

5-2-2024

Employment Training for Graduating Seniors Who Have an Intellectual Disability

Miriam Jeannetta Bohles
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.

Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Miriam J. Bohles

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Tammy Hoffman, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Derek Schroll, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2024

Abstract

Employment Training for Graduating Seniors Who Have an Intellectual Disability

by

Miriam J. Bohles

BS, Ohio State University, 1983

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

April 2024

Abstract

The problem that was addressed in this study was that local high school students with intellectual disabilities exit their high school community-based vocational program without sufficient skills required to attain meaningful employment. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine local high school educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and the additional instruction needed to enhance students' ability to attain meaningful employment. The conceptual framework was based on Kolb's experiential learning theory. The research questions focused on skills educators need to incorporate in a community-based vocational program curriculum. Data were obtained via Zoom interviews with ten high school special educators. Open coding was used to code the raw data. The themes – program structure, employment success, community experiences, active learning, impact future, and collaboration – were related to special educators' perceptions of employability skills that are needed in a high school community-based vocational program and the additional instruction needed to enhance students' ability to attain meaningful employment after graduation. The results of the study indicated that special educators are familiar with the concepts of customized employment strategies but have not received adequate training to use strategies of customized employment in community based vocational programs. Therefore, to prepare special education teachers to be successful with the implementation of customized employment strategies, educators require appropriate training. This study may impact social change by updating curriculums and instructional strategies and creating more effective engagement in employment opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities.

Employment Training for Graduating Seniors Who Have an Intellectual Disability

by

Miriam J. Bohles

BS, Ohio State University, 1983

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

April 2024

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my loving parents, Robert and Miriam Bohles, who always inspired me to get as much education as possible because the possibilities are endless with an education! My brother James Junior, who was born with an intellectual disability years before my existence on this planet, continues to RIP, and I hope this study will make positive contributions to the field of special education. My beautiful children, Ronald and JeT'aime, who have always filled my life with much joy, continue to pursue your dreams. I hope this serves as a legacy to Gianni and future grandchildren to always keep learning, growing, and achieving goals. To my cousin, Jazz, thanks for listening and giving me the endless possibilities speech! To my cousin, and Godmother, Josetta, thanks for the motivating messages! To my aunts (the Simmons Sisters), thanks for always demonstrating high value for education, and Uncle, Dr. Joseph Patterson, thanks for leading the way, RIP!

Acknowledgments

First, I want to thank my Heavenly Father who gave me the strength to persevere through this doctoral journey even when facing life adversities. To my family and friends (Sharon Mitchell, Genevieve Epps, Ruth Crosby, Dr. Shirley Davis, Carol Clardy, and Rachael Longstreet-Jones), thanks for all your support and encouraging me to keep “forward movement” even when the end was in the fog.

I want to thank, Dr. Tammy Hoffman, Dr. Billie Anderson, and Chue T. Vang, for inspiring my confidence, advising, and assisting me in successfully achieving this academic accomplishment.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	iv
List of Figures	v
Section 1: The Problem.....	1
The Local Problem.....	1
Rationale	3
Definition of Terms.....	4
Significance of the Study	6
Research Questions.....	7
Review of the Literature	8
Conceptual Framework.....	9
Review of the Broader Problem.....	11
Statutes of Special Education.....	11
Transition Services.....	13
Predictors for Positive Post-School Success.....	16
Community-Based Vocational Programs	17
Overcoming Barriers to Employment.....	19
Implications.....	22
Summary	24
Section 2: The Methodology.....	25
Research Design and Approach	25
Participants.....	27

Data Collection	29
Data Analysis	33
Ethical Consideration.....	35
Data Analysis Results	36
Research Question 1	38
Research Question 2	43
Outcomes	47
Summary	49
Section 3: The Project.....	51
Introduction.....	51
Rationale	52
Review of the Literature	53
Project Genre	54
Professional Development	54
Evidence-Based Practices	57
Customized Employment Practices	58
Project Description.....	60
Resources, Supports, and Potential Barriers	63
Project Implementation.....	64
Project Evaluation Plan.....	65
Project Implications	68
Summary	70

