

Digitability™

Preparing students with
cognitive disabilities for our
tech-driven workplace.

digitability.com





Digitability™ Be Work-Ready!

Digitability teaches work-ready skills for our technology driven and highly social workplace.

Skills Mastered Include:

- ✔ Technological Literacy & Online Safety
- ✔ Time and Task Management
- ✔ Workplace Communication & Socialization
- ✔ Resume, Interviewing and Skill-Based Portfolio Development
- ✔ Problem Solving & Flexible Thinking
- ✔ Financial Literacy
- ✔ Self-regulation for Problematic Behaviors
- ✔ Self-advocacy in the Workplace



High school special education students standing outside of Independence Hall, Philadelphia

“As we lead our students into a tech-driven future, Digitability moves students closer to their career and life goals.”

-Jane Cordero, Secondary Special Education Coordinator at Hill-Freedman World Academy.

[Learn more at digitability.com](http://digitability.com)



Three Solutions in One!

Digitability develops social and emotional capacity while shaping work-ready skills.



**Real-world Work Simulations
for Generalization**



**Comprehensive Transition
Curriculum and IEP Goal Bank**



**Differentiates for Cognitive
and Behavioral Needs**



**Progress Monitoring
in one-click!**



**Capacity Building for
Students *and* Teachers**



**Social and Emotional
Development**



Digitability™ Service Model

Students have complex learning and behavioral needs, and the path to preparing them for today's modern workplace involves many moving parts.



- ✔ **Digitability's Curriculum** prepares students with a work-ready portfolio, and the social/emotional capacity to persevere; this is helping people with neurodiverse needs overcome barriers to obtaining employment.
- ✔ **Digitability's Data and Reporting Tools** measure student efficacy and facilitator fidelity through SMART goals and objectives. We offer real-time usage data, teacher and administrator dashboards, weekly emailed data reports and progress monitoring reports.
- ✔ **Digitability's Training and Coaching** uses baseline training data to create personalized professional development goals. With 1:1 support and coaching, teachers master evidence-based practices and become experts in teaching digital literacy and behavior.



Components of Digitability™



Video Library for Workplace Readiness

- Introduces students to tech
- Increases ability to attend/focus



Work Simulations

- Demo Day Video
- Success Stories



Scripted Lesson Plans:

- Communication
- Behavior
- Financial Literacy



Behavior & Communication

- Expressive/Receptive Language
- Workplace Behavior Training



Interactive Social Games:

- Apply tech from video in social context
- Apply tech from video in workplace context



Platform Access

- Progress Monitoring & Data
- Account Management



Assessments:

- Online (platform)
- Offline (Lesson Plab Supplements)



Professional Development

- 1:1 on-boarding and coaching for all teachers and support for admin
- Evidence-based practices
- Demystifying tech for teachers



Digitability™ Curriculum

When skills are taught in isolation, skill transfer doesn't happen. Digitability's one-of-a-kind curriculum teaches skills through real-world simulations using the best evidence-based practices.




















- ✓ Financial Literacy
- ✓ Resume, Portfolio, & Interviewing
- ✓ Technological Literacy & Online Safety
- ✓ Workplace Communication & Socialization
- ✓ Self-regulation for Behavior
- ✓ Self-advocacy in the Workplace
- ✓ Time & Task Management Problem
- ✓ Solving & Flexible Thinking



4 Levels of Digitability's Award-winning, Work-ready Training

Today, more than **70%** of people with cognitive disabilities are unemployed. Digitability's award-winning, innovative approach is changing this statistic. Nearly **70%** of our first cohort of graduates obtained meaningful employment.

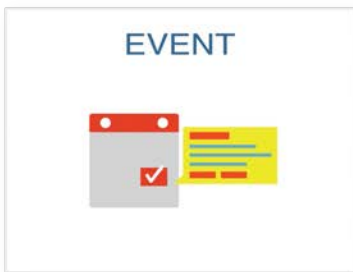
 LEVEL 1: INTERNET NAVIGATOR	 LEVEL 2: THE DIGITAL CITIZEN	 LEVEL 3: TECH-SAVVY AMBASSADOR	 LEVEL 4: PRIME PROFESSIONAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Internet Basics  Browser  Search  Online Accounts  Sharing Online  Connecting Online  Popular Internet Icons  Online Safety  Expressive and Receptive Language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Gmail  Google Drive Cloud Storage  Google Calendar  Google Contacts  Spam  Workplace Communication  Time and Task Management  File Organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Google Docs  Google Sheets  Google Slides  Google Forms  Collaboration in the Cloud  Project Management  Presentation Skills  Data Entry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  LinkedIn  Google Sites  Personal Brand  Bio  Resume  Online Portfolio  Networking  Endorsements  Interviewing Skills
LEVEL 1: SOCIAL ECONOMY	LEVEL 2: SOCIAL ECONOMY	LEVEL 3: SOCIAL ECONOMY	LEVEL 4: SOCIAL ECONOMY
<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Earning and Spending  Motivation  Socialization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Personal Budgeting  Executive Functions  Self-regulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Company Budgeting  Empowerment  Self-Efficacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Long-term Planning  Perseverance  Self-Advocacy Plan



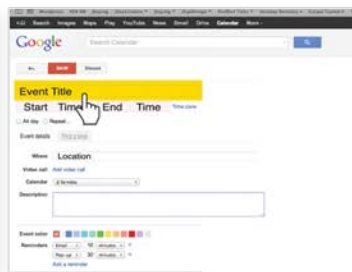
Digitability™ Video & Lesson Plan Curriculum

The Digitability work-ready training program includes an easy-to-use, web-based software that provides teachers with a library of hundreds of video lessons. Each video is designed using the best, evidence-based practices, such as principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA).

