

hello everyone thanks for being here uh my name is sean roy i am a white male with a very short dark uh hair i'm wearing a gray sweater because it's never not sweater weather in minnesota where i am i'm sitting in my basement office with pictures and books behind me to make it look my life look a lot more organized than it really is i am the co-manager of the youth employment solutions center my fellow co-manager serena lowe from tash will be joining us a little bit later i am with an organization called transcend and we are partners with tash in the youth employment solutions center and uh our uh goal as a technical assistance center is to promote um is to promote state systems change uh that leads to improved employment outcomes for students with disabilities including those with high support needs you'll notice that in the title of today's webinar we very intentionally put the words elevating the student advocate voice in almost every piece of research-based transition models and structure that you would find from the nayset national alliance for secondary education and transition national standards to the national technical assistance center on transition taxonomy to the guide posts to success from the national collaborative on workforce and disability you'll find that student self-determination is an essential component of transition success yet it seems to be one of the areas that we as professionals be it educators or employment professionals or advocates really seem to struggle and that's why i am so excited to bring you uh today the the great presenters and the panel so hopefully we can increase your knowledge of of current practices maybe we can clarify exactly what is meant by effective self-advocacy and self-determination um i want you to have some great tools shared with you and we want you to hear from the direct experience of self-advocates that are are really trying to embed employment into their lives so next slide please let's meet the people who are going to be talking today today speakers we have dr john mcnaught we have hassan davis and then we have a self advocate panel for you at the end which we're very excited about patrick mack he is from south carolina josh tuttle he is from utah and kamisha herrevo she's coming to us from massachusetts and you're going to be able to hear from them a little bit later so first it's my pleasure to introduce dr john mcnaught he is the co-director at the virginia department of education's training and technical assistance center at james madison university where he focuses on behavior transition and self-determination now i've uh i have met uh john several times as our paths seems to cross uh most often in the state of texas for some reason and i have had the opportunity to hear him speak and i think that the way that he and his staff approach self-determination is probably the most effective that i have heard so when we decided we were doing a session on self-determination john's was the very first name that came out of my mouth and i'm so glad that he accepted so without any further ado i'd like to pass this over to dr john mcnuttt thank you sean hello everybody i'm john mcnaught i am a white male with uh longish hair as a result of covid i am uh wearing a red plaid shirt that my wife picked out and i am sitting in my campus office at james madison university i have a virtual uh background on with the jmu logo because i just moved to this office today and i have boxes and a mess everywhere so i'm excited to talk to you today um and i'm watching my time so we're gonna quickly talk about um using theory to guide practice and know that this is we're just dipping our toe in the water today and so um you know i know we're going to do a follow-up session where you can call in and ask specific questions i really encourage you to do that uh because today you know we're just gonna it's just gonna be more of an exposure activity all right next slide please so before we get too deep into it i just want to give you our website

[www.ondetermin.org](http://www.ondetermin.org) because everything on it is free it's all downloadable all the tools we also have videos of parents youth and teachers talking about uh effective ways to build self-determination and so i

always think video examples are some of the most uh beneficial and easiest to learn from you actually can hear from someone who did it and so again i encourage you to check that out when you have some time next slide

and so when we talk about self-determination we talk about a lot of different skills and what you're seeing on your screen right now is what i call the elements of i'm determined and so um you know it's a scaffolded approach and that's not always the approach we take and so what i what i mean is um we've got to start with a certain number of skills and we're talking about self-determination right so we need to start with things like how do you make choices how do you make decisions how do you problem solve once you develop those skills and meet those skills you uh move on to what we call abilities right and so abilities are things like setting and attaining goals uh self-regulation which is just simply you know the ability to monitor and control your own behaviors and self-advocacy speaking up for yourself when you need something and so you know with a lot of the early work around self-determination i think a lot of us thought oh well if you can self-advocate uh well then you're good to go and that's not not really true right so first self-advocacy takes some base skills first like decision making and problem solving uh and then it takes practice right and then it leads to the ability of being able to advocate and then finally once you've once you've mastered those abilities right uh you have some beliefs and so things like internal locus of control what that sounds kind of strange what is that right so that's just the belief that you have control over uh the outcomes in your life uh self-efficacy um the belief that um you can succeed in a certain situation right you've got the skills you've got the tools in your toolbox and then lastly self-awareness which is just understanding your own strengths needs and abilities now that sounds like oh we all should know our own strengths right well i can tell you for you know over 20 years in the field of special education even when i work with adults and tell them to write down five things they're good at i get silence right and so you need to have some skills and abilities before you can truly get to those beliefs where you can say yeah these are my strengths and you know what these are the areas i need help with and this isn't a disability thing this is a human being thing right we all have strengths and we all have areas we need help next slide please

and so we look at self-determination theory which has three components we're going to talk about autonomy competence and relatedness i'm going to break each one of them down quickly next slide

and so when we look at that right big picture the elements of self-determination are undetermined are on your left right and those are the skills abilities and beliefs we just talked about now what happens a lot in education is that's where we stop okay and what happens is you might have those skills but the students aren't generalizing them

outside of the classroom environment right and so this is where the theory needs to come in we need to filter those skills through the lens of autonomy competence and relatedness which will then lead to the self-determined uh graduate so we're gonna break down each one of those talk about what they mean and how you can do it next slide

