

Fostering skills development and inclusivity for transition program students and Philippine school stakeholders

Rose Marie Jane A. Rementina, LPT, MA, (rmjrementina@gmail.com)

Cited as:

Rementina, R. M. J. (2026). Fostering skills development and inclusivity for transition program students and Philippine school stakeholders. *World's Education Journal by CISC*, 1(1), 44–60. <https://doi.org/10.24926/wejc.v1i1.7132>



Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

[The World's Education Journal by CISC \(WEJC\)](#) is a peer-reviewed academic journal initiated and managed by the [CEHD International Student Community \(CISC\)](#). WEJC publishes manuscripts in education across all disciplines offered at the University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development.

Fostering Skills Development and Inclusivity for Transition Program Students and Philippine School Stakeholders

Rose Marie Jane A. Rementina, LPT, MA, (rmjrementina@gmail.com)

Abstract

Despite limited access to special education services in the Philippines, an urban public elementary school offers a transition program to support learners with special needs in preparing for post-school opportunities. However, the program requires further enhancement to address instructional gaps for transition-aged students, which currently limit their skill development. Moreover, opportunities for collaboration and engagement between the general and disability communities remain limited. By establishing a café simulation facility in the school, complemented by on-the-job training with partner businesses, the transition program students showed improvements in their social, daily living, pre-vocational, and employability skills. It also created opportunities for regular interaction within the school community. Lastly, the disability inclusion workshop series conducted among parents, teachers, and students led to increased disability sensitivity and awareness, suggesting that a localized approach can promote inclusive mindsets and supportive practices at home and in school for learners with special needs.

Key words

Transition, employment, inclusion, public school, Philippines

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ensures the promotion and protection of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2006). Aligned with this commitment are the existing mandates of the Philippines, like the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (Republic Act No. 7277, 1992) and the Inclusive Education Act (Republic Act No. 11650, 2022), ensuring the quality education and equal participation of learners with special needs in all school levels and settings. In the school year 2024-2025, there are 381,089 enrolled public school learners with special needs, and around 60% of them have limited access to special education (SPED) programs, facilities, and teachers (Second Congressional Commission on Education & IDinsight, 2025).

Despite this limited access, a local urban public elementary school (UPES) in Metro Manila previously served 60 learners with special needs, of whom 22 were enrolled in the SPED department's transition program to learn relevant skills for productive living. However, 6 of them remained in the same program for at least 5 years, indicating a learning plateau and barriers to post-school support. This reflects the data gathered in the city that only two public school graduates with special needs were known to have been hired.

Moreover, most UPES teachers have direct experience with learners with special needs, but only a few have completed formal coursework in inclusive education. Additionally, many parents of learners with special needs do not think that their children are capable of working, nor would a company hire them. Lastly, general education (GenEd) students needed greater trust and confidence when interacting with peers with special needs.

With these, this study is weaved into the Social Role Valorization theory and the Social Model of Disability affirming that the social factors (eg., stigma, limited opportunities and

capacities of the general community) hinder learners with special needs' maximum potential; hence, enhancing their skills and the stakeholders' perceptions about the disability community are equally important (Wolfensberger, 1983; Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, 1976). Given this context, we envision our learners with special needs (hereafter referred to as "transition students") to be equipped with the necessary skills helpful for their future employment while building bridges within their immediate community towards a more inclusive society.

Method

The project team, consisting of one GenEd and two transition program teachers, employed the S.P.E.D approaches during the school year 2019 to 2020 to:

1. Systematize the transition planning aligned with families' goals and the transition students' needs and interests;
2. Provide a school platform to hone transition students' skills for increased self-esteem and productivity;
3. Expose them to employment settings for skills training or job opportunities; and
4. Develop the skills of the faculty, learners, and parents to support the potential and capacities of learners with special needs.

This approach was developed based on UPES needs analysis and benchmarking to some Metro Manila private and public schools implementing transition programs with transition planning, existing school simulation facilities, and partnerships with businesses for skills training.

Participants

Twenty-two transition students with intellectual and developmental disabilities participated in skills training in school and job settings. Of these, 15 learners with adaptive social skills were selected to participate in the disability awareness workshops, including 35 Grade 4 and Grade 5 learners holding active roles in student groups/clubs.