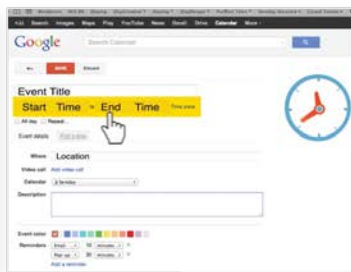
#1



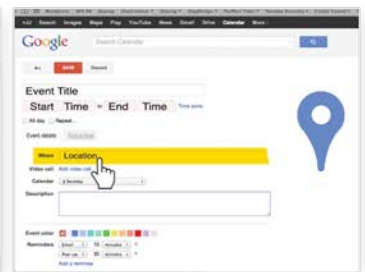
#2



#3



#4



Each online video is facilitated via off-line curriculum resources, including lesson plans, social games, differentiated supplements, work-simulations, and resources for IEPs and transition planning.

Pre-Implementation Assessment Form

LESSON PLAN

SAMPLE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

WORKPLACE CONNECTIONS

Pre and Post-Assessments	Differentiated Lesson Plans	S.M.A.R.T. IEP Goals + Objectives	Real World Workplace Connections
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Dr. David Mandell, Sc.D.

Director, Center for Mental Health Policy and Services,
University of Pennsylvania | Pennsylvania

“Digitability gives schools an opportunity to provide support to high school students with autism in a way they wouldn’t be able to otherwise.”



Dana Steinwart

Lead Transition Teacher, Blue Valley School
District | Kansas

“What I enjoy most about Digitability is the class participation I get due to the classroom economy system. Earning dollars is highly motivating, and I have 100% class participation. Every student is engaged in the lesson. I have also seen quick behavior changes when students pay dollars for behaviors. I love teaching Digitability.”



Dawn Nuoffer

Executive Director, Down Syndrome Association
of Wisconsin | Wisconsin

“We have seen great success with Digitability. In the short time we have been offering this course, we have opened multiple class locations and will continue to replicate it across Wisconsin. Digitability is changing lives and helping our friends to secure meaningful jobs!”



Tracey Sterling

Supervisor of Special Education, Perkiomen Valley School
District | Pennsylvania

“We brought Digitability to Perkiomen Valley School District because of the scope and relevance of its unique digital content. The training was differentiated and tailored to each of our students’ needs through evidence-based practices.”



How It Works

1



Whole Group Facilitation

Facilitators engage students with workplace skill training. Facilitators develop the language for technology and understand today's workplace communication

2



Developing Social Capacity for the Workplace

Through evidence-based practices, students develop their communication skills and financial literacy. Students are empowered to self-advocate in the workplace.

3



Work-Simulations

Every student has a role to play and develops workplace routines using tech. Students problem solve while working together to accomplish tasks.

4



Independent Practices

Through independent practice using the online system, student comprehension of each measurable objective is assessed.

5



Review Data and Monitor Progress

Data dashboards and progress monitoring tools identify areas of growth. Data reports can be shared with family, therapists, or other educational team members.

6



Skill-Based-Portfolio

Students develop a skill-based portfolio, online resume and interviewing skills to showcase their abilities to employers.



Real-World Work-Simulations

Industry Standard Software:



Gmail



Google Search



Google Docs



Google Docs



Google Slides



Google Sheets



Google Calendar



Google Forms

Low/Middle Skill Job Examples



Data Entry



Retail



Personal Care and Service



Social Media



Inventory



Administrative



Clerical Work



Production

Digitability can help you streamline existing programs, like garden projects. Using Digitability, students will develop new skills through stronger work-ready training. Every work-simulation includes differentiated resources that can be used to meet the needs of a variety of learning styles and profiles. Students use their experiences in the work-simulations to build their resume and work-ready portfolio.

South Philadelphia High School Gardens

Home About Partners Blog Contact Us

Farm Stand

Students operate a weekly low-cost farm stand

During the school year the farm stand is located in the SPHS lobby and operated by culinary arts students. The summer farm stand is run by student interns at the corner of Broad & Jackson. In the meantime, welcome to the Southern Gardens Sales Page, where every fruit and vegetable comes to life!

 Beets \$2.00	 Raspberries \$2.50	 Broccoli Brunches \$3.00
 Hot Peppers \$0.10	 Rosemary \$1.00	 Blackberries \$2.50

Digitability's Classroom Social Economy



Digitability's Classroom Social Economy is a behavior system that uses boundaries and reinforcers to prepare students for today's workplaces. Students develop workplace social and communication skills based on their current language and behavior needs.