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions.....	71
Project Strengths and Limitations.....	71
Recommendations for Alternative Approaches.....	73
Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change	73
Reflection on Importance of the Work	74
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research.....	75
Conclusion	77
References.....	79
Appendix A: The Project: Instructing Customized Employment Strategies	92
Appendix B Pre-Survey and Post-Survey.....	119
Appendix C: Professional Development: 3-Day Agenda.....	120
Appendix D: Generation of Codes.....	123
Appendix E: Invitation.....	125
Appendix F: Interview Questions Protocol Form #____.....	127
Appendix G: Permission for Figure 1	128

List of Tables

Table 1. Example of Generated Codes	35
Table 2. Codes and Themes for Research Question 1	40
Table 3. Codes and Themes for Research Question 2	45
Table D4. Generation of Codes	123

List of Figures

Figure 1. Kolb's Experiential Learning	11
--	----

Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

In secondary schools, one purpose of special education is to prepare students with intellectual disabilities (SWID) for post-school life or the movement from school to employment and community life (Rooney-Kron & Dymond, 2022). Students with an intellectual disability display significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which include many everyday social and life skills, such as difficulty concentrating on tasks, socializing with others, and generalizing newly acquired skills across different situations (Muharib et al., 2019). High school students who participate in community-based programs have better post graduation outcomes than SWID who do not participate in community-based programs; this indicates SWID are graduating, but they are not prepared for the job market due to the absence of strong employment instruction in secondary schools (Mazzotti et al., 2021).

Due to the lack of instruction in employability skills and efforts of current statutes to reduce unemployment rates, the gap in employment between SWID and their peers continues to grow (Mazzotti et al., 2021). As noted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), only 7.9% of individuals with a disability had secured competitive employment after graduating from high school. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021), “fewer individuals with disabilities were employed in 2020 with a total employment rate of 17.9%, down from 19.3% in 2019, which translated to an all high unemployment rate of 12.6% for persons with disabilities.” Research by Baer et al. (2021) supports the idea that school-to-work transition planning for SWID should include

community-based early work experiences to prepare for possible future integrated employment (p.336).

The problem addressed in this study was focused on local high school students with intellectual disabilities (SWID) who are exiting their high school community-based vocational program without sufficient skills required to attain meaningful employment. In my study, I used Kolb's 1984 theory as a framework through which to examine the relationships between experiential learning skills and the identification and matching of competency skills associated with job demands. Competency skills are paramount employability skills that can be developed between the classroom and the real world that strengthen the linkages among education, work, and personal development (Kolb, 1984).

The local school's five-year strategic improvement plan that was initiated in 2016 and concluded in 2020 documented the need for additional resources and vocational instruction for students with disabilities. Each year, school districts receive a special education profile that includes Indicator 14 Post-school Outcomes, which describe further education and competitive employment experiences of youth with disabilities after graduation (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). According to the special education profile, the local school district has not met the required standard of 100% by 26% (74%) on Indicator 14 within the past two years (Ohio Department of Education, 2023). Based on the results from Indicator 14 data, this study may aid special education teachers and administrators in cultivating a deeper understanding to update employability skills and experiential learning experiences as vital components of CBVP.

Rationale

High schools in a northeastern city participate in a yearly Indicator 14 Post-School Outcomes. At the study site, 76% of youth who were no longer in secondary school had Individualized Education Programs in effect at the time they graduated, and they were not enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school (Ohio State Department of Education, 2021). Each year, school districts receive a special education profile that includes Indicator 14 Post-school Outcomes, which describe further education and competitive employment experiences of youth with disabilities after graduation (Ohio Department of Education, 2021). Indicator 14 is rated on a 0-100% scale. The study site has been below the target scale for two consecutive years (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). Since the implementation of Ohio Employment First, only 2% to 3% of graduated SWID reported subminimum work outcomes (Ohio Department of Education, 2019).

Early in the history of special education, a quandary developed regarding the education for SWID (Odom et al., 2020). Society contended that leadership in legal and educational institutions ought to take responsibility for the welfare of SWID, but parents dissented from these views and requested equal education and employment opportunities for their children with intellectual disabilities, which resulted in the enactment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 (IDEA, 2023). The Ohio Laws & Administrative Rules require leadership in each school district to adopt and implement written policies and procedures to ensure they provide free and appropriate public

education (FAPE) to all children with disabilities between the ages of three and 21 (codes.ohio.gov). According to a district special education supervisor, instruction in employability skills and/or experiential learning experiences has been an ongoing problem with the district from 2015 to the present. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine local high school educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and the additional instruction needed to enhance SWID ability to attain meaningful employment after graduation.