Additionally, 50 GenEd teachers working with learners with special needs participated in the parent-teacher workshops, alongside 30 parents from the SPED Department, most of whom are parents of transition students.

Data Collection and Analysis

The following processes are guided by the S.P.E.D. approach.

Firstly, a private school with various therapists conducted assessments for our learners with special needs to identify their baseline needs for educational interventions. The project team conducted home visits to gather more data and collaboratively develop the students' Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) with their parents/legal guardians. IEP transition goals (social, daily living, pre-vocational, and employability skills) were set for each student.

Secondly, the team established the school café simulation facility through fundraising and voluntary contributions from school and community members. They also taught transition students in three small groups, three times a week, covering food preparation, customer service, cash handling, and housekeeping. Students served in the café weekly, based on their learning.

Thirdly, the transition students travelled to two inclusive local restaurants and participated in on-the-job training (OJT) twice a week throughout the school year. They were coached by their teacher and co-staff, performed their duties, and earned their daily-based pay.

Finally, the team conducted a three-day disability inclusion workshop for 50 teachers, 30 parents, and 50 students, with each session lasting 3.5 hours. They taught students to address peers by personal names, identify their positive attributes, and learn disability characteristics (Day 1); identify their strengths and demonstrate collaboration through booth displays (Day 2); and exhibit self-confidence and cooperation via an advocacy performance (Day 3). Students completed identical pre- and post-tests, consisting of a rating-scale and multiple-choice items aligned with the session goals (e.g., relationship-building, self-confidence, growth mindset, cooperation, creativity).

For parent-teacher workshops, a university instructor provided interactive lectures and role-playing activities for teachers (Day 1) and parents (Day 2) on how to implement behavioral management techniques applicable at home and school. On Day 3, parents and teachers participated collaboratively to establish a community of practice and empathy to support diverse students' needs across settings. Participants completed post-event forms after each session, providing both scaled ratings and open-ended responses aligned with the objectives, including empathy, inclusivity, skillfulness, collaboration, and communication.

The team assessed the transition students quarterly based on daily observations and teacher-made progress monitoring tools with structured scoring (eg., "1: Beginning" indicates little to no participation; "2: Developing" indicates participation with frequent prompts; "3: Approaching Proficiency" indicates participation with moderate prompts; "4: Proficient" indicates participation with occasional prompts; and "5: Advanced" indicates independent participation) aligned with their IEP's learning targets across four domains. Both SPED teachers jointly rated each student's school and workplace performance. Moreover, they analyzed the scores from the disability inclusion workshops using a 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 4 ("Strongly

Agree”) scale, reflecting students’ agreement with session competencies, and parents’ and teachers’ satisfaction with the workshop objectives.

The team then evaluated outcomes by calculating the descriptive statistics (M ± SD) across four IEP learning domains between quarters 1 and 4, and the disability inclusion workshop responses.