LEVEL 1: SOCIAL ECONOMY	LEVEL 2: SOCIAL ECONOMY	LEVEL 3: SOCIAL ECONOMY	LEVEL 4: SOCIAL ECONOMY
WORKPLACE CULTURE	WORKPLACE BOUNDARIES	WORKPLACE POLICIES	WORKPLACE ADVOCACY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earning and Spending Motivation Socialization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal Budgeting Executive Functions Self-regulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company Budgeting Empowerment Self-Efficacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long-term Planning Perseverance Self-Advocacy Plan

What do social skills look like in the workplace?

How does the social economy empower students?



Following Directions/
Collaboration



Students access tech, to create media for their ideas and completed workplace tasks.



Adapting/Shift
Flexibility



They build confidence and self-efficacy by presenting their work along with interpreting questions and feedback.



Giving/Receiving
Feedback



Students practice and internalize the ability to self-advocate and interview.



Problem Solving



Differentiation

“Digitability has something for every single one of my students.”

-Dawn Geiger, Special Education teacher
in Philadelphia, PA.



Everyone has a role to play with Differentiation.

Individuals who participate in the Digitability program run the gamut; therefore, to create an inclusive learning environment, all of our resources are extensively differentiated to support a wide range of learning and behavior profiles from adolescence into adulthood. As students progress through the work-ready process and develop their skill-based portfolio, materials are adapted to meet the needs of students at their current levels.

Behavior and Cognitive Characteristics of Students Served

- Expressive and Receptive Language Needs
- Attention, Memory, Organization Issues
- Impairments in Social Reciprocity
- Sensory Processing Issues
- Low Self-Esteem/Confidence
- Difficulty Processing Emotions
- Limited Verbal Ability
- Anxiety and Impulsive Behavior
- Intellectual Disability (low IQ)
- English Language Learning Needs
- Auditory Processing
- ★ (Digitability serves individuals with and without special education needs)



Digitability understands that ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

You're busy. Let us help.

As a company founded by a teacher, Digitability understands that special educators are tasked with many responsibilities. All resources are differentiated three ways to ensure that students can access material and develop new skills based on their personal needs. Each resource is created for a specific tier. The indicator for each tier is attached to the title in a green bubble. This bubble tells you quickly what tier this supplemental is for (keep in mind, some tiers will share supplementals).

Example

1. Distribute **WB.1.3 Self-Inventory Exit Ticket Worksheets** See **DIFFERENTIATION** for this activity to identify supplements needed for your students.

DIFFERENTIATION

- T1** Using **Tier 1 Self-Inventory Exit Ticket**, students will brainstorm their own ideas on personal behavior in the workplace.
- T2** Using **Tier 2 Self-Inventory Exit Ticket**, students will use a checklist and sentence starters to evaluate their personal behavior.
- T3** Using **Tier 3 Self-Inventory Exit Ticket**, students will use a checklist and/or modified questions with their Yes/NO Image Exchange Cards. Alternatively, students may use Trace and Learn Exit Ticket.

The image shows three overlapping worksheets for 'WB.1.3 Self-Inventory Exit Ticket' at different tiers: T1, T2, and T3.

- T1 SELF-INVENTORY EXIT TICKET | WB.1.3.1**
Directions: Write a paragraph describing the behaviors you have that will make you successful in the workplace.

Directions: Write a paragraph describing the behaviors you have that can be problematic in the workplace.

- T2 SELF-INVENTORY EXIT TICKET | WB.1.3.2**
Directions: Complete the sentence starter to evaluate behaviors you need work on.
I have ____ behaviors that will help me be successful in the workplace.
These behaviors are _____ I can use
these behaviors in the workplace by _____
I have ____ behavior(s) that may be problematic in the workplace. Examples
of these behaviors are _____ One
behavior I will work on is _____
- T3 TRACE 'N' LEARN EXIT TICKET | WB.1.3.3**
Successful Workplace Behavior
Sharing, helping,
encouraging,
following directions,
staying on task,
greeting a guest



Digitability™ developed easy-to-use tools making progress monitoring and data collection easier.

Digitability is a company driven by scaling measurable progress for people with neurodiverse needs. We understand how important data is to informing instruction. That's why Digitability developed easy-to-use data and reporting tools to help make progress monitoring easier.

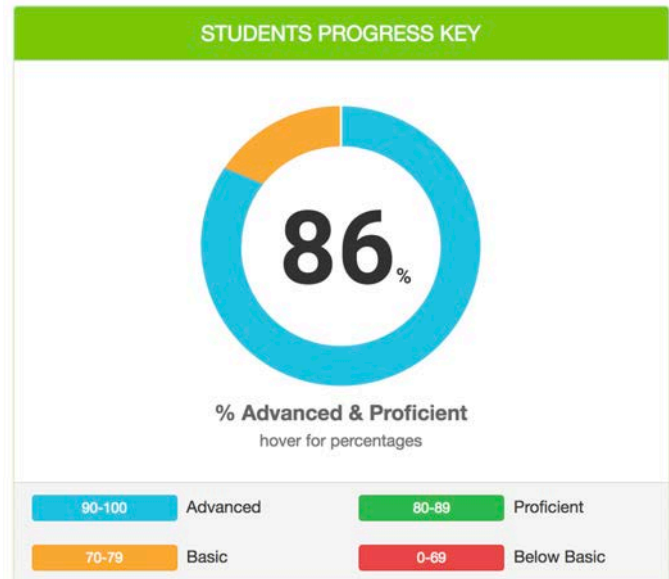


- ✓ Real-time usage data
- ✓ Data dashboard
- ✓ Weekly emails on efficacy and fidelity
- ✓ Progress reports



Complete with everything you need

Teachers, supervisors and administrators can easily track student progress and performance through our monitoring tool. You can generate a report with the click of a button, and Digitability will automatically email reports on student efficacy and fidelity. Digitability's curriculum is backed by the best, evidence-based practices, such as Applied Behavior Analysis. Our coaches work with your educators to support data-driven instruction to increase outcomes throughout your entire organization.