so we'll start with autonomy next slide okay so what is it right autonomy is a big word it sounds confusing it just means that you feel in control of your own behaviors right and so what elements of it determines specifically target autonomy choice making and decision making uh are the skills right which lead to the uh ability of self-regulation right which that ultimately leads to the belief of self-awareness now that sounds great but how do we do it right and so um for teachers how do we do it or parents we build in choices right we give problem solving opportunities we teach uh goal setting and when i say goal setting i mean goals that the student picks right because my wife can set a goal for me but if i'm not bought into it i'm not going to try very hard right and so a student chosen goal allowing failure as a learning experience is one of the most important pieces because all the things i just talked about failure is a potential outcome of those things right you might not reach your goal you might try to solve a problem and it doesn't go too well you might make a choice and it's the wrong one well guess what that's the point right the point you don't if you if you already knew everything why would you go to school okay and so we need to normalize failure as part of the learning experience okay i fail all the time but you know what i don't stop right i fail i see what i did wrong right i assess it i make a new plan and i try it again okay and this is where it needs to happen in school because if i'm a student and i fail in school well guess who's there to pick me up my teacher my case manager whoever a coach doesn't matter right but there's somebody there okay and they can instruct me through the process help me understand what i did wrong and move on to the next thing okay that's what we need to be working on in school right now and this can happen in school at home and in the community right building in choices at home building in choices in the classroom building in choices on the job site so one real easy way to do this to get started is the undetermined one pager so if you go on our website and just google one pager it's just a simple tool to get students started and then another thing is to think about if you're an educator or a student on this call are you leading your own iep meeting because that's really the first step i know a lot of people think that that's like the ultimate in self-determination the reality is that's just the beginning right and leading it means you know you can start with showing up right are you going to the meeting and um and then are you talking about yourself are you sharing about yourself and there's all sorts of different um resources on our website that can walk you through this next slide

so as i said right this happens across three environments homework and school so at home decide when to complete chores i do that with my children all the time and look as a parent it drives me crazy that they always pick at the end of the day to do it but guess what it gets done right so ultimately their choice but it gets done work practice different tasks with varying levels of independence school choosing what electives you want to take okay the thing they remember here right is that you practice practice practice right we've got to practice these skills everywhere right in the classroom at home on the job while we have the supports in place okay normalizing failure but understanding you know for for the students on the call it's okay to ask for help right asking for help doesn't mean that you're going to lose control of the scituate it just means you need a little bit of help and if you can more specifically define exactly what you need then people can help you appropriately next slide competence next slide okay so what is it right feeling uh this feeling that you have the skills needed for success and how do we build that and what lens do we look through so we look at um skills like problem solving abilities like self-advocacy and then beliefs like self-efficacy and self-awareness how do we get there how do we build competence in individuals specific positive feedback so if i walk around a room and just keep

saying good job good job good job no one knows what i'm talking about right but if i can say to someone uh sean i really liked how you introduced me that was super specific and you highlight highlighted everything i wanted you to highlight thank you right specific positive feedback opportunities to respond a lot of times in in schools and in life in general right opportunities to respond comes down to who can process the question the fastest right and so if you're a fast processor you're always answering the questions you're always getting a chance to respond if it takes you a little bit what are what are we doing as professionals right to um level that playing field so for instance think of um let's talk about jeopardy jeopardy in the in the first two rounds right is all about fast processing and speed right because you got to race the person to the buzzer final jeopardy levels the playing field right they ask a question they play some music everyone has a chance to respond and then we see who got it right right run your classroom like final jeopardy uh not like the first two rounds of jeopardy and then as we talked about before but you'll you'll notice this theme is opportunities to practice right nobody becomes a pro at anything without practicing okay and so um my mentality is and i always say look when do when do we start self-determination pre-k right because this is if you don't start self-determination until you're 14 or 15 well there's a lot of work to do right so the earlier you start the better now we can get you there if you're if you started late we can get you there but it's so much easier to start early okay and then one tool we have on the website if you want to check it out is the good day plan right so the good day plan just an easy way to start building confidence next slide please

so let's go with thoughts first this time i got excited earlier i went right to actions disability awareness is twofold and so first as a student as a youth of the disability you need to be able to articulate what your strengths are and what your needs are right you need to have a general understanding about how your disability affects your difference in different uh situations and i think what we'll hear from our panelists which i'm super excited to hear is they're probably going to tell you the same thing now for educators it's equally important right and so

as educators do we whether we're general ed or special ed do we understand the disabilities of the students we're working with do we understand what their individual strengths and needs are can we communicate that to people outside of our field right in general right now some of our issues are lack of disability awareness among general educators lack of disability awareness among employers okay and so we can't move the numbers uh for positive post-school outcomes until we address that start small right and so um a lot of times get people really excited and they want to dive right in and change everything right start small you don't need to wake up tomorrow and run your entire iep meeting right but what you could do is introduce yourself and talk about um your hopes and dreams for when you get out of high school right starting small so what can this look like in different places home i do this with my children they get to cook dinner of their choosing for the family one night a week and so i definitely scaffold my support so some they definitely need some help sometimes depending on what the meal they choose is um right but that's one way to build competence at work tell a supervisor of a necessary accommodation right that's that self-advocacy piece and work now look if it doesn't go well that's okay it's a learning experience right we'll go back and we'll and we'll figure out what went wrong and we'll try it again and then at school what could that look like telling a new teacher about your disability and how they can help you succeed what i've learned and it took me a little bit of a time to learn this right is that

in most cases general education teachers are more than willing to help our students out what they don't understand is our professional language our acronyms right and so if a student can explain specifically what they need to succeed you know in my experience most teachers are willing to are willing to meet them there and help them out next slide

all right lastly relatedness next slide okay so what is it uh feeling of a sense of belonging now look it only takes one other person to satisfy a sense of belonging right so i can just have one best friend and for a lot of people that's all you need right it could be a team it could be co-workers it could be people you go to church with it could be anybody right but we all need that feeling of a sense of belonging and so we look at um goal setting entertainment as an ability that we need and then ultimately for belief self-awareness and self-efficacy so how do we foster this sense of belonging um i'm a big advocate and if i had i i told sean and serena i could probably talk for three hours not just uh 20 to 25 minutes but if i had three hours i would talk to you about inclusive practices and inclusive opportunities i am a huge advocate of both of those to me it makes absolutely no sense for a student with a disability to be taught math by a special education teacher okay i want students with disabilities taught math by math teachers and i want special education teachers in there to support them as needed okay we we can't set the bar high if we can't get our students access to the appropriate classes taught by the content specialists so to me that is just that's where we begin inclusive opportunities outside of school what's available right and so is that um sports teams is that uh community groups is that church groups is that um you know some kind of if you're if you have a job some kind of group social group at your workplace right but we need to seek out those inclusive opportunities one thing i've learned is that most people stay both with and without disabilities a lot of people stay close to where they grew up right and so if you're someone without a disability who went all the way through high school and never met a person with a disability how open are you going to be to um hiring a person with a disability when you're the manager of a store if you've never even met somebody with a disability right and so um inclusion inclusion inclusion one pager as i talked about earlier is good and then also the goal plan is just another way to build that and then disability awareness we already talked about right the importance of building that among all people among all of society next slide

