Impact of Internet and Other Transition Support Activities on the Postsecondary Education and Employment Outcomes of Students with Disabilities

Abstract

Transitioning from high school to employment or postsecondary education is a critical juncture in any person’s life. For a student with disabilities, the complexities associated with such pivotal decisions are compounded, increasing the need for transition preparation and ongoing support. Although many programs have supported high school students during their transition periods, there is little empirical research on the long-term impact of specific support activities. This article reports the results of a follow-up survey of participants in a well-known model transition program for college-bound youth. Effective components such as Internet training, year-round on-line peer and mentor support, live-in summer study activities, college and career preparation activities, and work-based learning opportunities are discussed. Recommendations for applications to transition programs as well as future research are also provided.

Introduction

Since higher education can enhance their employability and vocational success, young adults with disabilities should be encouraged to participate in postsecondary education (Stodden & Dowrick,
However, people with disabilities are significantly underrepresented in postsecondary programs (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). Adolescents with disabilities who wish to attend college are often faced with responsibilities they are unprepared to meet because they are conditioned to depend on others, and they lack self-advocacy and independent-living skills (Stodden, 1998; Stodden & Dowrick, 2000). Those enrolled in college often hesitate to request the specific accommodations they need (Durlak, Rose, & Bursuck, 1994). In addition, students with disabilities are rarely encouraged to prepare for challenging fields such as science, engineering mathematics and technology, and they are less likely to take the precollege courses that are prerequisite for postsecondary studies in these areas (Burgstahler, 1994; Malcom & Matyas, 1991; National Science Foundation, 2000). Even students with disabilities who begin such programs are more likely to drop out of school prior to completion than non-disabled students (DeLoach, 1992; National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 1999; Wagner, 1989). They also have few job experiences before leaving school, which contributes to poor employment outcomes for this group (McNeil, 2000; Yelin & Katz, 1994).

Transitioning from secondary schools to adult lives can be a challenge for everyone, and is often even a greater challenge for those who have disabilities. As the end of high school approaches, so does the termination of a structured support system (Burns, Armistead, & Keys, 1990; Heal & Rusch, 1995). Since 1984, the needs for additional support during the transition period have been well documented in over 400 transition-related model programs funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) of the U.S. Department of Education (Kohler & Chapman, 1999). It is estimated that private foundations, state agencies, and other organizations are also funding many additional programs that focus on transition support for students with disabilities.
What are the outcomes of these programs? A review of the literature indicates that there are few published documents that report empirical research data related to transition. Kohler and Chapman (1999) identified only 20 studies, published between 1990 and 1997, which focused on students with disabilities or at risk. Among these 20 studies, only one study demonstrated an impact on long-term employment outcomes (Heal & Rusch, 1995). Kohler and colleagues' follow-up efforts on reviewing more current programs between 1998 through 2000 still reveal a serious lack of empirical studies on long-term outcomes (Kohler & Hood, 2000; Kohler & Troesken, 1999). In addition, some of the existing studies have weaknesses in establishing a clear relationship between specific program components and their outcomes. They often lack the clear description of effective interventions that is necessary in order for successful practices to be adopted by other programs. The current evaluation study was conducted to add to new knowledge about effective transition-related interventions that lead to better postsecondary education and employment outcomes for students with disabilities.

**DO-IT Overview**

The DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology) Scholars program was selected to be evaluated in this study because it has many characteristics of successful programs: (1) it has won several prestigious awards, including the President's Award of Excellence for Mentoring in Science, Engineering and Mathematics fields; an outstanding program award from AHEAD (Association of Higher Education and Disability), the professional association for postsecondary disabled student services officers nationwide, and the National Information Infrastructure Award for exemplary use of the Internet to further education; (2) it has sustained operations for almost a decade; (3) it has well-defined components that lend themselves to comparative analysis; and (4) it has flourished with increased funding from government, corporate and private sources to add features to the
program over the years (see DO-IT web site at www.washington.edu/doit/ for more information). The DO-IT Scholars program, since its inception in 1992, has benefited nearly 200 students with a wide range of disabilities during their transition from secondary schools to postsecondary schools and employment environments. DO-IT is housed at the University of Washington and is primarily funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), the U.S. Department of Education, and the State of Washington. DO-IT was initially funded by the NSF to increase the participation of students with disabilities in academic programs and careers in science, engineering, mathematics, and technology. After this initial six years of funding for the experimental project, the State of Washington funded ongoing efforts with Washington residents, but increased its scope to include other challenging academic and career fields.

