

## Transition

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is a federal law that requires planning for transition to adulthood. This includes planning for employment, for a young person with a disability, starting by at least age 16, as part of his or her Individualized Education Plan. Transition is the process designed to assist students in their move from school into the adult world. Lincoln Public Schools created Vocational Opportunity in Community Experience (VOICE) to prepare students, ages 18-21, for life after school. VOICE has designed the educational experience to ensure students gain the skills and connections they need to facilitate a positive transition into successful adult living.

# “VOICE”

## Vocational Opportunity In Community Experience

### What is VOICE?

**VOICE** is a special education program that operates outside of the traditional high school environment to provide students with relevant educational experiences in realistic community settings. VOICE utilizes age appropriate/functional curriculum, community-based training, and integrated settings to provide students with a variety of meaningful and productive educational experiences. The instruction takes place

in the setting where the skill being trained is actually performed. The community becomes an extension of the classroom as it emphasizes independence in the areas of domestic, community, recreation/leisure, and vocational skills. Students work, learn, recreate, and socialize with individuals without disabilities as they become **“A VOICE in the World of Work.”**

While the educational experiences occur in the community, students and their families maintain the well-established connections with their home school. The students, teachers, and IEP managers in the VOICE program remain a part of the special education programs at each of the high schools. VOICE operates in conjunction with the six high schools. It is not a separate or isolated program.

### Who can participate in VOICE?

Students receiving special education services from the six high schools in Lincoln, Nebraska, who are between the ages of 18 and 21 may participate in the VOICE program. Students enter VOICE when they are at least 18 years old and have made the decision, with their IEP team, to continue their educational experience before they graduate. Students may participate in VOICE through the school year in which they turn 21 years old. VOICE serves a variety of students with different levels of disabilities. While most students utilize the VOICE program for three years, students are not required to participate in the program for the entire three years.



# Placement Decisions

Special education high school students are faced with the following three options in their high school career:

1. To graduate with completed high school credits
2. To graduate according to their IEP
3. To stay in school and enter the VOICE program

Students and their families are asked to declare their intention during the junior year of high school. A decision is usually made to enter the VOICE program during the student's senior year of school.

# Transportation

Transportation is provided by Lincoln Public Schools. Students are first transported from their home to their community site. Students stay at their site for the entire school day. At the end of the school day, students are transported from their community site back to their home.



## Employer Expectations

Students learn to adapt to different work environments in the community as they are expected to follow employer expectations. This may include adhering to dress codes, health tests, the signing of confidentiality forms, attending training, and displaying appropriate work and social skills. Staff and students are reminded that they represent the individual businesses and Lincoln Public Schools while they are at work in the public.

***The following are descriptions of the vocational and life skills sites that are currently part of the VOICE program:***

**Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital  
5401 South Street**

**&**

**BryanLGH East Medical Center  
1600 South 48th Street**

At the Madonna Rehabilitation job site, students work in various areas of food service. Tasks here include unloading and putting away dishes from the dishwasher, stocking the employee cafeteria, and setting up the main dining room for some of the Madonna residents. The students also wipe down chairs and tables in the employee cafeteria. The Madonna Day Care, which is a separate building on the Madonna Campus, provides job skills training for one student. This student must be independent and the tasks here include laundry, washing toys, and delivering daily newsletters.

BryanLGH offers vocational training opportunities in the areas of food and custodial service. Students are expected to follow the hospital's employer expectations by taking a TB test and by following the dress code at BryanLGH. Lunch is taken in the hospital cafeteria, where the students receive the employee discount for food purchased there. Tasks practiced at this site include wiping down and sanitizing the exercise equipment and working in the kitchen/food service area. In the kitchen, students wash down carts that return from the hospital floors, pull silverware and plastic/paper from returning trays, and wipe down tables in the cafeteria.

Currently, Madonna is a half-day site that meets each morning from 9:00 am to 11:30 am. BryanLGH is also a half-day site that meets from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm.

**BryanLGH Warehouse  
1901 Pioneers Boulevard**

The BryanLGH Warehouse serves as the distribution center for both BryanLGH West and East Hospitals. Vocational training opportunities include labeling, packaging, collating, and assembling packets. There are opportunities for training in general maintenance and stocking. Students are expected to follow employer expectations by following the dress code and meeting with departmental staff. Employee break areas can be utilized by students during their lunch and break times.

## Work-Related Skills

Vocational experiences at the different community sites allow students the opportunity to learn a variety of work-related skills while building their resumes. This can lead to employment opportunities for students and businesses in our community.

