The Power of Hands-on Career Exploration
Your Presenters

- **Dr. Chuck Gardner**, Director of Curriculum, Cyber Innovation Center, Bossier City, LA
- **Shawn Zimmerman**, Certified Vocational Evaluator, VA Dept. of Rehabilitative Services
- **Tish Harris**, Grant Coordinator, Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities, VA Dept. for the Blind and Vision Impaired
- **Chanthen Nene**, former Academy student, mentor and Classroom Assistant, current VCU student
Our Challenge

• Engage high school students with disabilities
• Use curriculum approved and used by the VA Department of Education for camps or classes
• Use curriculum for in demand pathways
• Make the curriculum fully accessible
• Provide expert instruction
• Provide classroom accommodations as needed
• Allow our students to excel!
Where in the world did this idea of academies come from?

Two Words: Joe Ashley
His charge: Propel a mindset change

DBVI Commissioner Hopkins:
Let’s show that our students can excel or even outperform students at the public school summer camps by adapting their curriculum, making it accessible.....
And next year....let’s create something new!

*never fall into the tyranny of low expectations*
Academies were born

**2017**
- Robotics and Cyber at VA Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (NICERC)
- Water Filtration Academy at WWRC

**2018**
- Continued Academies from 2017
- Added Cyber Analyst and Coding (NICERC)

**2019**
- Continued Academies from 2017 & 2018
- Added Welding, Health Care, Manufacturing
The Process

- Evaluation
- Infrastructure
- Curriculum
Curriculum Source – NICERC and CIC
Regional Educational Model for the Nation

- Perpetual and Sustainable
  - Teacher-focus curricula and training model
- Demonstrated Capacity
  - Labor market in Northern Louisiana outperformed initial commitments.
- Replicable Model
  - By design, teachers from any school can begin integrating cyber foundations into the classroom.
Infrastructure - Tish

- Flyers and Information Dissemination
- Recruitment
- Application review
- Supplies
- Authorizations
- Budget
- If needed, room and board
- Invites for final event day and follow up
Admittance Process

• Consumers that apply are reviewed per academy
• Math/Reading requirements may vary
• Thorough case review, including discussing consumer with RC, teachers, parents, etc. may be necessary
Cyber Security Analyst Academy
Structure

• Introductions, students choose roles
• Intro to Cyber Security and different employment opportunities
• Scenarios from NICERC
• Wrap-up
Let’s hear it first hand!

Meet

Chanthen Nene
Two Pathways Diverged in A Yellow Wood…

– In the summer of 2016, I chose the Career Pathway to DBVI’s Robotics Academy in Richmond, hesitantly…
  • I am Chanthen Néné and will briefly share my experiences and where the pathway is taking me.

– I am: a freshman at VCU, an alumnus and subsequently a mentor and assistant instructor at the Robotics Academy, a person with nystagmus and partially developed optic nerves, an aspiring film director and entrepreneur.

– My DBVI counselor recommended the Academy to me and my family.
What I found in the Woods Academy

– I came hesitantly, unsure how much my impaired vision would get in the way of doing Robotics. I viewed the Academy as a place for people with disabilities. I found instead:

  • Instructors and staff who focused me on my abilities inside and outside the classroom.

  • Other kids with differing disabilities.

  • I had a knack for programming and tech in general.

  • That when you feel good about yourself, you also feel like helping other kids. Or may be it’s the other way around!
Where the Pathway is taking me

– Sometimes I still feel my vision makes some things difficult, but Career Pathways taught me that focusing on my abilities:

  ✓ Will ensure I excel in a very visual field like Cinema: my first major.

  ✓ Gives me the confidence to start my own company: I will be doing a double major in Business and was selected for VCU’s Da Vinci Entrepreneurship Program.

  ✓ Makes me want to pay it forward and help other kids find the career of their choice. (Tish doesn’t know this yet, but I will be reaching out to her for guidance with an idea for a way my tech startup-to-be could do this.)
In Conclusion, For Me...

DBVI & Career Pathways have made all the difference

Thank you!
The Quantitative Results: The Data Speaks

Robotics Academy-

57 of 63 for 91%

Have entered or plan to enter a Career pathway through college (2 or 4 year), credential training, or going directly into employment......
The Costs beyond free NICERC curriculum

One day Cyber Analyst
$0 Cash Outlay
Staff time to set up and recruit
Evaluate applications
Instructor time
Copy needed materials

Two Day Coding with Micro bit
$25 per student cash outlay
Staff time to set up and recruit
Evaluate applications
Order Microbits
Find classroom volunteers
Instructor time

Five Day Robotics
$1800 per student includes laptop, bot, instruction, recreation and evening activities, room & board
Staff time to set up and recruit
Evaluate applications
Order supplies
Set up Rally- high visibility
Find classroom volunteers or PWE
Students keep all equipment!

career pathways for Individuals with Disabilities
New in 2020  Leap into Linux

• Learn how networks and web servers operate
• Investigate Compliance: how to modify websites to make them compliant
• Learn tools to explore a computer network's structure
• Experience setting up your own server
  Retro-fit non-accessible websites
• Create your own webpage for others to visit
How to fund?

• Capacity building grants
• STEM grants at state level
• Partner with federal grantee (such as Career Pathways)
• Partner with a business
• Foundation grants
• Non-profit partners
Questions?

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