DO-IT participants, referred to as DO-IT Scholars, are college-bound high school students who face significant challenges to pursuing postsecondary studies and careers due to their disabilities. DO-IT goals for the Scholars include development of social skills, academic skills for pursuing postsecondary studies, and career/employment skills. To achieve these goals, the DO-IT Scholars program employs two primary interventions: (a) *Summer Study at a postsecondary institution*, and (b) *Year-round computer and Internet activities*. Participation in DO-IT begins with a two-week face-to-face live-in Summer Study program at the University of Washington in Seattle where Scholars are introduced to other participating youths with disabilities and adult mentors. Here they are given training in computer and Internet use, and helped to prepare for college and careers through dorm activities, student services presentations, academic studies, and other activities. In addition, DO-IT Scholars communicate year-round with each other and adult mentors. They are provided with home computers to access information resources on the Internet and with technical support, and adaptive
technology. Other activities include internship opportunities as a third Summer Study option, and participation on panels, in conference exhibits, and in a variety of additional work-based learning activities.

DO-IT’s selected interventions were adopted after a review of the literature regarding promising practices in transition support. For example, the need to provide access to mentors and adult role models for students with disabilities is well documented and Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), where people use computers and networking technologies to communicate with one another, has the potential to connect people separated by time and space who might not otherwise meet (Schnapp, 1999). With CMC, the absence of social cues and social distinctions like disability, race, and facial expression through text-only communication can make even shy people feel more confident about communicating with others. Young people can learn in ways that people learn best – through sharing information, questioning information, verbalizing opinions, weighing arguments, and active learning. DO-IT has helped its participants gain access to mentoring through CMC by providing home computers and adaptive technology to all participating Scholars who do not already have one. In addition, it also supports the program participants with free Internet and technical assistance services throughout the years. Although proximity is critical to developing peer and mentor support in most settings, such as in DO-IT Summer Study activities, Internet communication has proved invaluable in building and sustaining peer and mentor relationships over great distances (Burgstahler & Cronheim, 2001; Hawken, Duran, & Kelly, 1991; Stainback, Stainback, & Wilkinson, 1992). Adaptive technology makes it possible for anyone to participate in CMC regardless of disability. CMC can help overcome the geographic, temporal, and disability-related barriers to establishing peer and mentor support groups and thereby reduce social isolation and allow independent access to information resources. The combination of
CMC and in-person peer and mentor support has the potential to improve the postsecondary and career outcomes for young people with disabilities (Burgstahler & Cronheim, 2001; Burgstahler, Baker, & Cronheim, 1997; D'Sousa, 1991; Kay, 2000; Kim-Rupnow, Dorwick, & Burke, 2001; Pemberton & Zenhausern, 1995; Stephenson, 1997). Other programs have also found mentoring to be a critical component of a successful transition for youth with disabilities. The summer program Project Access in Columbia, Maryland, enhances students' potential for successful postsecondary experiences by developing “Peer Mentors/Tutors” who have year-round face to face interaction with program participants (Schnapp, 1999). Similar to DO-IT, this program promotes the use of the Internet for academic purposes, but supports more face-to-face mentor assistance as well. The “Connecting to Success” project sponsored by the Institute on Community Integration of The College of Education and Human Development at the University of Minnesota also uses electronic communication to promote the successful transition of young people with disabilities to adult life (Hill, 2001).

Resume writing, mock interviews, internships and other activities that prepare students for careers form a critical component of DO-IT’s program. Employment preparation experiences while they are still in school give students opportunities to explore their own interests, develop resume-writing, problem-solving, and interviewing skills; apply academic and vocational skills and knowledge to real work situations; and learn to work with supervisors and co-workers (Briscoe, Pitofsky, Willie, & Regelbrugge, 1996; William T. Grant Foundation, 1988). Through internships and job placements, students apply academic knowledge and experience to specific work environments firsthand (National School-to-Work Learning and Information Center, 1996). Students with disabilities benefit from work-based learning activities as much as, if not more than, non-disabled students. These experiences provide them with opportunities to practice disclosing their disabilities as well as negotiating and testing the
effectiveness of specific accommodations in job settings. Even those individuals with disabilities who complete postsecondary education are likely to have fewer work-based learning experiences than those who do not have disabilities. Lack of job skills and related experiences create additional barriers to employment for people with disabilities (Benz, Doren, & Yovanoff, 1998; Benz, Yovanoff, & Doren, 1997; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997; Unger, Wehman, Yasuda, Campbell, & Green, 2001). These factors make the provision of effective work-based learning opportunities critical to the career success of people with disabilities.

