Employment for Youth with Learning Disabilities

Centre for Youth & Society UVic

Employment outcomes for Youth with Learning disabilities (LDs) improve from participation in well designed Vocational Programs.

Why This Matters

Youth with Learning Disabilities risk heightened levels of unemployment and lower levels of career satisfaction. That said, there is a wealth of research to guide readers on how to address that reality.

What the Research Says

❑ The need for a universal LD language endures as one of the central problems for stakeholders contributing to the promotion of effective practice.

❑ There is a dissociation between the intentions of transition services and the realities of the employment environment.

❑ Some of the most predictive pre-employment measurements include career awareness, community involvement, educational inclusion, and a realistic career maturity.

❑ LD learners have consistently been shown to have a unique but underused skill set of value to employers.

❑ Current transition programs are often diluted by generalized disability curriculum.

Key Points

❑ LDs encompass a subgroup of disabilities which present as process challenges involving information input, management, and/or production.

❑ The diversity of this umbrella term includes within its scope Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia, Developmental aphasia, and in some cases ADHD.

❑ 25.9 % of LD youth (aged 15-24) are employed compared to 51.9% of non-LD youth.

❑ Research has consistently shown that prevocational program engagement increases the chances of employment for LD youth from high school.

The efficacy of transition supports and accommodations relies on the personalization of strategies and approach.

What You Need to Know

❑ Effective transition planning focuses not only on job attainment, but includes meaningful employment within its equation.

❑ Transition practices should instill hope for users, but should at the same time target unrealistic expectations within career maturity constructs.

❑ Student-centred program formats that rely on inputs and design direction from youth highly promote engagement from participants.

❑ Technology is a powerful tool to meet some of the demands of the the ever-changing expectations of professional literacy.

❑ Mentoring programs have only been demonstrated as beneficial when administered by trained pedagogical agents.

❑ Though often grouped together, providers should be careful when considering umbrella programming for ADHD and LDs.

What the Research Says

❑ The gap between policy initiatives and active educational settings provides challenges to teachers, counsellors, and service providers.

❑ Though steps have been made in offsetting employment outcome disparities, little has been done to mitigate the social challenges faced by LD youth within workplace settings.

❑ Some of the most beneficial transitional outcomes are seen from programs that aim to empower students to distance themselves away from direct supports.

❑ Self-efficacy skills are more predictive of employment success then academic indicators.

❑ Service providers are often using technologies with little or no evidence base.

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"Employment is not a universal remedy for the problems that people with disabilities face" (Vornholt et al., 2013)

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