

RUNNING HEAD: Reading Response: Employment & Self-Determination

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5/2/08

EDTE 630: HR & Career Education in Special Education

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The article *Preparing for Employment: On the Home Front* by Casper, Roy, and PACER Center (2006), found on *LDOonline.org*, discusses how an individual with disabilities may find support and confidence in terms of garnering employment, namely from family, friends, and IEP teams.

Obtaining employment is difficult for individuals without disabilities, and the social stigmas and confidence issues that often accompany disabilities can make employment that much more difficult. That is why specific employment goals and skills should be specified early on, especially during the school years. Schools often offer specific career-oriented courses, counselors, IEPs, and volunteer opportunities to help with this, but those with disabilities and their families can do much on their own outside of school related programs to help prepare for employment. And this article mentions that recent research has been showing that families of disabled individuals make significant contributions to successful future employment ventures. For instance, parents are often much more specifically aware of their child's interest-inventory and skills than those outside the home, and parents are often well-networked with the local community and businesses, which opens doors to the child that they could not have opened themselves. Also, parents can be the main support system to help their disabled child become an advocate for themselves, especially in terms of the working world (Casper, Roy, and PACER Center, 2006).

The key to a successful future of employment for individuals with disabilities is self-advocacy, or helping the individual become as independent as possible. Some of the skills that help develop independence are self-knowledge, setting goals, making decisions, and problem solving, which are all aspects of "self-determination." Research

has shown that those with stronger self-determination skills have a greater chance of being employed happily and in a stable manner (Casper, Roy, and PACER Center, 2006). All of these skills can be worked on and honed in the home and I believe that these skills could even help the parents themselves, who, as I've personally witnessed, become more confident the more confident their family unit becomes and look into their own strengths and weaknesses as they help their children to do so.

This article goes on to discuss how employment and volunteering during the school years, such as a summer job, internship, or volunteer job, is a great way to begin working on all of the above listed skills and to start developing an impressive résumé. This is something else that parents can be a great support for, as they are often aware of local community organizations and businesses to fulfill a position like this (Casper, Roy, and PACER Center, 2006). I can personally attest to the value of this because my parents not only started having me volunteer for local charities via church when I was younger, my mother also helped me get my first meaningful summer job at her office. All of this was résumé material. And though I was not a disabled student, my experience does parallel what this article discusses.

The experience I do have that deals with disabled youth involves exactly what this article discusses in terms of professional, or "formal," support in that my school, Chelsea School (for students with learning disabilities), offers a specific transition program to our juniors and seniors where they develop their self-determination skills and career goals. Our transition program also requires job shadowing and the TV Production program that I teach offers a credited internship, which has motivated and created the confidence of several our students – just in the past two years - to pursue careers in production.

References

Casper, B., Roy, S., & PACER Center. (2006). *Preparing for employment: on the home front*. Retrieved May 31, 2008 from <http://www.ldonline.org/article/12053>