Digitability Facilitator Report for Digitability V1 : Randall 06/05/2018

Hi Sam Randall,

"You're killing it this month! You are completing 6+ lessons per week with your class or engaging your students 3+ days/week. Your administrator will see that you've earned Level 1 Status...like a boss. :)"

You're currently ranked #1 at Blue Valley North High School. To see how your ranking data compares to your organization wide data, sign in and view your MY PD tab.

Here is a list of your current students and the number of lessons completed this last week:

Student	Lessons completed
Matthew Breedlove	3
Naval Cheema	2
Bill Chen	23
Kathryn Embry	2
Kris Garnett	0
Jacob Murphy	1
Connor Schaffer	53
Edward Shultz	2
Grace Walline	0

Keep up the great work!

The Digitability Team

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Digitability™ gives special education teachers and support staff their own personal special education coach.

Digitability's fidelity and data features inform the support and coaching teachers need to implement evidence-based practices. This personalized professional development supports student outcomes in special education.



- ✓ Onboarding
- ✓ Ongoing coaching
- ✓ On-site and live virtual training
- ✓ On-demand access to training
- ✓ Tech support
- ✓ Data analysis
- ✓ Weekly reports
- ✓ On-demand access to training



Teacher Professional Development Within Digitability

We use baseline training data to create personalized professional development goals based on teacher experience and understanding of evidence based practices.

Customized Professional Development Goal Planning					
≤ 1 Month	≤2-3 months	≤ 3-4 months	≤ 4-6 months	≤ 6-8 months	≤ 8-10 months
Milestone #1: On-boarding	Milestone #2: Evidence-based Basics	Milestone #3: Evidence-based Basics (cont.)	Milestone #4: Work Simulation	Milestone #5: Workplace Behavior	Milestone #6: Executive Functions
Understanding Curriculum	Immediate Feedback	Increasing Student Attendance to Task	Peer Review/ Constructive Criticism	Self-Regulation	Flexibility to Shift
Digitability Platform & Accounts	Differentiation	5 Types of Prompting	Task Analysis (TA)	Scripting (Sc) & Social Narratives (Sn)	Fading Prompts
Digitability's Classroom Social Economy	Positive-Reinforcement	Expressive vs Receptive Languages	Supporting Peer-mediated instruction and intervention		Self-management

Teachers receive world-class support from Digitability's Implementation Coaches



On-Demand Library



Virtual Development



In-Person Workshops



Award-winning, Work-ready Support Services

At Digitability, we understand that you can not impact student efficacy without teacher fidelity using evidence-based practices. Our model of coaching and professional development is designed to prevent students from regressing or staying at the same level throughout their education.

Teachers receive:

- ✓ Onboarding training and continued support
- ✓ Implementation coordination (making it easy to use with existing demands)
- ✓ Technology integration coaching
- ✓ Social and emotional development training
- ✓ Professional development on evidence-based practices
- ✓ Technical support
- ✓ Data review and analysis to support student mastery
- ✓ Progress monitoring tools
- ✓ Weekly reports
- ✓ Lesson planning support for all domains taught
- ✓ Custom work-ready resource consulting (to help integrate existing programs)

Administrators receive:

- ✓ Weekly and monthly reports on efficacy and fidelity
- ✓ Account management support
- ✓ Data dashboard
- ✓ Data reports and consulting for admin
- ✓ Communication tools
- ✓ Intervention and support summaries
- ✓ Tools for teacher observations and professional development



For Educators

Digitability makes managing special education easy.



1. Comprehensive Curriculum

Hundreds of differentiated lessons rooted in ABA and tailored for personalized learning



2. Data Dashboard

1-click reporting for progress monitoring



3. In-Class Supplements

Each lesson has supplemental materials and activities aligned to IEP and transition goals

3a. IEP Goal Bank

A variety of IEP goals and objectives already written to save you time

3b. Print-Ready Lesson Plans

Each lesson plan is differentiated three ways and includes project-based learning activities



4. Automated Classroom

Students become the leaders in a collaborative, work-simulated environment



For Administrators

Digitability makes managing special education easy.



