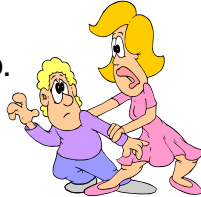


Hold On! We Are Trying to Help You:

Teaching and Supporting Job Keeping Skills for At-Risk Youth – Implications for Educators, Parents, and Employers

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Preparation for the world of work evolves over time....

- Efforts to promote attitudes and beliefs that support persistence, social problem solving, self-awareness and self-regulation start early. (Home – School)
- Career awareness and occupational exploration. (Home – School – Community)
- Discovery of strengths, interests and preferences in work related concerns (Home – School – Community)



Research has found the following practices associated with improved post-secondary transition:

- Participation in paid work experience in the community during (at least) the last two years of high school.
- Participation in vocational education classes during (at least) the last two years of high school, especially classes that offer occupational specific instruction.
- Competence in functional academics (e.g., reading, math, writing), social skills (e.g., adaptive behavior and social problem solving), and community-living skills (e.g., money management, social awareness, career awareness, self-advocacy, goal setting).
- Direct individualized tutoring and support to complete homework assignments, attend classes, and stay focused at school.
- Participation in transition planning process that promotes self-determination.
- Direct assistance to understand and connect with resources related to post-school goals (e.g. colleges and universities, vocational rehabilitation services).
- Graduation from high school

Many youth with special needs (especially those with severe disabilities and those with emotional and behavioral disorders) often fail to gain access to these foundational experiences

Factors that may hinder or constrain the career preparation of youth with disabilities

- Curriculum fails to address social skill, mental health, and behavioral needs of youth.
- Special educators cite a paucity of employers willing to hire youth with disabilities.
- Special educators may lack the time to develop the necessary relationships with local businesses.
- Employers may have limited awareness or understandings of:
 - the skills and strengths of youth with disabilities,
 - the purpose of special education transition programming,
 - the opportunities available to support youth-fostered career development activities, and
 - the resources or assistance potentially available to them when they hire or work with youth

Group Activity One
(Break into respective groups, parents, educators, employers)

Nature of the Disability	Strengths and Skills	Concerns
Intellectual Disability		
Learning Disability		
Autism		
Emotional or Behavioral Disorder		

Possible Employer Activities

- Participate in a job fair
- Participate in job shadowing day
- Help match youth to jobs
- Create directory of employers
- Provide feedback on programs
- Offer mock interviewing practice (with feedback)
- Include information in company newsletters
- Help identify and engage in activities to recruit youth
- Help raise funds for vocational/ transition programming
- Serve as guest speakers in schools
- Provide meaningful work experiences
- Speak to other employers
- Meet with school personnel to discuss options
- Co-develop training programs
- Explore and communicate to others the benefits of hiring youth

Need to 'grow' the awareness and involvement of parents and employers in the transition process

- Move beyond the individual business approach to identifying potential partners
- Contact local Chambers of Commerce and business/professional organizations (e.g., Lions, Rotary, Optimist and Kiwanis Clubs)
- Help these organizations become more aware of the capabilities of youth with disabilities and increase employer's awareness of the availability of supports to employ these youth.

Better prepare at-risk youth for involvement in community situations

- Actively explore the nature of social skill deficits and behavioral problems displayed by youth.
- Develop intervention strategies that promote self-regulation of problem behavior rather than simply controlling the behavior (e.g., adult sanctions, adult directing, changing context to avoid the problem).
- Provide frequent positive feedback as students begin to show greater self-regulation in authentic settings.

Self-Instruction Training

(Meichenbaum & Goodman 1971)