## Embedded Skills

VOICE provides a relevant environment in which to teach embedded skills such as academics, motor, social, and communication skills. Many employers consider social and communication skills even more important on the job than technical training. (85% of those who lose jobs do so because of inadequate social skills.) VOICE can teach these skills to students when and where the behavior occurs. The interaction of our students and the community allows positive employer/employee relationships to be established.

## Community Placement

Many of our students will not become eligible for additional services from community agencies until they turn 21. VOICE provides educational experience in the community until students may qualify to receive support from community agencies.

# Benefits of the VOICE Program

## Positive Community Growth

VOICE fosters the interaction of the high schools and community. Our students provide a diversity of work force and a personal touch in the work environment. The community becomes an important component of educating our students to become successful members of our community. In fact, BryanLGH has received recognition from the Nebraska Department of Labor for their contributions to VOICE and their efforts to promote diversity in the work environment.

## Facilitates Communication

Student information that is documented at the community sites offers great insight to the needs, skills, and interests of the student. This information is communicated to the student, family, school staff, and community agencies selected by the parent/guardian of the student. It can be utilized as an effective tool in building a transition plan that leads to a meaningful adult life.

## Personal Independence

As students are exposed to different environments in the community, they gain independence in the areas of domestic, community, recreation/leisure, and vocational skills. Students become more confident as they develop to their full potential.



Lincoln Public Schools District Office  
5901 "O" Street, Lincoln, NE 68510  
402-436-1905 • <http://www.lps.org>

# VOICE Recognition

At the end of every school year we honor the accomplishments of students leaving the VOICE program at a recognition ceremony sponsored by Bryan/LGH. Students, families, friends, community site personnel, and representatives from community agencies are invited to attend the celebration. Each student's achievement is recognized and students are given a Certificate of Completion for their participation in the VOICE program.

**If you would like additional information about the  
VOICE program, please contact the Special  
Education Coordinator at your student's high school or**

**Tanya Hilligoss  
Special Education Supervisor  
[thillig@lps.org](mailto:thillig@lps.org) or 402-436-1915**

**Continued descriptions of the vocational and life skills sites that are currently part of the VOICE program:**

**East Duplex  
1040 West “Q” Street**

The East Duplex is an accessible home setting where students can spend their day learning and practicing life skills. This side of the Duplex has special features for those who may have motor impairments or utilize a wheelchair. The kitchen’s special features include an adjustable sink and stove that can raise or lower according to a student’s height and a convection oven that has a side-swinging door as opposed to a traditional lower hinge oven. The oven and dishwasher are set higher in the cabinets to cater to those with limited mobility. The dining room tables can be raised so that individuals who utilize a wheelchair may sit at the table with their peers. The kitchen has a talking microwave that is equipped with Braille for those who may have visual impairments. The bedroom contains a MAT table for students with physical needs that may need to receive occupational/physical therapy. The East Duplex also contains laundry and shower facilities. Tasks practiced at this site include home maintenance, volunteer work, food preparation, self-care/hygiene, recreating/leisure, academics, and community outings.

**West Duplex  
1040 West “Q” Street**

The West Duplex is an accessible home setting where students can spend their day learning and practicing life skills. Each side of the Duplex contains a fully operational kitchen designed for students with special needs, a living room/instructional area, and two restrooms. The bedroom contains a MAT table for students with physical needs that may need to receive occupational/physical therapy. The West Duplex shares an office and laundry room that is equipped with a washing machine and a dryer. While at the Duplex, students work on daily living and life skills such as social skills, budgeting money, check writing and checkbook balancing. They learn to make healthy food and lifestyle choices, plan meals, complete yard work, assist Lakeview custodians with cafeteria clean up, and help with household maintenance. Additionally they work on job-seeking skills, academic work, recreational activities, knowledge of and tracking current events, and participate in community outings that include bowling, tours, recreation centers, and library visits.

**Hy-Vee Food Stores  
70th & Pioneers**

Hy-Vee offers students hands-on-experiences in customer service work. Students follow Hy-Vee’s dress code and professional code of conduct as they work in various departments throughout the store and join Hy-Vee staff for lunch in the break room. Duties students may participate in include bagging groceries, providing drive-up services for customers, wrapping and packaging bakery goods, busing tables, filling napkins and condiments, and light cleaning tasks in the cafeteria. Students also have an opportunity to stock merchandise in the produce, meat, frozen/dairy, and health and beauty departments.

**Lincoln Public Schools District Office  
5901 “O” Street**

Lincoln Public Schools District Office (LPSDO) provides work training for students within a professional office environment. The work at this site is primarily clerical, but custodial and cafeteria work is also completed. The work room is in close proximity to other rooms, cubicles, and hallways which are busy with district employees and public visitors. The room is equipped with a full-size refrigerator, microwave, and sink. The public restrooms in the building have MAT tables which can be used to assist students with physical needs if needed. There is a cafeteria in the building where students can purchase snacks or lunch.