1. IDEA Compliance

Digitability is a comprehensive transition program rooted in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)



2. Data Dashboard

Get data reporting and analytics

3a. Educator Fidelity

Real-time feedback on facilitator usage and progress

3b. Student Mastery

1-click reporting for progress monitoring



3. PD and Training

Empower teachers of all ages to use technology and project-based learning

4. Ongoing Support

Every teacher and admin receives a support specialist ready to answer and assist



3a. Educator Implementation

Digitability comes with on-site training and implementation strategies

3b. Custom Solutions

Data-driven response to intervention tools for admins and supervisors



5. Cloud-based Platform

No IT-support needed to bring Digitability into your organization

Meet Digitability Graduates



DeShaun

DeShaun came into the Digitability program with age-inappropriate behavior. He used baby talk and referenced children's stories off-topic. Deshaun had limited social skills, eye contact, and expressive language, as well as significant processing delays. Digitability prepared DeShaun with a work-ready portfolio, along with the social and emotional development Deshaun needed to obtain employment. Today, Deshaun is working full-time in a human resources office and was recently honored as a valued contributor to his workplace.



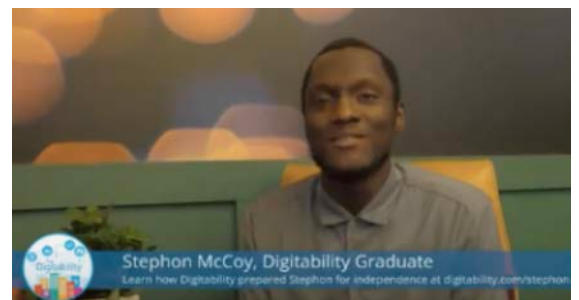
Stephon

Stephon came into the Digitability program with low self-esteem. He was a person with selective mutism, who experienced anxiety and depression. As a student with dysgraphia, Stephon had low interest in writing. Digitability empowered Stephon with new digital skills to help him find his voice, discover his career interest and self-regulate so he could obtain and sustain employment. Stephon found employment during his senior year of high school and continued on to an electrician training program. He is now training others to develop the skills he has mastered.



Marcus

Marcus came into the Digitability program with significant speech and language issues and an intellectual disability. He experienced a stutter, which made him self-conscious. Marcus was hyper-focused on topics, such as mammals, and had vast knowledge about the characteristics of mammals. Through Digitability, Marcus created a webpage, organizing his knowledge of mammals in a hierarchy. Digitability provided a framework for Marcus to develop his speech and language abilities, as well as build his confidence. Digitability also connected Marcus's interest in mammals to the local zoo to explore internship opportunities and employment. Marcus presented his website with confidence to a panel of eight judges during his senior program. Marcus is now employed, confident, and enjoying his social relationships with others.



Website Designer - The Southern Gardens Project Website
The Lower Moyamensing Civic Association, Philadelphia, PA
Sep 2011 - Jun 2012 • 10 mos
Economic Empowerment

Designed and created a website that showcased the work of both the Lower Moyamensing Civic Association and the students at South Philadelphia High School.

Produced an original video by using industry software such as Final Cut Pro for the Southern Gardens that was also featured in a talent show.

Introduced the program and architected a five page website.

Managed a team of students who also participated in content development.



Meet a Digitability Graduate

This is DeShaun, a Digitability graduate who is now working in a human resources office. DeShaun travels to work independently and on his days off, takes the bus to the city's center for lunch and to visit his favorite museums.



Where Deshaun's Journey Began

DeShaun began his transition to adolescence as he entered his 9th grade autistic support classroom. At this time, DeShaun exhibited age-inappropriate behaviors. He often used baby talk and told his class about fairy tale princesses. While he watched animated children's shows using online applications like YouTube, he didn't use the computer to connect with others, learn about new topics, or perform independent living tasks.

Digitability shapes student interest into marketable skills and simultaneously develops social and emotional capacity.

Through Digitability, DeShaun learned the basics of using tech. First, DeShaun mastered the ability to use a search engine like Google to perform research on Cleopatra (an age-appropriate parallel to DeShaun's interest) and the history of Egypt. Incrementally, Digitability helped DeShaun build on those foundational skills. DeShaun began organizing presentations using his content knowledge and a variety of media assets he found online through image and video searches. Digitability's online learning platform made Google Drive's Cloud Applications, like Google Slides, accessible to DeShaun so he could master the ability to create online presentations.