Another example of a college-based program, similar to DO-IT in terms of its objective to expand career options and opportunities for young adults with disabilities, is Towson University Outreach in Towson, Maryland (Fisher, 2000). However, unlike DO-IT, Towson originally began operating throughout the school year. Recognizing the value of continual application of skills learned by participants during the school year, the program was eventually extended into the summer months. Consequently, Towson University now offers programs and services year-round.

Another important component of the DO-IT Scholars program is its on-campus Summer Study activity. While teens with disabilities travel from various locations to participate in the DO-IT Summer Study program in Seattle, similar summer programs open their doors in other parts of the country. For example, attending recreational camps is a popular summer activity for American youth. In a rustic environment, they bond with one another and take steps toward higher levels of maturity. Easter Seals, the Muscular Dystrophy Association and other charitable organizations sponsor hundreds of camps specifically designed for young people with disabilities. In addition to making friends, the campers develop independent living and self-advocacy skills. Computer and other academically oriented camps combine the benefits of recreational camps with knowledge and skill development that can lead to
academic and career success. They can compliment or extend instruction provided by traditional educational programs.

Students in the Alabama Transition Initiative (ATI) also attend a summer camp (Rabren, 1999). This program focuses more on encouraging development and cultivation of leadership and self-advocacy skills, and not as much on computer-mediated peer and mentor support and Internet-based learning. As with the DO-IT program, students stay in dormitories at a university and participate in "college life" by participating in typical college-related activities such as attending classes and eating in the cafeteria.

Questions to be addressed

• What is the impact of various aspects of a model program that provides on-campus Summer Study programs, year-round CMC with peers and mentors, and other supports on the transition of high school students with disabilities to higher education and employment?
• How can other programs apply the successful practices developed in this model program in order to improve academic and career outcomes for students with disabilities?

Method

A follow-up survey study was conducted to identify effective components of the DO-IT Scholars program that are associated with student success in and satisfaction with transfer to postsecondary education and employment from high school.

Participants

A total of 173 Scholars participated in DO-IT from 1993 to 2000. (This number does not include one scholar who passed away after the first Summer Study and another who dropped out of the program.) Of the 173 participants, 155 for which DO-IT has contact information received a
questionnaire and 75 Scholars responded (44 via a Web-based questionnaire, 3 via e-mail, and 28 via postal mail), resulting in a 48 percent response rate. The Scholars who started DO-IT in 2001 were not included in this study since, at the time the survey was conducted, they had not completed their first Summer Study session and, thus, did not meet the study criteria to investigate the long-term impact of DO-IT participation on postsecondary education and employment outcomes.

Data

The survey questionnaire was designed to assess DO-IT Scholars’ perceptions of the impact that participation in DO-IT activities has had on their lives, and to evaluate the value of specific program features. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: (a) Personal information, (b) Summer Study programs, (c) Year-round computer and Internet activities, and (d) Changes in Scholars as a result of participation. Personal information questions ranged from age and gender to postsecondary education and employment. The Summer Study section invited students to rate the importance of program components, such as computer and Internet use, social interaction, and career and college preparation. The year-round computer and Internet activities section asked students to rate activities ranging from use of adaptive technology to on-line communication with peers and mentors. The final section asked respondents to assess their level of specific skills (e.g., Internet skills, self-advocacy skills) at three different points in their lives – before participating in DO-IT, after the first Summer Study, and now.

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to analyze the survey data. Statistical analyses consisted mostly of frequencies, means, and other descriptive statistics. For open-ended survey items, content analyses were performed to find general patterns in the narrative.

