

Providing Jobsite Supports

Providing support to a student with a disability on a jobsite can increase that student's job success. Jobsite support includes instruction on work routines, task completion, work behaviors, and work expectations. On a jobsite, there are four key roles to providing support: trainer, advocate, consultant, and collaborator.

Trainer

The trainer's role is much like a teacher's role in helping students to learn concepts and skills. As a trainer, you are responsible for helping the student learn their new job. Training focuses on three main areas: 1) learning about the jobsite, 2) learning job duties, and 3) learning business policies.

Learning about the Jobsite

Learning about the jobsite starts before the first day of work. Students can learn about the jobsite during the interview and build on that knowledge during orientation and the first few weeks of the job. This allows students to develop skills in navigating the jobsite and the structure of the business. Get students to take part in jobsite tours, review the company's website to learn about its leadership, and engage in shadowing established employees.

While the student is learning about the jobsite, take note of the potential support the student will need. You might notice that your student needs help locating their workstation. Make or ask for a map of the physical layout, or point out specific markers to help the student learn where to go.

Learning Job Duties

Knowing the job duties is essential to students' success. When training a student in new tasks, the trainer must understand how to complete them. Observe and record the steps to each task as the student is being initially trained. As a trainer, you will often need to break down large tasks into smaller, more manageable parts. If a student is struggling with a task, try strategies like least to most prompting, visual and auditory aids, and assistive technology. Scaffolding support and accurately identifying accommodation and learning needs will be your greatest tools as a trainer.

Learning Business Policies

Learning business policies is essential but often overlooked. Ensure that students receive training on written policies and procedures. Students may also need help identifying unwritten or unspoken policies. Unwritten policies include things like what you cannot microwave at work or even how to ask a coworker a question. Some managers like employees to drop into their offices to ask a question, and others use online chat platforms. Help students practice written and unwritten policies through social stories, role-playing, and video modeling.

Advocate

Encourage students to develop self-advocacy skills. These skills enable students to communicate their needs, interests, concerns, and conditions for success. Help students discover their workplace preferences and request accommodations. Workplace accommodations may be similar to educational ones, but it is common for students' needs to be different. For example, a student may need frequent breaks at school. Before requesting that accommodation, assess if that need applies at work, too. You may find that the student's interest in the work will decrease the need for breaks. This may be the first time a student has worked, so take time to build self-advocacy skills. Provide a variety of practice opportunities. Be careful not to over-advocate on behalf of your student. Instead, model and support them through the process to advocate for their own needs.

Consultant

The employer may have limited experience working with a high school student or someone with a disability. As a consultant, provide the employer with strategies to support the student. Consultation includes providing feedback that ensures training procedures and other processes are inclusive. Being a consultant may include:

- Providing disability training to staff.
- Working with the employer to find accommodations that work best.
- Supporting the employer to meet the communication needs of the student.
- Identifying tasks and responsibilities that meet the needs of the student and business.

Providing jobsite support shouldn't be a barrier to the student and employer working together. Still, there will be instances when it is more appropriate to provide consultation directly to the employer to ensure the student receives a fair and supportive experience.

Collaborator

Educators work on teams and collaborate with families to help students reach their goals. On a jobsite, you have the same role. You collaborate with supervisors and coworkers, and maintain open communication. Ask for feedback from supervisors. Supervisors may identify workplace readiness skills that the student needs to develop. Use this feedback to guide your support. Then, report the student's progress to appropriate parties (i.e., student, family, business, teachers, counselor). Share success stories, communicate progress, and emphasize skill development.

Conclusion

Effective jobsite support requires planning, preparation, and good employer relationships. Remember these four roles that will guide your time on a jobsite: trainer, advocate, consultant, and collaborator. Each role is key to helping students achieve positive work experiences.