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Transcript of NCSET Conference Call Presentation

Preparing Youth With Disabilities for Professional Employment: A National and International Perspective

presented by:

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MS. MACK: Good afternoon this is Mary Mack from the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, and I would like to welcome you to our monthly teleconference call.

The title of today's call is "Preparing Youth with Disabilities for Professional Employment: A National and International Perspective" and Dr. Robert Stodden, from the Center on Disability Studies at the University of Hawaii, and Kathy Martinez, Deputy Director of the World Institute on Disabilities, are the presenters.

It would be nice to just quickly go around and give your name and where you're from, and also, when we get to the question and answer, if you would please give your name and where you are from before you ask your question. We will be able to know who was speaking when.

MS. CONWAY: This is Megan Conway from the University of Hawaii.

MS. CAROLL: Nanette Carroll with Jewish Vocational Service in Chicago.

MS. HELBY: Stella Helby with the Park County School District in Las Vegas Nevada.

MS. CHICK: Linda Chick from the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center in Virginia.

MS. DOLL: Pat Doll from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln.

MR. SHEES: Carl Shees, It's Two For Disabilities Studies.

MS. WHELLEY: Teresa Whelley with the Center on Disabilities Studies in Hawaii.

MS. LEE: Debra Lee from the DC Department of Health.

MS. SHEEHY: Jennifer Sheehy from the Depart-

ment of Education.

MS. DAVIDSON: Debbie Davidson from Rehab Services for the Blind in Jefferson City, Missouri.

MS. MACK: It looks like we have a nice diversity of people from across the country, with different kinds of perspectives. So I think that this will make a nice call. This is an open line teleconference call so background noise will be picked up so it would be best to just put your phone on mute unless you are speaking. With that I'm going to turn the call over to Bob Stodden, and he'll introduce himself, and then he'll turn the call over to Kathy Martinez. Bob do you want to start and tell us who you are?

DR. STODDEN: Yes, good morning and good afternoon to some of you. My name is Bob Stodden and I'm the Director of the Center on Disabilities Studies at the University of Hawaii in Manoa, and we also direct a national center for the study of postsecondary educational supports which is a research and training center funded out of NIDRR, which is the program that generates much of the information or the ideas I'm going to talk about, and also a whole another array of research and ideas around postsecondary education and people with disabilities. Kathy do you want to introduce yourself?

MS. MARTINEZ: I'm responsible for when's and where known, employment and training programs, and I currently direct Proyecto Vision which is a technical assistance center dedicated to increasing employment for Latino's with disabilities which is funded by RSA.

DR. STODDEN: OK, I have a request; I need to actually leave the line at 9:30, so what I would

like to do is I'll make my comments, and hopefully leave five or ten minutes before 9:30 for questions and discussion. If we can do that, and I really apologize for missing Kathy's presentation because I also wanted to hear that, but I do have to leave at that point. So if we can follow that format that would be great.

The topic today is preparation for professional employment and the topic is referring to preparing youth with disabilities beyond entry-level employment or beyond focusing upon initial employment placement, and of course that includes preparation for postsecondary education, life-long learning, and the provision of the skills and knowledge to develop new skills as one progresses through life. So I'm going to talk a little about the background on this and then also attempt to at least give a sense of the direction or line of study and line of thought its proceeding.

These comments are part of a National Capacity Building Institute that was held in Honolulu in February that focused on professional employment and preparation for professional employment. There are a set of papers that you can go to on the NCSET Web site, www.ncset.org, where you can get further reading on this.

So to start for years I think all of us that have been working in the secondary education transition and employment field have heard, we've increasingly heard from employers, economist, and others that the landscape of the workforce in the United States has been changing and obviously the skills and knowledge for people to participate in that workforce have also continually changed and for the past 20 years we've kind of been getting this information, and a lot of the information is focused around an increased need for people coming out of secondary school and as they move into postsecondary school and other training programs for them to possess skills and knowledge that support change or adaptability, to possess the interpersonal skills, critical thinking kinds of skills, that allow people to adapt from one level of employment to another level of employment as well as to adapt across types of employment, and we're noticing also that most people that participate in employment also have the skills to continually upgrade themselves, and so

they're not just moving horizontally in entry-level positions but they are moving vertically, usually within a career track or across career tracks.

