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Barriers to Employment for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

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BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

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Abstract

This literature review with an application emphasis examines barriers to employment that adolescents and young adults with intellectual disabilities face and looks at what high schools are doing to help them prepare for a job during and after high school. The responsibility to prepare adolescents and young adults with intellectual disabilities for employment falls on many people and should start early. Employability skills should be taught and practiced so that young people are prepared for employment. The research-based applications are a handout of frequently employer-asked questions, a four-day unit plan focusing on employability skills, and a resource directory for families and educators to help young adults with intellectual disabilities find programs to assist them with employment and life outside of high school.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Work plays an essential role in our society. Throughout history, work has been a yardstick by which individuals measure their success; however, working is not easy for everyone. Entering the world of work can be a challenge for young adults and can be especially challenging for young adults with an intellectual disability. Many obstacles must be overcome during the process to find and keep a satisfying and profitable job. Since work plays such an important role in our society, it is imperative young people with intellectual disabilities have the necessary skills and training to enter the workforce. "The successful movement from education to employment is crucial for establishing independence among young adults with disabilities" (Shandra & Hogan, 2008, p. 117).

Holding employment is such a significant part of our culture teenagers are asked to choose a career path before completing high school. High schools even have tailored classes to allow students the opportunity to research and sample different careers before earning a diploma. Many high schools allow students to participate in post-secondary education while still enrolled in secondary school. This dual-credit approach makes the transition to college or a post-secondary career smooth and gives young people the advantage of graduating from high school with college credit and a clear career path in mind (Bangser, 2008).

It is common for teenagers to work part-time jobs while in high school. According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (Targeted News Service, 2019), 81 percent of youth between the ages of 16 and 24 without a disability held employment in at least part of 2019. Additionally, 33.1 percent of youth between the ages of 16 and 24 with a disability had a job in at least part of 2019. This study shows it is less likely for a youth with a disability to find employment than youth without a disability.

Throughout history, equality for people with disabilities has been an ongoing issue. Individuals with disabilities have been viewed as unhealthy and defective. For centuries, the prevailing attitude has been that individuals with a disability cannot contribute to society and rely on welfare or charitable organizations for financial support. These assumptions have been challenging to overcome as buildings, public transportation, housing, and educational facilities have not been required to accommodate individuals with disabilities. By not requiring public entities to accommodate individuals with disabilities, participating in the community was a difficult task (Unger, 2002). However, in recent history, accommodations have been made, and a push for a more inclusive society has been emerging to serve the needs of those with disabilities.

History

In the 1970s, individuals with disabilities began to view themselves as a minority group like other groups battling for equal rights. People started fighting for the equality of individuals with disabilities. Though some changes were made in the 1970s and 1980s, it was not until 1990 when the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed, people with disabilities saw a significant policy change. This Act led to practical changes in the way many people led their lives. ADA guaranteed accessibility to individuals with disabilities in employment, voting, travel, and housing. This Act also provided independence in education, requiring schools to provide access to the same curriculum as students without disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act has changed the way individuals with disabilities navigate their communities. It has also changed the way individuals with disabilities participate in the appropriate accommodations to meet the needs of those with disabilities. ADA affected the workforce, and companies are now required to make reasonable accommodations to allow people with disabilities to work alongside those who are nondisabled (Unger, 2002).

In June 1999, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled in the case *Olmstead v. L.C. and E.W.* that the "integration mandate" of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires public agencies to provide services in the most appropriate integrated settings in order to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities (“Minnesota’s Olmstead Plan,” 2020). The Olmstead Plan created a way for government entities to document their plans and provide services to individuals with disabilities in the most integrated setting possible.

Individual states reacted to ADA and the addition of the Olmstead Act differently. While it is important to provide examples of how states have responded to implementing the Olmstead Act, it is outside the scope of this thesis to discuss the history of disabilities of each state. Minnesota, Nebraska, and Kansas were used as examples of ways states are implementing their Olmstead Plans.

Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton issued an executive order in 2013 to develop and implement Minnesota’s Olmstead Plan (“Minnesota’s Olmstead Plan,” 2020). This plan focused on working with high schools and transition programs to create employment opportunities for students with disabilities. This type of plan is called person-centered planning; the focus was to help students with disabilities find and keep employment in an area of interest and ensure the individual’s preferences were at the center of the plan.

According to the Administration for Community Living, person-centered planning is a process for selecting and organizing services and supports a person with a disability may need to live in the community. The individual chooses their team comprised of family, friends, educators, and service providers to help create a long-term plan including employment, education, and independent living, for the person with the disability. The team identifies the individual’s strengths, goals, medical needs, need for home- and community-based services, and

desired outcomes. This approach also recognizes the person's preferences in recreation, transportation, friendships, therapies and treatments, housing, vocational training and employment, family relationships, and social activities. These elements are included in a written plan for supporting the person, which is developed based on those considerations.

The Minnesota Department of Education has urged secondary schools to start implementing employment skills into special education classes to help prepare students for work and life after high school ("About Minnesota's Olmstead Plan," 2020). Other US states in the Midwest have also developed ways of preparing special education students for employment and life after high school. For example, Iowa and Nebraska have also planned to implement The Olmstead Act in their states. Each state has been approaching the implementation of The Olmstead Act in its own way. The states are responsible for ensuring ADA guidelines are met, and individuals are receiving the services to integrate into the community with individuals who do not have disabilities.

Similar to Minnesota, Nebraska has increased access to education and choice in competitive, integrated employment opportunities as one of seven goals written in their state's Olmstead Plan ("Nebraska's Olmstead Plan," 2019). The Nebraska Department of Education worked with public schools to promote strategies for working with students who have disabilities. Nebraska also worked in partnership with federal, state, and local agencies to provide pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities along with aligning efforts to increase the number of businesses in a variety of employment fields to hire and retain employees with disabilities ("Nebraska's Olmstead Plan," 2019).

Unlike Minnesota and Nebraska, Iowa did not lay out a specific plan to work with schools to incorporate the Olmstead Plan within public education (Olmstead Plan Framework,

2020). Iowa has nine particular areas of focus included in its Olmstead Plan. Employment has been listed in the third outcome under "Life in the Community." The third outcome stated that children with disabilities and mental health conditions should be appropriately educated in integrated settings. Iowa's plan also stated adults with disabilities and mental illnesses would be employed in integrated settings of their choice, earning competitive wages and benefits. Iowa's Olmstead Plan included connecting individuals with disabilities to federal, state, and local agencies such as Medicaid employment services, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and Iowa Department for the Blind Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act ("Olmstead Plan Framework," 2020).

While each state has its own Olmstead Plan, Minnesota has had a strong focus on working with students in public high schools who have disabilities. The Minnesota Department of Education has partnered with public high schools and transition programs to help students and young adults with disabilities gain the skills needed to find and keep employment in a field they enjoy ("Minnesota's Olmstead Plan," 2020). As educators have been working with students to help them gain employment, it has become clear that students face many barriers that must be overcome to find competitive integrated employment that will lead to a lifetime career.

President Donald Trump signed the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act into law in 2018. Known as *Perkins V*, it replaced the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 as federal funding for career and technical education (CTE). This is the largest federal investment in CTE and ensures career and technical programs are rigorous. It also ensures academic and technical content is connected across secondary and post-secondary education (National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, 2020).

Many of the Perkins Act's provisions align with the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE). NAPE's mission is to promote equity in Career and Technical Education. The Act is intended to promote and measure enrollment and program completion of nontraditional students, ensuring women and men participate in and complete training programs in fields where they are traditionally underrepresented. The Act also includes provisions for helping special populations, including individuals with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, and individuals preparing for nontraditional fields. The CTE programs are designed to prepare individuals for high-skills and high-wage employment (National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, 2020).

Purpose and Guiding Questions

The purpose of this literature review with application emphasis is to understand what holds 18 to 21-year-old students with intellectual disabilities back from finding and keeping employment. Given that purpose, the guiding questions are: What employment barriers do adolescents, and young adults with intellectual disabilities face in the United States? How are US high schools helping adolescents and young adults with intellectual disabilities prepare for employment?

Key Terminology

It is important to know, understand, and recognize several key terms found throughout the information provided in this thesis. The key terminology is *intellectual disability*, *transition program*, *Individualized Education Plan* (IEP), *cooperative education programs, competitive integrated employment, and supported employment.*

An *intellectual disability* is a disability characterized by significant intellectual functioning limitations and adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates before age 22 (Schalock, Luckasson, & Tassé 2021).

A *transition program* for students with intellectual disabilities focuses on academic enrichment, socialization, independent living skills, including self-advocacy skills, and integrated work experiences and career skills that lead to gainful employment. The program should integrate person-centered planning in developing the course of study for each student (Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities, 2015).

An *Individualized Education Plan (IEP)* is a plan or program developed to ensure that a child with an identified disability attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives specialized instruction and related services. The IEP includes the following components: the student's progress in the general curriculum, all related services for which the student qualifies, appropriate educational accommodations necessary for the student to be successful, the student's present levels of academic performance, and measurable annual goals and objectives for the student's education (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology, 2019).