Results
The results are presented in four parts: The first summarizes the survey respondents' demographics; the second and third parts describe Summer Study and year-round activities, respectively; and the fourth part presents the changes in skills perceived by the survey respondents at three different points of DO-IT participation.

**Survey respondents**

Of the seventy-five respondents:

- 52% are male and 48% are female;
- 81% are between the ages of 18 and 23, 11% between 24 and 26, and 8% under 18;
- 41% list their primary disability is related to mobility, 13% sight, 12% learning, 9% hearing, 1% speech, and 23% other;
- 47% list their academic strengths as science/engineering/math, 23% liberal/general, and 30% unclassified;
- 38% report their strongest motivator for pursuing postsecondary education to be getting a good job, 20% academic interest, 15% commitment to family, 10% social life, and 17% other;
- 47% report their strongest motivator for pursuing employment to be financial security, 40% independent living, 5% incentive plans such as a retirement plan or medical insurance, 3% contribution to social changes, and 5% other;
- 91% graduated from high school;
- 88% are currently participating in or have completed postsecondary education or formal training since high school; and
• 41% are currently employed; among these, 33% indicated their social skills helped them get their current job followed by 25% computer skills, 17% Internet skills, 14% academic skills, and 12% other skills.

**Summer Study program**

When asked which DO-IT Summer Study activities were very valuable in their personal, academic or career development, the results were:

• 84% Computer and Internet use;
• 75% College preparation;
• 71% Face-to-face interaction and developing relationships;
• 53% Career preparation; and
• 37% Internship at Summer Study.

When asked which specific skills the DO-IT Summer Study program were very valuable in assisting them to develop, they reported:

• 65% Social skills;
• 59% Career/employment skills; and
• 47% Academic skills.

**Year-round computer and Internet activities**

When asked which year-round computer and Internet activities were very valuable in their own personal, academic or career development, they reported:

• 83% Access to information and resources on the Internet;
• 68% Access to home computer;
• 59% On-line communication with adult mentors;
• 59% On-line communication with peers; and

• 51% Access to adaptive technology.

Which specific skills did they consider computer and Internet activities very valuable in assisting them to develop?

• 67% Academic skills;

• 61% Career/employment skills; and

• 51% Social skills.

Changes perceived by respondents at three different points of DO-IT participation

Respondents were asked to identify characteristics or skills where they experienced the most growth as a direct result of participating in DO-IT. Specifically, they were asked to rate themselves on certain skills and characteristics at different phases of their participation in the DO-IT program on a five point scale, where 1 is very low and 5 is very high. Table 1 lists the mean scores of the respondents’ rating in each category across the time. Paired-sample T tests were performed to evaluate the changes over time for each category being surveyed. The comparison results (see Table 2) identified significant improvements in participants’ self-evaluation from baseline (before the participation of the program) to the first summer or now, at the time they responded to the survey, for all categories. Paired comparison for consecutive conditions also showed significant improvements from the first Summer Study program completion to now. The time gaps between the first summer and now vary from 1 year to 7 years depending on the respondents, which also depict different levels of involvement with DO-IT. Some continued to have regular Internet communications with peers and mentors, while others did not. However, all but one respondent indicated their skill levels and characteristics improved as a result of DO-IT participation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After First</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Skills</td>
<td>2.66 (1.37)</td>
<td>3.86 (.91)</td>
<td>4.56 (.66)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer Skills</td>
<td>3.04 (1.22)</td>
<td>3.76 (.86)</td>
<td>4.46 (.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for College</td>
<td>2.32 (1.11)</td>
<td>3.62 (.89)</td>
<td>4.47 (.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Career Options</td>
<td>3.05 (1.18)</td>
<td>3.64 (.84)</td>
<td>4.35 (.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for Employment</td>
<td>2.41 (1.13)</td>
<td>3.43 (.79)</td>
<td>4.19 (.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>3.57 (1.78)</td>
<td>4.16 (.72)</td>
<td>4.47 (.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>3.42 (1.28)</td>
<td>4.10 (.83)</td>
<td>4.43 (.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Skills</td>
<td>3.17 (1.29)</td>
<td>3.76 (.97)</td>
<td>4.25 (.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-advocacy Skills</td>
<td>2.96 (1.26)</td>
<td>3.82 (.78)</td>
<td>4.45 (.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>3.13 (1.17)</td>
<td>3.82 (.82)</td>
<td>4.45 (.61)</td>
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*Note:* Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.
Table 2. Pair-wise Comparisons between Times of Involvement in the Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>df</td>
<td>versus</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Summer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internet Skills</td>
<td>(1,67)</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer Skills</td>
<td>(1,68)</td>
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<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for College</td>
<td>(1,59)</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived Career Options</td>
<td>(1,65)</td>
<td>***</td>
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<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for Employment</td>
<td>(1,64)</td>
<td>***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>(1,63)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>(1,66)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Skills</td>
<td>(1,68)</td>
<td>***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-advocacy Skills</td>
<td>(1,65)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>(1,67)</td>
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*Note:* ** p < .01; *** p < .001.

