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How Does Work-Based Learning Help Prepare Students For Life After High School

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A MASTER'S THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Work based learning is part of career and technical education that can help students to be better prepared for life after highschool. There are many different types of programs that make up a work based learning programming. These programs are for both Special Education students and general education students. Programming can encompass job shadowing, youth apprenticeships, clinical internships or practicums, and work experience programming. Another part of Work-Based Learning (WBL) is career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO). These are different student run organizations where youth can learn business, agriculture, health and other varying work based skills from professionals in the field. These organizations also work to teach youth leadership skills. This literature review explores the need for work based learning programs with schools and how they can benefit all students to better prepare them for life after high school.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

My own story

This thesis writer, whole heartedly, believes as educators we need to be better preparing students for more journeys after high school than just college. This is because this writer was not ready for college after high school and didn't know or feel prepared for what they could have done. This researcher was only told of options after high school being a 4 year college or a 2 year college to prepare for a 4 year college or university degree. Those options were not options that this writer was prepared for. This writer seeks to help other students, parents and educators to understand there are many more options after high school. During high school this writer was able to have a job on his own, finding out, however, would have done better or thrived differently if he could have had support through the school to understand what employers look for or how to handle different situations. Also, this author was not ready for the financial responsibility and community participation responsibility that happens after high school.

Self determination, self advocacy, resilience, and employability skills are all things that work based learning could have helped prepare this author for life after high school. As this researcher is preparing his students for their journey after high school, he ensures and works for independence with work experience and other transition based programs. This writer believes that transition planning and services such as Work Based Learning need to be available and ready for all students so that success can be felt and seen by students at any level that they are at. Finally, as we continue let's figure out what we are doing to prepare students and how we can continue to prepare students for life after high school better.

Are they ready?

"In the United States,federal education policy calls for every student to graduate from high school ready for college and a career, regardless of their income, race, ethnic or language background, or disability status" (Castellano, Richardson, Sundell, & Stone, James R., I.,II, 2017). Are students truly ready to endure life after high school? Do educators truly prepare students for life after high school? "Many young people completing high school in the United States do not have immediate plans to attend college or to complete a four year post secondary degree" (Bremer & Madzar, 1995). Why are we as educators trying to push college if many young people are not going right after high school? It is this writer's opinion that educators can do a better job at preparing students for life after high school. Many different schools have solely focused on preparing students for the next step in life. However, this next step is different for everyone. Life after high school is not a one size fits all journey or path. All students have different paths that they want to take or only have certain abilities to take. Are educators setting up students for failure after high school if they are only getting them ready for post-secondary schools such as college or university?

Educators continue to grow their skills and resources for their students in many different ways. One of those ways is to promote the use of Work-Based Learning (WBL) programs so that students both in special education and general education can be ready for what their journey is after they graduate. WBL programs come in many different shapes and sizes so that they can fit in many different situations for districts and schools. Raelin shared that "through experience, students are able to obtain a truer forecast of the real world than when confined to a classroom" (Raelin, 2010, p. 39). Are educators truly giving students an accurate forecast of jobs, skills needed, and life skills need to be a competitive or productive part of society after high school?

Educators sometimes only think of the 4 years after high school for their students. What if educators could shift their thinking to the 30 years after high school so students can be set up for success?

What does success look like for students after high school? There are some that believe that success after high school is only going to college, however, this is just not true. Just like every individual is different and their needs are different, their educational journeys can look starkly different. Having said this, educators are not fully serving all students when it comes to preparing our students for the next steps after high school.

Success for some can be completing high school and finding work after high school. On the other hand, for some students success is completing a transition program until the age of 21 and then working in a supported work environment. There are some people that would believe this as unsuccessful if they didn't go to college or didn't get a 4-year degree. Why does this need to be the expectation of every high school student no matter their abilities? Educators, both general education educators or regular education educators, should ask one simple question. What does success look like to this individual student? Once the educational team for that student figures that out, then we ask a final question. What is the best plan? The educational team for one student could be teachers, counselors, and parents, whereas some special education students may have more people in the equation such as a case manager and other providers. These teams have met with the student and have asked and figured out what success could look like. The final question that will have different answers for many different students should be: How do we get the student to their path of most success?

Work-Based Learning (WBL) provides many different ways to help students accomplish success in their post-high school journey.   One thing that helps students in understanding how to achieve personal success is to learn about what self-determination looks like. Self-determination is a skill that not a lot of students who have special needs know or understand however, it is a skill that can help both regular education and special education students be successful after high school. According to research done by Michael Wehmeyer and Michelle Schwartss in 1997, they stated: "student involvement has the potential to increase student interest in and motivation to learn transition-related skills and provides hands-on experience in making choices and decisions" (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997) This supports that if educators involve students more in the planning process of their education they will have more motivation to learn transition relation skills. Whemyheyer and Scharts also indicated within their research that self-determination skills and having an ability to advocate for themselves make a transition to competitive employment more successful (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997)

As schools continue to program for students it has been found that different arrangements can be set up for student success and learning.

