Tapping Into Potential with Expectations:  
Making Employment and Post-Secondary Education  
the New Norm for Individuals with Disabilities  

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In her keynote address from the University of Maine World Usability Day Conference on November 8, 2018, Dr. Kelly Nye-Lengerman discusses how large numbers of people with disabilities can’t access the typical trajectory for economic well-being.

“What is it about our educational settings or employment settings that are not making these spaces available or accessible to people with disabilities?”

Nye-Lengerman identified six steps to address the disparities:

1. **Full inclusion**: Make education and employment the new normal. Pursue, support and vigorously defend inclusion for all people.

2. **Language of expectations**: Raise expectations and use words that convey positivity and expectation.

3. **Presuming competence**: People with disabilities can be successful in post-secondary education and employment.

4. **Power of experiences**: Human beings need experiences, the willingness to try, opportunities to take risk, and a little bit of failure to develop self-awareness. Offer the same experiences in education and employment to people with disabilities.

5. **Starting early**: Invest in the social-emotional development of young children and family support.

6. **Universal design for learning**: Make classroom spaces universal so everyone benefits from the different styles of learning students have, with different types of assignments that measure knowledge, skill and ability.

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