

Providing Jobsite Supports

Providing jobsites support to students with disabilities can increase students' job success. Jobsite support includes instruction on work routines, task completion, work behaviors, and work expectations. There are four key roles to providing jobsite supports: trainer, advocate, consultant, and collaborator.

Trainer

The trainer's role is similar to a teacher's role in helping students learn concepts and skills. Trainers are responsible for helping the student learn their new job in three main areas.

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 understanding the business's structure. 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, note the potential support the student may need. You might notice that your student needs help locating their workstation. Make or ask for a map or point out specific markers to help the student learn where to go.

Learning Job Duties

Knowing the job duties and how to complete each task is essential to students' success. Observe and record the steps to each task during initial training. Trainers will often need to break down large tasks into smaller, more manageable parts. Also, try strategies like least-to-most prompting, visual and auditory aids, and assistive technology. Scaffolding support and 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 prefer employees to drop by their offices to ask a question, while 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 so they can 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. However, you may find that the student's interest in the work will decrease the need for breaks. Take time to build self-advocacy skills and 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 high school students or someone with a disability. As a consultant, provide the employer with strategies to support the student. Consultation includes providing feedback to ensure that 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

A collaborator fulfills the role of working across teams to support students in reaching their goals. You collaborate with supervisors and coworkers and maintain open communication. Ask for feedback from supervisors as they 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 the appropriate parties (i.e., the 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.