and so quickly as i said um opportunities outside of school awareness of your strengths and your goals right what are you good at and what are you working towards because you know when i'm working for a goal i seek out people with similar goals or people who have met the goal i'm working toward so they can help mentor me right and understand that you're not defined by your disability just because someone puts a low expectation on you or on your students right we can throw that out we don't need that and so what's it look like at home joining a community group potentially at work participating in an after work social gathering and in school joining a school club or team and so you got to put yourself out there we got to push our students to put themselves out there and if those opportunities aren't available we need to work with people and figure out ways to make those opportunities available next slide

okay so if we do all that right if we look at those elements if undetermined and if we build them through the lens of autonomy competence and relatedness we're gonna get that self-determined young man or woman at the end of the day next slide

great thank you very much again i'm going to stay on for the whole webinar to answer questions and i'll also be on uh later on in may as you as you explore the website and learn more about undetermined and self-determination thank you

great thank you so much dr mcnaught or john um we just that was excellent a wonderful overview and i agree i think we could all listen to you for a whole day and really be able to um just bring home so many strategies to the work we're doing at a local level so thank you so much for for being with us today um it's now my distinct pleasure to introduce our second guest speaker hassan davis and i'm just so excited that hassan was able to join john and our self-advocate panelists today i've recently met john and between or i'm sorry i recently met hassan and all of the stories and experiences and work he's done is just fascinating and i will just i'll let him tell his story but i will say a couple things about him which is um he is a man who experienced um challenges and discrimination because of his disabilities in a very early age in elementary school they went undiagnosed he didn't get the supports he needed and still despite all of the barriers attitudinal barriers and lack of supports he still went on to not only earn a ged but a bachelor's degree in communications and then later on a law degree he has worked in a number of systems and really is focused on keeping young people not only out of the juvenile justice system but out of any kind of institutions um and and institutionalization um he was kentucky's fifth commissioner of juvenile justice and was instrumental in helping that state transform its juvenile justice and other youth serving systems um if you get a chance please check out his his 2014 memoir it's called written off how one man's journey through disability poverty and delinquency are transforming the juvenile justice system i got it about a week and a half ago it was a page turner i am finished with it and i can honestly say it was so fabulous i'm going to have my book club read it soon so i'm going to turn it over to hassan because he can share his story better than i can but i think you're going to love what he brings to this conversation including a really practical model of immersion that he uses to train youth professionals on how to build trusting relationships with youth with disabilities who might be at high risk of criminalization institutionalization or segregation and how to really support them building a future of hope opportunity and potential for themselves using their own voices goals and dreams so with that it's my pleasure to introduce hassan

good afternoon friends and thank you for having me serena my name is hassan davis i am an african-american male with a bald head

frame glasses and a salt and pepper beard and uh and i and i have a shirt that reads known loved and inspired just because this is the place i want that to be clear on my screen is a silhouette of young people running and i'm gonna get started

it was a day like the rest me sitting right there with the lost kids in another special class where we would fit the round pegs into square holes all day as the teacher's excuse we were just made that way there's no need to be worried you've no reason to stress your poor lives are not fair so you just do your best these last words they would sing as they settle us all down passing glue and round scissors for our popsicle stick crowns who are crafting a band for my popsicle crown i reached hand in the pocket and guess what i found it was a note from my mother again like last week a reminder things don't have to stay as we see written bold in block letters more easy for me to read it still took me a while but here's the note said i will love you each day like the first you were mine but to change in their eyes you must first change your mind if you want new results you can't accept what they say about your needs that make them think this box is okay to put an eagle with chicks does not mean he's to blame but he must one day fly son or fail just the same so keep your mind on your dreams and keep your eyes on that door the inevitable victory can still be yours to raise you up high any risk i would take but you my dear boy you must plan this escape now having no thought what that last line inferred i returned to my crown with not much of a word but the next minute there i spent disbelieving no way could my eye see what they were perceiving a window had appeared or there'd been none before among these walls and locks and peepholes and door from where this thing came i could hardly have guessed but bright light and cool breeze had just captured my breath and outside the window i heard sounds unknown sounds of cheering and laughter and loud microphones there were announcers announcing on their loud speakers speaking welcoming all the champions that came from last weekend they said today is today and last week was back then on a day like this folks anyone could still win now looking back i'm sure they did not expect me to take those words that excitement so personally but there's no control over the words that we say once out of the mouth they translate their own way every ear that can hear must interpret for self so i picked up my note and started up that bookshelf then i slipped past the teacher and over the pain of the window before they could close it again then i shimmied down columns just right for escaping and i rushed myself over where people were pacing i arrived at this field was amazed by the scene of these runners and jumpers on all types of teams they were stretching and reaching after prepping for months to take the first challenge to clear the high jump and like antelope they leaped none knew fear or seemed hopeless so i slipped into line praying no one would notice but someone did see through my thin veil disguise it might have been the boots or the scared look in my eyes i said please let me try sir this looks like a blast not like making those crowns from old popsicle trash but the judges hemmed then they hard then explain the plain truth your talent your skill are not for this pursuit they removed me from line as the stars started starting when from up in the bleachers big voices began barking maybe he's lightning just been bottled too long you might think he is weak but but what if he is strong nobody would ever try as hard as he tried and even if he falls down he most likely won't die from what i can guess with new fans of mine and my mother who must have been there the whole time game demands i be given one shot at that bar despite having no chance to show talent thus far so they made me some room and they let me back in assured there was no way i could possibly win and soon the time came i was finally on at the line with the silence so definitely long in good humor they played started lowering the bar for this unknown untested not right superstar but i whistled and waved hey you raised that right back i can't break your record with a low jump like that and so rolling their eyes and with fiendish sly grins they quick raise my bar all the way up to ten and i watched them high five i heard one of them say do you think that boy smart enough to just walk away but they all look surprised as in hiking boots clumping i dashed for the mark they had set for my jumping and with vision so clear i could hardly