So we're concerned that people with disabilities also have the skills and behaviors, the expectation themselves and the sense of opportunity to be able to proceed in a similar way.

So a lot of our work is pointing in the direction that there is a need to develop some new skills to ensure that youth with disabilities are able to adapt to new roles and they're able to participate in continual lifelong learning in advancement within and across career fields.

So there are a few issues around this that I want to talk about, and this has come to the forefront fairly recently around the number of federal initiatives focused on documenting postschool outcomes and so I'll touch on that just a little bit.

For youth with disabilities historically, and speaking to the last 20 years or so where we have had a focus on preparation in secondary school and transition to adulthood, and particularly employment, for youth with disabilities, we've often focused upon entry-level employment. The secondary school personnel, including special education teachers and in cases where secondary school counselors interact with youth with disabilities, the discussions often stop at the point of entry-level employment.

There's often, and there are many reasons for this I think, a sense that a lot of energy and effort needs to be put into preparing for and accessing entry-level employment but with that level of energy in focus, we often aren't focused upon some of the other skills and behaviors that are needed by youth with disabilities to create a sense of expectation and opportunity to move beyond that entry-level employment, and that in turn leads to a lot of other things which may be unemployment, or a lack of motivation to continue, and many things that we would experience.

Often school to work transition programs and education personnel and secondary education teachers, don't focus on the skills needed to pursue postsecondary education and lifelong learning opportunities.

So it's developing that set of skills that allows you or actually puts you in a position to learn new

skills which are critical to move within and across career tracks or to advance, and without this focus on those skills and behaviors, often youth with disabilities are then just very focused on entry-level employment, and become pigeon-holed and are handicapped to a large extent to pursuing both continuous postsecondary education and life-long learning.

Also we're finding, and this is an area of emerging studies, that looking at how secondary school personnel and also parents of youth and children with disabilities, how they view the expectations and also the sense of opportunity for youth with disabilities, and how those, how the sense of the self-expectation and sense of opportunity, how those things are actually developed and molded for youth with disabilities and we currently have somebody working on a doctoral dissertation that is going to be looking at the expectations, and the actual behavior of secondary counselors as it relates to youth with cognitive disabilities in high school concerning these two variables, and I think we're going to find that youth with disabilities, in relation to these two variables, are establishing a sense of expectation and a perception of opportunity in terms of careers and lifelong learning that school counselors probably treat youth with disabilities very differently than they do other students, particularly those students that might be tracked toward postsecondary education.

Other concerns are there's typically a lack of role models for youth with disabilities to assist the development of a sense of expectation and perception of opportunity. So there's concern in that area, and I know there's quite a bit of work evolving in looking at mentoring and other kinds of things that can possibly assist with that concern.

Another concern that is fairly evident recently is the newer focus, particularly with federal agencies including OSEP and the Rehabilitation Services Administration, upon documenting outcomes and particularly postschool outcomes, and not that it's bad to document these outcomes, but were tending to see that the focus of that documentation is on establishing end points, and as each of the groups of personnel or people working with youth with disabilities establish their end points, it sort of takes

them off the hook for looking at what is next. What is the lifelong learning opportunity? What is the career track or the direction that a person with disabilities might want to go after entry-level employment?

So we see encouragement and actually some emphasis on things like high school graduation as an end point rather than maybe a benchmark within a pathway that leads to something else.

So a secondary school educator's focus becomes upon the courses, the academic requirements, and other requirements to just achieve graduation; they don't often see beyond graduation and what is required - what are the skills and behaviors required to move forward.

So we see this in many sectors, definitely in the secondary ed sector. It's also being reinforced in the employment sector with vocational rehabilitation counselors, seeking closures. So the closure may be an initial employment placement and then things end. The file ends, the person is counted for that agency and we are finished, and some of this thinking is limiting. I think people look at youth with disabilities, and it's definitely limiting the opportunity for people across the lifespan to focus upon lifelong learning opportunities, career advancement kinds of things, all the things that all of us expect within our careers or as we move through adulthood, and all the things that we expect that lead to a continuing improvement in one's quality of life.