Measuring Mastery Through Digitability's Data and Reporting Features

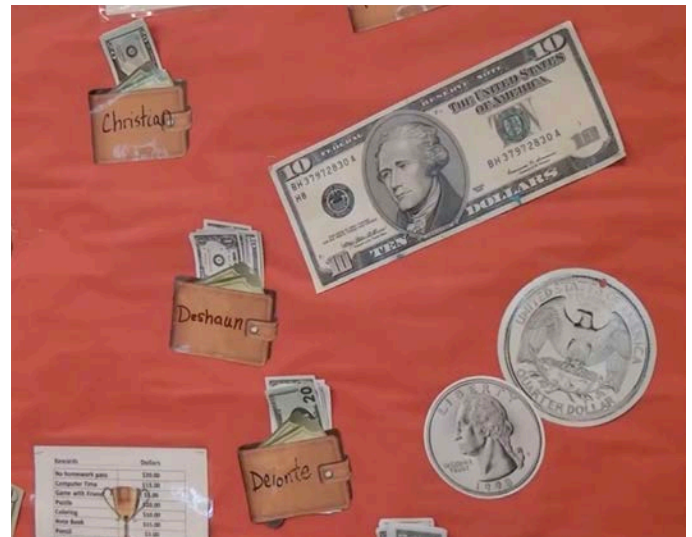
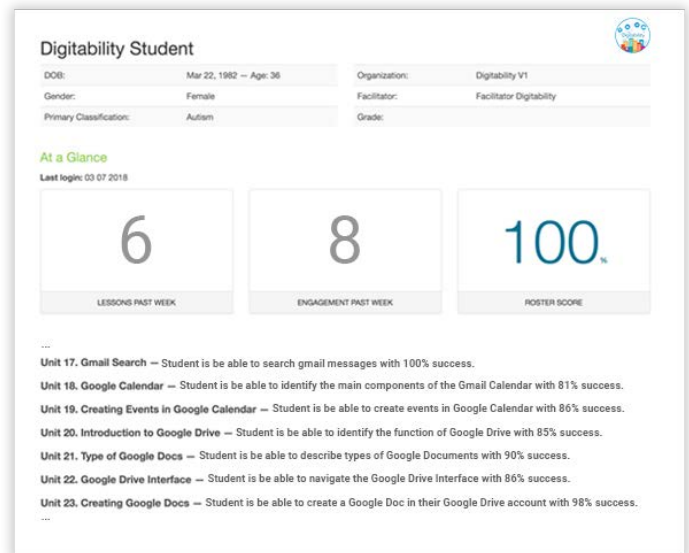
[Digitability's Data and Reporting features](#) were able to demonstrate DeShaun's skill mastery through measurable goals and objectives. With Digitability's online platform, DeShaun's teacher was able to generate a progress report with a click of a button. This report and additional tools made it possible for DeShaun's family to receive emails on his progress.

Digitability Classroom Economy Helped Deshaun Develop Appropriate Workplace Behavior

[Digitability's Classroom Economy](#) is a behavior system that uses boundaries and reinforcers to teacher workplace behavior to students. Digitability's Classroom Economy is what helped DeShaun shift his interest into age-appropriate topics and then increase his focus on using tech to develop life skills. In addition to having the tools needed to independently navigate and utilize the internet, Digitability also taught safety concepts, such as public versus private information, spam, as well as topics that can be more nuanced, such as appropriate online comments.

As DeShaun began making progress in developing his social and communication skills through Digitability, he practiced using age-appropriate language during his Google Slide presentations about Cleopatra.

As each student in DeShaun's class mastered new tech and social skills, they continued to move through the Digitability work-ready training program. Next steps included students collaborating to complete a [Digitability Work-simulation](#).



The Work-Simulation: Streamlining Community, Tech, Communication and Problem Solving Skills

DeShaun's school had a community garden where the produce grown was sold to residents in neighborhoods identified as food deserts. Using Digitability's Planning a Website Simulation, DeShaun's [special education classroom](#) designed a website to engage the community and to provide important information like inventory, pricing and garden market hours and location.

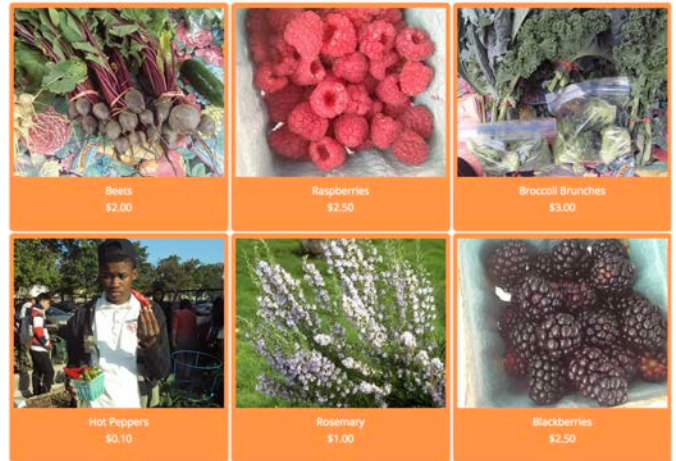
One of DeShaun's roles was to create a webpage that showcased what produce would be sold and how much each item would cost. DeShaun used Google Sheets to create an inventory list and included hyperlinks to each item's photo, which were all organized in Google Drive.

Digitability also taught DeShaun how to collaborate in the cloud with his peers. Now he could share the resources he created with his teammate who was responsible for creating the recipe blog.

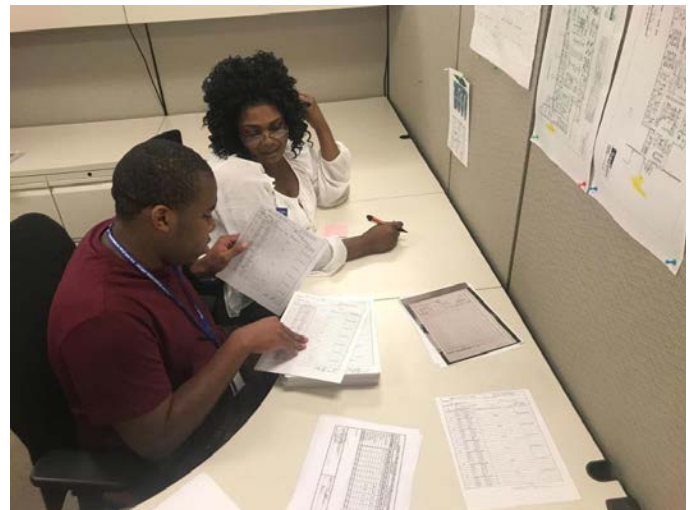
Digitability provided the structure for DeShaun to get comfortable receiving feedback and interviewing.