see through it i left for that bar as if nothing were to it there i floated no i sailed as the whole crowd stopped breathing watching me attempt this they were not quite believing now i didn't quite make it over

more truthful to say see i barely made half of the distance that day but no sooner flat on the mat i was pumping my fist making it clear to this crowd i was quite new to this but what they could not have known from the big smile on my face is that five feet had just crushed my best jump to this day it was two feet higher than the mark in third grade when they started to track me and how i behaved it was four feet higher than in middle school buzzing they said soon you'll be dead or in jail like your cousins see this mark was the highest that had ever been set and after trying i knew i was not quite done yet so i stopped my odd dancing in time to report there were kids lining up for some other great sport but before i could make for the next crowded line i was boxed and closed in by some old friends of mine sent to track down the fugitive boy from room 8 for quiet return to his class to his place and once back there they tried to downplay the whole scene suggesting that life for me was just a pipe dream there are round pegs in your future these square holes must be filled it's good work for the hands and your particular skills so i sat there a while thinking maybe it's best that they saved me and brought me safe back to this desk then i looked and took note all the names i could see of the kids they had rescued and returned before me there was carlos and derek john tilson's name twice rasheeda remundo and my long-lost friend mike and so many more names i could not recognize including one signed a lincoln since one eight two five and in the top right hand corner between all of those lines there was just enough space left to finally make this seat mine but before eyes could dim back to their early dull state i remember the voice and the words echoed from the stands at the race where my mother stood shouting waving banner sky high so what if you fall down boy

you most likely won't die then a strange courage took hold swept right over me i grabbed a handful of crayons and big butcher sheets i started draft plans i'd long feared to speak i said goals for one hour one day then one week and with those popsicle sticks i began to build up a small room when complete was a full replica of this box where some said i would live my life out where none would see my lost face or would hear my mad shout then i placed in this model where a brave looker might see one red x on the wall or that window must still be then glancing around like i'd not done before i spied keys to the locks on a chain by the door and since the teachers were all busy passing more crayons and paste i just left a note on their desk gone to find my next race

going to find my next race that is the conversation that each of us needs to be encouraging our young people to engage in when i had the opportunity to listen to john and the framework that he just shared i was blown away by how much it mirrors the experience that i have have navigated my entire life my name is hassan davis and i am a hope dealer i believe that every young person has a right to be engaged empowered and provided a clear path to their personal greatness in education in career and across their community life but we're here today because we know that is not the case for every young person as you heard in the introduction i have had the privilege of working in systems nationally that work and serve young people and many of them do that with a challenge at the very best as a young

person i experienced this system in in some different ways and we only have a few minutes but i think that it's important for you to understand something about me before i get into any any deep thoughts in the first grade

there was a day that came when the teacher so frustrated with the boy who couldn't sit still and stop touching the things that weren't his and standing on his desk trying to reach pieces that he wasn't supposed to be touching the kid who couldn't take lines and make letters who couldn't take letters and make words who who couldn't take words and make sense that day that teacher decided that she no longer had a responsibility to that child

so she grabbed him up by the arm and she dragged him across the room in front of his peers when they reached the code room the closet in the back of the art class she turned to him and said this is your classroom now and on her way out she locked the door behind her and that became the ritual every day pulled across the room and locked in that box and told this is the place you belong

my mama always taught me there's two things you can do with any difficult situation you find yourself in figure out how you got there and figure out how you use it well i knew i was there because i was that broken kid that nobody wanted to see but i didn't know how to use it now at seven years old my parents had just divorced after a violent domestic dispute and we were living aunt to cousin to friend and and we were on welfare not always eating three meals a day but my mama made sure that we survived in this closet every day i didn't know what to do with the experience but one day after punching the coach and screaming at the walls i cleared my eyes and i looked up and i and i realized that the coat room is also where everybody keeps their lunch boxes and so so god's plan was revealed because susie had the peanut butter jelly sandwiches without the crust bobby always had fruit cups and jimmy always had tang instant breakfast drink and so for a few days i ate good so well did i come home mama i'm not even hungry until other mama started coming to school complaining about they babies coming home hungry and they came to investigate the mystery of the coat room like a scooby-doo episode and there i was with eight lunchboxes spread around me like a buffet and that teacher was so frustrated that she dragged that little boy across the classroom to that special seat right next to the teacher so she could keep an eye on that bad child who eats other children's food what she didn't do intentionally but completely by accident was create a possibility where there had been none always call it away from no way and that's all i needed was a little bit of room and a little bit of courage and you never know what can happen

from that experience most of my childhood followed suit i got my first arrest at 11 years old i attended five different elementary schools i lived in 13 different homes some of those were homes where we live for a month and then someone wake you in the middle of night and say get your stuff don't turn the lights we've got to go you'll be in a new school tomorrow but through all of that i had a family unit that made me feel powerful and seen when my mother picked me up from the police station at 11 instead of doing the thing that is obvious in a situation like that the screaming and the frustration and the rage the

only thing i remember of that long ride home in the car she had to borrow to come and pick me up was when i finally had the courage to look up at her and she turned me with huge tears in her eyes and she said baby

if you could see what i see every time that i look at you then you would know how great you already were when we talk about the ability to imagine ourselves greater in the world especially those of us who navigate differently to have someone who can see us who can encourage us without the the comma but that comes after very often you're brilliant but you're going to need to try to do something you're amazing but you probably have to stay more calm and need to get on medication when somebody can deliver to you an image of yourself a reflection