 "Arrangements that combine school with related work (such as internships, apprenticeships, and cooperative education programs) and courses in career and technical education can provide the preparation and work experience that employers want. Such programs also have the potential to reduce high school dropout rates by enabling the 20-30 percent of students who now drop out of high school to see the benefits of staying in school until graduation" (Barton, 2007).

Educators are continuing to see that students are doing better in school when they are having choice in their educational journey. These above arrangements are giving the students skills to be able to tackle life after high school no matter the journey they choose to take. If educators prepare students for a future that includes more options than just college, there may be better outcomes within our schools.

Research into career readiness for students has continued and as stated by Mathers, "the focus on strengthening and expanding career readiness is likely to continue. In 2019 more than half of governors' state of the state addresses included some mention of career readiness" (Mathers, 2019). This research showed that having students experience in career readiness straight out of high school has become a priority for many state officials throughout our nation. That being said, preparing students for college where they continue to learn but are not community, social and financially aware or ready for a career. Work based learning programs along with CTE or career and technical education courses can help to improve student' outcomes when it comes to being career ready or life journey ready after high school.

Thesis Questions

This thesis will focus on the following questions:

1) How does work-based learning prepare students for life after high school?

2) What are some effective teaching/experience models and strategies that can be used?

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Through the research process, this author has been using Bethel University Library, Academic Search Premier, and ERIC. These resources have helped this researcher learn more about the Work-Based Learning Process. Other resources used are books on the topic.

Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning (WBL) is a career and technical programming for students starting in high school. There are many different programs that can accompany WBL that can show how students are better prepared for life after high school. According to Working Knowledge, "their focus is to create Work-based learning as a specific educational strategy for high school students" (Bailey, Hughes, & Moore, 2004).   The programs that can help students prepare for life after high school are youth apprenticeships, mentorships, job shadowing, and practicums. Vocational student organizations, work experiences through paid or volunteer work, Cooperative Education are additional experiences that help students improve their skills. Work-based learning is a tool and an area of curriculum and instruction that can be used for both general education and special education students.

Work-Based Learning Models and Practices

In this section this thesis writer will discuss teaching Work-Based Learning/Teaching Models. The models are: Lecture or inquiry-based model. The second method is the Reflection Model. A third method to be discussed is the Youth Apprenticeship Model A final method is Clinical Teaching or Practicum Model.

Lecture or Inquiry-Based Model

Today the greatest method of teaching is classroom methods of a lecture or inquiry-based teaching. This method of teaching has been around since we have had formal education within our country. However, classroom teaching is a predominant mode and method of teaching experiential learning is more than likely a second runner up in how educators are teaching according to Joseph Raelin. "Through experience, students are able to obtain a truer forecast of the real world than when confined to a classroom" (Raelin, 2010, p.39). Work-Based learning models of interaction and teaching are to help to grow students' knowledge of employability skills and work within the community. "Work-based learning, on the other hand, deliberately merges theory with practice and acknowledges the intersection of explicit and tacit forms of knowing at both individual and collective levels" (Raelin, 2010, p. 39). Work-based learning models can give students the ability to use skills they didn't know they had. These models can give students the ability to practice new skills or to hone in on skills they have acquired. Raelin wrote about practicing as an educational event. Students are told to continue to practice to get better at reading, writing, or math skills. "Learning by practice signifies that it occurs more as a participative social process than as a phenomenon that takes place in a person's head" (Raelin, 2010, p. 40).

Reflection Teaching Model

There can be a lot learned from reflecting on things that you have been through or situations you have had. When there are behavioral issues in classrooms, teachers will meet and have an after behavior debrief. This reflective process is something that helps teachers and administrators respond better to behavior. Knowing that reflection can help us grow. It is something that is used heavily in many different work-based learning models. One thing that

reflection in work-based learning can do is "it can involve others as opposed to being an individual experience" (Raelin, 2010, p.42). Reflection in many situations helps to make knowledge grow and see where things can get better. This is also true with how we can help students gain skills through work-based learning programs.