In Digitability's Planning a Website Work-Simulation, DeShaun would present his work at Demo Day. During his presentation, DeShaun discussed collaboration with his group and how he managed his time and tasks independently to meet deadlines. He discussed his process, problems he encountered, how he solved those problems and what he would do differently next time.

DeShaun listened to the feedback he received from his teammates and his 'executive team'



Item	Price	Google Drive Image File
Beets	\$2.00 per bunch	https://drive.google.com/open?id=124Xa4dju6ln1DT1M6cKm5Y2idi9wVDT
Raspberries	\$2.50 per box	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1C1ds9yW2inOhT9w_SQwpljV3y9WVjy
Broccoli	\$3.00 per bunch	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1HxQ3ixT1EFPJ0x1e1FYPhofwDcu7GQb
Hot Peppers	\$0.10 per pepper	https://drive.google.com/open?id=115UOPwJRZb7HYeN9qPeBujVAGLuKGA2
Rosemary	\$1.00 per bunch	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1tqznrK3zYb5hU5N6rhaN8y1qmRbTEBz
Blackberries	\$2.50 per box	



(any teacher or administrator in the classroom). He then interpreted that feedback to plan his next steps with the phrase, “What I hear you saying is...”

Upon completion of Digitability Work-simulations, students prepare their resumes and practice interviewing for a different job in the ‘Digitability ‘company.’ Digitability taught DeShaun how to showcase his work-ready skills while developing his social and communication abilities for the workplace.

This experience helped prepare DeShaun with what he needed to become employed.

Working in an HR office

Today, DeShaun is working in an HR office where he manages data and communications. Deshaun was recently named Employee of the Month and is now receiving training to upskill his position.

Digitability is dedicated to changing the current paradigm of pigeonholing people with disabilities into unemployment. While more than 70% of people with neurodiverse needs are unemployed, DeShaun is a part of Digitability’s first graduating class, which is a group where nearly 70% of students obtained employment.

Digitability has an expansive library of hundreds of [differentiated lesson plans](#) and work simulations like the one DeShaun participated in.

Educator or Administrator? You can get a free demo of Digitability here: <http://digitability.com/demo/>

Learn more about Digitability’s award-winning, work-ready training or watch a video on Deshaun’s experience at: digitability.com/education





How tech means jobs ahead for kids with cognitive disabilities

Individuals with intellectual disabilities have it particularly rough when it comes to getting hired. Here's how some are addressing the problem.

By Marguerite Reardon

As a special education teacher at a public high school in Philadelphia, Michele McKeone prepared students with autism for life after graduation. But she quickly discovered a glaring hole in the curriculum: a complete lack of digital literacy.

When the US Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that more than half of all jobs require some degree of technology skills, that's a problem. McKeone feared her students were destined for menial, low-wage positions, if they could get any jobs at all.

McKeone saw an opportunity to use technology and project-based learning as a way to teach important technical skills, as well as foster the ability to think critically, solve problems and live independently.

She quit her job last year to focus on her startup, Digitability, developer of an online curriculum that teaches those technical skills. Initially, it was called Autism Expressed, but she changed the name after expanding the program to kids with other cognitive disabilities. Her program, which has won several technology contests, is being used throughout the Philadelphia School District, where she used to work, and in schools in several other states, including in New Jersey and California.

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There are roles that people with intellectual disability can fill in many businesses, if they have the right training and support. I'm trying to raise the bar to make sure everyone is taught these important skills.

”

Her program is just one way individuals and companies are working to give people with cognitive disabilities a better shot at succeeding in the workplace with higher-skill jobs. Efforts range from promoting more technology education to companies and employers expanding how they look for talent. They help to dispel the misperception that individuals with intellectual disabilities aren't suited to be in tech.

These initiatives address a real problem. The unemployment rate for all people with disabilities is nearly twice the rate of people without disabilities, according to the US Labor Department. People with cognitive or developmental differences, such as autism or Down syndrome, are even worse off.

“Most of us want a meaningful job, and people with intellectual disabilities are no different,” said Gary Siperstein, director of the Center for Social Development and Education at the University of Massachusetts Boston. “But in spite of tens of millions of dollars spent on programs for better outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities, the needle hasn't moved much.”

There's reason to be optimistic. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 requires schools and state vocational rehabilitation agencies to provide transition services to students with disabilities to help them find “meaningful work.” Agencies must allocate at least 15 percent of their federal funding toward such transition efforts. This push from the



How tech means jobs ahead for kids with cognitive disabilities

Individuals with intellectual disabilities have it particularly rough when it comes to getting hired. Here's how some are addressing the problem.

By Marguerite Reardon

feds could help spur more schools to think about including digital and computer skills in their curriculum and transition plans for students with disabilities.

Getting tech in their hands

McKeone is both a pioneer and an evangelist when it comes to getting technology in the hands of children with cognitive disabilities. While schools often see the value of providing technology as a way to assist students with disabilities, it's been a harder sell convincing them that people with cognitive impairments should learn skills like web page development and coding.