that does not include a caveat it creates the space for all of those things that that that john just laid out in the early conversation to take root and to take flight my wife calls it roots and wings to be grounded and able to know you can go and so i've probably got 15 more hours of things i want to say in a few minutes but here here are the pieces that are salient for me after attending alternative school for five years

i was expelled and i got my ged and for me that was something that folks touted as an accomplishment folks who didn't know me that it's amazing you made it this far i mean

but there were people like my mother and and the administrator at the school even after she expelled me who who made me believe i had a right to be more and so i applied to go to college and with a 1.67 gpa a juvenile criminal record expulsion from alternative school having lived in 13 different homes and gone to five different elementary schools i know what you're thinking because i was thinking it too i should go to college

and everybody i was thinking it but not many else was but i applied to go to college and i heard about this college and i applied and the week before classes started i had not received my admit my admission letter which i thought was odd of course i have no idea what college is like and so i called the college collect because i i couldn't afford a long-distance call and i i demanded to speak to the director of admissions and they actually put him on the line and and this goes back to what john said you know that confidence of of asking for what you want people can tell you no but people told me no my whole life and so the exception is when they go oh okay i'll connect and when the director got on i said hey i'm hassan i applied to come to school and i haven't gotten my acceptance letter and classes start next week now now that i know better i know that that meant they put me in the oh no you don't file but because i called because i i interjected my humanity into whatever story was being told to them on the page he pulled that file out of the garbage can and after being clear with me he said well i've only got a few spots left in the freshman class and berea if you don't know berea college it's a small school you have to be poor to be a to attended but it's very exclusive we have thousands of applications for hundreds of spots

he said i'm have to be honest i've got some very promising applications here and only a few slots left i don't think this is going to work for you and i say well sir i actually really need to know for sure if it's going to work he said okay i'll call you back in a few minutes and confirm that it won't and a few minutes later the phone rang and it was mr cook with this this this day's sound to his voice and he said okay mr davis i i think we're going to give you a chance like somebody's saying just like we rehearsed it john i think we're going to give with you a chance and like that i became a college student now mind you i started college in zero level english and math courses not even counting for credit i would wait for my roommate to fall asleep each night and i would get my my notebook out and i would practice my handwriting on the path that my mother's provided me like i've been doing since third grade you know red line blue line red line and after i was sure my roommate was in deep sleep i would get a book out from one of my classes for the next day and i would read four or five pages over and over again for the next few hours until i was sure i forced enough of those pages into my mind that i could make it intuitive leap in class to prove i deserve to be there because i wanted to be there even though all the data said that i wasn't supposed to but being in that environment created the space built the relationships and the sense of purpose in me to keep me moving forward in fact i got expelled from college twice but i returned after a year being expelled each time and talked my way back in and finally the third time back i actually

told them what i needed back to what john was talking about and asked them to help me become the person that that i think i could become they actually loaned me the money for a computer and back in the day it was a mac plus the verse first very first series of macintosh computers and it had something i told them this this it has microsoft write 1.1 with spell check it's the first time spell check was ever a thing in the world but i said i don't even know what that is but if i had something like spell check i could get what's in here that i think is amazing out so you could see it and you can decide for yourself and that convinced them to loan me three thousand dollars which now i guess would be about 50 grand to get back in and i made the dean's list my first semester back and once i got off every probation they had on the record i was elected president of student body and i was voted homecoming king everything about my experience changed because i was able to stay in a place that seemed hostile and build out the supports my senior year the professor in my required graduating course i finally had the courage to tell him i can read eight books that are more than 300 pages each and that's just something i say often and i get the the same response they just kind of generally blow it off and say well you're in college deal with it but the next week this professor showed up with four boxes of cassettes where he had gone to every retired professor on campus and asked each one to read one of the books on the cassettes so then i could have the tools i need to compete

that is the service we're about finding the resources to make every young person amazing as they imagine themselves to be when i graduated college i i went on the law school full disclosure i got expelled three times but i never missed a day of class one of the first things i did was i went to my vocational rehab counselor and i thought that finally after fighting for myself this whole time having an advocate i was about to tear the walls out of this place and and i'm going to tell you this as i finished because i want you to understand this when i went to my counselor the first thing i noticed about her office was that one entire wall was nothing but plaques awards and certificates and in my mind i was

doing my happy dance because i thought i had hit the jackpot of service advocates and after we had our conversation and she went through my pile your or my pile of records that was like you know a foot deep she looked at me with this amazing consideration and compassion and she said hassan do you know that you have failed your entire life

then she said i'm afraid that if i support you in law school it's just going to be another failure and i can't have that on my conscience she said so i've got these programs that i want to share with you where you can learn to do things with your hands things you can be proud of your whole life and i think that's going to be better for us i want you to be clear about a few words the word us and her conscience when you're working as a champion advocate for others but you're putting your emotions and your sense of of what's important first then you are not working as a champion or advocate

and so unfortunately that was my last visit with my counselor and i realized that i was going to have to make the next three years the hardest education environment i'd ever be in like i made the last 15 on my own pushing and demanding things that other people don't think i deserve and none of us should have to do that and so and i know in all the years of the past voc rehab and all of these supports have changed dramatically and i'm what i want to encourage you to do is remember and going back to john again because he said that this is about creating space and opportunities for people to find success i always say that the only place that you find ability comes before opportunity is the dictionary everywhere else we have to give people exposure and experiences to things before they can actually become accomplished at them and it's just the opposite when we think about young people experiencing the world different and so you are the ones who ought to be creating those spaces those experiences for social interaction for good work experiences and trial and error to happen failure is the most constant thing in my life just like my vocal rehab counselor said but it is also the thing that has given me a armor plating so thick that i can walk through fire and walls and if we can see all of that then we have the ability to really serve and support young people as they advocate for their greatest lives and the greatest possibilities well beyond the things we could imagine i got myself all crazy here so i'm going to take a deep breath and i know that i've hit my time limit somewhere in this conversation so i'm going to stop because i want to hear also from our amazing young folk who are navigating this world now and creating some space and the thing i'm hoping we'll have time for q a at the end so i'll stop here with a comma not a period to see what's next and i want to thank all of you for being here in this conversation because this is the most important conversation we could be having thank you