Cooperative education programs are programs that work with students, faculty, staff, and employers to help students clarify career and academic goals and expand classroom study by participating in paid, practical work experiences (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology, 2019). These programs provide opportunities to work in trainee positions in fields of interest and to gain career-related experience as a part of academic programs. By participating in cooperative education programs, students may earn academic credits. When a student gains academic credit, the school typically discusses the student's work performance with the employer to determine their success.

Competitive integrated employment refers to jobs held by people with the most significant disabilities in typical workplace settings where most persons employed are not persons with disabilities. In these jobs, individuals with disabilities earn at least minimum wage

and earn equal pay as workers without disabilities, perform the same or similar tasks, and are paid directly by the employer (Office of Disability Employment Policy: Integrated Employment, n.d.).

According to Wehman (2012), *supported employment* means competitive employment in an integrated setting with ongoing support services for individuals with the most severe disabilities. Supported employment is designed to assist individuals for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred or for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent due to a severe disability.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To locate the literature for this thesis, searches of Education Journals, ERIC, Academic Search Premier, and EBSCO were conducted for publications from 1980-2020. This list was narrowed by only reviewing published empirical studies from peer-reviewed journals that focused and addressed the guiding questions of what barriers students with intellectual disabilities face when looking for and keeping employment. The literature also examined how schools can help prepare students with disabilities to enter the workforce. The keywords used in these searches included "intellectual disabilities and employment" and "barriers to employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities." Further review of the articles' references provided a comprehensive list of research articles that gave insight into the workforce for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

To answer the guiding questions, Chapter II is organized as follows. First, the literature on employer perceptions and the responsibility of the school and family is reviewed. Next, literature surrounding skills needed for employment and community barriers is reviewed. Finally, literature about employment programs provided by the school and community resources is reviewed.

Employer Perceptions

To better understand some of the barriers that persist in holding back individuals with intellectual disabilities from finding and keeping competitive employment, it is important to understand what perceptions employers have regarding hiring individuals with disabilities. According to Baker et al. (2018), employers fear that an employee with a disability would not perform at the same rate of efficiency and accuracy as a person without a disability. There is an apparent gap between assumed abilities and the actual abilities of individuals with disabilities. In

the recent past, there has been an assumption that individuals with disabilities are not as well educated and will not be as capable of learning a job as those without a disability (Baker et al., 2018).

The assumption regarding individuals with disabilities not being as well educated and ready for employment was shown in a field experiment's results (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). Identical resumes from well-qualified applicants for accounting positions were submitted. One-third of the cover letters disclosed that the applicant had spinal cord injury, one-third disclosed Asperger's syndrome, and the remaining third did not mention a disability. Applicants with disabilities received 26 percent fewer expressions of interest than those without disabilities.

In another study, 30 human resource managers from companies with at least 250 employees were used to assess differences in perceived barriers to employment of people with physical disabilities, mental disabilities, and intellectual disabilities (Kocman et al., 2017). The study collected data via three questionnaires and semi-formal interviews. The questionnaires included quarries asking the participants to rate the likelihood of barriers to inhibit employment for the three types of individuals with disabilities. During the interviews, participants were asked to rank their preference for employing people with intellectual, physical, or mental disorders. The results showed that companies were more comfortable hiring individuals with physical disabilities than individuals with mental or intellectual disabilities. Some of the perceived ideas about individuals with mental or intellectual disabilities included a lack of efficiency in completing tasks and an inability to navigate the hiring process. Another perceived barrier was fear of legal repercussions if an individual could not meet production standards or was not a good fit for the company and needed to be dismissed from their job (Kocman et al., 2017).

This study went on to ask human resource managers what strategies would be beneficial for companies to gain comfort in hiring individuals with mental or intellectual disabilities. The managers reported they needed more information and awareness training and increased networking activities with employment services that help those with disabilities find employment. The study also noted that disabled individuals might need more help when beginning a new job. Companies reported they would be willing to allow a person from an outside agency to support a new employee while learning all the job duties and skills needed for the position. It is clear from these two studies that employer perceptions played a role in a company's willingness to hire an individual with a disability. Since the introduction to employment usually starts in the teenage years, schools must be willing to partner with outside employment agencies to connect with businesses and provide disability training for human resource staff members (Kocman et al., 2017).

School's Responsibility

Lawmakers know schools play an essential role in helping prepare young people for employment. Therefore, several federal and state policies have provided funding for school-to-work programs to address the school's responsibility in guiding students to work. While these programs have been somewhat successful, there is still a discrepancy between youth with disabilities and youth without disabilities (Shandra & Hogan, 2008). Shandra and Hogan (2008) examined five questions among a sample of young adults with disabilities. The data was collected over seven years and involved 8,984 young people ranging from ages 12 to 16. The study used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97). The study intended to determine a change in the employment rate for individuals with disabilities after the amendment to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1990 and 1997 and the School

to Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) of 1994. There were 2,254 individuals with disabilities selected for the data collection, and these individuals were identified in the initial data from NLSY97 as having a disability. Data were collected for seven years, from 1997 to 2004, to determine the employment status of the 2,254 individuals. The study revealed that a youth's employment is highly dependent upon their previous employment. Students who participated in a school-to-work program were 1.5 times more likely to work full time and be offered benefits from their employers. The results indicated that participation in cooperative education, which is now included as part of the School to Work Opportunities Act, has positively impacted students. Shandra and Hogan's (2008) study could not distinguish between students who received special education services and those who did not, limiting the depth of information they considered. Specifics of students' classes and program opportunities were unknown, which could play a role in how successful students were in employment after graduating high school.

According to Sabbatino and Macrine (2007), concerns about students with disabilities transitioning from secondary education to life after high school have been the focus of several pieces of federal legislation. Legislators enacted the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994. The purpose of this act was to prepare students with and without disabilities to overcome challenges in their transition from school to work (Sabbatino and Macrine, 2007). The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendment of 1997 was similar. This Amendment mandated that all students with a disability have transition planning as part of their Individual Education Plan (IEP) by age 14. IDEA required a statement of interagency obligations and connections to ensure that programs for students with disabilities continue after they leave school (Wittenburg et al., 2002). These measures reinforced the need for schools to provide employment skills for students who have a disability.

Although high schools have funding and programs that allow students to gain employment skills, some barriers keep students with intellectual disabilities from fully accessing programs that would benefit them. According to Southward and Kyzer (2017), some of the barriers include growing up in an environment with low expectations, a lack of knowledge about workplace accommodations, fewer work opportunities to choose from, and a lack of interpersonal skills for employment.

Research by Finn et al. (2001) offered that IDEA should be recommitted to empowering students to overcome their disabilities by equipping them with coping strategies rather than teaching students to always expect special services and accommodations. Finn et al. (2001) suggested that as some states have moved toward a standards-based curriculum and a results-based accountability system, special education students are not always required to meet these standards. This requirement deficit creates more of an academic gap between students with disabilities and those without disabilities.

McLaughlin (2010) reported that receiving a high school diploma is an essential outcome for students with disabilities, but the rigor of graduation requirements is also important. McLaughlin's study surveyed all 50 US states and the District of Columbia from 2002 to 2003 to examine graduation requirements for students with and without disabilities. Results indicated that students with disabilities were allowed to obtain a standard diploma without completing all requirements in most states. Each state uses a slightly different method. Some examples include reducing the number of credits required, allowing alternate courses to substitute for course credit requirements, lowering performance criteria, and extending the time to graduation. Some states offer IEP/special education diplomas, occupational diplomas, or grant certificates of attendance and achievement. According to McLaughlin (2010), "The unequal expectations for graduation

may likely reflect an attempt to treat some students with disabilities differently to provide them an equitable opportunity to receive a diploma. Although such treatment may be fair, it may promote greater inequities if it results in loss of opportunity to gain knowledge and skills that are relevant and necessary for post-school success (p. 272).

A study conducted by McEachern and Kenny (2007) reported students with disabilities are often unprepared to handle the transition from school to work due to a lack of knowledge about the work world and barriers facing them as they move from secondary education to life after high school. Two groups of ten students who had either a physical, learning, or cognitive disability were formed based on their preference and ability to attend post-secondary education or go straight into the working world after high school. Both groups met with guidance counselors in nine sessions. Each session focused on a different topic of needed information for either post-secondary education or employment. After nine group sessions, guidance counselors working with the employment group reported students lacked work and volunteer experiences and needed assistance in finding those opportunities and expanding their knowledge and familiarity with employment options.

Research by Carter et al. (2010) suggests that early work experience during high school is one of the most consistent employment predictors for young adults with disabilities. According to Sankardas and Rajanahally (2015), training in employability skills should start early and should be an ongoing process that should provide a smooth transition into skills training. Students should also be able to access training relevant to the labor market and the student's abilities.