Even learning how to use the most basic online apps can have a huge impact on people with cognitive differences. For instance, Google Calendar is the mobile equivalent of the wall calendar that many students in special education use to stay on task.

Digital media lets many students showcase their skills in a way that may not be apparent in traditional assessments.

"I just wanted to teach them everything I learned in art school," McKeone said. "We live in this world where everything is digital and they should be able to participate in that."



The program, designed for middle and high school students, includes 250 separate lessons that use research-based approaches for breaking down concepts and teaching skills in explicit steps. The lessons offer short videos with animation to

**“
We live in this world where everything is digital and they should be able to participate in that.
”**

introduce no more than a couple of concepts at a time. Students are continually asked to demonstrate their knowledge and are rewarded with virtual badges.

The curriculum gives them a foundation to build skills that can be used in

the workplace. It's divided into four modules and teaches skills like using Gmail and social media, as well as advanced tasks like coding.

McKeone plans to work with companies to develop certification programs so that Digitability can be tailored for specific workplace skills.

'Food, flowers or filth'

Training people with intellectual disabilities to work with technology is the best way to prepare them for jobs outside of "food, flowers or filth," said Jonathan Lazar, a computer science professor at Towson University in Maryland. Lazar is referring to food service jobs, basic landscaping and janitorial work.

But there needs to be a change in how people perceive people with intellectual disabilities such as Down syndrome and autism.

**Read the full article:
bit.ly/digitability**

How a NoLibs startup's partnership with Pa. will help Philadelphia's schools

A Philadelphia startup announced a major partnership with the state on Tuesday that it says will help prepare more than 1,500 city students with cognitive disabilities to enter the workplace.

At an event held with district educators Tuesday, Northern Liberties-based Digitability celebrated the integration of its pre-employment and work-ready programming model into 17 high schools as part of the partnership with the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

“When we implement the program in the school district of Philadelphia, with such a large number of students, we’re creating a pipeline of qualified candidates into organizations,” said Michele McKeone, Digitability's founder and CEO.

Aimed at students between 14 and 21 with diverse neurological needs, the program takes a holistic approach to preparing students for jobs through a combination of technology training and behavior modification using streamlined evidence-based practices. Through the state partnership, it comes at no cost to the district.

Digitability's work addresses a pervasive issue of unemployment among adults with cognitive disabilities. According to federal data, about 32 percent of working-age adults with disabilities are employed and McKeone said if they do have jobs, they're often pigeonholed into the three Fs — food, flowers and filth.

She wants to help change that by arming students with social, emotional and technical skills to work in a much wider range of professional positions, from data entry to web design.

Learning the hard skills is important, she said, but often the biggest hurdle can be teaching students with cognitive disabilities how to interact and communicate in an office. Addressing both needs at once can change the numbers, she said, as about 70 percent of Digitabilities graduates in its first cohort are employed.

“In the workplace, you’re also responsible for managing your time, your tasks. You also have to learn about problem-solving, flexibility, all of those other skills beyond what the job role is,” said McKeone, who developed the program after working as a high school special education teacher in the city's school district



COURTESY OF DIGITABILITY

Digitability announced the partnership at a launch event on Tuesday at the Hill Freedman World Academy.

for seven years. When her work building tech skills into the classroom resulted in her students winning third place in the Philadelphia Regional Computer Fair Competition in 2010, she knew she had to expand her reach.

"It's a clear demonstration of leveling the playing field, having people with neurodiverse needs compete with neurotypical peers," she said. After presenting her business plans in competitions in 2011 and 2013, she eventually left teaching in 2015 to start running Digitability full-time. In 2016, McKeone raised a \$500,000 seed round, with half coming from Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Southeastern Pennsylvania.

"Leaving the classroom was very hard. I loved teaching, but the impact I really wanted to have was larger than my classroom. I knew there were other teachers who needed these resources," she said.

A notable factor of Digitability's program is its scale. While smaller nonprofits and organizations tackle workforce development among young adults with cognitive disabilities, they're not often at the scale Digitability is reaching through its most recent partnerships and those in the works for the future.

Since the partnership is statewide, they're looking to launch in Pittsburgh next, she said. It already operates in five states. The Philadelphia launch is so far the company's largest.

"We're able to have a very scalable impact across the city, the state and the country," McKeone said.

To develop both sides of the equation, Digitability is also focused on preparing businesses for bringing on employees with neurodiverse needs through helping them form a strategy and then working with them to set up specific tracks, simulations and certifications within the program that match employers' needs.

"We're working to create an ecosystem with partnerships with the state and employees who want to learn about neurodiversity and learning more about neurodiversity strategies at workplaces.

There is a distinct and growing gap between the demand for workers in and around the tech industry and available, prepared employees.

A study released by the Economy League last May stressed the importance of the tech sector when it comes to overall growth but outlined that thousands of jobs in the field remain unfilled.

That growth isn't just demand for high-level coders and engineers. Another report, **this time from the Brookings Institution** and also released last May, estimated that as much as 57 percent of 104,000 well-paying, middle-skill jobs positions in the city's "innovation district" of West Market in Center City and University City are in adjacent support positions that don't require a four-year degree.

Michelle Caffrey

Reporter

Philadelphia Business Journal