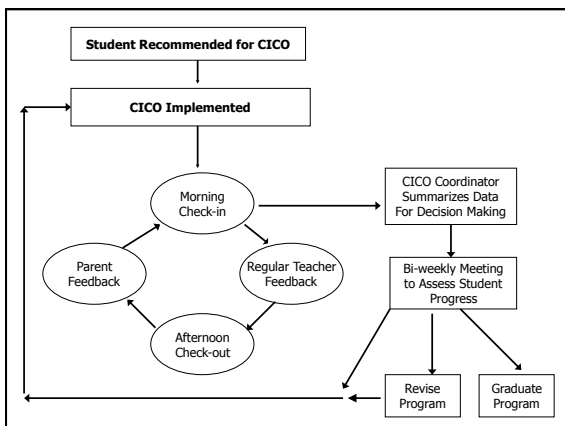
- **Cognitive Modeling** – the teacher performs a task while talking aloud; the student observes.
- **Overt External Guidance** – The student and teacher both perform the task while talking aloud together.
- **Overt Self-Guidance** – The student performs the task using the same verbalizations as the teacher (talk together).
- **Faded Self-Guidance** – The student whispers the instructions (often in an abbreviated form) while going through the task.
- **Covert Self-Guidance** – The student performs the task, guided by self-speech.



Self-Regulation/Self-Control

- **Self-monitoring** – the ability to collect data or otherwise identify one's own thoughts and behavior.
- **Self-evaluation** – to be able to judge one's performance accurately against some standard of performance.
- **Self-reinforcement** – the ability to deliver self-praise or a reward contingently on the display of a specified desired behavior.





The *Include* Strategy for Determining Reasonable Accommodations

- ✓ **I**dentify environmental, task specific, social and instructional demands of the various tasks, physical and social contexts involved.
- ✓ **N**ote youth learning strengths and needs.
- ✓ **C**heck for potential areas of youth success.
- ✓ **L**ook for potential problem areas.
- ✓ **U**se information gathered to brainstorm what must be taught and what adaptations/accommodations may be needed.
- ✓ **D**ecide which adaptations and accommodations to implement.
- ✓ **E**valuate youth progress.

Modified from Friend and Bursuck (1996)



The CHAMPS framework sometimes helps

- **C**onversation: *Can youth talk to each other during this activity?*
Help: *How do youth get the teacher's or another adult's attention and their questions answered?*
Activity: *What is the task/objective? What is the end product?*
Movement: *Can and how can youth move about during this activity?*
Participation: *How do youth show they are fully participating? What does work behavior look/sound like?*
Success: *When youth meet **CHAMPS** expectations, they will be successful!*

(Modified from R. Sprick, 2004)

Coffee Shop Exercise

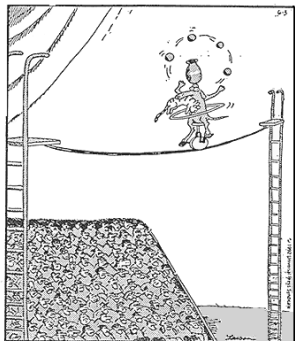
(Mixed groups – parents, educators and employers)

- You have each been given a student vignette for your target student.
- The student is going to have a job (three days a week for 2 hours a day – late afternoon 1-3 p.m.). The job involves basic clean-up and re-stock of a coffee/snack shop (e.g., Starbucks, Caribou Coffee, Duncan Donuts, Einstein Brother's Bagels). The student must bus tables, return trays and baskets to the kitchen to be washed, re-stock napkins, sugars, stir sticks, etc. He also washes the tables, sweeps the floor and cleans the restrooms as needed.
- Using the template provided, identify some of the key tasks, strengths the student brings to each task and potential concerns that might arise (e.g., social problems that are likely to arise).
- How might you go about instructing the student and/or making the necessary accommodations to promote student success?
- What might be some meaningful instructional consequences for common problems that might arise – youth errors?

Implications

- Instruction for transition to adult living can not wait until high school for students with disabilities.
- Social skills, social problems solving and addressing challenging behavior must be actively addressed beginning in preschool and moving throughout the students school career.
- Efforts to promote meaningful self-regulation of behavior must be the goal of behavioral and cognitive behavioral intervention.
- Active teaching of desired behavior with multiple opportunities for authentic participation and high rates of positive feedback is essential for learning.
- Clear expectations must be identified for community employment opportunities and these expectations must be taught and monitored as the youth moves into the world of work.
- Errors are a fact of life – error correction strategies should be identified as part of the employment program.

THE FAR SIDE/Gary Larson



High above the hushed crowd, Rex tried to remain focused. Still, he couldn't shake on nagging thought. He was an old dog and this was a new trick.
Taken from AAHE Annual Meeting, March 14-17, 1993 (Washington, D.C.)