Obviously if you are targeted to participate in entry-level employment for the rest of your life, the quality of life that you might experience is going to increasingly decline, not that it would be a high quality of life to start with.

So this really requires us to think about these things a little bit, and to begin to see what people's roles are in the various areas.

Let me end with just a couple of comments about the direction where we're hoping research, and also some thinking policy wise, might go. One is to encourage everyone that participates in this process in elementary and secondary education, lower education as well as adult service providers, and very much parents of children or youth with disabilities, and then youth themselves, to begin to view settings and services as a mechanism for building one's

awareness, expanding that awareness with opportunities to explore and to understand and to integrate one's sense of self in relation to the adult world that we often speak of as postschool outcomes; that those opportunities are created in lower education, and are reinforced by service providers, and environments and settings in postschool such as postsecondary education and other training, life-long training opportunities, and that those opportunities focus upon developing a broad and or deep sense of self expectation in relation to the world of work as well as a sense of opportunity, a perception that opportunity exists in relation to that expectation, and if those two things in turn contribute to one moving forward, in career tracks and across career tracks.

So with that I'm going to end and I see here I have about seven or eight minutes for questions or comments and other kinds of things. So I'll open it up. Any questions, comments or thoughts.

MS. MARTINEZ: Bob, this is Kathy Martinez. I have a question.

DR. STODDEN: Hi Kathy, yes.

MS. MARTINEZ: I think that at least from the folks that I'm dealing with, and in my own experience, you know SSI is basically a poverty level subsistence, while it's not very exciting, it's very you know. in a certain way, very comforting. At least you know what you've got, and I guess in terms of transition, my question is for those of us, well let me back up. Those of us who've gotten off SSI, you know it's a terrifying process and I can tell you first hand that it's very scary to get off, because again poverty is what you know and while it's not great, it's comfortingly reassuring. I mean it's there and you know what it is.

DR. STODDEN: Right.

MS. MARTINEZ: But in terms of the jump, in terms of the networks, in terms of the opportunities and you know, I think the expectations have to begin from the family at a younger age, how do you keep studying that. I mean, my idea is to study successes. Are people starting to look at successes more than just the problem?

DR. STODDEN: Yes, several of our studies are retrospective studies. So I know one of the studies, the criteria for participation is that you have suc-

cessfully accessed participated within postsecondary education and have either moved from a two year program into successful employment, or you've transitioned into the next two years, the junior and senior year, and so we are looking then in one of the areas, we are looking at how was this sense of opportunity developed...

MS. MARTINEZ: Right

DR. STODDEN: and how were these, how did these expectations come into place, and was there a key person in your life that might have contributed and so on, you know kinds of things. So that is a way to look at that and then those studies are kind of bracketed with studies looking at various service providers in the field such as high school counselors and special education teachers to take a look at what are these roles, what are these people doing, and what is their normal routine that either contributes or inhibits these kinds of things from coming forth.

MS. MARTINEZ: I guess too, this is Kathy Martinez again, that you would have to also look at the definition of what success is, because as you know...

DR. STODDEN: Yes

MS. MARTINEZ: in our various cultural experiences with both the Latino Technical Assistance Center and the one that you have, the AAPI Technical Assistance Center, employment is defined very differently.

DR. STODDEN: Right, yes, you know all the way from participation within the family and the community that may be non-cash.

MS. MARTINEZ: Right

DR. STODDEN: You know to more expect that as a more normal role than we would expect within a particularly middle class kind of environment.

MS. MARTINEZ: More competitive?

DR. STODDEN: Yes. So there is that wide range, and I think we have to obviously be open and account for those and I think we can do that though looking at how one perceives their adult life unfolding...

MS. MARTINEZ: Right.

