

Development of Independent Living Skills in *Project Panther LIFE* Students during the Summer Residential Program

Abstract

Project Panther LIFE: Panther Learning Is For Everyone is an ongoing collaborative partnership between Florida International University (FIU), Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), and Parent to Parent of Miami, Inc. to develop, implement, support, and expand a non-degree postsecondary transition program for students with intellectual disabilities (ID). In Summer 2014, the program launched its first on-campus three-week Summer Residential Program (SRP) which focused on the development of independent living skills and self-determination skills. An overview of the SRP components, program support systems, and benefits of the experience will be given through the perspective of key personnel, partnerships, and students.

Description of the activity

The mission of ***Panther LIFE*** Summer Residential Program is to teach and foster the development of independent living skills in the community, further self-determination, and promote social skills. The ***Panther LIFE*** Summer Residential Program is an opportunity for young adults with intellectual disabilities to experience life away from their family's home and to learn daily life skills to enhance the possibilities of independent living. This unique program is designed to be a bridge between living at the family home and the ideal end-goal of living independently with minimal supports (semi-supported living with ***Panther LIFE*** Resident Assistants [RAs]). The program is guided by a curriculum that contains three main components: self-determination, independent living skills, and social skills. During the program the students follow a rigorous schedule which includes a mixture of educational opportunities and hands-on life skills activities (e.g. doing laundry, budgeting money) with the assistance of program coordinators and RAs.

Goals of the Symposium

The goals of this symposium are to discuss curriculum and activities, the role of support systems, and the benefits and challenges of the residential aspect of postsecondary transition programs for students with disabilities.

Format/Agenda of Symposium

The presentation will be in the form of a 60 minute PowerPoint presentation with a variety of presenters including students, public school personnel, and families.

The following outline is proposed:

- 1) Overview of Panther LIFE Summer Residential Program
 - Facilitated by Diana M. Valle-Riestra (riestrad@fiu.edu), PI of Project ***Panther LIFE*** & Amanda Giust (agiust@fiu.edu), ***Panther LIFE*** Program Coordinator
- 2) Activities & Scheduling
 - Facilitated by Rene Sierra (sierra@dadeschools.net), M-DCPS Program Coordinator & Angela Obregon (aobregon@dadeschools.net), M-DCPS Program Coordinator
- 3) Curriculum
 - Facilitated by Angela Obregon (aobregon@dadeschools.net), M-DCPS Program Coordinator

- 4) Student Supports (Resident Assistants Perspective)
 - Facilitated by Nickolas Preciado, Panther LIFE RA & Kevin Maestre, Panther LIFE RA
- 5) Benefits & Challenges
 - Facilitated by Diana M. Valle-Riestra (riestrad@fiu.edu), PI of Project *Panther LIFE* & Amanda Giust (agiust@fiu.edu), *Panther LIFE* Program Coordinator
- 6) Student Perspective
 - Facilitated by Michael Deschapell, FIU Panther LIFE Student, Limarkis Cail, FIU Panther LIFE Student, & Vanessa Suazo, Panther LIFE Student
- 7) Family Perspective
 - Facilitated by Janelle Espinosa, FIU Parent