Definition of Terms

To help clarify this study, I have defined the following terms:

Barriers: Obstacles that are lack of work experiences and lack of effective strategies toward employment (Charette-Dussault & Corbiere, 2019).

Community-based vocational instruction: Strategies for youth with disabilities to learn a specific job, task, or skill at an integrated employment site, and to transfer the knowledge gained to real-time work experiences (A Transition Guide, 2020)

Customized Employment: Multi-strategy approaches to match the discrete skills and unique contributions of a job seeker with a disability to an employer (Leadercenter, 2021).

Evidenced-based practices: Instructional methods and strategies proven through research to be effective to teach youth specific transition-related skills (The National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, 2022).

Experiential learning: A framework for examining and strengthening the critical linkages among education, work, and personal development (Kolb, 1984).

Experiential learning skills: A system of competencies for describing job demands and corresponding educational objectives and emphasizes the critical linkages that can be developed between the classroom and the real world (Kolb, 1984).

Indicator 14 post-school outcome: Datum describes further education and competitive employment experiences of youth with disabilities (Ohio Department of Education, 2023).

Intellectual Disability: Significant limitations in both cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and life skills, such as difficulty concentrating on tasks, socializing with others, and generalizing newly acquired skills across different situations (Muharib et al., 2019).

Post- school predictors: A data collection system to find out whether SWID have pursued further education or found competitive employment after graduation (Pacer, 2020).

Professional development: Instructional and learning sessions designed to meet target learning goals (Chen & Ney, 2020).

Professional learning communities: Forums for teachers to engage in regular, ongoing, systematic inquiry into practice (Brodie & Chimhande, 2020).

30-day placement plan worksheet: An erasable form that organizes employment tasks, activities, and due dates to keep everyone focused on the job search (Donovan, 2021).

Transition planning: The development of postsecondary goals based on students' preferences, interests, needs and strengths (Rooney-Kron & Dymond, 2022).

Transition services: A set of coordinated activities designed to be a results-oriented process focused on approving the academic, and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post activities, including postsecondary education, vocation education, integrated employment based on the individual child's strengths, preferences, interests, and needs (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2023).

Significance of the Study

Experiential learning experiences can provide SWID with opportunities to engage and participate in community businesses to learn viable employability skills. I implemented this study to explore special education teachers' perceptions of employability skills that should be considered as offerings to SWID to secure competitive employment. After graduation, key components of employability and global skills acquired in an experiential learning program are identified as competency skills. Competency skills are identified by Singh and Shah (2023) "as the ability to do something" (p. 35). Competency skills consist of the following: digital literacy, data literacy, technical skills, digital threat awareness, critical thinking, judgment and decision making, emotional intelligence and empathy, creativity, collaboration and working in teams, interpersonal communication, adaptability and flexibility, cultural intelligence and diversity consciousness, ethical awareness, leadership skills, networking, time management, curiosity and continual learning, embracing and celebrating change and

looking after yourself (Beeler, 2023). Competency skills are the strong foundational components of CBVPs or experiential learning experiences that may assist high school SWID become reflective learners, which may improve their performance in securing competitive employment opportunities after graduation (Beeler, 2023).

Exploring special education educators' perceptions may bring into view knowledge that may elicit changes to instructional practices, curriculum, and competency skills. Carrying out such changes may have an advantageous impact on SWID performance of learning employability skills. My research study may offer positive benefits to local educational settings by assisting educators with acquiring more knowledge about experiential learning experiences such as internships, field placements, work/study, and job shadowing, all by identifying evidenced-based practices that can assist SWID with learning employability skills.

Research Questions

Employment is a pertinent life skill to SWID because it enables students to engage in society, be productive, independent, and increase their quality of life (Inge et al., 2022). The quality of experiential learning experiences offered in a CBVP to prepare SWID for future employment needs improvement at the study site. A study was needed to explore special education teachers' perceptions of employability skills that should be considered as offerings in a high school CBVP to prepare SWID for future employment. I pursued to investigate the nature of the problem by asking the two research questions in my study, which are the following:

Research Question 1: What are local high school educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program?

Research Question 2: What are special education teachers' perceptions about the additional instruction needed to enhance SWID ability to attain meaningful employment after graduation.