Career Readiness

As school districts across the state look at their students, some are wondering how they can better prepare them for life after they leave their doors. Researchers are finding that "Employment with family-sustaining wages now requires post-secondary education" (Mathers, 2019, p. 4) Furthermore, schools are providing fewer courses on how to be ready for life such as financial stability after leaving high school or home. They are also finding that "individuals with only a high school diploma have about a 30 percent chance of earning more than $30,000 a year, and most that do are male (Mathers, 2019, p. 4). Career and college readiness is a term that can take on many different meanings by those who are interpreting it. As research continues "these data and even more recent workforce projections recognize, however, that not all students need a bachelor's degree to thrive in the workforce" (Mathers, 2019, p. 4). Family sustaining wages and the necessity of a 4-year college degree do not concurrently have to go hand in hand. Work-Based Learning and Career and Technical classes can help to prepare students for a family-sustaining wage after high school.

As states and districts look at their educational systems for K - 12, they have seen that college and career readiness needs to be addressed. "More than half the states passed legislation in 2018 on using work-based learning opportunities to connect students with industry" (Mathers, 2019, p. 5). This alone has shown that work-based learning opportunities will help students be

better prepared for their journey after high school. Career readiness and life readiness do look different, however, if students are ready for a career after high school it is hopeful that they can be ready to be successful after high school.

Apprenticeship Model

Within work-based learning, there are many different program models that can be used to help students gain work skills during high school through work-based learning.

"Although work-based learning for students is not widespread in this country, a number of different models are in use. The youth apprenticeship model encouraged by STWOA is the newest and most comprehensive model, and currently, the least used. The clinical training model and the cooperative education model are similar to youth apprenticeships. but somewhat less comprehensive." (Congress of the U.S., Washington, DC. Office of Technology Assessment., 1995, p. 57)

These three above models are three distinctive models that can be used by education systems to support work-based learning. STOWA stands for the School to Work Act of 1994. Although these are three models used for work-based learning, there are other work-based learning activities and models that are used to help support education through work skills. There are some schools that use school-based enterprises. This is where "...students work part-time in school business that produce goods or services for people other than the students involved" (Congress of the U.S., Washington, DC. Office of Technology Assessment., 1995, p. 69) Some high schools may do different businesses like a snack shack or a coffee house. These are ways that students can gain needed work skills while still in school and can practice these skills in a monitored safe environment. "School-based enterprises focus on academic reinforcement, some

career exploration, and occupational development" (Congress of the U.S., Washington, DC. Office of Technology Assessment., 1995, p. 69). Having these school-based businesses make it easy for students both with and without disabilities to be part of the work-based learning program. Students without disabilities could gain supervisory skills and or management or purchasing of goods skills. Students with disabilities can learn how to cashier, clean, and reinforce school and social skills as well.

Clinical Training or Practicum Model

Another model that can be used in the functionality of work-based learning is a clinical training or practicum model. This model can help to encourage students in a particular area where a certificate or licensure may be needed to get a job or career in that field. "Students in clinical training programs take academic and occupational courses and assume a series of positions that provide work experience and training. The course of study, the work experience, and a passing score on an examination administered by a professional body are usually required for licensure and subsequent employment in the field" (Congress of the U.S., Washington, DC. Office of Technology Assessment., 1995 p. 65) These programs can look different between school districts and they can look different between populous areas as well. Some schools have a college in the school type options where they are getting hands-on experience in cosmetology or EMT work while still getting both college and high school credit. This option allows high school students to leave high school with a certificate type job in an accredited field.

There are many different ways that students can engage in a work-based learning program. Work-based learning programming is something that can be tailored to the individual.

Educators can take the career and vocational interest of their students and find experiences that

can help them to find where they can be successful in their journey to gain more skills.

Work-Based Learning for Special Education Students

Work Experience

What is Work experience?

Work experience is something that schools have put in place to help students gain

needed skills in employment where they take a class and work on a job site with support.

"The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 mandates state VR

agencies and schools work together in new ways to better prepare students with

disabilities for competitive, integrated employment. Developing opportunities for

students with disabilities to participate in work experiences while in high school is a

critical part of WIOA" (Whittenburg, Sims, Wehman, & Walther-Thomas, 2019).

VR (Vocational Rehabilitation) are services that students have the ability to use during high

school and that follow them after they have finished their high school and or transition journey.

Work experience is something that can look different in many ways. Work experience can be

positioned within the school where students can work to get experience in job-related skills.

This can look like working and training with the custodial staff in the school to clean and

maintain the building and grounds. Another work experience within the building could be a

school supported coffee shop or snack shop. This experience within the school will give many

different opportunities to many students. You can have students learning food service skills,

cashier skills, & customer service skills. The coffee shop or snack shack can be directly tied into

a classroom experience where they learn how to order supplies, prepare items, and budget their

money to run the store. Also, there are outside work experience opportunities that can be volunteer and or paid within the community. More than likely, they would have a job coach at one of these experiences. Those experiences could be working at the library stocking books and would be an example of a volunteer position, An example of a paid position with support could be greeting at a store or working at Chick-Fil-A with a job coach. Job coach supports can be for the whole time or they can be written into the work plan to fade as the student understands their job and the social interactions that come along with the position.