Family's Responsibility

Parent involvement is another factor of the success in transitioning from high school to the world of work for young adults with disabilities (Francis et al., 2019). Francis noted that parents frequently report not being included in their student's transition plan or even informed of their plan. This study, where 26 parents with young adults who have intellectual disabilities were interviewed, showed that communication waned as students went to middle and high school. Parents commented that involvement and collaboration seemed more complicated as students become young adults. Parents explained a lack of awareness about support services their young adults may need as they grow older and move out of the public-school system (Francis et al., 2019).

According to Hall et al. (2013), a survey given to several job developers working with young adults with intellectual disabilities reported that common factors arise when engaging with families. Family members often suggested employment places where they have a connection without considering the young adult's skills and interests. Another common concern for families is transportation to and from work for their family member with an intellectual disability. As reported by Hall et al. (2013), job developers also encountered family members reluctant to embrace employment for fear that even small amounts of money earned would eliminate or substantially decrease the job seeker's social security income (SSI) and social security disability income (SSDI). Sankardas and Rajanahally (2015) revealed another concern parents have with their employed young adult with a disability is the employer's lack of sensitivity toward their young adult.

Families play a crucial role in helping their students find employment, especially those with intellectual disabilities (Gilson et al., 2018). In a study conducted by the Research and

Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities (2020), 673 parents and family members of adults with intellectual disabilities were given a questionnaire asking them to rate the importance of different employment aspects. Over 71 percent of families rated their top priority when thinking about employment as finding a job that brings personal satisfaction to their young adult. The least rated priority was the number of hours their young adults worked (Gilson et al., 2018). Families also named job support, the ability to apply for and find a job, social skills/communication, safety, and transportation as significant concerns.

Austin (2000) stressed that parents significantly impact their young adult's values and expectations regarding independence and social integration. Parents are the one constant in the life of a person with a disability. Parents can set an example and promote positive attitudes regarding school and the need for education. They can advocate for the continuity of services for their student between school and adult organizations. "In many ways, the parent has the most to gain or lose when it comes to the progress their disabled child can make concerning academic, social, and vocational skills. Yet very few programs directly address the needs of the parents of disabled youth" (Austin, 2000, 2).

Employability Skills Needed

Employability skills are the core skills and traits needed in nearly every job. They are the general skills that make someone desirable to an organization. Employability skills include soft skills that allow people to work well with others, apply knowledge to solve problems, fit into any work environment, and include professional skills that enable someone to succeed in the workplace. They are often transferable skills because they can be applied to a job in any industry (Doyle, 2020). According to Clark et al. (2019), poor soft skills account for approximately 90% of job losses and are a significant employment barrier for students with disabilities to overcome.

These soft skills include work completion, task accuracy, punctuality, social skills, and self-regulation.

Social skills represent one of the most important employability skill areas, and they are critical across all industries and occupations, both for employees with and without disabilities (Ju et al., 2012). Agran et al. (2016) reported that employers do not feel it is the employer's responsibility to teach social skills. However, it is the employee's responsibility to have the skills before beginning work. The value of social skills in promoting the employability of individuals with disabilities, particularly those with an intellectual disability, is significant. Obtaining and retaining a job may depend on the quality of an individual's social interactions, which is why it is imperative employees have appropriate skills when starting a job (Agran et al., 2016).

Southward and Kyzar (2017) reported that young adults with intellectual disabilities require job-specific training before seeking employment. Sankardas and Rajanahally's (2015) research investigated the importance of training for young adults with disabilities. This study aimed at identifying the importance of specific skills training for young adults with disabilities over the age of 18. Researchers gathered data from questionnaires and interviews from fifteen vocational instructors, ten employers, and ten parents. The questionnaire included a combination of closed and open-ended inquiries. Out of the total number of 35 questionnaires distributed, 27 were completed and returned by 13 vocational instructors, six retail employers, and eight parents. The answers from the questionnaires were analyzed to help determine what questions would be asked in the interview. Those interviewed were two vocational instructors, two retail employers, and two parents.

Sankardas and Rajanahally (2015) concluded that if young adults are taught the skills necessary for a particular job, they would be able to find employment in a field where their skills

matched the job requirements. The results confirmed that vocational instructors and employers agree on the importance of skills training. Vocational instructors felt simulated skills practice in an environment like a potential job setting would be beneficial before assigning actual job tasks. Parents felt the capability to work would depend on the level of an individual's disability.

Sankardas and Rajanahally's (2015) study was conducted with a limited sample group and cannot be generalized beyond the specific group used in the study. Views gathered from a more significant number of vocational instructors, employers, and parents would have represented more of the population and may have shown other skills thought necessary for young people with disabilities to have before finding employment. Another limitation of the study is particular disabilities were not discussed, which leaves room for participants' interpretation when answering questions regarding one's opinions.

Scheef et al. (2019) explained businesses like to hire employees with strong soft skills. The top five skills employers look for are attitude, dependability, stamina, flexibility, and communication. Attitude was the most discussed soft skill as employers reported the need for individuals to be positive and maintain a pleasant demeanor. An employee can learn technical skills on the job, but soft skills are essential to an employee's success (Scheef et al., 2019).

In another study completed by Clark et al. (2019), almost 90% of job loss for people with disabilities is due to the lack of soft skills, such as work completion, task accuracy, punctuality, social skills, and self-regulation. In addition, employers perceived having youth with disabilities work at their business as a disadvantage as opposed to youth without disabilities. These employers noted soft skill instruction could be a way to assist youth with disabilities in finding employment. It was found that employers value soft skills over academic skills. The skills

employers felt youth people with disabilities were missing were communication, teamwork, cooperation, problem-solving, and work ethic.

In the Clark et al. (2019) study, a soft skills curriculum called UPGRADE Your Performance was introduced and used with four high school students from a suburban public high school. UPGRADE Your Performance is a framework for building soft skills and includes introduction, explanation, practice, and reinforcement. The four students chosen to participate in this study had intellectual disabilities and IEP and goals of participating in on-the-job training at school or in the community and finding regular employment. The students were enrolled in an employment class but had not had any instruction regarding soft skills.

Students were given a job performance rubric based on skills employers reported necessary for successful employees to possess. The following soft skills were listed on the rubric, attitude and cooperation, reliability, productivity and on-task behavior, quality of work, teamwork, and communication. Students were given baseline scores based on their performance on in-school job tasks for three days and community job site tasks for one day. Students were evaluated by an interventionist and an employer at the community sites and the interventionist at the in-school job site. Three employers participated: a bank, a sporting goods store, and a computer technology service center. All evaluators used a job performance rubric created for this study. The interventionist provided instruction on what was required to complete the job tasks; however, students did not receive any feedback or instruction regarding soft skills during their tasks.

Students participated in one-on-one instruction, which included explaining the job performance rubric and the importance of soft skills on a job. During the instruction, students defined key terms, role-played, and viewed video instruction where they were able to practice

evaluating someone using the job performance rubric. At the end of the instruction, students were asked to set a goal to improve in the area with the lowest score from their job performance rubric. After students set personal goals to improve one soft skill area, students participated in the same tasks as before; however, the daily tasks were complete, students were asked to evaluate themselves. The students were given worksheets followed by instruction from the interventionist working with the student. Students were asked to follow the steps: Evaluate yourself (U), then the professional (P) showed the student his or her score of their performance only on the section of the rubric the student selected in which to focus, third, the students were asked to graph (G) both scores on a graphing worksheet and compare the scores, next students restated (R) their goals to determine if it was met, fifth students were asked to acknowledge (A) what they did well, then they decided (D) what they could improve, and then executed (E) the plan to meet the goal.

Once students reached their goals, they moved to the subsequent phases, U-GRADE I and U-GRADE II. This involved evaluating yourself, (U), graphing your scores (G), restating your goal and determining if you met it (R), acknowledging what you did well (A), deciding what you need to do better (D), and executing improvements to meet your goal (E). During U-GRADE I, the goal was for students to work independently and evaluate their skills. After being taught how to use their personal electronic device (i.e., phone, iPad, tablet) to track their personal goals, the interventionist slowly phased out job support. U-GRADE II's purpose was to generalize their soft skills to community jobs with the interventionist checking in every third day.

The results of this study concluded that even when students focus on one soft skill to improve, over time, all the soft skills increased. When students participated in community job

training after setting goals to improve their soft skills and working with the interventionist, the manager from the sporting goods store and computer technology service center both reported they would hire the students. The bank manager said he would need to interview the students to ensure they were a good fit for the bank but gave higher marks on the rubrics after the intervention. Students improved their soft skills while using the UPGRADE method; however, only four students were used in the study, so results are not generalizable to a larger population. It is also unclear if the students were hired after completing the training. Students with disabilities need direct instruction to learn soft skills. They also need opportunities to practice, self-evaluate, and receive feedback on their progress (Clark et al., 2019).