Table 3 categorizes narrative comments made by DO-IT participants who were asked to summarize the greatest impact DO-IT activities had on their lives. Categories are based on content codes. The following are selected direct quotations:
“I think the greatest impact for me is it helping me to understand more about my self and the people in the real world. I have learned how to adapt to society without thinking that I am disabled, that I am useless.”

"Realization that I can have a normal adult life and that my disability really should not stop me from pursuing a career that is interesting to me. I also became more comfortable around people with severe disabilities and realized that they are real people."

"DO-IT has shown me that information is empowerment and that through the computer and social networking there is virtually free access to information for everyone."

"I've been prepared for my future in academic, social and employment aspects. I'm excited and anxious to see what the world has to offer now that I've participated in the DO-IT program, not to mention all the great friendships and fun times I've had."

"I have learned I can accomplish anything I set my mind to."

**Table 3. Greatest DO-IT Impact Perceived by Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Frequency (percent)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive outlook on life &amp; disability</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expand social network</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve technical skills</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boost confidence in college life</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase career choices</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

DO-IT survey respondents included 39 males and 36 females, mostly between the ages of 18 and 23, who listed impairments related to mobility, sight, learning, hearing, and other multiple functions as their primary disability. Nine out of 10 graduated from high school to pursue postsecondary education and nearly half considered science, engineering, and mathematics as academic strengths. Their primary motivation for continuing their higher education was to "get a good job" in pursuit of financial security. Of those who were currently employed, social skills were deemed the most important in securing employment, followed by computer skills.

In regards to their DO-IT Summer Study and year-round activities, participants rated computer and Internet use the most valuable activity for enhancing their academic and career skills. Computer and Internet use was followed by college preparation and development of personal relationships and social skills as highly valued activities.

Discussion

According to the survey responses, DO-IT program participants experienced significant short-term and long-term growth in their level of preparation for college and employment and increased development of self-advocacy skills. Data collected suggests that DO-IT has met its primary objectives of improving the social, academic, and careers skills of students with disabilities. Although DO-IT participants showed higher rates of high school completion (91%) and pursuit of postsecondary education degrees (88%) than people with disabilities in general, it is recognized that this group is not representative of the general population of people with disabilities. The 41% employment rate of survey participants does not accurately depict the true impact of the program regarding ultimate career success.
because more than half of the survey respondents were still in college. Survey results suggest that the
DO-IT program has a positive impact on college attendance and success. The following quotation from
a DO-IT Scholar reflects the effectiveness of this area of the Summer Study program: "It showed me
that I really can succeed in a college setting."

DO-IT Scholars also experienced significant growth in the development of their Internet skills
which enhanced their academic and career skills as well as their ability to communicate more efficiently
with mentors and peers for academic and social interaction. DO-IT has shown that peer and mentor
support, traditionally provided in-person, can be delivered via a supported electronic community on the
Internet. It is important to note that out of all Summer Study and year-round activities, more than 80
percent of survey respondents rated computer and Internet use as the most valuable. One DO-IT
Scholar summarizes the greatest impact of the program, "DO-IT has shown me that information is
empowerment and that through computer and social networking there is virtually free access to
information for everyone." Other outcomes, in order of increased growth, include enhanced computer
skills, independence, perceived career options, social skills, self-esteem, and perseverance. As previous
research has documented the importance of Internet skills for academic and career success, Internet
and computer support provided by DO-IT appear to open many doors for its participants.

