

INTRODUCTION

The EMBARK Program was founded in 1975 through the Northshore Education Consortium (NEC). It was one of the first regional collaboratives in Massachusetts and is the largest provider of intensive special education services to children and youth with emotional, behavioral, and developmental disabilities on the North Shore. In addition to special education programs, NEC runs the Northshore Recovery High School. This is for students who have struggled with substance abuse disorders, and provides a wide range of training and professional development for parents, teachers, and other specialists from area school districts.

INTERNSHIP PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The objective of the project was to research the benefits of the program for disabled students and to analyze how the staff and students felt about the program itself.

RELATED LITERATURE

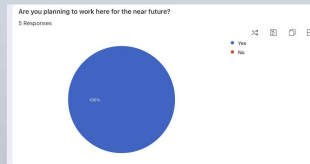
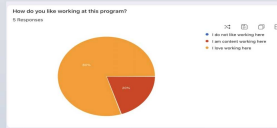
Advocacy is working toward a goal, sometimes against resistance. One may advocate on their own behalf, or others may advocate for them. One's local independent living center, tenant organizations, town and city governments, and senators' or representatives' offices may also provide advocacy. One important advocacy tool is reasonable accommodation. State and federal laws now require that programs available to the public be accessible to you as a person with a disability. This means that if one's disability makes it difficult or impossible for you to receive services, an accommodation must be made so that you can receive certain services (DisabilityInfo.org, 2024).

Transition Planning into Adulthood services is extremely important for disabled students. These are based on the individual student's needs, taking into account his/her strengths, preferences, and interests. These services help young adults to live, work, participate in the community, and go on to further education or training as independently as possible when they leave high school. The article speaks on the Federal "Turning 22" Law. Transition services are defined by federal law (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA) as a "coordinated set of activities...designed to be within a results oriented process,...to facilitate the student's movement from school to post-school activities (The Arc of Greater Haverhill, 2025).

MATERIALS & METHODS

- The purpose of this analysis was to review the importance of disability services and how it provides important life skills and academic assistance.
- The questions were based on weekly interactions with the students and teachers at Embark Program.
- The analysis was completed at Embark Disabilities Program in Salem, Massachusetts.
- The employee survey analyzed their opinion of the effectiveness of the program for the students, and whether they enjoyed working there.
- The student survey analyzed how the students liked the program, the benefits of the program, and how long they had been in the specific program.
- Participants responded to the survey individually and anonymously
- Once the surveys were completed, the data was imported to spreadsheets and graphs were created to analyze the data. The questions were based on weekly interactions with the students and teachers at Embark Program.

Examples of survey questions:



RESULTS

Both surveys identified many benefits to the Embark program. On the employee survey, all of the employees who responded enjoyed working at the program. In addition, some employees claimed they wished the day was longer for the students; these employees felt it would be more beneficial to the students to have longer sessions for their academic work. Next, every student who responded to the survey enjoys the program and feels the program benefits their life skills.

Quotes from employees:

"More family engagement opportunities so they feel they are on the same page as staff"

"This program has continued to change and evolve over the time I have been employed here, and will probably continue to change and evolve as the population expands. Many of the work-related changes are going to be addressed in the upcoming collective bargaining agreement negotiations".

"The students need more time during the class day"

CONCLUSIONS

In all, there are numerous benefits to disability programs throughout the country, but specifically here in Salem, Massachusetts at Embark Program. The students enjoy the environment, the teachers, and the program. More so, the employees at this program see the benefits of the program within their students. The special education program has been extremely successful. Additionally, the employees felt that the students would have more benefit to the program if it was a longer day and they were able to connect with the families more. The employees critiqued certain portions of the program but all enjoy working there.

REFERENCES

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