Setting up work experience options for students can be something that is difficult and can take the time and dedication of staff and employers. It takes the employer to understand the differing needs of the students working and being willing to offer supports, if needed. As work-based learning coordinators search for potential work experience there are some things that are crucial in having it be successful,

> "Initial conversations are critical starting points for establishing successful partnerships with local businesses. The goal of an initial conversation is to learn more about the business, so transition specialists and special educators should guide these conversations to focus on business needs, workflow, and key characteristics of successful employees. It is often helpful to start the conversation by briefly describing what the transition program does" (Whittenburg, Sims, Wehman, & Walther-Thomas, 2019).

Understanding a business's needs pertaining to workflow and best characteristics for employees will help work-based learning coordinators to best place students with jobs where they can be successful. It also helps the school to understand what businesses in the area are looking for in future employees and can direct students towards positions when they come available.

Another factor that goes into work experience is assessment of the students needs and abilities according to research;

> "Comprehensive vocational evaluation (vocational tests, work/job samples, situation assessments. job tryouts) also is important in examining the realism of their choices and their education and training needs. Many students with disabilities may require more than the traditional amount of time to prepare for an occupation..." (Brolin & Gysbers, 1989, p. 158)

These different assessments, along with understanding that students with disabilities, may take more time to understand job skills all go into putting together work experience programming for those students. Educators want to make sure students are understanding their job rolls and are enjoying the job tasks they have so that they can have quality employment and a better quality of life.

A final factor that can go into work experience is hearing what students have to say about their experiences themselves. Work experience is not something that just has to happen during the school year. It is something that can be supported during the summer in many different ways. However, we get our best understanding of work experience from our students. One study stated: "an untapped source of information regarding summer experiences comes from adolescents themselves. Adolescents with disabilities—arguably, the most important stakeholders in transition planning and implementation—have unique perspectives that may illuminate strategies for finding and maintaining employment and community activities and may identify supports and barriers to such experiences" (Trainor et al., 2011). This does only speak of summer experiences however this thesis writer feels that this information can help to build

programs for students. This is the schools working to get employment for students that will be gainful and enjoyable so that students can gain skills in areas they prefer.

What are the benefits of Work Experience for students?

The benefits of work experience for students with differing abilities and without are insurmountable. Students, when in work experience, are learning many different skills. They are learning skills in the area of social and expressive language, how to interact appropriately with others, and job-specific skills. During work experience students are learning by doing, It is also said that: "one-way students can learn the requirements of a job is to spend a day with someone who is performing the job" (Cease-Cook, Fowler, & Test, 2015).   This is true because sometimes in work experience students start out by shadowing the position and transitioning into doing the position themselves.

"Resilience has generally been defined as the capacity to successfully adapt and thrive, despite challenging circumstances where success is not predicted" (Scholl & Mooney, 2004). When talking about work experience, another skill that is benefiting students is the skill of being resilient. When students sign up for work experience through school they are not guaranteed success. Students are not guaranteed that there will be no challenges they may come across. When walking into work everyday they are not guaranteed to understand everything that they are being shown. Resilience is a skill that students are learning through work experience without even knowing they are learning it. This demonstrates that work experience can help students learn many different skills without it being laid out for them.

Experience is one of the biggest benefits for students when it comes to the work experience programs for students with disabilities. "Preparation for most students with

disabilities requires a substantial experiential component" (Brolin & Gysbers, 1989, p. 158). This writer believes that students that can get experience within the workforce will be better prepared for life after high school or transition programming. When a person can experience job skills, hands on, they are better understood and retained for use later.   Experience is one of the biggest benefits of these programs for students.

Transition Programming (Ages 18-21)

Transition programming is for students in the age range of 18-21 years of age. Special Education students can continue their educational journey until the end of the school year that they turn 21. Work-based learning is a major component for students that are in transition programming. These courses, along with work experience, will help these students continue their journey after schooling is finished. Transition programming is for students of all different levels of ability from being independent and needs little to no help with work skills to needing support in every part of work and/or life skills.

Employability of individuals with disabilities after high school is at a very low rate. Is this something that proactively teaches work skills in high school and transition programs that can help to curve? According to research reported by Lee and Carter: "...up to years after leaving high school only 63.2% of young adults with autism had worked at any point since graduation and only 37.2% of these young people were currently working at the time of the survey" (Lee & Carter, 2012, p. 989). These statistics are looking at individuals with autism, so these statistics do not take into account other areas of disability for students. Transition programs work to prepare students with varying disabilities to be successful in life after High School and completion of the transition program.

