

Impact of the Transition Work-Based Learning Model in Maine



Maine Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) carries out the Transition Work-Based Learning (TWBL) Model Demonstration grant in partnership with implementing partners Jobs for Maine Graduates (JMG), the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), and the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston, and evaluating partner, American Institutes for Research (AIR). Together, they implement and rigorously evaluate the alignment of two innovative interventions, Progressive Employment and enhanced-JMG (e-JMG).

- JMG is a year-round program that partners with public schools to offer for-credit courses which aim to improve high school graduation and put middle and high school students on a college or career path.
- The Progressive Employment model is an employment strategy that aims to serve vocational rehabilitation consumers by building and maintaining relationship with potential employers of people with disabilities. This dual customer approach includes work-based learning opportunities that may lead to job placement, but the emphasis is on flexibility to meet the needs of both vocational rehabilitation consumers and businesses, instead of an exclusive focus on job placement.
- A combination of these two interventions resulted in the e-JMG and Progressive Employment (e-JMG+PE) combined model, which brings together JMG specialists, who were trained through Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE), and vocational rehabilitation counselors, who were trained on Progressive Employment, to collaborate in serving students with disabilities. Maine DVR utilized the Progressive Employment model to expand employer relationships and align this dual customer community-based strategy with enhanced JMG programs for students with disabilities.

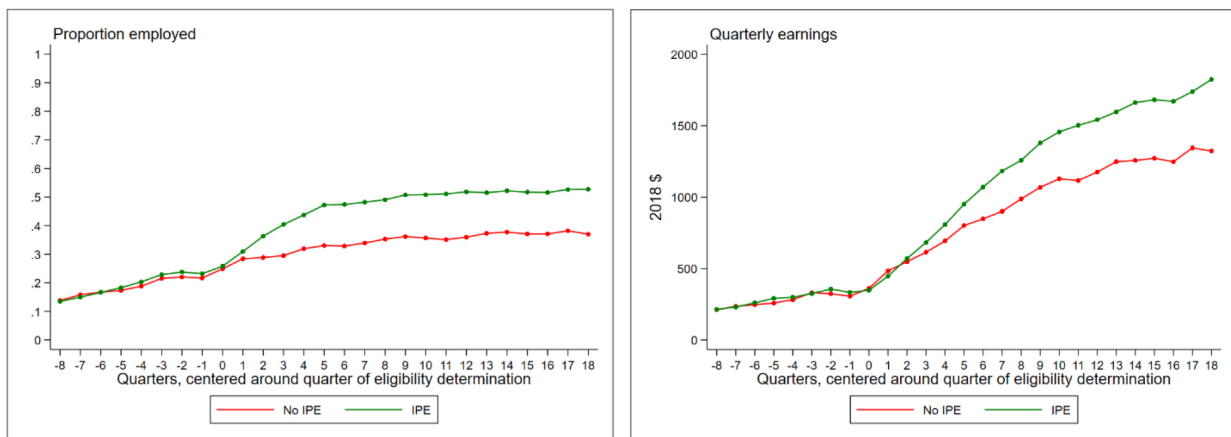
AIR evaluated these three models to determine whether a model of work-based learning improves competitive integrated employment and postsecondary education outcomes for students with disabilities.

Impact of Vocational Rehabilitation

The AIR team assessed the effect of receiving an individualized set of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services on employment and earnings of youth with disabilities (aged 14-24), and found that VR services provided through an IPE lead to substantially higher employment and earnings, both during VR service and after case closure (Figure 1). Using VR case information from RSA-911 data on VR applications between 2005 and 2016, and quarterly employment information from the Unemployment Insurance (UI) files from the Maine Department of Labor, the team compared youth with an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) to those without an IPE.

Of the VR-eligible clients 44% had an IPE. During the average 1.5-year period in which VR clients received services, almost half of VR clients with an IPE were employed, compared to less than a third of clients without an IPE. After VR case closure, the effects became even more pronounced. Receiving VR services through an IPE led to an increase of 15 percentage-points in quarterly employment rate, and a \$1,442 increase in average quarterly earnings for clients for two years after VR case closure. The impact was especially positive for younger clients (14-18 years), VR clients who were students, and clients without SSI/SSDI. When compared against the costs of purchased VR services, the effects showed a positive investment. The benefit and cost estimates, taken together, imply a 40.5% (\$13,453/\$5,594 – 1) real return rate in a 3.5-year period (six quarters during service and eight quarters post-closure). The annualized real return rate is 10.2%, meaning for every \$1 spent on purchased VR services, the benefits for the clients and society amount to \$1.10 per year.