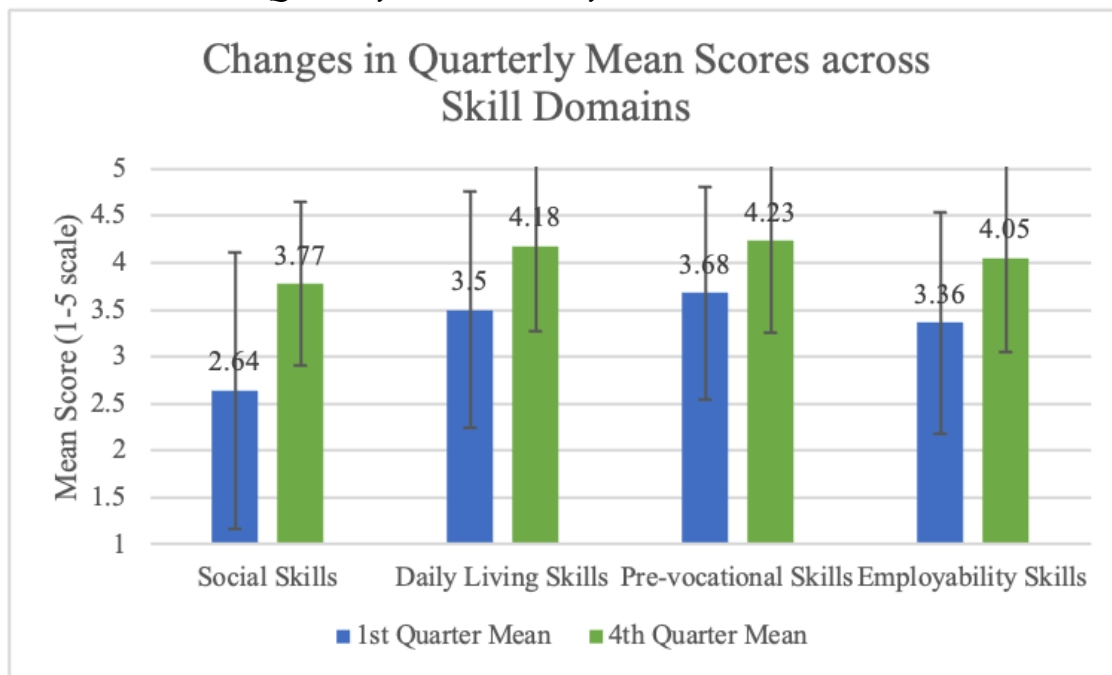
Results

Transition Student Outcomes

Across the transition students’ (N=22) four learning domains, their mean (M) scores improved from first to fourth quarter (Figure 1), while the standard deviations (SD) decreased throughout those periods (Table 1). This means that through the implementation of the school café and OJT, their skills improved and became more consistent by Quarter 4.

Figure 1

Transition Students’ Quarterly Mean Scores by Skill Domain



Note. N=22 students. Error bars indicate ±1 SD. Scores follow 5-point scale (1=Beginning, 2=Developing, 3=Approaching Proficiency, 4=Proficient, 5=Advanced).

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for each learning domain across quarters

Learning Domain	1st Quarter (M ± SD)	4th Quarter (M ± SD)	Mean Gain
Social Skills	2.64 ± 1.47	3.77 ± 0.87	1.13
Daily Living Skills	3.50 ± 1.26	4.18 ± 0.91	0.68
Pre-vocational Skills	3.68 ± 1.13	4.23 ± 0.97	0.55
Employability Skills	3.36 ± 1.18	4.05 ± 1.00	0.69

Note. N=22 Students. Mean scores ranged from 1 (Beginning) to 5 (Advanced).

When looking at each learning domain’s quarterly mean scores, transition students’ social skills improved the most, from 2.64 to 3.77, with a mean gain of 1.13. This is followed by employability skills improvement from 3.36 to 4.05, with an average gain of 0.69, and the daily living skills with an increased mean score from 3.50 to 4.18, or a mean gain of 0.68. The area of least growth is their pre-vocational skills, slightly elevating from 3.68 to 4.23, reflecting only a 0.55 mean gain.

Concurrently, their social skills had the most consistent scores (SD=0.87), followed by their daily living (SD=0.91) and pre-vocational (SD=0.97) skills, while their employability skills had the least consistency (SD=1.00). As variability decreased across quarters, the majority of transition students consistently improved their skills while participating in café and OJT duties over time.

Table 2

Number and percentage of students who improved, remained steady, or regressed across skill domains from 1st to 4th Quarter (N=22)

Outcome	Social Skills	Daily Living Skills	Pre-vocational Skills	Employability Skills
Improved	16 (73%)	11 (50%)	10 (45%)	14 (64%)
Remained Steady	6 (27%)	10 (45%)	12 (55%)	8 (36%)
Regressed	0	1 (5%)	0	0