Review of the Literature

The following literature supports the development of my research project study. The purpose of this study was to examine local high school educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and the additional instruction needed to enhance students' ability to attain meaningful employment after graduation. A study by Rooney-Kron and Dymond (2022) agreed that SWID participating in community-based programs teaches work skills, increases career interests, engagement in society, and preferences in real work setting, which explains why work is of eminent importance to SWID.

In this literature review, I focused on the broader problem by discussing topics that support the instruction of employability skills for SWID. These related topics consists of special education laws, transition services, predictors for positive post-school success, CBVPs, and overcoming barriers to employment. The literature review consists of peer-reviewed scholarly journals that have been published within the last 5 years.

I conducted searches on EBSCOhost, ProQuest, OhioLink, Academic Search and Educational databases, and Walden University Library databases. I utilized the following terms and phrases to search for peer-reviewed scholarly journals: *community-based*

employment, employment of people with disabilities, school-to-work, vocational rehabilitation, job placement, employment training, job sites, employment placement, and sheltered workshops.

The problem investigated in this basic qualitative study was to explore special education teachers' perceptions about experiential learning skills that should be considered as offerings in a high school CBVP for SWID. For teachers to improve the offerings of experiential learning at the study site, students must become actively engaged in their learning experiences (Kolb, 1984). To acquire a deeper understanding or meaning of instructional concepts and ideas, students need to make connections between the knowledge they already possess and what they learn in school (Kolb, 1984). Students also need ample opportunities to talk about their new knowledge and relate it to their past experiences. According to Kolb (1984) "learning is a continuous process in which the person's knowledge and abilities are shaped and developed according to the nature of the experiences in which he or she is involved" (p. 418). Experiential learning or community-based experiences can assist with creating a connection between the newly acquired knowledge gained in school while also offering a better understanding of how it relates to their daily lives.

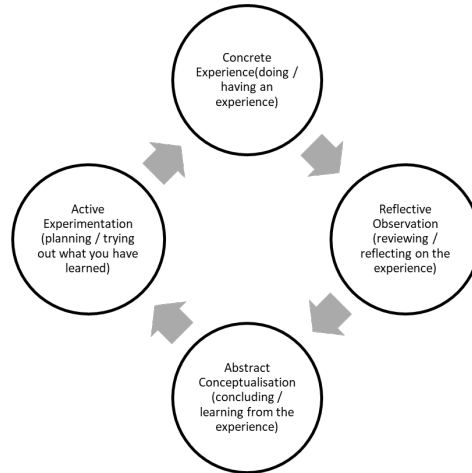
Conceptual Framework

Kolb's experiential learning theory was used as the framework to view the problem of practice (see Figure 1). Kolb's experiential learning theory focuses on describing how students acquire knowledge and the connection between new and prior knowledge. Kolb's theory addresses methods of establishing long-lasting education and

learning outcomes where students are actively engaged in their learning and in which they share mutual exchanges with people and the environment outside of the traditional classroom dynamics. Kolb's experiential learning theory does not depict teaching approaches but describes a rotating cycle of how engaged learning is interpreted. Kolb's (1984) theory is based on the following three assumptions that integrate experiential and community-based learning into a rich curriculum for SWID, which are the following:

1. People learn best when they are personally involved in the learning experience;
2. Knowledge has to be discovered by the individual if it is to have any significant meaning to them or make a difference in their behavior; and
3. A person's commitment to learning is highest when they are free to set their own learning objectives and are able to actively pursue (p. 55).

Within his experiential learning theory, Kolb suggests that researching to examine personal perceptions of experiential learning or CBVP components are the links to education and employment opportunities for SWID. Kolb's experiential learning theory was aligned with the goals of my basic qualitative study. The three principles were profound in exploring special education teachers' effective implementation of experiential learning experiences to improve SWID employability skills. In his experiential learning theory cycle, as represented in Figure 1 below, Kolb (1984) describes the four stages through which the learner independently repeatedly progresses to concisely exemplify the concept of how knowledge is acquired.

Figure 1*Kolb's Experiential Learning***Review of the Broader Problem**

A review of the current literature regarding experiential learning experiences was necessary to explore special education teachers perceptions about experiential learning skills that should be instructed in a high school CBVP to prepare SWID for future employment and identify evidenced-based practices to be shared during a PD. In this literature review, I focused on the broader problem by discussing topics that support experiential learning experiences for SWID. These related topics consists of special education laws, transition services, predictors for positive post-school success, CBVPs, and overcome barriers to employment.