DR. STODDEN: In terms of participation in whatever the means of employment might be, but if the self expectation and the sense of opportunity is such that I'm going to participate and I'm going to

advance, or I'm going to move up rather than you know participate at an entry-level all my life, those things probably apply across the board.

MS. WHELLEY: Do you have time for one more question Bob?

DR. STODDEN: Yes.

MS. WHELLEY: You probably know my question. I am always baffled by the statistics that 50 percent of the students with disabilities that complete postsecondary education are not employed, and I'm wondering what policies and programs at the Federal level should be, could be, used to help ameliorate that problem.

DR. STODDEN: Yes and we've talked about this. My sense of this, and obviously I think this is an area of concern that isn't explored too often because we kind of have a sense that if people invest the time and energy, people with disabilities invest the time and energy in postsecondary education, that somehow employment will just occur for them within their field of study, and there's quite a bit of evidence now that that isn't the case, and that people with disabilities may have a much more difficult time than people without disabilities gaining professional employment in their field of study.

There are a number of things going on here. Obviously it's some of the attitudes within some of the professional areas. We've also looked quite a bit at what are the skills and behaviors needed by a person with a disability as they proceed through postsecondary education and transition into professional employment. So what is their preparation to describe themselves, the skills and knowledge needed to describe their disability needs within different employment, the professional employment contacts, and what the approach is you would take to do that with an employer. Those are all kinds of important variables that are important considerations I think, and in trying to improve the situations of persons with disabilities transitioning to what were calling subsequent employment after postsecondary education.

DR. STODDEN: Other comments? I probably need to get off in about a minute, so if there are no comments, I'll go ahead and turn this over to Kathy, and Kathy, I apologize again for missing your presentation. I really wanted to hear it, but...

MS. MARTINEZ: We know you're a busy man Bob.

DR. STODDEN: Thank you, and thanks to everybody. I appreciate the opportunity this morning to be on the call.

MS. MACK: Thanks a lot Bob.

DR. STODDEN: Thank you, good-bye. Thanks Mary.

MS. MACK: OK, Kathy you want to talk about this from the international perspective?

MS. MARTINEZ: Well I'd like to just kind of, I'd like to talk about two things. One a little bit what we were learning within the various technical assistance centers which include the API Technical, agent specific island or Technical Assistance Center, and the Native American Technical Assistance Center, and Proyecto Vision. All of these are funded by our RSA to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities from those various populations.

For those of you who don't know me, I am blind. I was born blind in New Mexico. I was born blind on the reservation, and my parents decided to move to California when they realized that they would have to send me away to a school for the blind. I was mainstreamed which had I think good and bad points.

I mean I can say as somebody who did grow up with a disability that expectations are everything, and opportunity and expectations tend to correlate you know. I think as people have higher expectations of you, you tend to have more opportunities and we all know that jobs are not found in a vacuum. They are found by a network that you make in your life.

So I think that you know as people with disabilities are exposed to various, well I guess the word is opportunities, the more networks they will be able to build and I think you know, just like everybody else, that's how we find work.

When I was in my early 20's I had the opportunity to live in Mexico for four years, which gave me a real sense of what it was like to be disabled or blind in another country. You know, and I'd always been sort of critical of blind people who needed to be guided around all the time until I lived in a place where they're were absolutely no sidewalks or if

there were sidewalks, there were people, there were inventor carts and uneven places, and it was just impossible to really get around a very large area by yourself.

And I also learned while I was in Mexico, I worked with some of the disability groups and saw how they were doing things and that really piqued my interest with regard to international issues.

Coming from the Latino and Native American culture, I also had my own cultural issues to deal with regard to the role of women. The role that Catholicism played with regard to disability. The role that you know certain Native American cultures have in how they perceive disability. All that was sort of bubbling up inside me when I moved to Berkley and became involved in the disabilities rights movement, and one of the things that was interesting to me was, even then and still today, I don't see very many people of different cultures in leadership roles of the disability rights or disability civil rights movement.