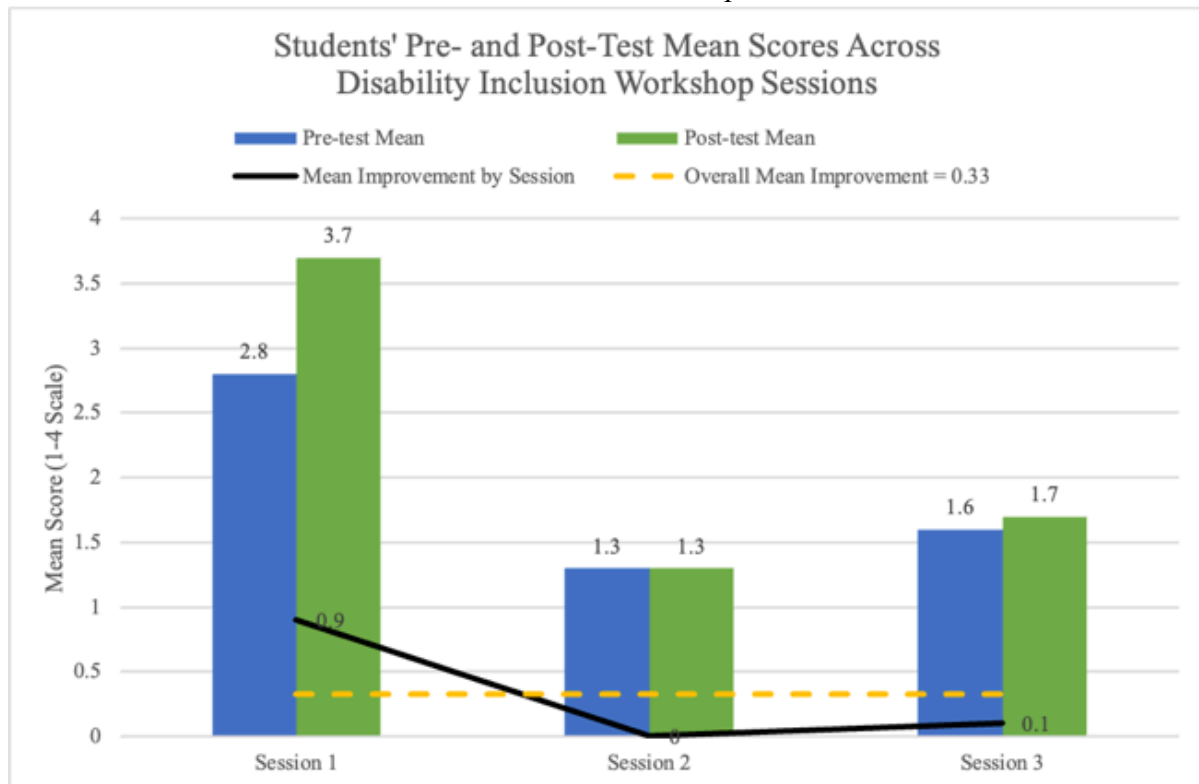
Examining the number and percentage of students who improved, remained steady, or regressed across skill domains (Table 2), the majority of students improved the most in their social skills, with 16 of 22 students (73%) improving, while 6 (27%) remained steady. Following



this, 14 (64%) students enhanced their employability skills, while 8 (36%) remained unchanged. Meanwhile, in daily living skills, 11 (50%) improved, 10 (45%) stayed consistent, and 1 (5%) regressed. In pre-vocational skills, 10 students (45%) improved, while 12 (55%) showed no change. These show that most students’ daily living and pre-vocational skills are maintained rather than enhanced.