Community Barriers

Besides the skills and support needed for individuals with intellectual disabilities to find and keep employment, there are also barriers in the community that make finding a job difficult. According to Flynn (2015), transportation can be a barrier for individuals with an intellectual disability. The skill to move about one's community safely can increase independence for individuals with disabilities by offering more employment opportunities. Since some individuals cannot obtain a driver's license and drive a car, people with intellectual disabilities are often limited to walking, riding a bicycle, or being transported by others if they do not learn to access transportation. This limitation in accessing transportation creates a barrier to individuals with intellectual disabilities as it restricts employment opportunities.

According to DiPetrillo et al. (2018), many strides have been made in the national transit system accessibility since the 1990 passage of the Americans with Disability Act; however, less progress has been made ensuring that accessible transit stations and stops are in place. The DiPetrillo et al. (2018) study found that people with disabilities who reported actively seeking

employment cited pedestrian infrastructure between home and the nearest transit station or stop as a concern. This study aimed to answer the question: “What agency practices and policies contribute to improving the accessibility of Pathways to Transit?” A survey was used to identify transit agencies actively pursuing policies and projects to improve pathways to transit stations and stops. A total of 152 transit agencies in 37 states and the District of Columbia were surveyed. The study found that Transit agencies were aware of issues such as lack of sidewalks, curb cut-outs, wheelchair-accessible ramps, bus shelters, broken or cracked sidewalks, and other physical barriers could keep a person with a disability from using the pathway to a transit station. Transit agencies acknowledged the need for improvement; however, 65% of the agencies surveyed reported financial limitations were holding them back from improving accessibility (DiPetrillo et al., 2018).

Lubin and Deka (2012) reported that people with disabilities might face public transportation challenges due to the increases in the quality and quantity of service and the cost of service. Another concern with public transit is that it is not an option for one-third of the country’s population because service is not available in the areas where they live. Furthermore, concerns about pedestrian safety and environmental barriers around stations and stops deter individuals with disabilities from using transit services. Finally, transit agencies also encounter obstacles to attracting people with specific disabilities because of their difficulty accessing and interpreting service-related information. In some instances, the perceived barriers may be due to a lack of awareness instead of actual impediments. Despite these challenges, transit agencies are working to enhance services accessible to increasingly larger numbers of people with disabilities (Lubin & Deka, 2012).

Career development and work experiences during high school are associated with improved post-school employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities; however, few natural community partners support and enhance the experiences (Carter et al., 2009). In this study, 135 businesses were surveyed to gather information on their business's feasibility in participating in employment opportunities for individuals with and without disabilities. To access the level of participation, each company had already experienced working with young people with disabilities. The study found that businesses were significantly more likely to have engaged in activities involving youth without disabilities as opposed to youth with disabilities. It was also found that companies were much more likely to mark activities as feasible with students without disabilities. Types of disabilities were not discussed in the survey, which likely masked variability in the business respondents' perceptions (Carter et al., 2009).

Employment Programs in Public School Districts

Most high schools emphasize college preparedness, which often overshadows attention to workforce readiness. According to Levinson and Palmer (2005), approximately 50 percent of young people leave high school without knowing what career path they want to take, or the skills needed to maintain a job. A significant factor in the success of students with disabilities transitioning to employment after high school is a school-to-work program (Levinson & Palmer, 2005).

According to The US Department of Education, all work-based learning programs must exhibit these three qualities to be successful: alignment between the classroom and the workplace, application of academic, technical, and employability skills, and support from classroom and workplace mentors. Bellman et al. (2014) found if one employee from a business agreed to meet with a student with a disability for a 30-minute mock interview or a half-day job

shadow, that business would be more likely to provide other work-related opportunities for students with disabilities.

Employment Supports

Since the inception of the movement toward full inclusion in all aspects of life for people with disabilities, supports are needed to ensure the success of integrated employment (Mautz et al., 2001). One example of support used to help individuals with disabilities find employment is a job coach. According to the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, a job coach is a person who uses structured techniques to assist individuals with disabilities to learn and accurately carry out job duties. Job coaches provide on-the-job training and support the individual to adjust their chosen work environment. This support aims to assist the individual in becoming an independent employee that can maintain their job.

Rogan and Held (1999) described the controversy over schools using paraprofessionals as job coaches. Often schools partner with businesses to allow students to gain either paid or non-paid work experience during the school day. Students often need staff to help teach them the job and navigate social situations that are typical of any workplace. Schools often have paraprofessionals assuming a job coach's role to work with students at their job location. Paraprofessionals usually only need a high school diploma, often do not have job coaching experience, and there is little training for paraprofessionals on how to be a job coach. Despite paraprofessionals not having a lot of training to be job coaches, these staff members are part of the community. They can act as liaisons between businesses in the community and the school (Rogan & Held, 1999).

Often, employees with significant needs need the support of a paid job coach. When Mautz et al. (2001) examined the social interactions of individuals with disabilities who had job

coaches with them at their place of employment, it was found that at times job coaches became a barrier to the individual's social interaction. Employees were found to rely on job coaches to communicate with co-workers instead of communicating with their co-workers independently. To remedy employees from relying too heavily on the job coach to interact with co-workers, job coaches should teach the employee to rely on their natural supports, such as their co-workers, to answer their job questions. The job coach can support the individual with feedback on engaging in interactions with other employees, but the job coach should allow them to use natural supports. Using natural supports enables the individual to transition to work without a job coach smoothly (Mautz et al., 2001).

Another form of supported employment is sheltered programs which are sometimes called sheltered workshops. Sheltered employment programs are designed to assist individuals who, for whatever reason, are viewed as not capable of working in a competitive integrated employment setting (Kregel & Dean, 2002). The term "sheltered employment" is often referred to as a wide range of segregated vocational and non-vocational programs for individuals with disabilities. These may include adult activity centers, work activity centers, and day treatment centers. Each of the programs differs in terms of its mission, services provided, and funding sources (Kregel & Dean, 2002).

Sheltered employment can be categorized into two types. Transitional employment programs are intended to provide training and experience to individuals in segregated settings so that they will be able to acquire the skills necessary to succeed in competitive integrated employment. Extended employment programs are designed to be long-term or permanent placements for individuals that will allow them to use their abilities to earn wages in the segregated workshop setting (Kregel & Dean, 2002).

CHAPTER III: APPLICATION OF THE RESEARCH

There are three applications that answer the guiding questions. Each is described in this section.

Frequently Asked Questions for Employers Handout

The Frequently Asked Questions for Employers Handout is a compilation of common questions employers ask regarding hiring individuals with disabilities. The handout is located in Appendix A and may be shared in person or emailed to an employer. The handout answers questions and misconceptions employers have identified as barriers when deciding whether to hire an individual with a disability.

Audience

There are several possible audiences for this handout. It may be used by school personnel, specifically work coordinators, when meeting with employers regarding the possibility of hiring students with disabilities. The handout may be shared in a group setting or individually, depending on the scenario. The handout could also be shared at a chamber of commerce meeting. Presenting questions and answers to common questions at a meeting where many employers are present would allow school personnel and employers to engage in conversations that could lead to a potential job. Sharing the handout in a meeting would also foster conversation between employers, which could lead to shared stories and examples of experiences hiring individuals with disabilities.

Resources Needed

The information included on the handout could be found by researching specific questions about hiring a person with a disability; however, it would be time-consuming, and it is unlikely that employers would research this information on their own. Compiling common

questions asked by employers and providing answers in a quick format will allow employers to spend more time focusing on their job duties and also hopefully ease their minds about hiring an individual with a disability (Kocman et al., 2017). Having a resource that is easily accessible is also important as school personnel does not always have a lot of time to meet with employers to discuss potential jobs for students.

This resource is needed to address employers' questions and concerns regarding hiring individuals with disabilities. When an employer has a negative or uncertain perception of an individual with a disability working for their company, it creates a barrier to employment. The literature review revealed employers are uncertain of how complicated it would be to hire, train, and sustain employment for an individual with a disability. By creating this handout, employers will have quick access to answers.

Sustainability

One must consider the sustainability of the Frequently Asked Questions for Employers Handout. The handout may be used by any Minnesota school as the information included is from state and federal websites. Since the handout is available electronically, it can be easily edited to add or change information as current laws and regulations change. It is also important to keep the handout simple to understand as employers are busy and do not have a lot of time to spend reviewing a handout regarding potential employees. To keep the handout updated, it should be reviewed once a year by school personnel, such as work coordinators, to ensure the information is current and relevant to employers to which it is being presented. Information may be added if school personnel see that employers are asking the same questions and they are not already addressed in the presentation.

Curriculum Unit on Employability Skills

A four-day curriculum unit focused on employability skills employers reported they are looking for in an employee is included in Appendix B. This unit focuses on soft skills such as positive attitude, communication, work ethic, teamwork, and adaptability. This unit is written for high school and transition-age students in special education. Each lesson includes an introduction, direct instruction, guided practice, independent practice, and assessment. All activities and worksheets are also included.