So when we talk about role models I think you know for people of different cultures, it's a very interesting conundrum. If we're put in an, excuse me, if we're put in state schools, we tend to become isolated from our cultures because most of the teachers are Caucasian and most of them are middle class. If we stay at home, we stay within our cultures and you know sometimes the education isn't the best. So I think you know it's a conundrum. Fortunately for me, I have a blind sister and people say why do you think that's a fortunate thing? Well in a lot of ways I got the best of both worlds.

I was able to compare notes about what it was like being a blind person, which you do get in a segregated setting. You do kind of create a community and then I was able to be mainstreamed throughout my whole educational life, although which I have to say, it did take me 13 years to get a bachelors degree, because every time I got an opportunity to travel, I took it, so I dropped out and then came back. I was not one of rehabs favorite clients.

So right now we are learning a few things. In Proyecto Vision, when we approach the topic of employment, we tend to think of competitive employment as the way to go, and we tend to, you know that I think comes from the fact that in this

culture, at least in the dominant culture, people move out of their houses when they're 18 and work and separate from their families, and that has been the basis or one of the cornerstones beliefs in the independent living movement that you know you get out, you get benefits, you get an attendant, and you know your goal is to work one way or another.

So of course what were finding in all the various technical assistance centers is it doesn't necessarily work that way. For people who are second third and fourth generations, I should say really third and fourth generations, there is a better chance that they have been assimilated and their concept of independence quote unquote, is more similar to that of a dominant culture, but many people, as you know, that were working with folks that are first and second generation and I have to say that you know a few times I've been kind of brought up short by the scruff of the neck because of my own views about employment. I mean a couple of examples are I was talking to a parent because one of the things we do is that we try to involve the family as much as the family wants to be involved. So I was talking to a woman who's daughter has a very slight developmental disability about possibly working outside of the home, and the daughter really wanted to, and the mother said there's no way. She said there's no way at this point that she could work outside of the home because she's already contributing to the family. She's already working she said. I said, what do you mean she's not working, she stays home all day. She says, well she cooks our food so I'm able to go out of the house and work and for us she's working. She's contributing. You know so I had to just shut my mouth. I mean I couldn't say, I'm not going to argue with the women, but to her, her daughter was being productive. Her daughter was contributing to the welfare of the family.

As Teresa can attest, you know the concept of putting yourself forward in many cultures is totally foreign especially in a lot of Native American and Asian cultures and Latino cultures, especially for a women. It's really foreign. You don't go out ahead of your non-disabled brother and get a job if he can't have one or get one.

In many instances I've been told that it's cruel that we want to find work for people with disabili-

ties, you know that they should be protected by their families. So you know we're dealing with a lot of cultural perceptions about disability.

Although, we are managing to get folks work at lots of different levels, and one of the things that's very interesting to me is that I think if you look at people from disability, people with disabilities from different cultures, first of all you know Latino and Asian and African American folks very shortly will no longer be the quote minorities. So I think that both as disability service delivery providers and as disability rights advocate, the whole issue of culture and disability is going to become more prevalent. It's not going away and so I guess that links directly into what's happening internationally because you know a lot of times people say here, well who cares what's going on internationally because you know the U.S. has the best laws, the U.S. has the best, the most access and the U.S. has people with disabilities, in this country are much better off than any where else in the world, and I would say that overall that's true, but there's still a lot of really cool innovative things happening, and I'll give you a few examples, but I want to guide you to a Web site. It's called *www.disabilityworld.org*, it's a Web site, it's a product of WID and a variety of partners.

We have an international grant to look at a number of things. Independent living, employment technology, governments, which is basically, you know there's folks with disabilities around the world who are being appointed and elected. How are they impacting governments? How are they impacting elections? How are they, you know, are they only addressing disability issues, or are they making an impact on other issues?

So *disabilityworld.org* has quite an extensive set of articles. The grant is in its fourth year, and there are articles from 101 countries addressing each of these topics. There's quite an extensive Web site and it has a searchable database.

Anyway with regard to employment, let me give you a couple examples; and you can read about all the examples I'm going to give on *disability world*. Let's look at Brazil. Brazil has had some very innovative employment programs. A few years ago they passed a law, the Brazilian government passed a law, which gave a natural incentive to companies to hire

disabled people and it was a tax incentive law. So what they did is the center for independent living in Rio was given money by these companies to quote make people with disabilities job ready.

