



MEET KEENAN

Pre-Reading Question

- *How do the different diploma tracks impact students' employment opportunities after high school?*

Keenan is a 14-year-old with emotional behavioral disorder and a learning disability in reading. He participates in the general education setting with accommodations. He has a strength in the area of math and especially enjoys learning about money management and estimating costs and profits. After graduation, Keenan's goal is to work in his family's auto mechanic shop full time. During Keenan's first high school IEP meeting, his teacher did not share information about the different diploma options available to Keenan, nor did she outline the benefits and limitations of each diploma option. Currently, Keenan is on track to earn a special education diploma.

What's the Problem?

Although he plans to work in his family's auto mechanic shop after graduation, he may decide that he wants to work at a different mechanic shop later on. Unfortunately, the special education diploma is not well-recognized by many employers, and thus it could reduce the chances of finding employment. Therefore, it may be difficult for Keenan to get a job outside of the family business given that the job market can be very competitive.

What's the Solution?

Keenan's teacher decides to suggest that Keenan seek an occupational diploma at the next IEP meeting. The occupational diploma, although still not widely recognized, requires that students complete two years of paid or unpaid work experience. He is taking a shop class that focuses on auto mechanics, so this could have potential to count as a work experience, which means he is already on his way to meeting the requirements of this diploma. These experiences will help Keenan stand out among other job applicants with fewer internships or experiences, even though he does not have a regular high school diploma.

Post-Reading Questions

- *How will your students' opportunities after high school be impacted by the type of diploma they earn?*
- *Have any of your previous students' opportunities been limited by the diploma that they received? If so, how did they overcome this obstacle?*