Audience

This unit could be used in any high school or transition class with special education students. Special education teachers can use this resource as part of a transitions class, employment class, or a class focused on social skills. All lessons include visuals and simple text. Assignments that include a lot of reading are recorded to ensure students understand the assignment and can work as independently as possible. Lessons that include recorded directions have a speaker icon located next to the title of the assignment. All assignments were created to be completed online, allowing students to use assistive technology apps with which they are familiar.

Resources Needed

According to the literature review, students who are taught employment skills and have an opportunity to practice job skills in a work environment have a higher success rate finding and keeping long-term employment (Shandra & Hogan, 2008). Teaching students with disabilities requires materials that can be easily adapted or modified depending on the needs of individual students. The unit included can be easily adapted to meet the needs of all students. The direct

instruction is broken down into small pieces, and the opportunity for student discussion and practice can be done as a whole group, small group, or individually.

Sustainability

The employability skills unit lessons can be used year after year as soft skills will always be needed for employment. The method in which lessons are taught should be reviewed yearly to ensure the skills being taught are relevant and methods of instruction and graphics are current. Special education teachers or work experience coordinators using the unit should make the updates. There will not be one person in charge of maintaining the curriculum; each special education teacher or work coordinator will need to update or change the curriculum to fit their students' needs.

Resource Directory

The Resource Directory for Families and Educators Working with People with Intellectual Disabilities (abbreviated to "Resource Directory"), located in Appendix C, is a resource for families and educators of individuals with intellectual disabilities. The directory includes live and static links to ensure the URL is accessible in both a .pdf and online form. A QR code is also included to maximize usability and convenience for individuals accessing the Resource Directory. The Resource Directory addresses the employment supports because resources for employment agencies are given. The Resource Directory also addresses community barriers by providing transportation resources.

This resource is necessary for the convenience and ease of having resources located in one document. Each resource listed includes a phone number and website where more information about each agency or service can be found. The directory focuses on Hennepin

County, Minnesota, because all of my school's families live in that county. Some state agencies have also been included.

Throughout this paper, barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities are discussed (Hall et al., 2013). To provide relevant and practical services to those with intellectual disabilities, their families, and educators who work with them, a resource directory is beneficial because it provides many resources in one document. Individuals with disabilities, their families, and the educators that serve them are often uncertain of what services and resources are available to assist them with employment and life outside of school. When provided a directory of options, families and educators may find a resource they did not know existed. A directory including available resources, phone numbers, and websites will give families and educators quick access to a particular service or the ability to apply for a resource.

Audience

Often families rely on teachers and school staff to inform them of resources available to assist their student with a developmental disability. By providing school staff such as teachers, social workers, counselors, and administrators access to a directory of resources, school personnel can be an even more valuable resource. When a teenager turns eighteen, they become a legal adult in the eyes of the government. The government does not take into consideration the intellectual functioning of teenagers; therefore, it is the responsibility of an individual's family to decide if they are capable of making decisions on their own or if they need assistance and support from a legal guardian, often a parent or family member. Often when an individual with a disability turns eighteen, they qualify for adult services rather than child services. Many families do not know how to navigate the change in programs and are uncertain of how that will affect their young adults. Offering a directory as a resource for families to reference and find assistance

may ease their minds when it comes to finding appropriate services not only during a transition to adulthood but throughout their child's life.

Resources Needed

A directory including resources such as personal care assistance, technical aids and equipment, health care, counseling, advocacy, education and training, access to transportation, and equal employment opportunities will save families and educators valuable time by not spending it looking for services. The needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities vary greatly depending on the individual. Some individuals have physical limitations and/or a speech/language disability along with an intellectual disability. An individual with a physical or speech/language disability accompanied by an intellectual disability may require more services than a person without limitations.

To obtain the necessary assistance for the individual with an intellectual disability, one must know what resources are available and then choose what best fits the needs of the individual. Receiving services other than what a family or school can provide allows individuals opportunities they may not receive without additional services. These services are often necessary to ensure individuals have access to services and resources they need in the community and ensure they are afforded the same opportunities as individuals without a disability.

Resources for individuals with intellectual disabilities in Hennepin County can be found by doing an internet search; however, the searches do not strictly produce information for individuals with intellectual disabilities. One comprehensive list cannot be found. It is outside of the included directory scope to cover every possible resource for individuals with intellectual

disabilities. Still, many resources are included, and as new or more current resources become available, they may be added to the directory.

Sustainability

It is important to consider the sustainability of the directory. This directory may be used broadly in Hennepin County, Minnesota, high schools, but the most immediate plans are to use it in the Robbinsdale School District. Special education teachers, social workers, school counselors, administrators, or other school personnel could update the directory as new information becomes available. Since the directory is electronic, it can easily be accessed and updated within a few minutes. The directory's easy access was planned to allow access to as many families and school personnel as are interested. It would be advantageous to update the directory a minimum of once a year as resources and websites may change, and new resources will become available.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Individuals with intellectual disabilities face barriers that individuals without disabilities do not face when looking for employment. It is important to understand the barriers so students with intellectual disabilities can find meaningful employment. One of the barriers individuals with intellectual disabilities face is employers' perceptions. Some employers are hesitant to hire an individual with an intellectual disability due to the lack of understanding of the disability and worry about meeting the individual's needs. It is also worth noting that some employers express concern about legal actions that could be taken if disciplinary action is needed regarding an individual with a disability (Baker et al., 2018; Kocman et al., 2017).

Research shows that schools play an essential role in preparing young people for life after high school (Shandra & Hogan, 2008). School-to-work programs have proven to be beneficial in helping educate and train students for the workforce. Schools are often the link between employment and young people with intellectual disabilities. Unfortunately, not all schools offer work programs for students with intellectual disabilities, which can cause students to fall further behind due to the lack of preparedness in employment. The research indicates students with intellectual disabilities are more successful in finding and keeping jobs when work skills are taught at an early age and continue to be practiced throughout their teenage and young adult years (Shandra & Hogan, 2008; Wittenburg et al., 2002).

Parent involvement is a factor in the success of students transitioning from school to the workforce. Some families report not being included in their student's transition plan or being informed of what skills are being taught to their student. Families also report not knowing what resources are available to assist their young person with employment skills after high school (Gilson et al., 2018).

Social skills represent one of the essential employability skill areas and are critical across all industries and occupations, both for employees with or without disabilities. It is the employee's responsibility to demonstrate this skill; however, the individual has to be taught the skills and given a chance to practice before exhibiting the skills needed for the job (Ju et al., 2012; Sankardas & Rajanahally, 2015).

In addition to the skills and support needed for individuals with intellectual disabilities to find and keep employment, there are also barriers in the community that make finding work difficult. At times, transportation is a challenge as many students with intellectual disabilities do not have a driver's license, and public transportation is not always available. When it is, it can be challenging to navigate (Lubin & Deka, 2012).

Although high schools have classes tailored to allow students to taste specific careers, approximately 50 percent of young people leave high school without knowing what career path they want to take or the skills needed to maintain a job (Levinson & Palmer, 2005). A significant factor in students' success with disabilities in transitioning to employment after high school is a school-to-work program. Most high schools emphasize college preparedness, which often overshadows attention to workforce readiness (Levinson & Palmer, 2005).

Since the inception of the movement toward full community inclusion for individuals with disabilities into all aspects of life, supports are needed to ensure the success of integrated employment (Mautz et al., 2001). While inclusion is equitable, it does not come without challenges. Many individuals with intellectual disabilities require support to gain and keep employment. To maintain employment, these individuals need ongoing assistance, usually provided by a job coach or, in some cases, supported employment through a sheltered employment agency (Kregel & Dean, 2002). Although these services make finding and

maintaining employment possible, they do not come without challenges. According to Rogan and Held (1999), not all job coaches have the proper training to assist individuals with job skills and, at times, can enable an individual to rely more on them than the natural supports provided by the workplace. Supported employment through a sheltered employment program allows individuals with significant intellectual impairments to participate in the workforce; however, these individuals often do not receive fair wages and are typically segregated from individuals who do not have disabilities (Kregel & Dean, 2002).

Professional Application

Conducting a literature review about barriers to employment opened my eyes to how many barriers a person with an intellectual disability face finding employment and how many people should be involved in preparing young people for employment. By researching obstacles, it is clear the responsibility falls on many people and should start early. As a special education teacher and work coordinator, I feel a heavy burden to teach students the necessary skills needed in the workforce. I also know students with disabilities often need more assistance when applying for jobs and often require a job coach when learning new tasks at work. After researching, I do not feel less responsible, but I realize the groundwork to prepare a young person for employment must start early.

Young people with intellectual disabilities need opportunities to practice employment skills across time and different settings. When given the opportunity, they are more likely to improve their skills and maintain what they have learned. It is also essential for employers to meet students face to face as meeting in person creates a better opportunity for future employment. Schools can help facilitate in-person meetings with students and employers to help

build students' confidence and better understand the student and how they could contribute to the company.