Now they did not do any job training, but they essentially taught you the whole concept of showing up on time, dress, that job related, and then the public contractors like the phone company, the bus company, the water company, would hire these people with disabilities, and they would get a tax break.

So they would hire these folks and the independent living center would be sort of an employment agency, and for each person that the contractors would hire, the independent living center got a kick back.

So, essentially in Brazil right now, the independent living centers are funded by the government so they develop these folks, and get them job ready, and then the companies get a tax break to give the centers for independent living a kick back to keep supplying them with ready talent.

So that's kind of one very interesting example. In Mexico, they're beginning to do a lot of telework, and I know that the New Freedom Initiative is exploring telework as a viable option for employment, and I think you know from a cultural perspective this is a very interesting concept. You know for folks who don't want to leave home, and it's also an interesting idea for people who really have a hard time getting out of the house, or who choose to work at home, that is becoming more and more a viable option for both disabled and non-disabled people.

If you look in Argentina, Argentina is embarking on developing their version of supported employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities.

In England there's been a really successful disabled entrepreneur's network. The disability community is working with small business owners. They actually did a really fascinating survey which results indicate that just a second; I'm having a problem with my own technology. Oh well, it's nothing we don't know. The results indicate that ineffective information and advice were essentially the main barriers to hiring people with disabilities.

So we in Proyecto Vision sort of took their

example and now are working with small business owners from the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce because it's really my belief that the Latino community here kind of own, it's owned so to speak. You know we say look, we're a part of you. So we're currently taking the British model and working with the small business owners who are affiliated with the National Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Who else? I think Vietnam, as you know there is a very large disabled community because of land mines, the government is now increasing opportunities by providing skills development training in community based rehabilitation projects throughout the country. They're working a lot with disabled vets from the U.S. to increase skill levels. I could go on forever. South Africa is another example. Do you guys; are any of you familiar with those wind up radios? I'm assuming you are. Well the wind up radios for those of you who don't know, are these radios that don't require electricity or batteries, and I don't understand how they work, but you wind them up, and there's a mechanism in them that when it unwinds, it somehow powers the radio to play.

So they've been incredibly, they've been so very successful here in California because of earthquakes, but it's also very, they've been sold all over the world to folks who live in remote areas that don't have access to electricity.

Anyway, the point of the story is that the association for the blind in South Africa, actually with other people with disabilities too, really got on the band wagon and just made a deal with the factory who is manufacturing these radios and said that they would kick in some money if the factory agreed to hire 50 percent disabled folks.

So you know that's another example. As you all probably know, many countries in the world have what we call a quota or levy system. We don't have that here, but they do in Japan, they used to in England. They still do in France and Germany where essentially, it's a law that says, companies have to hire two percent or 1 1/2 percent people with disabilities and if they don't, they be fined. Well in many cases, the companies prefer the fine because of attitudes and lack of access and all the reasons that we know why people with disabilities don't get hired, but what's happening, what's

interesting is that the levy or the fine used in these countries is beginning to be used cause there's quite a pot of money now that's collected especially in Japan and so they finally decided to use that money to train folks, to train folks to be employed.

So there's all different ways, and I think that like we said we have a lot to learn from them, and they certainly have a lot to learn from us. But you know success really is occurring all over the world, and I think it's important that we, that we're aware of it.

Does anybody have questions?

MS. MACK: Should we open it up for questions? Anybody? It's kind of jump in.

MS. PEG: Hi this is Melissa Peg from Clark County School District Las Vegas Nevada. We were curious what the RSA is that provided the funding for your programs.

MS. MARTINEZ: Oh I'm sorry.

MS. PEG: It's OK.

MS. MARTINEZ: It's the Rehabilitation Services Administration. It's a part of the Department of Education.

MS. PEG: OK, OK thank you.

MS. MACK: Other questions? Hello Kathy?