wow um i'm so emotional right now and i know many others are too that was so inspiring and on point and clearly from someone who has experienced the systems and is now a tremendous change agent in our world so i just i want to really honor hassan for sharing his story and his perspectives and really teaching us some valuable lessons that hopefully we'll all take back to our work um thank you so now it's my pleasure ash what a great day i'm telling you i'm on a high um i get to moderate the self-advocate panel now which i'm so excited about i'm going to ask donald if he'll put the slides up again and i'm going to ask my esteemed presenters or panelists for this next panel patrick josh and kamisha to go ahead and put your videos on as well

and we're going to try to do this as a virtual panel i'm going to ask some questions of the panelists and then they're going to share their examples um and i think it should work that as each person speaks you should see their um their face in the speaker view so we'll try this out um and everyone's kamisha's is waving and i just this is a great group so it's josh now so um so i'm gonna just start with patrick patrick i just want you to tell us a little bit about yourself your name where you're from where you graduated and what you're doing now hello everyone um just for those who are blind such as myself or league or legally blind or low vision i am an african-american male with short coily hair with a light polo colored shirt and i am from arnford south carolina currently i am a senior at the university of south carolina upstate majoring in english with a minor in spanish interpreting in education and also i am here representing able south carolina as well

great how about kamisha

hello everybody can i right here be okay yes cool so my name is kamisha harivo i work with an organization called mass advocates dirty start and from boston massachusetts um i'm happy to be here today and i i currently live in character massachusetts um i officially graduated in so my class graduated in 2012 but i officially left school in 2015. and i am currently trying to get my genie

awesome thank you kamisha uh and now josh josh can you tell us your full name and where you're from yes hi my name is darto i live in red doing utah um i will i have red hell i have band eyes um i have a red bills and i have um uh where's um by short i have jean and built on um i drew a in 2014 with my cash but what i love i love being with all your desire to tell what my story is great josh and can you tell us where you're working now a little bit about your job yes i will um i work at um going for it at the farm i am helping people with um telling what the story about the form is and i work with animals all day long great thank you and for those that um saw the pictures earlier of our speakers there's one of josh holding and emu which we were pretty impressed by we all got to talking the other day okay i think we're ready for the next slide donald

great and these are some questions related to your transition experience while you were in uh high school so i think we'll start with kamisha um and just uh asking a couple of questions uh you know when you were in high school did you have any idea about what you wanted to do when you left school and did you have access to some experiences to help you think about that like internships apprenticeships or just developing some skills important to getting a job um so when i was in high school i knew what i wanted to do um i was working while i was in high school i did a bunch of volunteer jobs and i um got my job now where i'm working now through a summer

program so i work with the mess advocates standing strong and um and i've been there since 2000 i've been there for two years prior but i've been there since 2015. that's great thank you patrick how about you

so for me i was privileged enough to have a plethora of of those supporting me such as the commission for the blind and their the people they're partnered with um successful transitions where i had i worked with mrs green where she exposed me to various of different like college campuses so i could help decide on what school i wanted to go to as well as internships because i was really indecisive on what i really had planned for after high school i knew i want to go to college and pursue a career but i really had an interest in everything i want to be an occupational therapist once a physical therapist optomologist but in short because of the exposure that they gave me and i was exposed to a lot of it i interned at carolina physical therapy in carolina speech pathology as well as the library once i started work once i started interning at the library i realized that education was for me and that i do enjoy working with children and young adults and helping them succeed that's great and josh can you tell us a little bit about your experience in high school did anyone kind of influence you about what you wanted to do did you know what you wanted to do um yes um a lot on my diesel um to tell me what why am i strong to what i want to do for my lifetime um i i have a job at a georgia's old touring i do every done with my car um my when i'm done with school i go to walk and my my neighborhood um do a lot of stuff for me my family do stuff for me um a lot of my teachers say you do whatever you want to do for your life time that's great very encouraging i think that goes back to what hassan said how important it is to have people that kind of encourage you and give you hope and make you feel seen and empowered so that's great uh donald i think we're ready for the next slide and chairnet i think the asl interpreters are ready to be switched if you haven't already done that thanks um one question before we get in here that uh victoria one of our participants asked it's not on here but i know you guys can answer it real quick is um she was asking do you guys live alone or independently do you live with some friends or a roommate um kind of or do you live with family what's your your living situation if you don't mind us asking so i um lived with my family for a bit um and now i'm living on my i've own living on my org for about six almost six months now so it's been pretty cool

wonderful how about you josh um i live with my family but i wanna have my own pace um to call my own and have family my have my own family that's great wonderful and patrick so currently i'm living home with my family but which is unfortunately because of the pandemic but usually i am on campus at my university awesome and i think a lot of folks young people with and without disabilities had to kind of move home temporarily because of the pandemic so you're not alone um in that so just some perspectives real quick on on your transition supports and we'll start i think we'll start with josh again um were there people in your high school like teachers or school counselors that helped you plan for the future and what was it about them that made you feel supported or encouraged you to pursue your dreams a lot of my teachers say um to say i mean every time we i have a poem or need to talk to people then say okay ready to find a job you is a lot more um doing but um i find a lot of fun entails opportunities um to where i want to work at and when i walk at the farm i am from frontier but a lot of people say when we would up to a different um would online to see what you like to do for your life that's great uh patrick how about you how were you encouraged during during school so in school um

because i have a visual disability i was given a mobility instructor who helped me use my mobility cane to be more independent in that area and also i was given a vision teacher who taught me not only braille but also how to distinguish the difference of like coins on ways to fold in your money without using sight because with my disability i have retinitis pigmentosa which is a mouthful in myopia so that i it i am going through this journey of vision loss so in that instance hence the reason why i had to have that those people as resources and then i also had a resource teacher who assisted me with ensuring that i had proper accommodations in the classroom that's great kamisha how were you encouraged in high school to pursue your dreams and your goals related to adulthood so i would talk a lot to my counselor and my um friends and um the people around me and they would they would always say especially my dad would and my mom would always say you can go after wherever you want like patrick and um just said um so like i've learned a lot from them and like i continue to learn a lot from them so i'm very grateful great and kamisha while we have you just to kind of turn the question upside down were there people in the school system or vocational rehabilitation that weren't that supportive and discouraging and how did that hurt or hurt your confidence about your future um they probably didn't mean to but yes um i remember um a specific teacher um i wanted to go to a spanish class and um we were in our um i was in the iep and then my iep meeting was done um and then