Statutes of Special Education

From the 1800s until the mid-1900s, children with disabilities were placed in institutions and not given the same educational experiences as their non-disabled peers. Between 1946 and 1967, the number of persons with disabilities in public institutions

increased from 116,828 to 193,188, and in 1964, the per diem rate for a person living in an institution was \$5.57 (The Minnesota Governor's Council of Developmental Disabilities, 2023). Due to public institutions being overcrowded and understaffed, parents did not want to place their children in institutions and instead wanted services in their own communities. Many parents started to unite and organize support and advocacy groups due to lack of services in their communities. Due to the impact of federal statutes, many individuals with disabilities have relocated from institutions and have maintained a steady presence in society.

The Lane v. Brown (2012) case challenged the unnecessary segregation of over 3,000 individuals with intellectual disabilities who were in sheltered workshops and not allowed to work in integrated employment settings or experience experiential learning programs (Civil Rights Division, 2022). The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities, highlights support for competitive integrated employment opportunities, and encourages schools to implement CBVPs or experiential learning programs (ADA National Network, 2020). With all the positive provisions of the ADA, the Lane v. Brown lawsuit directly violated the liberties and rights of this prominent law.

There has been federal legislation enacted specifically to increase the participation of SWID in experiential learning programs. The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act of 1984, as well as the 2009 Olmstead Community Integration for Everyone Act have promoted profound changes in inclusion and integration for SWID (The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, 2023). The Carl D.

Perkins Act requires that 10% of all funding for vocational education is allocated for instructional support for students with disabilities or for recruiting special populations into CTE programs (Ohio Department of Education, 2023). The Olmstead Act is an integration mandate that supports the Perkins Act by rejecting the belief regarding individuals with disabilities may best advance vocational skills in segregated workshops (Blanck, 2019).

The 1973 Rehabilitation Act includes Section 503, which requires affirmative action, as well as Section 504, which prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities and is known for making community services for persons with severe disabilities a priority (The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, 2023). The Developmental Disabilities Assistance Act was enacted to ensure that individuals with disabilities and their families have access to needed services, individualized support, and other forms of assistance that promote self-determination, independence, productivity, integration, and inclusion in all facets of community life (Association of University Centers on Disability, 2020). All these statutes reflect a forward movement of greater social acceptance of individuals with disabilities into employment and community experiential learning programs.

Transition Services

The Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EHA) of 1975 was established to ensure that students with disabilities have access to free and appropriate public education (Smith & Rayfield, 2019). The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) of 1990 statute mandates that a statement of needed transition services is reflected in a

student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) at the age of 16 or earlier if deemed appropriate by the IEP team. Transition services are identified as a set of coordinated activities that are designed to be a results-oriented process focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, or integrated employment based on the individual child's strengths, preferences, interests, and needs (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2023).

IDEA also stipulates that appropriate measurable postsecondary goals are based on age-appropriate transition assessments, which are related to future career goals in the areas of employment, postsecondary education or training, and independent living (U.S. Department of Education (Department), Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2020). Age-appropriate transition assessments are identified as informal and formal apparatuses that assist students with identifying their strengths, interests, skills, and/or the knowledge needed to reach their goals for life after high school. To assist high school students with disabilities make a steady transition from school to post-school activities, local educational agencies are providing transition services, programming, and interagency collaboration efforts (Riesen & Oertle, 2019). Transition activities can involve instruction in person-centered planning, connection to a course of study, career exploration activities, workforce preparation, community experiences, and making informed choices (A Transition Guide, 2020). A transition high school course of study identified by the Ohio State Department of Education (2022) should include the following:

- College Preparatory Courses for Graduation
- Curriculum based on Learning Standards
- Career Technical Education Program

These three courses of study should assist students with achieving their future career goals and aspirations. Experiential learning or community-based vocation instruction is a research-based best practice of a community experience utilized in schools to assist students with the development of employability skills and career awareness (U.S. Department of Education (Department), Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2020). A goal for students with disabilities upon graduation from high school is to pursue postsecondary career training according to each student's interests to attain suitable employment in the community. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, as identified by Shin and Ging (2019), was enacted in 2014, and is designed to reduce barriers to employment for youth with disabilities through education, training, and support services, and emphasizes more attention on transition services and activities that increase life skills and employment outcomes.