MS. MARTINEZ: Yes

MS. MACK: OK I wasn't-this is Mary Mack. I wasn't sure that we were still on the line.

MS. PEG: This is Melissa Peg from Las Vegas again. I have another question. As a school district we deal with students of all different types of disabilities, and I don't mean to be disrespectful when I say it sounds like were dealing more with, that Kathy you're dealing more with people with physical limitations non-cognitive limitations or students with very mild cognitive limitations. Is that correct or are you dealing with students who are severely and profoundly mentally challenged? Do you understand what I'm asking?

MS. MARTINEZ: So far the people with intellectual disabilities have been mild to moderate. I wouldn't say severe honestly.

MS. PEG: OK thanks.

MS. MACK: This is Mary Mack from the University of Minnesota and I guess Kathy that from my perspective both your presentation and Bob's really talk about all of us stepping out of the box and looking at what are the opportunities that we have

within the international community. What's being done internationally? What's surfacing from other countries about the opportunities that we can create for young people and also from looking at ourselves and how we deliver services, and I don't think that it's necessarily that we're talking about changing what were doing, it's more of an approach and a philosophy and I'd like you to respond to this?

MS. MARTINEZ: Well I think you know as the world becomes more and more, as the world becomes a smaller place, and as we have access to more information, you know I think what Bob said just kind of a broader awareness, and you know if we can't find, if we don't have the answers, where can we find them.

MS. MACK: Yes that's right. That's right. I spent a number of years working with young people in Minneapolis here in Minnesota, and we had kind of an open ended approach where we were helping young people enter the entry-level jobs that all young people start out at, but then helping them to understand how that leads to other opportunities, how that related to postsecondary training and other experiences, and these were young people that did not have that experience in the communities that they were growing up in, they were predominately poor. So they didn't look around and see people that ...

MS. MARTINEZ: That were like them.

MS. MACK: That were like them.

MS. MARTINEZ: Yes, well I think it's really you know a tough call because it's true if you stay in your neighborhood, most likely if it's a poor neighborhood, you know if it's an inaccessible project let's say, most disabled people don't come out of their houses. You know but if you send the person away to a state school, they get away from their community, their disability community, but they lose their cultural community.

MS. MACK: Can you talk a little bit about the, from your own perspective, on the role of role models in your life. I mean, was it one role model? Was it a number of role models?

MS. MARTINEZ: Well at various stages in my life I had role models. I mean I think I was very lucky because I had, when I grew up I think it was right at the beginning of mainstreaming, the late

'60s all the way through the mid to late '70s, and I think first of all there was a more optimistic view of mainstreaming. I think that, I think role models were extremely important. You know at all levels, role models in the family, role models as teachers, role models involved in a recreation program, which involved both disabled and non-disabled kids and you know that was extremely valuable with regard to the fact that people expected me to participate and expected me to do well, and expected that the experience would mean something and through those expectations, came opportunities.

MS. MACK: And do you think that that was in terms of the learning curve, that that was a two way learning curve, that both the people that were role models, that you also provided them with a valuable lesson?

MS. MARTINEZ: I don't know if it was really a lesson, but I think that for example, the kids that I went to elementary school with, I came to kindergarten the same day they did. So I was a natural part of their environment and to this day, the friends that I still am in touch with tend to be fairly comfortable with people with disabilities.

MS. MACK: OK, we've got time for one more question. Anybody have a question? The call in April, what the general topic is going to be, it's going to be around a discussion of cultural competency and how do you respectively work in a multi-cultural environment and be respectful of where people are coming from. I don't have the date or the presenters at this point.

So I think that also ties in really well with some of the discussion that Kathy gave us today. It will be towards the end of April, and you'll be getting an e-mail in the next few weeks to tell you about that and of course the teleconferences are announced in the NCSET E-news or on e NCSET Web site at www.ncset.org.

So thank you very much. Thank you very much Kathy.

MS. MARTINEZ: Thank you.

MS. MACK: All right bye.

MS. CHICK: Kathy, this is Linda Chick from Virginia and I appreciate your input and it gave me a new perspective, and I appreciate that, thank you.

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