Jobs performed include various bulk, U.S., and school mailings. Tasks include labeling, folding, stuffing, sealing, counting, collating, sorting, and banding. Students also pull paper clips and staples from paper to be shredded, shred paper, and crush pop cans. Jobs performed outside of the work room include picking up and delivering interoffice and U.S. mail twice a day, picking up recyclables throughout the building, making deliveries for the copy center, washing tables in the cafeteria, sanitizing toys for two departments in the building, and picking up trash on the outside grounds. Some students have also worked independently as assistants to the building courier, the cafeteria cook, and individual secretaries in the building.

One VOICE student has a paid position in the LPSDO mail room each year. This position is based on an application process and is a year-round (including the summer) job where hours are different than traditional “school day” hours. This student must provide his/her own transportation and the position is on a one year basis only.



**Continued descriptions of the vocational and life skills sites that are currently part of the VOICE program:**

**Shopko  
3400 North 27th Street**

Shopko provides experience for students working in a retail setting. Students are expected to follow the dress code for Shopko and to be polite and pleasant to customers and other employees. Students have access to the employee locker area and break room. Products may not be purchased while at the job site, with the exception of food items purchased by students for snacks. Tasks practiced at this site include stocking shelves on the floor and in the stock room, straightening and facing shelves, breaking down boxes, returning items to the stock room, and occasional cleaning activities such as window washing, sweeping, vacuuming, dusting, collecting trash, and working in the lawn/garden area during spring time.

**Southeast Community College  
8800 "O" Street**

Southeast Community College provides a variety of experiences in food service, retail, clerical, and child development within the community college setting. Activities in food service may include laundry, food preparation, washing dishes, making cookies, stocking coolers, wiping tables, filling ice machine, and other food service related tasks. Students who work in the bookstore label new books, unpack boxes of new books, check in inventory, clean shelves in the bookstore, and other tasks pertaining to retail work.

In the classroom at SCC, students shred papers for the entire Lincoln campus. This job involves picking up the paper, sorting and removing staples or paper clips, and shredding the paper. Students also put together packets and mailings, stuff envelopes, fold papers, label envelopes, and other clerical tasks that may be assigned. In the Child Development Center, students must be responsible and be able to work independently. Tasks include observing and helping in the rooms, supervising on the playground, assisting in the preparation and clean up of snacks or meals, operating the washing machine and dryer, folding laundry, washing dishes, sanitizing toys, and other duties related to child development.

**Super Saver  
2662 Cornhusker Highway**

Super Saver is a large grocery facility that allows students to work in a variety of departments such as Produce, Bakery, Frozen Food, Dairy, and General Merchandise. Activities include stocking, rotating, and facing products, as well as packaging, labeling, general cleaning, and customer service. In addition, students assist in returning grocery items to their proper location, pulling cardboard, putting shopping baskets away, and retrieving grocery carts from the parking lot. Super Saver's dress code requires students to wear a Super Saver shirt and close-toed shoes. Males must be clean shaven.

**University of Nebraska – Bob Devaney Sports Center  
1600 Court Street**

Bob Devaney Sports Center gives students the opportunity to participate in a variety of custodial activities. Students sweep and mop aisle seating, concourse hallways, stairwells, and vacuum carpets. Seats in the arena are sprayed and wiped down. Other areas cleaned by students are public restrooms on the concourse, eating/concession stand areas, track locker rooms, and the floor surrounding the pool. Occasionally, students sweep maintenance and storage areas in the basement. Litter may be collected from the grounds surrounding the sports center.

**Lincoln Children's Zoo  
1222 South 27th Street**

**&**

**Food Bank of Lincoln  
4840 Doris Bair Circle**

Students will enjoy spending time both indoors and outdoors at the Zoo. Jobs at this site include grounds work, sweeping walkways, and general cleaning tasks in buildings. There will be opportunities to help with preparation of special programs, such as Boo at the Zoo, Winter Weekends, and re-opening the Zoo to the public in the spring. Students will be asked to wear nametags each day and are reminded to dress appropriately for the weather conditions. The Lincoln Children's Zoo is our most recent addition to VOICE sites in the community.

The Food Bank of Lincoln is a warehouse and distribution center in northeast Lincoln. Students learn how to sack groceries, read menus and calendars, stock items, and set-up and take-down a simulated production line. They complete custodial tasks and assist with some clerical work. Students sort donated goods and stock shelves. They assist with an extensive recycling program.