she pulled me aside and started having a conversation with me and she basically said like

um like no to me going to spanish class because i wanted to go to spain's class so i can be a translator but now i'm going to try to get my ged so i can become a spanish translator eventually and to follow my other goals that's fabulous kamisha just like uh hassan said just keep going and don't let people deter you in the interest of time i'm gonna go with josh on this one and then patrick i'll probably jump to the next question with you uh but josh can you tell us a little bit about anyone that kind of you know wasn't that helpful and kind of discouraged you and how did that hurt your confidence um a lot

a lot of people not um understand why i kind of do um doctors um say um you know i abide or you have not have a job or have a um fine fam um friend but right away my teacher um today you are so smart and so of creation when we and you all caps for you guys excellent thank you uh patrick actually if you can just weave this in and then i'm going to start with the next question with you too

um so there's been quite a few experience in regards to people just being discouraging um it wasn't any of those who are actually working with me was usually when i it was when i started college and i was going through this student teaching process internship sort of freshman year and it was a whole lot of othering because i had a disability even though my focus was english she told me that i will work best with the handicap because i'm more familiar with that and it was other instances such as that that really was upsetting but because the commission for the blind introduced me to able south carolina which many of you probably um don't know or do know 80 of those working there do have a disability so i was able to vent and also i still have the context of those who used to work work with me in high school just

to keep me encouraged and i also learned as a self-advocate to filter out the bad things so that i could reach my success and my goals

excellent thank you um you can hear from these young people their tenacity and and commitment to uh going going big in their lives um the next slide uh donald these are our last questions and we're gonna give everybody about 30 seconds to a minute um to do these but we really would love to hear the advice that you all would give both young adults young youth and young adults as their transitioning from school related to seeking employment and also what advice you would give to to people who are working with students in terms of how best to to be supportive so patrick do you want to go start us off here i can so advice i would give to those working with students with disabilities was to just meet them where they're at because the person you see today is not who i started off as when i was first diagnosed with retinitis premature it was a it was a journey for everyone and it was it was really helpful it was very helpful that they didn't overwhelm me with too much information or too much involvement when it came to me trying to process my disability and adjust to it so that's the advice i would give to those working with with students with disabilities and for those students with disabilities seeking employment i would advise because there there are like many advices that you could give in regards to the workforce and employment but i would advise just to simply come up with ways such as affirmations that i have and that many of my teachers would um ask me to repeat myself so that i could keep going and that is if it is to be it is up to me and that's something that i hold true still to this day great i love that uh kamisha how about you

sorry i was muted um what advice i would give to um of students and to people who are working with students um is to like be like be communicative with your students and um the sky is the limit no matter what anybody else does um your dream is your your dream and don't like to take that away from you um one thing i would give to

to um like educators or whoever is like um make sure that you're you're putting or you're trying to put the individual first and make sure that um your you guys are both because instead of it being what's a one-sided conversation does that make sense absolutely absolutely communications and transparency is key so josh you get the last word and i'd love for you just to end with you know what would you what would you tell other young people about you know pursuing employment and anyone that's helping them along the way what advice would you give um why come here say saying i do that same for um jim taught like you um you that's diamond dynamite you um do every um will you one for your dream you do it and that's tight the limit and um but no um i'm happy um i speak on did beautiful day talk to you about what my experience is but um the young and daughter they say keep up and follow your dreams i love it i love it um just i want to exp i want to encourage pan uh participants just to give everybody a clap in your home right now i told john and hassan that no matter how incredible they are and as you know they were pretty incredible that this uh this advocate panel would steal the show so i'm sure uh you all agree i'm gonna turn it over to sean i'm also gonna let folks know that we'll keep this open for about until about um 4 35 so just to allow for a few more questions so be sure to put them in the chat

box or in the q a and i'm going to turn it over to sean um and any of the speakers go ahead and open our turn on your video so that you can answer questions

excellent thank you um serena thank you john and hassan and josh and patrick and kamisha if we were live uh in a live setting we'd be all giving you a huge ovation right now is a great uh great presentation so we do have a couple of questions um uh there was uh one comment about how the the comment the content was really good and this is from a vr counselor he wishes all of his schools could be here that leads us to this will be this is being recorded and it will be archived and so if you feel like this is information that other people need to see uh go ahead and send them the link um and we encourage you too i think it's may 7 for the office hours um that you can come and ask additional questions robert asked for the self-advocate panel um what was it like being in special education uh do you feel like you did better than you were given credit for so i know that's kind of a big question um and i would uh give you just a chance to think about it uh maybe start with patrick were you patrick were you in special education i was in special education in elementary school and then later whenever i entered middle school they put me into an inclusive club in inclusive classroom where i was then given a resource teacher and i would say from what i remember with special education is that i did not i did not i do not prefer it still to this day and it in some aspects it was a little helpful but just as a child there and i was simply being put into this small closeted classroom it just showed me that separate isn't equal and that a lot of the stuff that we were given weren't we weren't really giving too much of the um access to it to um some of the information that other kids were giving and when i trans when i transitioned into an inclusive classroom and once i gained the um confidence and using my assistive technology with the help of ms irwin i was then able to see that it was a whole lot of learning involved in the classroom and that it also shows children and it showed me that this is what the world actually looks like and we should all be exposed to diversity excellent thank you patrick for sure um uh josh or kamisha would you like to answer that question what was it were you in special education and do you have any thoughts about that experience yes i was in special education it was in a public school setting so it was like part high school and part um yeah it was a public school education a public school saying it was um like regular class and then like i would go into my um into my classroom i did i did have one there was one class where i did uh go with with everybody which was english class um i would say it was a lot different it was a lot different but like the same kind of because like like i don't know how to explain it but it was it was an interesting um dynamic there was something that i learned and some things that i like you know i wish like i could do more outside of the school system but overall it was like a good school thank you josh did you want to chime in