The results of this study should be considered in light of limitations which may have influenced
the results. First, all participants selected had to apply for acceptance into the program and were
college-bound high school students with disabilities who demonstrated the potential to achieve success.
Disability level was considered in the selection process. The selection board selects students with
disabilities that create the most significant challenges in pursuing education and employment and result in
a wide variety of disability types represented in each cohort. Therefore, they do not represent a cross
section of the national high school population of students with disabilities.

Second, this study is based on 75 program participants who voluntarily responded to the survey
(48 percent of the 155 DO-IT Scholars who were contacted). Empirical data collected from this group
may not accurately portray the effectiveness of individual program activities for all DO-IT program
participants. Third, no control group of students with disabilities who did not participate in DO-IT
Scholar activities is available. The long-term impact was based solely upon the self-reporting of survey
respondents.

Though the results obtained in this study are generally positive, there are a number of important
issues that require further research. First, a long-term follow-up is needed on DO-IT Scholars with
comparable non-participant peers in order to evaluate the program’s impact.

Second, further data should be gathered from parents, high school teachers and counselors,
external evaluators, DO-IT staff and participants, and similar transition programs’ staff and participants,
to add additional perceptions to the evaluation of the program’s effectiveness.

Third, because of the wide range of disabilities represented in the group, including mobility
impairments, hearing impairments, visual impairments, health impairments, and specific learning
disabilities, further analyses on the relationship between these different types of disabilities and which
support services they considered most valuable (e.g., Internet use or Summer Study) should be
conducted.

And fourth, more empirical research is needed to determine the long-term impact of summer
programs, CMC, peer and mentor supports, work-based learning activities, and other college and
career transition supports.
Recommendations for Other Transition Programs

To assess the impact of various aspects of DO-IT, participating Scholars were asked to rate activities and make recommendations to further enhance the program. In response, DO-IT Scholars provided insights and recommendations that can help transition-based programs nationwide enhance employability and vocational success for students with disabilities. A sample of responses reflects aspects of the program they considered essential to help participants achieve positive social, academic, and employment outcomes.

- Technology and Internet support services—“They gave me my laptop which was a great help!”
  “The Summer Study was excellent, and the technology really helped me at the time because there was no way I could afford a computer then.” “I learned that I could really use computers effectively.”

- Social skills development—“I’m less shy now that I know there are more people out there that are just like me or worse off. That just makes me even more determined to get out there and just DO-IT!”

- Self advocacy skills development—“I am becoming more independent and don’t let people boss me around.” “I learned how to advocate for myself.”

- College counseling—“...learning skills needed to succeed in college, having them help me get accepted to college, and teaching me never to give up on my dreams.” “Also, the knowledge that college was more easily doable than I thought.”

- Career counseling—“I realized that I had more career choices than I thought I had.”

- Self-esteem development—“I have learned that each individual can contribute regardless of their disability.”
• Year-round extension programs—“DO-IT needs to have gatherings during the year to meet successful persons with disabilities.” “…Perhaps a refresh session mid-year like a weekend retreat of some sort to keep Scholars focused.”

Following are selected quotations from DO-IT program participants who were asked to recommend additional DO-IT program activities to help young people with disabilities enhance their social, academic or career skills (44 participants responded):

"I think it would be good to have time set aside just for socializing and sharing experiences about living with a disability, school or just life in general."

"I think young people are very uncertain and unsure about their careers. DO-IT should have one academic counseling session with each DO-IT kid so that they understand if the track they are going on is right or not."

"Encourage strong mentor-student relationships."

“Conduct and host self-advocacy discussion forums.”

"Encourage special education teachers to be more active in the DO-IT Program to give them the chance to see how the program actually works and to take part in it."

"Expand the Summer Study program. Start it at other universities across the country so that more disabled high school students can learn about college life."

**Conclusion**

A study was undertaken to assess the social, postsecondary education, and career outcomes of the interventions of a well-known, successful college and career preparation program for students with disabilities. The results of the study suggest that summer study, on-line peer and mentor support,
Internet and computer training and technical support, college and career preparation, and work-based learning activities can have a positive impact on postsecondary academic and career outcomes for people with disabilities. Programs should make greater efforts, however, to clearly document their practices and follow up with participants to further improve program outcomes and disseminate successful practices to maximize their replication. Such efforts will, ultimately, improve the postsecondary academic and career outcomes for people with disabilities.

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