The transition services students receive should align with their preferences, interests, needs, strengths, and post-school goals (Rooney-Kron & Dymond, 2022). A study by Lindsay et al. (2019) noted that active participation in transition planning will promote more control and responsibility toward post-school outcomes and employment opportunities for SWID. Participation in transition services has been shown to have a monumental effect on academic functioning, self-advocacy, socialization, and future planning for SWID after high school (Scheef & Mahfouz, 2020). Offering high school

SWID more opportunities to be involved in their transition planning will yield positive outcomes and exposure to an array of work experiences that are aligned with their career strengths, interests, preferences, and goals (Mazzotti et al., 2020).

Predictors for Positive Post-School Success

Predictors for positive post-school success are essential elements to prepare students for adulthood. Some secondary predictors for positive post school success consist of transition activities, services, and collaborative support between agencies that usually occur during the school years. These secondary predictors for positive post-school success are affiliated with higher rates of successful movement from school to adulthood (ohioemploymentfirst.gov). The eight-predictors areas identified by Employment First (2020) are the following:

1. Collaborative networks for student support
2. Individualized career development
3. Authentic community-based work experiences
4. Social and social-emotional instruction and skills
5. Academic, vocational, occupational education and preparation
6. Supporting parental Involvement and Experiences
7. Self-determination, independence living skills instruction and skill building
8. Inclusive practices and programs (Ohioemploymentfirst, 2020, pp.1-19).

Post-school predictors are a data collection system to find out whether SWID have pursued further education or found competitive employment after graduation (Pacer, 2020). Three key elements of post-school outcomes identified by Dell'Armo and Tasse

(2019) are post-secondary education, employment, and independent living. The goal of post school outcomes is to improve transition services and secondary programs offered during high school so SWID can graduate with skills to secure employment and postsecondary opportunities (Pacer, 2020).

Many high students feel incipient excitement building up months, weeks, or days before graduation, but SWID may feel unprepared to meet the challenges of adulthood (Mazzotti et al., 2020). Especially during high school, many SWID may not experience instruction in independent living, and job-training skills to prepare them for adult life (Dell'Armo & Tasse, 2019). This unfortunate situation may make the transition process extremely difficult for SWID, which can result in SWID experiencing negative outcomes after exiting high school.

Community-Based Vocational Programs

SWID exhibit difficulty concentrating on tasks, socializing with others, and generalizing or transferring knowledge across situations (Muharib et al., 2019). For any student to meet the eligibility requirement for the category of intellectual disability, an adaptive behavior assessment must be conducted (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2023). SWID face chronically low rates of employment and high rates of poverty (Buncher & Daston, 2022, p. 223). CBVPs were established to focus on career awareness, independent life skills, and workforce preparation skills to ensure SWID can present skills and qualifications for global employment opportunities. Community-based vocation instruction assists high school SWID in applying new knowledge to concrete experiences and transition services.

There are two common types of CBVPs specifically designed to provide a range of support to students with disabilities including experiential learning experiences, which are Job Training Programs and Project SEARCH (Davis et al., 2021). The Job Training Program is structured so that high school students with various disabilities can develop knowledge about careers and/or occupations in the community and acquires employability skills by performing specific work competencies (Ohio State Department of Education website, 2021). Project SEARCH is a school-to-work program for students with intellectual disabilities that provides specific job training instruction and skill development, which may lead to an increased ability to draw on vocational strengths to meet self-determined career goals (Buncher & Daston, 2022, p. 224). These community-based internship programs occur within integrated competitive businesses with support from trained school educators. SWID are matched to internships based on individualized strengths, interests, and preferences, which likely increases student motivation and success within the workplace setting (Whittenburg et al., 2020).