Lee and Carter focused their research on understanding the needs of individuals with High Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder (HFASD). As we continue to understand the needs of individuals with disabilities there are a few things we can look at for individuals with HFASD. "Particularly important for youth with HFASDs may be the accruing of early, hands-on vocational experiences through after-school and summertime jobs, paid or unpaid internships, or school-sponsored work experience. (Lee & Carter, 2012, p. 992) Although this is important for youth with HFASDs, this is also an important thing for many different students who have disabilities. This researcher believes that we can help to impact a students trajectory for the better if teachers and coaches can help students have authentic work skills through hands-on learning. As transition age students continue work based learning instructions there are areas where instruction of social skills are challenging. Lee & Carter, (2012) stated: "although a fairly extensive literature has addressed the design and delivery of social skills intervention within school based settings, far less attention has focused on the application these interventions to teaching work relations social and interpersonal skills" (p. 995). Social skills in personal situations can look very different from social skills in work related tasks. These are two different areas of understanding for students when navigating their understanding of working. According to Lee and Carter "...social and work-related instruction should be a prominent focus of instruction within the secondary curriculum" (Lee & Carter, 2012, p. 995).

That being said, this is something that can also be reinforced in transition aged programming. Transition (18-21) programming is a staple for students that may need a little more direction in skills to be successful in life after their school journey. Just like every student is an individual and their needs are unique, this is also true when it comes to transition needs for

students with disabilities. "The demands of the 21st-century workforce require local education agencies to prepare students with disabilities for college and career readiness by providing instruction and services to assist youth in attaining positive post-school outcomes" (Mazzotti & Rowe, 2015, p. 299) preparing students for life after high school and their schooling journey is critical to their success.. Working with life skills, along with work skills, so that success is something that every student can obtain without going into a college program. Mazzotti & Rowe said best: "...beginning with the end in mind, transition assessment identifies areas of student need that can be addressed as early elementary school" (Mazzotti & Rowe, 2015, p. 299). If the end of a student's journey is always thought of, we can better support where the student is going instead of supporting where the student is. Challenging a student to do more than they are perceived to be able to do is better than only supporting them in the things they know they for sure can do.

Finally, as we continue to grow in this country, we continue to become more diverse in our school and our workforce. "Due to the increasing diversity of our nation, it is also important that teachers and school personnel provide effective transition services to youth with disabilities with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Mazzotti & Rowe, 2015 p. 299). Schools continue to grow in the differing backgrounds of our students. Diversity contours instruction is something that transitions are needing to do. Transition programming is preparing all students for all areas of life after their school journey, no matter their linguistic or cultural background. Transition programming for students in WBL is an assist that can help prepare our students for life after their school journey.

Work Based Learning For All Students

Youth Apprenticeships

What are they?

There are many different ways that you can define an apprenticeship however, for the purpose a youth apprenticeship it can be defined as follows a "...youth apprenticeship is defined as a program that integrates school and workplace learning by emphasizing learning by doing under the tutelage of experts, and which address the personal and occupational development of young people" (Bremer & Madzar, 1995 p. 2) Youth apprenticeships are something that can expose our youth to jobs that may have a need for high skill level in a certain area. These apprenticeships are designed to have a student learn a specific skill and possible trade so that they can be ready for the workforce when they are completed with high school. According to Wonthey (2019): "Youth Apprenticeship programs give students a wide range of choices after high school that include embarking on career pathways, moving directly into industry, attending post secondary education and joining an adult apprenticeship" (p. 30). When we give students choice in what they can do we will see more success. Youth Apprenticeship is something that can open doors for students to industry, postsecondary education, and further adult apprenticeships.

How do they benefit students?

There are many different benefits that students have when they have been a part of a youth apprenticeship. One of the first benefits for the students is gaining skills from someone who is highly qualified in their field. Other than gaining independent skills according to Bremer and Madzar they are:

"...(1) linking theory and practice; (2) gaining work experience generally, and within a particular function; (3) gaining personal insight -- including job preferences; (4) entering into a professional role; (5) gaining knowledge of the working of the particular organization; (6) acquiring knowledge and attitudes relevant to future learning; (7) exercising skills of thinking in a practical context; and (8) developing personal maturity."

(Bremer & Madzar, 1995)

Having students be able to link the theory that they learn in classrooms to working it in practice helps to solidify skills and helps students to understand if they are going to enjoy going down the path of that certain career choice. Students are gaining work experience to grow their resumes which can help for college and or join the workforce after secondary school. Job preference is a huge part of deciding on a career and with a youth apprenticeship student can gain their personal insight on jobs first hand. These apprenticeships can leave students with professional certificates and skills that can help them to step into more professional roles. Through these apprenticeships students are able to gain maturity in the workplace, how the organization they are working within works and acquire knowledge about what it could take to continue to move within the job skills area that they are apprenticing in. Youth apprenticeships are a part of Work Based Learning that can continue to prepare students for many different journeys they may take after their high school career. They can prepare for post secondary education, entering into a skills based labor industry, or continue into an adult apprenticeship program.