The Frequently Asked Questions for Employers Handout will help employees concerned about hiring individuals with disabilities. The National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (2020) reports it is beneficial to build relationships with businesses where students with disabilities are successfully employed and ask the company to support outreach to new employers considering hiring a person with a disability. Employers often have questions about the students I work with and want to know if they can perform the job duties. Having the handout available to send to employers before I meet with them will allow our time to discuss logistics rather than questions regarding individuals with disabilities.

This resource can be used by any educator trying to connect students with disabilities to employment opportunities. Work coordinators are often in the community working to connect individuals with disabilities to employment. This handout could be used in person or sent ahead of time to answer common questions about employing a person with a disability. This handout may also be used at events such as Chamber of Commerce meetings to answer questions and find employers who would be interested in working with the school district to employ students with disabilities in the community.

The employability skills unit is a four-lesson unit targeting soft skills employers look for when hiring employees. Although there are many softs skills, the unit in the Appendix focuses on five: attitude, communication, work ethic, teamwork, and adaptability. In the literature review, employers listed good attitude as the number one employability skill needed. I will use this unit in my employment skills class.

I will use the Resource Directory for Families and Educators Working with People with Intellectual Disabilities in several ways. When working with students individually, it will be helpful to have the resource directory readily available to optimize the time spent working with a student. It will also give students a sense of what types of resources are available to them.

When working with families during IEP meetings or other meetings, the resource directory will help students' plans after graduation are discussed. Some families do not know there are resources to help their students after high school. By providing a copy of the resource directory, families will identify programs that would benefit their students. I will also use this directory when I am teaching work skills classes. Part of the curriculum I use includes learning about employment resources for life after high school. By giving students access to the resource directory, they will be able to review different programs and possibly find one they would like to attend.

In addition to the Resource Directory for Families and Educators Working with People with Intellectual Disabilities resource being beneficial for me, it will also help others. Colleagues will be able to use the resource guide when working to help students plan for their futures. They will also be able to use the resource guide to show families what resources are available to their students. According to the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (2020), it is important to create opportunities and different ways for parents and students with disabilities to advocate for themselves. The Resource Directory for Families and Educators Working with People with Intellectual Disabilities can also be used during staff meetings as a professional development tool on available accommodations for students with intellectual disabilities. Teachers and other school staff meet twice a semester to discuss what resources graduating students have and what they may need in the future. According to NAPE (2020), it is important to provide

accommodations for students with disabilities in virtual and face-to-face learning environments. The Resource Directory for Families and Educators Working with People with Intellectual Disabilities will help staff consider options to propose to students and their families. It is important to include caregivers in the decision-making process when planning for their students with intellectual disabilities (National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, 2020).

Limitations of the Research and Future Research Needs

There are some limitations to the information available regarding employment barriers and individuals with intellectual disabilities. One limitation is the number of studies specific to individuals with intellectual disabilities. Many articles discussed employment obstacles for individuals with disabilities, but not specifically intellectual disabilities. The impact autism plays in finding and keeping employment was more readily available than information tailored to individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Another limitation is the lack of information regarding solutions to the employment barriers for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Although barriers are identified, there is little research on how individuals should overcome the obstacles. In the study done by Shandra and Hogan (2008), data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997) was used to track young adults with disabilities for seven years to determine if programs implemented after the School to Work Opportunities Act of 1994 made a difference in employment rates. Unfortunately, the data did not offer information about what programs students participated in; therefore, no information is available from this study to show what worked for students and what needs improvement.

In addition, most of the research around employment barriers for individuals with intellectual disabilities has not been done within the last five years. This makes it difficult for

one to know how to prepare students with intellectual disabilities to face employment barriers. If more current research were available, it would give educators and families an idea of how to plan to best support students with intellectual disabilities.

Conclusion

The purpose of this literature review was to examine barriers to employment in the United States that adolescents and young adults with intellectual disabilities face and find out what high schools are doing to help them prepare. The application emphasis was intended to provide resources for families and educators to help young adults find programs that can assist them with employment and life outside of school. A Frequently Asked Questions for Employers Handout is included in Appendix A, answering potential employers' questions about hiring individuals with a disability. A four-day employability skills unit is also included in Appendix B. This unit is for high school and transition-age students and will help prepare them for employment. Lastly, a Resource Directory for Families and Educators Working with People with Intellectual Disabilities has been included in the Appendix C with resources tailored to individuals with intellectual disabilities.

After a review of the literature, it is clear the responsibility to prepare adolescents and young adults with intellectual disabilities for employment falls on many people. When individuals with intellectual disabilities have a team of people working together to provide opportunities to learn and practice employment skills, they can successfully find and keep integrated competitive employment.

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Appendix A

Frequently Asked Questions for Employers Handout

Question	Answer
# 1 What if I hire a person with a disability but they are not able to perform the duties of the job to the standard needed?	The Americans with Disabilities Act states an employer needs not hire or retain an employee who cannot do the job's basic requirements with or without an accommodation.
#2 I know it may take longer to train a person with a disability to do the job. What if I don't have time?	Many individuals with disabilities have access to job coaches provided by state and local agencies. Job coaches can help individuals learn the job and work with the individual until they are prepared to work independently.
#3 How will customers react to a person with a disability working at our company?	According to a survey by the University of Massachusetts, 92% of Americans look more favorably on businesses that hire people with disabilities than those that do not (Siperstein et al., 2006) 87% of people said they would prefer to give their business to companies that hire people with disabilities.
#4 Will our company need to change how we do things to accommodate an employee with a disability?	No, the Americans with Disabilities Act states that a company must make reasonable accommodations which are any changes or adjustments to a job, the work environment, or the way things usually are done that would allow equal access to benefits available to other individuals in the workplace. Check out this website for a list of common accommodations: ADA Guide URL: https://www.ada.gov/workta.htm

#5 Are there benefits to hiring a person with a disability?	**Yes!** **- Communication:** Employees with disabilities equal or exceed their counterparts with no disabilities in the areas of job performance, attendance, and commitment to safety. **-Retention Rate:** Employees with disabilities report higher satisfaction with their jobs, which leads to greater retention for the company and lowers the costs associated with replacing workers. **-Earn a Tax Credit:** There are tax benefits for companies who hire individuals with disabilities. Check out this website for more information: **Work Opportunity Tax Credit (IRS Website)** URL: https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/work-opportunity-tax-credit
#6 Can I ask an applicant to share information about their disability and how it will impact their work?	No, but you can ask an applicant questions about their ability to perform job-related functions, as long as the questions are not phrased in terms of a disability. You can also ask an applicant to describe or to demonstrate how, with or without reasonable accommodation, the applicant will perform job-related functions.
#7 If I hire a person with a disability, how will I know what, if any accommodation, I need to provide?	ADA states the employer's obligation to provide reasonable accommodation applies only to known physical or mental limitations. However, this does not mean that an applicant or employee must always inform you of a disability. If a disability is obvious, e.g., the applicant uses a wheelchair, the employer "knows" of the disability even if the applicant never mentions it.

Appendix B

Employability Skills Unit

Length: Four 50-minute class sessions
Name of course: Employment Skills
Grade levels: High school and transition-age students

Essential Questions:
What skills are employers looking for in an employee?
Do I have those skills?

Date	Learning Targets	Vocabulary	Materials
Day #1	Students will be able to… ● identify desirable soft skills ● discuss desirable soft skills	Employability Skills Soft Skills Hard Skills Transferable Skills Qualities Professional	● Slide Presentation ● Worksheet

Introduction: Begin the lesson using a KWL chart to get students to start thinking about employment skills and assess prior knowledge.

What skills do most employers desire job candidates to have?

What I think I **KNOW**	What I **WANT** to know	What I **LEARNED**
● ● ●	● ● ●	● ● ●

Direct Instruction/Guided Practice:
Discuss student responses on the KWL chart
Present slides Skills Employers are Looking for in Employees.

- Types of Employability Skills (Soft Skills, Hard Skills, Transferable Skills)
- Soft Skills (Positive Attitude, Communication, Work Ethic, Teamwork, Adaptability)

Discussion Question: Which soft skills do you think you have? Share an example with the class.

3 Types of Skills Employers Desire

Learning Targets

I will identify desirable soft skills.

I will discuss desirable soft skills.

KWL Chart

What skills do most employers desire job candidates to have?

What I think I KNOW	What I WANT to know	What I LEARNED

Soft Skills

Soft Skills enable a person to interact with others and perform a task well.

Soft skills are often referred to as "people skills" and/or "personal skills."

5 Soft Skills

- **Positive Attitude**
- **Communication**
- **A strong work ethic**
- **Teamwork**
- **Adaptability**

Hard Skills

Hard skills are specific skills related to a task, subject, or situation.

Hard skills are often referred to as technical skills.

Hard skills tend to be more easily identified and measured

Examples of Hard Skills

- **Computer Programming**
- **Typing**
- **Using a Machine**
- **Accounting**

Transferable Skills

Transferable skills are any skill that can easily be transferred from one job to the next. It is a skill that can be used at most or many jobs.