Figure 1 Labor market outcomes (1. Employment, 2. Quarterly earnings) over time for IPE and non-IPE clients



Impact of Jobs for Maine's Graduates

AIR conducted an analysis on the impact of receiving JMG and VR services, as compared to only VR services, and found a positive impact of receiving JMG in high school and additional VR services afterwards (Figure 2). With the assistance of DVR, the evaluation team linked RSA 911 data, JMG participation data, and UI wage and employment data from the Maine Department of Labor. The evaluation team then compared employment outcomes between individuals who received JMG and VR services with individuals who received VR, only between years 2005 and 2016.

The AIR team show the trend in employment from age 17 onwards for VR clients who receive JMG during high school, compared to VR clients who do not receive JMG. After the first two quarters, JMG students have a similar trend as non-JMG youth, but after six quarters (after age 18.5), their employment and earnings start increasing at a steeper rate than non-JMG youth. By the sixteenth quarter (age 21), more than 50% of JMG youth are employed, compared about 40% of non-JMG youth.

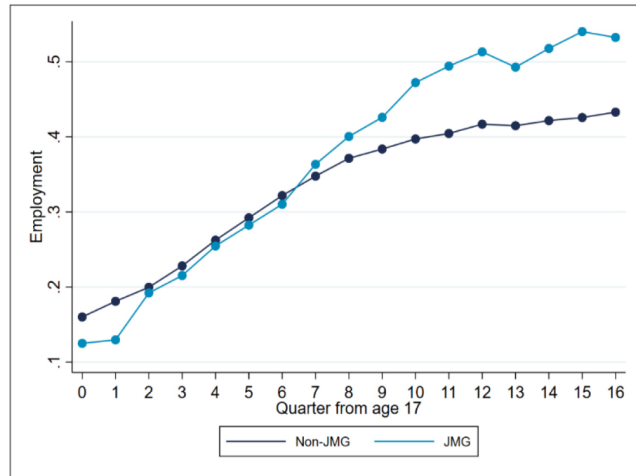


Figure 2 Employment outcomes for youth with 1. VR services (Non-JMG) only or 2. VR and JMG services (JMG)

Further analysis, separating four groups: 1. JMG students, 2. VR service recipients (measured as having an IPE), 3. JMG and VR recipients, and 4. no JMG or VR services, found that both JMG and VR improve quarterly growth in employment and earnings. However, while VR substantially improves employment levels (by 9 percentage points), employment growth over time is faster for JMG participants (increase of 1 percentage point per quarter) compared to VR (increase of 0.3 percentage-point per quarter).

Impact of Progressive Employment

For the assessment of the impact of Progressive Employment on employment outcomes of students with disabilities, the evaluation team focused on students in high school between 14 and 18 years old with an IPE. Preliminary findings show that Progressive Employment increases the average quarterly employment with no significant results on earnings. For this analysis, AIR uses VR case data from the RSA 911 data to identify Progressive Employment clients and comparable regular VR clients with an IPE. The team used UI files to measure quarterly

employment and earnings from four quarters before IPE up to four quarters after. Figure 3 shows the employment trends for Progressive Employment clients and non-Progressive Employment clients in Augusta and Bangor. The preliminary analysis indicates that before an IPE (pre-quarter 0), Progressive Employment and non- Progressive Employment clients have similar quarterly employment rates, of approximately 20% on average. After an IPE (post-quarter 0), the employment levels of Progressive Employment clients rise much faster than non-Progressive Employment clients. By the third quarter after IPE, more than 40% of Progressive Employment clients were employed compared to slightly more than 30% of non-Progressive Employment clients. Preliminary analysis comparing Progressive Employment clients of 14 to 18 years in the same cities with a matched comparison group shows similar results. These preliminary findings suggest that Progressive Employment is associated with higher employment levels for youth in Maine.

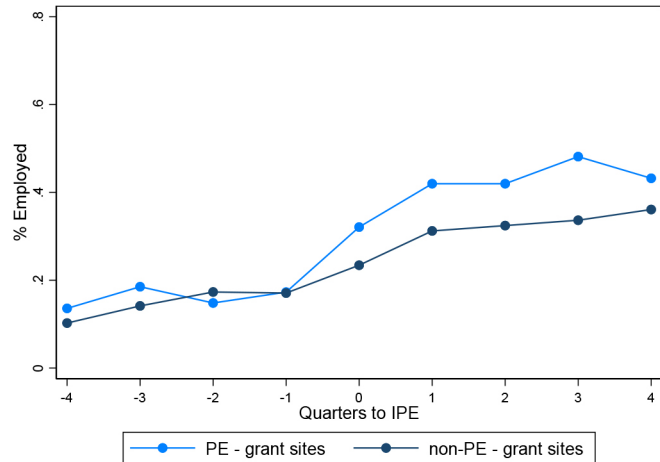


Figure 3 Employment in quarters from IPE for Progressive Employment and Non-Progressive employment youth (14-18 years with IPE)

Contact Information

For more information about the evaluation of the TWBL model demonstration project, contact Michelle Yin, Ph.D., Principal Economist at the American Institutes for Research, at myin@air.org.