Job Shadowing

What is it?

Job shadowing is another area of work based learning that can help support students to be more prepared for life after their high school graduation. Job shadowing can come in many different forms. It can be a program within a high school where it is something you do as a class or it can be structured as a whole high school. This is best seen in Omaha Nebraska where they have a successful Job shadowing program where "students are participating in a career focused half-day program in veterinary science at the High School Zoo Academy" (Mulkerrin, Leising, & Sykes, 2018). This half day veterinary program can put students in hands on experiences that can help them with skills that they can use after high school and have great resumes for college. "Research shows that students exposed to career and technical education are more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, and earn higher salaries than those who don't" (Mulkerrin, Leising, & Sykes, 2018).

Job shadowing in itself course structure can be set up in different ways to best support student understanding and learning. "In a typical job-shadowing experience lasting eight to 10 weeks , one or two students observe the daily work and routines of a single mentor or, on occasion, several workers in the same facility" (Mulkerrin, Leising, & Sykes, 2018).

How does it benefit students?

Job Shadowing is a great program that can help students become prepared for the next steps in their life or educational journey by giving on the job skills, helping to understand different job skills, and giving students resume building activities. Job shadowing has given students skills that can transfer over into college or the job world. According to Mulkerrin, Leising, & Sykes (2018): "many grads tell us their Zoo Academy experiences gave them the confidence and qualifications to pursue opportunities they otherwise would have avoided". This

showed that they can get job skills and confidence and that is only one benefit of job shadowing. Also these activities can grow students' resumes by showing they have skills that can be put to use in different job areas. Finally, job shadowing benefits students by giving them learned skills in the real job environment, resume' building activities, and helps students to understand many different job skills. Other than being a great program, this type of experience gives students the opportunity to be a part of the real life job world.

Career and Technical Student Organizations

What is it?

Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) are a key part to work based learning and helping students within the work based learning field. These different organizations align with different industry areas such as business, farming and agriculture, and skills based jobs. CTSO's have many different things that make them what they are: Alfeld, Hansen, Aragon, and Stone stated: "we believe that CTSOs provide four distinctive kinds of experiences for high school students who participate: (1) leadership, (2) professional development, (3) competitions, and (4) community service" (Alfeld, Hansen, Aragon, & Stone,James R., I.,II, 2006, p. 123).

CTSO's which were previously called Vocational Student Organizations, can provide the above 4 distinct experiences however they can also provide skill building and different advantages.

"Advantages of participating in a Vocational student organization include: (a) building self-confidence; (b) developing interpersonal relationship skills; (c) improving vocationally related and employability skills; (d) providing motivation to learn; (e)

providing valuable information about citizenship and living independently in a

democratic society; (f) developing leadership skills; and (g) providing an opportunity for

effective teacher student interaction" (Sarkees, 1983, p. 62).

These different advantages help skills with and without disability learn skills from peers and

teachers to continue to help them prepare for life after high school.

When students can learn leadership from qualified adults within their area of interest, it

helps the student connect to their skills they are learning both in school and from their CTSO.

Professional development is something that students will need as they advance their career or

interest area. Developing an interest in developing oneself professionally early on within their

education journey helps to prepare students for many different avenues after high schools.

Competition and understanding that hard work and determination get us somewhere is a huge

skill area that can help students stand out when looking for colleges, industry jobs, or vocational

education. When we embed the need of serving our community into our students we embed a

desire to serve those around them. This will help to develop students to have compassionate

hearts and be willing to work with their community in times of need.

How does it benefit students?

First off, "CTSOs promote career exploration and interfacing with business and industry.

These opportunities allow students to practice making more informed choices about their careers

while setting goals and assessing options. Support and encouragement from the instructor are the

last key components of a facilitative environment for developing self-determination" (McNally

& Harvey, 2001). These benefits show that students that are a part of CTSOs are developing

skills in self determination while exploring different career options to maximize their

understanding of what is next for them after high school. Secondly, CTSOs are an inclusive

option for students with special needs as well.

    "CTSO programs provide opportunities that are designed to afford equal access for all

vocational-technical education students, including those with special learning needs.

There is an all-inclusive nature to activities and programs in CTSOs with a broad range

of options for various skill sets for all participants. One component of such a program is a

system of student-skill competitions. CTSOs design options for students with

limited-skill sets so that they too can experience the benefits of healthy competition"

(McNally & Harvey, 2001).