Stakeholder Outcomes

Figure 2
Pre- and Post-Test Mean Scores across Student Workshop Sessions



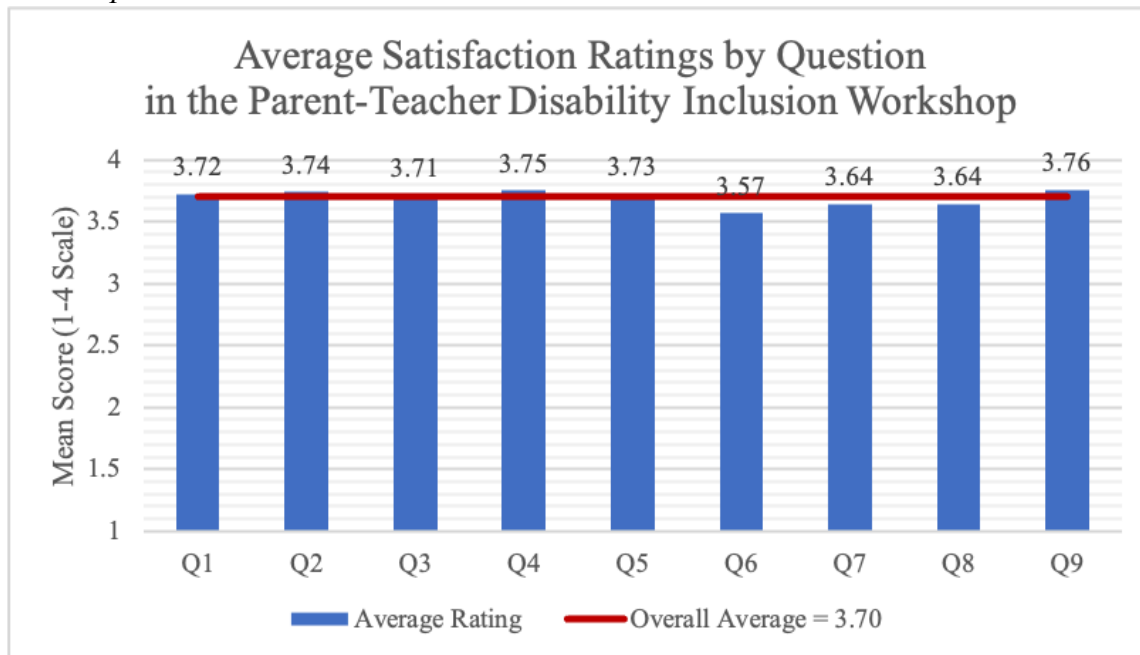
Note. Scores follow a 4-point scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree)

Following the disability inclusion workshop series, the students’ pre- to post-test mean scores improved from 2.8 to 3.7 in Session 1, and slightly from 1.6 to 1.7 in Session 3. Meanwhile, session 2 mean scores remained steady at 1.3 in both tests. Moreover, the



session-level improvements ranged from 0.0 to 0.9 on a 4-point scale, with an average improvement of 0.33 across all sessions, representing about 11% of the total possible score range. Despite its short duration, the workshop resulted in a modest but observable increase in students’ disability-related knowledge, values, and skills, where they agreed the most in recognizing the unique abilities of individuals with disabilities and referring to them by name rather than by their disability.

Figure 3
Average Satisfaction Ratings for the 9 Questions in the Parent-Teacher Disability Inclusion Workshop



Note. Scores follow a 4-point scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree).

Based on the survey forms across three sessions, parents and teachers almost strongly agreed (3.57-3.76) that the workshops were facilitated smoothly (Q1) with topics clearly taught (Q2) and with appropriate activities (Q3); were useful to enhance their role as parents/teachers in guiding (Q4) and connecting positively (Q5) with diverse students/children; and were helpful to create a safe space between parents and teachers (Q6). They also appreciated the conducive



workshop setting (Q7); indicated that they would recommend it to other teachers/parents/guardians (Q8); and expressed positive overall workshop feedback (Q9). With an overall mean rating of 3.70 (Figure 4), the participants rated the parent-teacher workshop series as valuable and useful, indicating strong satisfaction.

Discussion

Transition programs that incorporate goal setting and work experience on or off-campus facilitate post-school employment (Test et al., 2009; Schutz et al., 2023; Lindstrom et al., 2014). Aligned with this is the S.P.E.D. approach, where the students had transition planning and worked in the school café and local restaurants. Consequently, they enhanced their social, daily living, pre-vocational, and employability skills, with their socialization as the most consistently improved skill across quarters. With the introduction of job exposure, the intervention contributed most to students' consistent growth in social skills (Almaqzhi & Alqahtani, 2020). However, unforeseen circumstances such as a pandemic may lead to skills regression, especially when socialization and job opportunities are limited. Therefore, a risk management plan should be in place.

Although employability skills were the second most improved after social skills, some students improved moderately, while others remained in the steady group, partly due to higher baseline scores. Gains were also less consistent than in other domains, suggesting that sustained workplace practice beyond one academic year is necessary, as it encompasses employment-related soft skills that may require mastery and long-term retention. Additionally, more individualized strategies could have supported students with low baseline scores, while advanced performance indicators could have challenged high-performing students.

Meanwhile, daily living skills demonstrated substantial improvement, particularly among students with lower baseline scores, and performance remained consistent alongside gains in social skills. Conversely, one student regressed in this skill. Because this skill applies across multiple settings, consistent practice in different environments is recommended to improve performance.

