



# IRL Newsletter

May 2021

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## Our Mission:

To empower individuals of all abilities to take charge of their own learning and lives, making it possible for them to be competent, caring and contributing members of society; and to provide learning opportunities for families, professionals, and communities to support those efforts.

## In the Spotlight! - Re-Opening Continues to Grow

Thanks to all of our staff who are collaboratively working on campus and virtually to ensure that all of our children, students, and clients receive their daily services!!!

- Early Education now has 73 little ones in their program daily.
- Almansor Academy brought back middle and high school students on May 6<sup>th</sup> and now have 94 students back on campus.
- Transition and Adult Services will increase to 15 clients back on campus on May 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Westmoreland Academy will also be bringing back middle and high school students on May 13<sup>th</sup> and will have 57 students on campus.



## In the Spotlight: Abel V. - Through the Lens



IRL is pleased to share Abel V's story as this one is close to our hearts as Abel started as a client and now is an IRL employee. In January 2014, Abel's father, Modesto, a valued member of our transportation team since 2004, worked with the Regional Center to refer Abel to IRL's Transition and Adult Services (TAS) for supported employment services. TAS became Abel's pillars of support in his job search. Abel quickly demonstrated a passion for computers, software development, photography, and graphic design, which helped him to secure a job offer working at our HQ office. Abel started with an administrative role, inputting data into a new database to help track new trends, create statistics for the organization, search for grants, and serve as a photographer for events.

"He has always been a mellow guy and always behind the scenes with a big heart! Although he doesn't express himself much, he really likes to be involved and took an active part on different projects when asked," said Nita Davis, TAS Program Director. According to his current supervisor, Gabriel Vazquez, Abel was already an active and enthusiastic contributor to the development team, researching grants and taking on minor photography requests from the marketing department. However, Gabriel noted, "after observing his talent and interest in photography (a passion we share), I challenged him with bigger projects".

Abel recently filmed the story of another TAS client and his video was presented at the San Gabriel Chamber of Commerce meeting in May. IRL is proudly showcasing his work on our website under our [Media Page \(A Story of Success and Lexus R.\)](#). [Blog | Institute for the Redesign of Learning \(redesignlearning.org\)](#).

[Click here to read an Abel's Interview!](#)

## In the Community

**Transition and Adult Services (TAS)** received a second contract from the **Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)** to provide supported employment services to high school students. The Certification of Student Services Work Experience contract allows TAS to work with the Pasadena, Glendale, and El Monte/West Covina DOR offices to provide vocational preparation, job searches, and vocational training to high school students looking to enter the workforce. It also provides a new avenue for work experience for our high school students at Almansor Academy and Westmoreland Academy. TAS is hopeful to serve 10 students per month with this new contract. Kudos to the TAS team for securing another contract, providing more employment opportunities for high school students within IRL and the San Gabriel Valley, and additional employment opportunities within IRL.



If you know of an employer or business that would be interested in hearing about the financial benefits of hiring through TAS, please have them contact Karissa Tressa at [ktressa@redesignlearning.org](mailto:ktressa@redesignlearning.org) or (323) 341-7773.

## Grants



While our schools begin reopening and our students are slowly returning to their classrooms, LA84 Foundation selected IRL as one of their recipients to receive a \$10,000 grant to help update and rebuild the motor labs at both Almansor Academy and Westmoreland Academy. This new fitness equipment will allow our students to work on their motor and social-emotional skills in a safe environment and improve their overall well-being upon their return to campus for the 2021-2022 school year.

Almansor and Westmoreland Academies have been designated as a “Grief-Sensitive School” by the New York Life Foundation, receiving a \$500 Grief-Sensitive Schools Initiative grant to help create a bereavement support plan and encourage ongoing staff development in order to better support its grieving students.

Schools confront issues of grief and loss every day: [1 in 15 US children\\*](#) will experience the death of a parent or sibling by age 18. Studies show that unresolved grief can have a social and emotional impact on children, leading to behavioral issues and poor performance in school. Yet educators often feel under-prepared to lend support to their students, with the vast majority of teachers [reporting](#) they have not received any bereavement training.

The Grief-Sensitive Schools Initiative – a pioneering effort that utilizes New York Life’s workforce to help equip local schools to care for the grieving students in their midst – is an extension of the work of the Coalition to Support Grieving Students, a collaboration among leading K-12 professional organizations to develop and deliver best-in-class [grief support resources](#) to educators.



## Ways You Can Help!



"AmazonSmile" is a website operated by Amazon with the same products, prices, and shopping features as Amazon.com. The difference is that when you shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization of your choice. All you do is go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), login like normal, choose your charity (Institute for the Redesign of Learning) and you start to give with every purchase. Every dollar of support helps!

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