Students with differing abilities benefit from CTSOs just as much as students without differing

abilities. Having students with differing abilities understand competition and work skills needed

for certain jobs benefits them to grow skills that they can carry over into a work environment. It

also helps them with understanding how to handle many different social situations that they may

come across when in the job field. Looking at the effect and benefits of CTSOs, Alfeld, Hansen,

Aragon and Stone stated that: "...hypothesize that participation in a CTSO will affect students'

achievement motivation, academic engagement, civic engagement, career self efficacy,

employability skills, grades, and college aspirations" (2006, p. 128).

<div align="center">**Examples of Organizations**</div>

<div align="center">**DECA**</div>

DECA is a student organization that is within most high schools that run certain

programming in schools. "Today, DECA prepares emerging leaders and entrepreneurs in

marketing, finance, hospitality, and management high schools and colleges across the globe"

(Young, 2011, p. 32-33). Preparing students for leadership is something DECA has done since the 1950's and beyond. They have been preparing future business leaders for years. This organization has helped students understand how CTE and Work Based Learning can help them to figure out and prepare them for their journey after graduation. Not only does DECA work within schools to create programming for students to learn how to run a store or designing or building pop up shops, it helps to engage students within their community. "DECA prepares the next generation to be academically prepared , community oriented, professionally responsible, and experienced leaders" (Young, 2011, p. 33). This organization is working to prepare its members for business related careers to become better leaders with community minded values and understanding of what the business world looks like after high school.

Future Farmers of America

"The establishment of the Future Farmers of America (FFA) in 1928 and its subsequent growth in size and scope was noticed around the world. Agricultural education professionals from dozens of other countries wanted to know about the organization and how it helped motivate young rural boys to study vocational agriculture and choose agriculture as a career field" (Connors, 2013). FFA or Future Farmers of America is a Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO). The focus of FFA is on youth development and careers in agriculture. FFA also has another focus area: "The traditions of the National FFA Organization (FFA) are grounded in agrarianism. This ideology focuses on the ability of farming and nature to develop citizens and integrity within people" (Martin & Kitchel, 2013). The FFA has taken their tradition and formed it into an organization that empowers youth development and helps them to prepare for life and careers after high school. Although, FFA is a well known national

organization that works well in rural community schools, there are some students that feel there are barriers in place that hinder them from participating in FFA. "Other studies indicated the lack of diverse role models could form a barrier to urban students' joining the FFA" (Martin & Kitchel, 2014). This is one of many different obstacles or barriers that came up for FFA in an urban environment. Another discussion is the lack of transportation in the urban environment. Overall, FFA is a CTSO that has grown to an international idea that can help promote youth development and career readiness. This is an organization that youth who are interested in agricultural education or careers can be a part of to help be prepared for life and journeys after high school.

Although there are many more CTSO organizations other than DECA and FFA. Highlighting two of the most popular and successful CTSOs helps to see that they are helpful in preparing students for life after high school.

CHAPTER III: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Literature

Preparing students for the next steps in life after high school is one of the biggest jobs that both general and regular education professionals have. We have the honor of working with students in some of the most formative years of their life. As a teacher, I view my job as one to prepare students for where they want to be in the next 5 - 10 or 20 - 30 years. What do these students want to do for their life or where do they see themselves? My goal is to see how can I make sure that they will get there in some way, shape or form.

Career and Technical education courses, along with Work Based Learning that incorporates varying different forms of models, are what works to keep students engaged. As educators, we get to prepare students for the next steps of life after high school. Having the choice and the ability to have hands-on skills experience through varying models of education helps students become ready for their next journey. Along with the engagement of students, we search to help students understand that there are more choices after high school than just college.

Research has shown that students having the ability to have knowledge of different careers, and be career-ready, has helped support better outcomes for students. It also has shown that Work Based Learning programs have helped to create confidence in students to know where they want to go to school or what they want to do after completing high school. Students

specifically that have participated in job shadowing feel more confident when going into college courses or finding work in their field because they understand the expectations of employers.

Work experience programming for special education students have greatly helped them be ready for the transition into further educational programming or getting a job after high school. "One-way students can learn the requirements of a job is to spend a day with someone who is performing the job" (Cease-Cook, Fowler, & Test, 2015). This is something that resonated with me when going through literature that was referenced in many articles in different ways. Students retain information better by hands-on experiences in working alongside a professional. "Work Based Learning seeks to achieve outcomes that may include readiness for work and careers, entry to an education or training program, completion of a career-related program of study, degree or credential attainment, job entry, career advancement, and self-sufficiency" (Cahill & Jobs for, 2016).

Within all the literature of this thesis, there were definitely resonating factors. The resonating factors across the board in all the articles were self-advocacy, self-determination, resilience, job skill building, youth development, and leadership, These are all areas of skills that students were able to gain by being a part of work-based learning, career and technical education courses, or involved in career and technical student organizations. If a student can learn to self-advocate and be self-determined, we have helped to foster a student that will be ready for the next steps of life, no matter what direction that student takes.

