



CAREER PREPARATION AND TRAINING: TIPS FOR SUCCESS

A WELL-DEFINED OBJECTIVE

All early work experiences should have a clear purpose and goals. Some experiences (such as service learning) will involve larger groups, but don't lose sight of individual goals for each student. For example, when developing a service-learning project, look at your student's postsecondary goals and think about which roles might address skills they need in future jobs. Consider Jamal. He wants to work as a bagger at Publix after high school. His class is participating in a service-learning project at a homeless shelter serving meals. Some students will prepare meals, others will set up the dining area, and others will actually serve the meals. Since Jamal wants to work in a job that requires interaction with the public, Jamal's teacher assigns him to serve the meals so he can practice conversational and social skills.

GOOD DOCUMENTATION

All of these school-sponsored experiences should involve documenting each student's progress and outcomes. Some of the assessments discussed in our course on Transition Assessment could be helpful here. Students—and their transition team—should learn valuable information about their strengths, needs, interests, and preferences.

FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility is key in early work experiences. Think back to Seth's example, the student who needed to move his workstation closer to the computer. Sometimes, work experiences will not start off smoothly and might require adjustments. For example, a student might express interest in working outside in a garden, but then realize they hate getting dirty once actually on the job.

BUILT-IN SUPPORT

Educators, paraprofessionals, and other school staff can provide support in these various work experiences, but don't overlook peers and other forms of natural support.

VARIETY OF WORK EXPERIENCES

Students with disabilities will benefit from having a variety of work experiences throughout their transition years. A series of well-planned work experiences over time can help students identify desired post-school employment goals, as well as gain the skills and knowledge and experience they need to achieve it. Though the trajectory of work experiences will look different for each student, all students need a continuum of work experiences that build in intensity over time, some of which occur out in the community.