Soft and hard skills can both be transferable.

Almost all soft skills are transferable, thus are sometimes called "transferable skills." On the other, hand, hard skills are less likely to be transferable.

#1 Have a Positive Attitude

- Think and speak positive thoughts and ideas
- Be willing to learn

#2 Good Communication Skills

- Communicate clearly using verbal and non-verbal signals
- Listen to understand

#3 Strong Work Ethic

- Work hard everyday
- Stay on focused and on task

#4 Teamwork

- Willing to work as part of a team with good attitude
- Do your fair share of the work

#5 Adaptability

- Handle changes with a positive attitude
- Willing to learn a new way of doing things

Thinking about these 5 soft skills

Positive Attitude

Communication

A strong work ethic

Teamwork

Adaptability

Discussion

Which soft skills do you think you have? Share an example with the class.

Practice

Complete the table on the worksheet (provided by the teacher) by categorizing the following actions of great workers or not so great workers.

Exit Ticket

Name one soft skill you could improve and what you do to practice that skill?

Independent Practice:
What Makes a Great Worker? (Worksheet)

What Makes a Great Worker?

Companies hire, recognize, reward, and promote great workers.

Directions: Complete the table by categorizing the following actions of great workers or not so great workers.

Great Worker	Not So Great Worker	
		Ignore workplace rules
		Exceed expectations
		Embrace change
		Require constant supervision
		Create drama in the workplace
		Complain about problems
		Disrespect or ignore co-workers
		Take ownership and responsibility
		Follow workplace rules
		Fail to meet expectations
		Resist change
		Complete tasks independently
		Get along well with others
		Anticipate and solve problems
		Support and encourage co-workers
		Hide mistakes or blame others

Assessment: Students will complete an exit ticket to show they understand soft skills and can evaluate their soft skills. The exit ticket's prompt will be: Name one soft skill you could improve and what you do to practice that skill?

Date	Learning Targets	Vocabulary	Materials
Day #2	Students will be able to… ● analyze scenarios in which positive and negative employability skills are demonstrated ● categorize professional and unprofessional soft skills	Employability Skills Soft Skills Qualities Professional Unprofessional	● Post-it Notes ● Slide Presentation ● Professional and Unprofessional Sort Activity

Introduction: Each student is given a post-it note and asked to recall the definition of soft skills from Day 1. Once students have answered, students place their post-it notes on the board. When all students have responded, the teacher reads the responses aloud and briefly reviews soft skills.

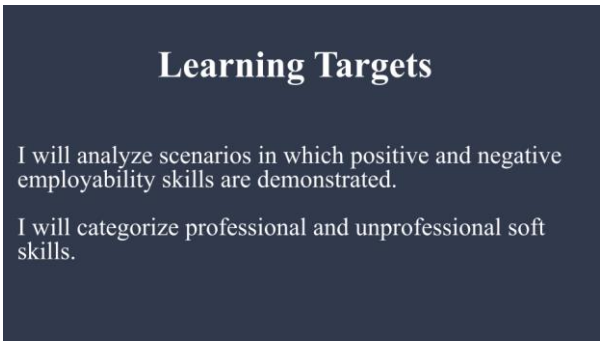
Direct Instruction/Guided Practice: Soft Skills Questions
The teacher asks students the following questions and discusses them as a class.

- Why are soft skills so important to employers?
- How can you demonstrate to an employer you have good soft skills?
- What can you do to improve your soft skills so that you are ready for a job?

The class will read and discuss three scenarios and decide if they are exhibiting good soft skills. The class will also determine which softs skills are being demonstrated or lacking.

Soft Skills Scenarios

These scenarios could also be printed and used for group discussions. The students could then come back as a whole group and share thoughts from their conversation.



Why?

Why are soft skills so important to employers?

How?

How can you demonstrate to an employer you have good soft skills?

What?

What can you do to improve your soft skills so that you are ready for a job?

Scenarios

Examine each scenario and decide if the individual in the scenario is demonstrating good soft skills and which soft skills they exhibiting or missing.

Scenario #1

Alex works at the Target headquarters in Minneapolis. He has strong technical and computer skills, but he often distracts others, arrives late to meetings, and makes rude comments. He walks into the weekly staff meeting on Thursday late, but he brought everyone coffee.

Demonstrating good soft skills?
Yes or No

Which soft skills does Alex have or is he missing?

Scenario #2

Maria likes her job at the thrift store, but she is really tired from staying up to watch a late movie. She knows she needs to mop the floors before she clocks out, but she too tired and thinks the floors don't look too dirty. She decides to skip mopping and head home early.

Demonstrating good soft skills?
Yes or No

Which soft skills does Maria have or is she missing?

Scenario #3

Justin works at Hy-Vee as a day-time stocker. As soon as he gets to work Monday morning his boss tells him they are going to change the way they have been stocking the shelves. Justin knows he is going to have to learn a different way to do his job and feels a little nervous. Justin tells his boss he is up for the challenge and will do whatever he needs to, to make sure everything is done correctly.

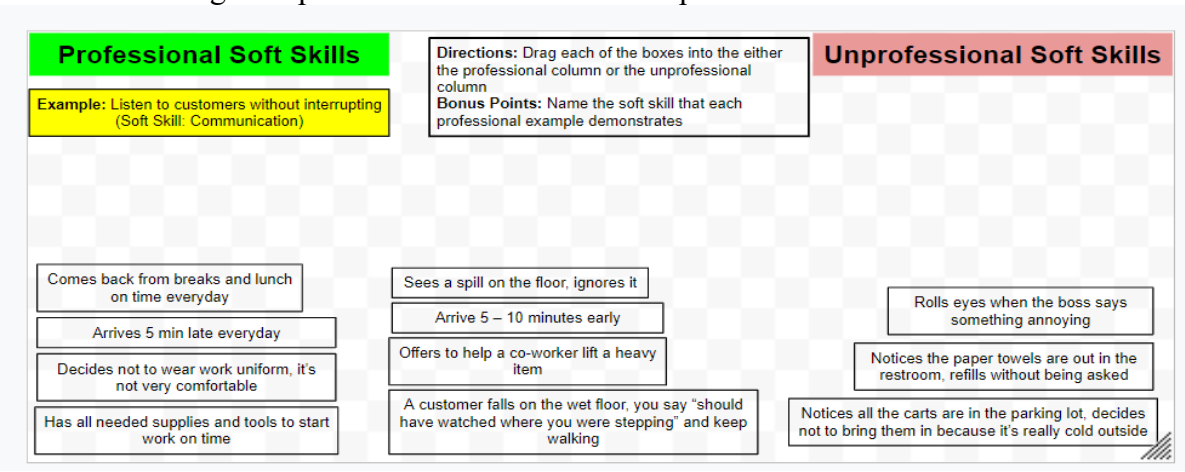
Demonstrating good soft skills?
Yes or No

Which soft skills does Justin have or is he missing?

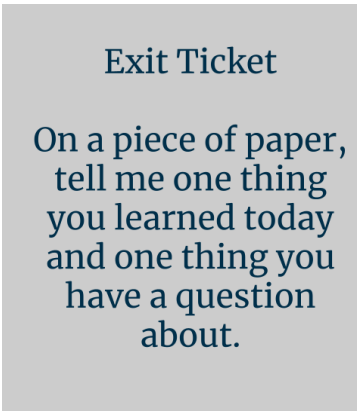
Exit Ticket

On a piece of paper, tell me one thing you learned today and one thing you have a question about.

Independent Practice: Professional Soft Skills or Unprofessional Soft Skills Sort
Students will categorize professional soft skills and unprofessional soft skills.



Assessment: Exit Ticket**:** Name one thing you learned today and one thing you have a question about.



Date	Objective	Vocabulary	Materials
Day #3	Students will be able to… ● Assess their employability skills ● List strategies to improve their employability skills	Employability Skills Soft Skills Professional Unprofessional Applicant	● White Board ● Markers ● Professional Slides ● How Professional Are My Employability Skills? Worksheet

Introduction:
The teacher will ask: "If you were a manager looking to hire a new employee, what would be the most important skill you would look for in an applicant?"

Students are asked to come to the whiteboard and write one skill they would look for in an employee if they were a manager hiring. After all the students have been allowed to respond, the teacher will ask each student why they chose their specific skill and why they believe it is important.

Direct Instruction/Guided Practice: Professionalism Slides
The teacher asks students the following questions and discusses them as a class.

- What is professionalism?
- What traits does a professional employee have?
- How could your professional or unprofessional actions impact other employees?

The whole class will discuss positive and negative ways an employee's professional or unprofessional actions may impact others. This could be taken a step further, and the teacher may lead a discussion on how an employee's actions could impact a business' customer service.

Independent Practice: How Professional Are My Employability Skills? Worksheet

How Professional Are My Employability Skills?