Professional Applications

This research has given me many different professional applications. I feel that it can give both general education and special education teachers a sense of how important work-based

learning can be to all students. These professional applications can be varied depending on what you teach and what department you are a part of.

For special education teachers, the research within this thesis can help to understand how students in special education can benefit from different areas of work-based learning. When it comes to work experience, it helps teachers or readers to understand what benefits to students are when being a part of work experiences. There are also sections speaking to Job Shadowing, Youth Apprenticeship, and the importance of Transition (18-21) Programming for students with special education needs that are helpful to learn about for educators.

For both general education and special education teachers, this research has laid out the importance of work-based learning in all areas of student's education. There are sections that teachers can use to understand how Career and Technical Student Organizations can help students to gain hands-on skills along with gaining leadership experience in their desired career area. Also, areas where educators can understand how Job Shadowing & Youth Apprenticeships could benefit their students that may be struggling with their normal academics such as English, Math, Social Studies, and/or Science.

Finally, this research has expanded my understanding of how education can be different. Through this research I have started to understand that education does not need to be just academics. Education can be administered through skills-based work in Work Based Learning environments. I am now working with some students that struggle with their regular academics to see how we can help them to learn what they need to be successful through WBL instead of the normal academic classes.

Limitations of the Research

When doing the research for the literature review, there were few limitations of research. Although there was some research on disabilities and work-based learning, there was a lack of research that is current in nature and data that is reviewable and current to understand trends. Also, in the review literature, there was a lack of literature on specific programmings such as mentorships in work-based learning and different areas of WBL that students could be a part of.

Review of research became challenging when wanting to analyze the difference in programs between regular education and special education. There was more research-based in regular education WBL than on special education. There were portions of research on how to implement WBL for special education but not as much on how it is working for students with disabilities.

Implications for Future Research

After reviewing all the research, I found about WBL, Career, and Technical Education courses, and Career and Technical Student Organizations there are definite areas of growth when it comes to future research. Research needs to be improved in finding facts and data on how students with disabilities can better participate in CTSO or Career and Technical Student Organizations. There is research from the 1980s, however I feel that it is time to reassess and see how we can be helping students in special education to access CTSOs. Secondly, I feel like expanded research needs to be done on how career and technical education classes and work-based learning programs have helped to decrease high school dropout numbers. Thirdly, helping to expand research on how all different fascists of work-based learning programs can support students with and without disabilities. Lastly, there is a benefit to researching the effect of a purely college-bound teaching curriculum and how it does or does not prepare students for

life after high school. The future of education is ever-changing especially in a world that can be influenced by fear. If we can continue to research how students with and without disabilities are learning best and start teaching that way, we will have better success as teachers and educators. When we are not teaching students skills in finance or even what a loan is we are failing them to understand how our banking works. If we do not teach students how to make a budget we are setting students up to fail financially. If we develop and research how we can be helping students to better prepare for life after high school then we can stop future research into work-based learning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, through my literature review, research, and personal experiences with work based learning programs, I have learned that they better prepare students for life and or education after high school. These programs can give students needed work based skills, leadership opportunities, and a development of additional social skills.

Work Based Learning programs such as Youth Apprenticeships and Job Shadowing have given students job skills learning opportunities. These opportunities have given them confidence in their skills while also giving them school credit. While being a youth apprentice, students are learning valuable career readiness skills from a trained professional, and could be working towards a certificate in the field they are apprenticing. Also with job shadowing they have the opportunity to increase their work skills alongside a professional in the field. This can grow confidence and ability to find jobs through their journey after high school.

Career and Technical Student Organizations have given students opportunities to learn and understand many different skills when it comes to certain parts of their career. Many

different CTSOs focus on helping students gain much needed leadership skills and will help them to lead a team with support from caring teachers. CTSOs also have helped with preparing students to work in business, healthcare, agriculture and many different fields.

Finally, work based learning has helped to develop students self determination, self advocacy, and resilience skills. These different social and emotional skill areas have helped students to become more independent and make decisions on their own after high school. Being able to have self-determination and know what you want to be doing is a huge skill to living a life that you have chosen. Self-advocacy is an area where many students struggle, however, with work experience this helps students develop those skills. They learn that self advocating can help them gain skills that they can use for the rest of their life. Resiliency is a skill that may not be directly taught, but it is learned through the students being able to learn and work through challenging situations. These situations may happen while apprenticing, job shadowing, or during work experience. We teach to work through difficult life situations and the students learn that when being resilient, they can accomplish much more. Finally, work based learning is programming that can definitely better prepare students for life after high school.

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