um yeah um yet i um same thing she said i am in the spider edge program and why when i don't have to go to gym or go out to dan or food or um and stuff but um but um by yeah i go out my gym dan and food and stuff

thank you for that and there's another question that came in for the self advocate panel which i think is a very intriguing question would love to hear your thoughts on this kim asks what would you like to say to people who try to help too much what is the best way to ask if someone needs help and not to over

step into enabling so have you ever had an experience where people have tried to help you too much and you've had to tell them to kind of back off and let you do it yourself and what is a good way to handle that as a self-advocate

and whoever whoever wants to hop in um say i wanted one to do it by myself before i do that i do let me give you a bubble and say hey we need i need help to doing did you turn bad in my bubble but a lot of a lot of teachers um need um to add um to tell them and say well you need help with or what you need more to be here but every every time i be in school i have a hard time on one say the time um i want him by myself i tell

oh josh that's great i love the idea of the bubble yeah i'll let you in when i need you in that's that's that's awesome um uh kamisha any thoughts on that question um yes i i had a boss that said if you need help ask for it i am the type of person who likes to do things for myself as much as possible i like to be independent if i get stuck

then i would ask someone to help me but if i feel like i can do it myself i will ask her out

patrick i was just basically um say that i am the pilot in this flight and i am the pilot for this flight in life and that um you just fought like helping me with you is you following by my lead because i'm the expert in what my needs are yeah that exactly that's a great message you know we we as serena said we're going to keep it open just a few more minutes if you're able to join us for the remainder fine if not thank you for joining us please fill out the evaluation in the survey what i'd like to do though is i'd like to give john and hassan just a quick opportunity to respond either to that last question or just in general about what they heard today any kind of last thought so let's start with john um give you the floor for a minute and just see if you had anything else that you'd like to add sure i think that that last question about helping too much is a great question and i think uh the panelists nailed it i think um you know as long as we're starting young right and teaching all kids to ask for help when they need it we don't need to be jumping in uh if we're not asked to jump in and so you know um for all kids kids aren't going to learn if we keep doing it for them right and so and then we wonder why they're 20 and they don't have any skills and so um even with my own kids i and i know the temptation people enter the teaching field because they're helpers right and they've got this desire to help and i think what i've learned over 20 years and i think um what what these panelists have learned much quicker than i have is that um by jumping into help we're often hurting not helping and so understanding that um you know we learn through practice and we learn through failure and that's okay as long as we're there to help pick them up and to um assess what went wrong and try it again right and not jumping in before they even had a chance to try anything so i think that's a that's self-determination in a nutshell that's excellent thank you john and hassan i think what we we may be giving you the the final word here on this on on the subject well i don't know if i should be the final word but i really do appreciate being in this conversation and these young folks well you said it and serena said i mean they are they are the work and and the examples i really appreciate being able to to hear them and and their experience what i would like to say

as we close is that too often in this work we get caught up thinking we're doing hope work but we're really doing hospice work if you're in your subconscious of trying to give these young amazing people great end of life experiences because it's going to just be hard for them from here on out then you're not doing the right work this is about hope this is about possibility and it's about following their lead as you've heard them clearly say and and i think that's the work we are hope dealers not hospice care workers and we have to keep that really clear in our head and hearts if we're going to really do the work we came to do

well i'm going to uh on behalf of serena and everybody at the yes center thank you so much for all of you um hassan and john josh patrick and kamisha for for joining us this has been um energizing and inspiring um and thank you just for spending the time member may 7 if you have it's in the chat box if you want to join us for some additional questions with john and hassan uh that will be 12 o'clock eastern for what we're calling office hours um and we have got we do these webinars monthly so just be on the lookout um for uh other great topics so i'm going to hand it back over to donald uh but just say thank you to everyone for a great session thanks um transition is different for everybody and we are still we are still in transition um no but no matter what it looks like so um however the individual might look at it that's all i had to add i'm sorry that's no no no apologies needed that's a great way to end it and it's a great point donald trump uh i believe serena is going to tell us about the next two events we have coming up i'm going to give her a moment yeah just really quick um we have decided to do something new for the next few webinars to give people an opportunity to do some real dialoguing with some of our presenters so we're going to start with john on friday may 7th from 12 to 1 30. these are open only to our registrants of this webinar to give you a little more um opportunity for some depth and breath you'll be able to ask questions the whole thing is about questions about strat you know how do you take the strategies he talked about today and implement those in real time on the ground in the communities you're working in um we're going to have hasan a little later that month uh to be determined so keep an eye out on the yes center emails that we will be sending just to registrants uh but that will be another 12 to 1 30 time frame again um we also want you to really keep it look out we're going to work on some podcasts with um the self advocates and possibly with hassan um and john because we want you to get the word out because there were a lot of people that missed out on this incredible webinar and that's just a shame so we want to spread the love a little bit um and then our next uh monthly webinar will be on may 26 at three o'clock and i'll turn it back over to the channel

okay well again we've got a couple additional dates coming up but i'm going to tell you a little bit about what will happen with this webinar uh as soon as uh i end the webinar you're gonna get uh your screen will pop up with a link to take the survey uh the link is also in the chat box it's maybe scrolled a little bit past at this point but we would really appreciate your feedback we definitely uh read it all and use it to try and decide what our agenda for the next um upcoming offerings will be um so if you don't if you don't see it in the chat or at the close of this webinar uh we'll be sending out a follow-up email that will also have a link to that survey and then we'll uh promote you with a few reminders uh the and then this we recorded this webinar and we will be posting it uh within the next few days and you'll receive an email also with the link to the recording and to the uh captioning transcript for this webinar anyway thank you everybody and we hope to see you at the office hour in the uh in uh next month