Furthermore, the students' pre-vocational skills improved the least, where the majority remained steady, while some improved moderately. This may also be due to most students beginning with higher baseline scores; hence, a small room for improvement. This indicates a need for more individualized and authentic instruction with greater task complexity and longer practice duration.

Overall, the intervention improved transition students' skills across all four domains. Students with lower initial scores showed the greatest gains in social and daily living skills, while those with higher baseline scores maintained their abilities, particularly in employability and pre-vocational skills. These findings suggest that the intervention promotes functional independence and employment readiness through contextualized skill practice and social engagement. Future research should explore the effects of more individualized, intensive, and longer-term implementation.

Alongside this, the disability inclusion workshop sessions provided a moderate increase in stakeholders' competencies in engaging with learners with special needs. Students learned the most in addressing peers with special needs by name and recognizing their strengths, fostering more positive perceptions and actions. Students also consistently demonstrated collaboration and showed slight improvements in self-confidence and relationship-building. This may be attributed

to the workshop participants' existing skills as student leaders and members, as well as the transition students' adaptive social abilities.

Moreover, parents and teachers indicated that the disability inclusion workshop enhanced their awareness and capacity to support learners with special needs at home and in school; thus, further study is needed to examine how these insights were actually implemented in practice. Nonetheless, parent and teacher expectations are considered valuable to facilitate students' post-school employment goals (Mazzotti et al., 2021; Schutz et al., 2023; Holwerda et al., 2015).

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, in transition planning, more stakeholders should have been actively involved (e.g., GenEd teachers, other SPED teachers, administrators, employer/s, and the students themselves) to gather more data across different quarters and to co-facilitate a more intensive approach. Second, the teacher-made progress monitoring tools had limited formal testing, and observations may be subject to observer bias; hence, inferences drawn may be restricted. Third, the conduct of workshop pre- and post-tests lacks a control group, limiting causal inferences. This warrants further investigation in future studies. Fourth, while self-ratings were captured via satisfaction forms post-workshops, parents' and teachers' behavioral or attitudinal change was not explicitly measured. The stakeholders' inclusion practice should have been evaluated further. Finally, only aggregated scores from the 2019 student and parent-teacher workshops were retained, limiting access to individual participant data and variability. Future studies should aim to retain data for stronger analysis.

Practical Implications

Implementation of a transition program may be hindered by stakeholders' limited knowledge of the appropriate procedures, mandates, or resources essential for the successful transition of learners with special needs (National Association of SPED Teachers, n.d.). For countries that currently face some transition program challenges, the national and local education agencies are urged to strengthen transition policies based on local schools' needs (eg., writing student-centered transition goals within IEP, tapping relevant stakeholders including but not limited to teachers, families, students, counselors, and employers/community members to be part of the transition team, and structuring partnerships for students' workplace experience or post-school placement), effectively relay existing transition resources, and systematically conduct transition-related training, especially to SPED teachers.

Also, school administrators are urged to engage with mandated agencies and initiate employer partnerships, especially if there are funding or opportunity constraints. If simulation labs are needed, the school should prioritize inclusion in budget plans or enhance the existing facilities to optimize resources. Moreover, the SPED teachers should be updated on essential resources and practices, contextualize them based on students' needs, and co-advocate with families and students through dialogues or platforms where students can showcase their strengths.

Most importantly, learners with special needs and families need more active involvement in setting and implementing their post-school goals; hence, collaborative IEP discussions with all relevant stakeholders are essential (Test et al., 2009). In parallel, the transition programs and activities should be aligned with the students' needs and interests to lessen challenges (Scott et al., 2021). Furthermore, all school personnel should go beyond disability awareness training and

ensure the inclusion of learners with special needs in general education for at least 80% of the school day (Flexer et al., 2011). Additional content and pedagogical training are required when inclusive teaching competencies are limited.

Conclusion

With the increasing age range of students and the growing population in the UPES transition program, there is a need to further enhance its program features and activities. Through hands-on training in school and workplace settings, along with the collaborative efforts of families, teachers, and employers, learners with special needs showed improvement in their functional and employability skills. Additionally, the disability workshop series raised awareness and encouraged active interaction between learners with and without special needs, as well as between parents and teachers. Despite varying levels of change in stakeholders' competencies, the study promoted greater inclusion within the school community and advanced learners' skills and families' aspirations for post-school opportunities.