Directions: Here are some quick tips to being a good employee…and a good team player. Determine which of your skills are "on target" and which might need some improvement by choosing "Always," "Sometimes," or "Never."

1. I get to work on time. If I am going to be late, I call and let my boss know.
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

2. I rarely miss work. If I am going to miss work, I let my boss know ahead of time (or call if I am sick).
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

3. I work as hard as I can.
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

4. I pay close attention to my work.
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

5. I do my work as I am told. If I am unable to do something or have questions, I ask my supervisor or co-workers.
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

6. I am friendly on the job.
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

7. I try to solve problems that come up.
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

8. I follow safety and company rules.
   Always
   Sometime

9. I use materials and equipment properly.
   Always
   Sometimes
   Never

10. I behave professionally.
   Always
   Sometimes
   Never

Answer the following questions:

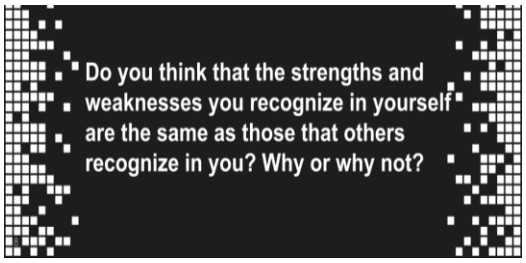
Based on the descriptions above, I am most proud of my ability to:

One area I would like to improve is:

Three ways I can improve my employability skills:

•
•
•

Assessment: Students will complete an Exit Ticket. The prompt is: "Do you think that the strengths and weaknesses you recognize in yourself are the same as those others recognize in you? Why or why not?"



Date	Learning Targets	Vocabulary	Materials
Day #4	Students will be able to… ● answer interview questions highlighting their employability skills ● Recognize employability skills highlighted by peers in an interview	Employability Skills Soft Skills	● Job Posting ● Interview Questions worksheet ● Rubric

Introduction: The teacher will take a survey of hands, asking, "Who has ever been interviewed for a job?" The teacher will allow students to share their experiences. The teacher will explain to the students that they will be practicing interviewing for a job.

Direct Instruction/Guided Practice
Job Posting
The teacher posts a job posting on the board or computer if the class is virtual. The teacher will go over the various parts of the job posting, answering any student questions.

Interview Questions
After reviewing the job posting with the class, the teacher will share the interview questions with students. The teacher instructs students to write answers to the interview questions as they would answer them in an interview. The teacher needs to explain that each response is an opportunity to highlight employment skills that the employer is looking for.

Students will be given the interview rubric, and the teacher will review the skills that their peers will assess during their interview.

Once students have had an opportunity to write their answers as practice, students will get into pairs and interview each other using the rubric to assess their peers. At the end of the interviews, students will share feedback with their partners.

If time allows, the teacher may ask for a volunteer to interview in front of the class. The class should listen for employability skills highlighted by the students being interviewed.

Hiring
Business: Cub Foods
Title: Part-Time Cashier
Job Overview:
Provides prompt and friendly service to customers and assists them when necessary. Operates a cash register and all the duties which correspond to this activity

Job Responsibilities and Accountabilities:

- Provides prompt, friendly customer service Smiles and greets customers in a friendly manner
- Assists customers by (examples include)
    - escorting them to the products, they are looking for
    - loading or unloading heavy items
- Works with co-workers as a team
- Operates cash register accurately and scans all product
- Receives cash, checks, counts back change, and issues receipts
- Places merchandise in cart in a neat, organized fashion.
- Answers customer questions and concerns
- Communicates clearly
- Keeps register area clean
- Reports to work when scheduled and on time.

Job Requirements:

- Must be able to carry out detailed but uninvolved written or verbal instructions, deal with a few concrete variables.
- Must have the ability to do arithmetic calculations involving fractions, decimals, and percentages.
- Have the ability to understand and follow verbal or demonstrated instructions; write identifying information; request supplies verbally or in writing.
- Must be able to work shifts varying in length and time, including nights, weekends, and holidays.

We are an equal opportunity employer. All applicants will be considered for employment without attention to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, veteran, or disability status.

Interview Questions

Questions	Answers
Tell me about yourself.	
Why are you applying for this position?	
Do you prefer working alone or with others?	
What are your strengths?	
What is one thing you are working to improve?	
Why do you think you would be a good fit for this position?	
Tell me a time that you helped someone.	
What questions do you have?	

Name:	Date:	Interviewer:		/18
INTERVIEW RUBRIC	**Appropriate 3 Points**	**Somewhat Appropriate 2 Points**	**Needs Work 1 Point**	**Notes**
On time for interview				
Eye contact				
Posture				
Discussed employability skills in answers				
Positive Attitude				
Answered all questions				
What employability skills were highlighted?				

Assessment: The teacher will have students turn in the worksheets with answered interview questions and the rubric used to assess each student. The teacher will use the information gathered from the worksheets to track progress.

Appendix C

Resource Directory for Families and Educators Working with People with Intellectual Disabilities

Disability Advocacy

ARC Greater Twin Cities **URL: https://arcminnesota.org/** Provides access to advocates, training programs, assistance with the guardianship process, and navigating state and local resources	**952-920-0855**
Minnesota Disability Linkage Line (Disability Hub MN) **URL: https://disabilityhubmn.org/** Tools for managing health, benefits, work, and housing	**866-333-2466**
Pacer Center **URL: https://www.pacer.org/students/** Provides self-advocacy skills training, advocates for individuals to increase success in the classroom, at home, assistance connecting to	**952-838-9000**

Transportation

Metro Mobility **URL: https://www.metrotransit.org/metro-mobility** Door to door transportation	**612-373-3333**
Transit Team Inc. **URL: https://transitteam.com/** Door to door transportation	**612-332-3323**

Education

Job Corps **URL: https://huberthhumphrey.jobcorps.gov/**	**612-822-1334**

A no-cost education and career technical training program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor that helps young people ages 16 to 24 through career technical and academic training	
Maryville University **URL: https://online.maryville.edu/disabilities-guide** A college for individuals with disabilities (located in St. Louis, MO)	**1-888-266-0574**
Bethel BUILD Program **URL: https://www.bethel.edu/academics/build/** Certificate of Applied Studies with a career pathway in arts and communication, business, or human relations, increased independence and self-determination skills, internship experience that prepares you for future employment, integrated campus experience	**651.638.6400**

Employment

MN Employment and Economic Development **URL: https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/** Vocational Rehabilitation Services assists in preparation for, finding and keeping a job, and living as independently as possible (training programs, job searching, job coaching, financial assistance regarding employment)	**Minneapolis North** **612-299-7200** **Brooklyn Park** **763-279-4456** **Blaine** **763-279-4350**
Work Incentives Connection (Benefits Analysis) **URL: https://www.goodwilleasterseals.org/services/disability-services?tab=disabilitybenefitssupport** Benefits analysis to understand available options, answer health insurance questions, Learn how to report earnings from employment to Social Security and other agencies, Identify the timing of changes in benefits once you begin working; one on one assistance is available, must be between ages 16-64 and receiving either SSDI or SSI benefits	**651-632-5113**
Disability Benefits 101 **URL: https://mn.db101.org/** Calculate benefits and work salary, working while receiving disability benefits	**1-866-333-2466**

L & S Consulting **URL: https://lsconsultingmn.com/** Job exploration counseling, job seeking skills training, public transportation training, instruction in self-advocacy services, independent living skills or soft skills training, service learning, and job coaching	**651-505-2250**
Accessability **URL: https://www.accessability.org/** Employment planning, developing, supported employment, job coaching, includes a DT&H program	**612-331-5958**

Day Support Services (DSS)/Habilitation

Choice **URL: https://choicejobs.org/** Employment, health & wellness programs, lifelong learning, ,transportation, community engagement, and enrichment programs	**952- 474-9510**
Life Works **URL: https://www.lifeworks.org/** Aids adults through career searches, supported work opportunities, and music therapy, must have a waiver to attend	**651-454-2732**
Midwest Special Services **URL: https://www.mssmn.org/** Job seeking skills training, internship programs, placement and retention services, employment development services, online vocational training, creative arts, support for personal development and increasing self-sufficiency and advocacy	**651-778-1000**
Opportunity Partners **URL: https://opportunities.org/** Provides job training, employment and residential support	**952-938-5511**
Partnership Resources **URL: https://www.partnershipresources.org/** Assists with competitive integrated employment, match work skills and interests to jobs, helps prepare for job search with applications, interviews and new employee orientation, on the job training, job coaches, and job retainment	**612-331-2075**

Rise **URL: https://www.twincitiesrise.org/** Assists individuals in poverty to long-term stable employment, prepares participants with job skills, internship opportunities, job search assistance, employment placement services, one-on-one support, partnering with participants for two years after they've landed their new jobs, self-confidence, and self-reliance**.**	**612-338-0295**
WorkAbilities **URL: http://www.workabilities.org/** Offers supported employment and employment training.	**763-541-1844**