

Research Article Summary

Pathways to Paid Work for Youth with Severe Disabilities: Perspectives on Strategies for Success

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Purpose: This is a summary of a scientific research article. It can be used for general information and reference purposes. The original article is owned and copyright protected by the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Article: Schutz, M., Schwartzman, B., Awsumb, J., Burgess, L., Carter, E., & Taylor, J. (2023). *Pathways to paid work for youth with severe disabilities: Perspectives on strategies for success. Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 58, 11-26.*

A QUICK LOOK

Article Summary: Providing paid work experiences to youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities in high school is known to have positive effects on their post-school employment outcomes. However, students who need a greater amount of support and assistance in a job setting may have trouble getting work experience opportunities before leaving school. The purpose of the study described in this article was to ask teachers, families, school district leaders, employment support agency providers, and businesses about strategies that help students with higher support needs be successful during work experiences.

KEY FINDINGS

The following strategies were identified in the study to help students be successful during work experiences:

- **Training and Information:** Giving employers disability awareness information and trainings on how-to best support students with disabilities helps businesses create meaningful work experiences for students.
- **Quality On-the-Job Support:** Trained job coaches play a crucial role in supporting students with disabilities and helping them succeed in their job.
- **Individualizing Support:** Selecting a unique set of employment supports that is right for each student can help bridge any gaps between their current ability and the requirements of the work environment.
- **Teaching Preparedness:** Students need training in Career Planning, Job Skills, and Self-Determination as they prepare to exit secondary school and look for employment.
- **Alter Attitudes:** Changing the mindset within the community about the ability of students with disabilities to contribute to the workforce can lead to meaningful shifts in practices and policies that support work experiences for students.

- **High Expectations:** Encouraging families, teachers, and other key people to have high expectations for students with disabilities related to employment can lead to better work opportunities.
- **Collaboration:** When schools, employers, agency providers, families, and communities work together they can create comprehensive plans of action to overcome challenges that prevent work experiences for students with disabilities.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

To create employment opportunities for youth with high support needs, participants in this study recommended that schools:

- Create a community transition team by bringing together multiple community members, such as schools, employers, agencies, families, and organizations to foster new collaborations and establish new work opportunities.
- Assign educators, providers, or other individuals to serve as liaisons between schools, agencies, and employers. This can make it easier to share information, promote communication and foster collaboration among group members.
- Give students, families, and businesses easy-to-understand strategies, information, and resources that can help students find community job opportunities.
- Organize community conversations that actively involve key stakeholders about ways to overcome challenges faced by students with disabilities who have higher support needs and want to work.

SUMMARY

Providing students with opportunities to work in the community sets them up for better post-school outcomes, specifically related to paid employment. Participating in work during high school helps students gain real-world experiences and prepares them for future employment. Creating valuable work experiences for students requires the collaborative effort of many key community stakeholders. Educators can lead the way by following some of the tips provided in this article.

You can read the full article at:

<https://content.iospress.com/articles/journal-of-vocational-rehabilitation/jvr221221>



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