Ethics Declaration

Having no applicable ethics oversight body in the study's location, the project underwent a formal review and approval process via a non-profit organization and the school, followed by the participants' informed consent.

Acknowledgment

The author acknowledges the in-kind and technical support of individuals, organizations, and businesses in the implementation of this project.



The author also used an OpenAI product to support statistical description and language clarity, but were finalized by the author.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

No conflict of interest is declared except that the author taught at the school explored.

Funding

The writing of this paper received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors; however, the logistical support in setting up the café and conducting the disability workshop series was financially supported through the grants won from the Global Peace Foundation, SM Cares, and the Jesse Robredo Foundation.

References

- Almaqhzzi, H. A., & Alqahtani, S. S. (2020). Special education teachers' reflections on school transition practices that support partnerships with businesses to prepare students with disabilities for employment. *Children and Youth Services Review, 105813*.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2020.105813>
- Flexer, R. W., Daviso, A. W., Baer, R. M., McMahan Queen, R., & Meindl, R. S. (2011). An epidemiological model of transition and postschool outcomes. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 34*(2), 83–94. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0885728810387922>
- Holwerda, A., Brouwer, S., de Boer, M. R., Groothoff, J. W., & van der Klink, J. J. (2015). Expectations from different perspectives on future work outcome of young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation, 25*(1), 96–104. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10926-014-9528-3>
- Lindstrom, L., Hirano, K. A., McCarthy, C., & Alverson, C. Y. (2014). Just Having a Job: Career Advancement for Low-Wage Workers With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals, 37*(1), 40–49.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2165143414522092>

- Mazzotti, V. L., Rowe, D. A., Kwiatek, S., Voggt, A., Chang, W.-H., Fowler, C. H., Poppen, M., Sinclair, J., & Test, D. W. (2021). Secondary Transition Predictors of Postschool Success: An Update to the Research Base. *Career Development and 108 Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 44(1), 47–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2165143420959793>
- National Association of Special Education Teachers. (n.d.). *Overview of transition services*. NASET. <https://www.naset.org/professional-resources/transition-services/overview-of-transition-services>
- Republic Act No. 7277. (1992, March 24). *Magna Carta for Disabled Persons*. Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1992/03/24/republic-act-no-7277/>
- Republic Act No. 11650. (2022, March 11). *An act instituting a policy of inclusion and services for learners with disabilities in support of inclusive education*. Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2022/03/11/republic-act-no-11650/>
- Schutz, M. A., Schwartzman, B., Awsumb, J. M., Burgess, L., Carter, E. W., & Taylor, J. L. (2023). Pathways to paid work for youth with severe disabilities: Perspectives on strategies for success. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 58(1), 11–26. <https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-221221>
- Scott, L. A., Thoma, C. A., Gokita, T., Bruno, L., Ruiz, A. B., Brendli, K., Taylor, J. P., & Vitullo, V. (2021). I'm Trying to Make Myself Happy: Black Students With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Families on Promoting Self-Determination During Transition. *Inclusion (Washington, D.C.)*, 9(3), 170–188. <https://doi.org/10.1352/2326-6988-9.3.170>
- Second Congressional Commission on Education & IDinsight. (2025). *Accelerating support for learners with disabilities: Findings and policy priorities from a study on the early-stage implementation of the Inclusive Education Act (Rev. 2)* [Policy brief]. EDCOM2. https://edcom2.gov.ph/media/2025/11/EDCOM2-IDinsight-Accelerating-Support-for-Learners-with-Disabilities_Rev2.pdf
- Test, D. W., Mazzotti, V. L., Mustian, A. L., Fowler, C. H., Kortering, L., & Kohler, P. (2009). Evidence-based secondary transition predictors for improving postschool outcomes for

students with disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 32(3), 160–181. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0885728809346960>

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (A/RES/61/106).

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>

Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS). (1976). *Fundamental principles of disability*. London: UPIAS.

Wolfensberger, W. (1983). Social role valorization: A proposed new term for the principle of normalization. *Mental Retardation*, 21(6), 234–239.