When students with intellectual disabilities are engaged in CBVPs, they can sample a variety of jobs to increase their knowledge of careers, develop work readiness skills, and start to manage their career plans for life after graduation. Research by Valentini et al. (2019) agreed that SWID experience numerous benefits from engaging in community-based work experiences including developing soft skills, career exploration, identifying strengths and interests, and building personal relationships, which are pertinent skills they will need in life as well as in the modern workplace. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory explores the roles of observation, reflection, and analysis

in empowering students to become responsible for and engaged in their learning. These two types of CBVPs may encourage employers to allow SWID opportunities to display their work competencies while learning the importance of employability skills in the workplace. Within CBVPs, SWID can develop their communication, teamwork, leadership, creative problem solving, and critical thinking skills, which are pertinent skills they will need in life as well as in the modern workplace.

Overcoming Barriers to Employment

Employment is a daily occurrence that provides meaningful value, socialization, and self-sufficiency to our lives. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned racial segregation in the workplace but SWID are still encountering many barriers to employment (Manning, 2023). Barriers are obstacles that are lack of work experiences and lack of use of effective strategies toward employment opportunities (Charette-Dussault & Corbiere, 2019). A study by Charette-Dussault and Corbiere (2019) identified two types of barriers, which are environmental and individual barriers. Environmental barriers are related to disability benefits and other physical resources, to stigma and social support, and to vocational services (p. 523). Individual barriers are related to illness, work experiences and skills, and self-perception, fears, and motivation (Charette-Dussault & Corbiere, 2019, p. 523). Over one-third of individuals with disabilities have reported stigma and negative attitudes from employers regarding disability (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Another major barrier to competitive pathway opportunities for SWID is the acquisition of soft skills for employment. Soft skills identified by Betti et al., (2022) are “interpersonal qualities, also known as people skills, and personal attributes that one

possesses, such as responsibility, communication, and teamwork” (p. 4). A study by Clark et al., (2019) argued that business leaders and employers view soft skills as more important skills for work readiness than reading, writing, and arithmetic.

On March 19, 2012, Governor John Kasich signed an Executive Order making Ohio an Employment First State. The Employment First Initiative identified by Rogan and Rinne (2021) is “a system change at the local, state, and national levels to prioritize employment as the first and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age individuals with disabilities, regardless of the level of disability” (p. 256). The Employment First Initiative involves various agencies working systematically to provide person-centered planning to each individual with a disability and consent of working age to identify their preferred employment goal and develop a career path to competitive community employment (ohioemploymentfirst.gov).

According to Ohio Employment First (2020): Realizing the Employment First For Youth and Predictors of Transition Planning Success, has identified eight barriers to a successful transition to community employment for SWID and these barriers are:

1. Disposition of Belief: Individuals do not agree that SWID can or should have access to community employment.
2. Agency barriers: Agencies do not align their policies and procedures to assist youth navigate employment and/or postsecondary options.
3. Preparations: Many youth never acquire learning employability skills while attending middle or high school.
4. Professional Development Needs: Many agencies and professionals do not have

the skills to support youth moving into adulthood.

5. Ongoing Support: Many SWID do not have the ongoing support to be successful in employment opportunities.
6. Experiential Learning: Many local educational agencies are not offering CBVPs or experiential experiences to prepare SWID for future employment.
7. Access to Comprehensive Information: Individuals have difficulty accessing resources to be successful in competitive employment.
8. Perceived Risk of Employment: Many adults and SWID are concerned with losing benefits and safety issues (Ocali, 2020).

These eight barriers to successful employment are the foundation of the Employment First Initiative Transition Framework, which is purportedly committed to the many issues high school SWID may encounter when seeking competitive employment upon graduation.

Personality or Employment tests are described as current methods of barriers that employers use to hinder successful employment opportunities for SWID. A study by Ismail (2022) identified personality is a stable structure specific to the individual that is formed by being influenced by many factors. Personality tests were originally designed to identify positive work attitudes, behaviors, and values to assure that all individuals have the same competence necessary to perform to their fullest potential in support of the organization's goals but recently these tests personality have adversely impacted applicants based on race and national origin (Lamb, 2020). In the workplace, conscientiousness predicts important outcomes like job performance and job satisfaction

(Olaru et al., 2019). A study by Lamb (2020) agreed with the idea that personality tests have pervaded hiring and promotion practices across the nation's largest companies, even as psychologists have questioned the tests' validity (p. 49). Personality tests can display biases against future employee candidates and can limit employers from seeing the full work potential of SWID.

The identification of barriers has been significant in increasing the unemployment rates for SWID. Important factors such as disclosing a disability, receiving support, and accommodations in the work environment have been instrumental for SWID to maintain competitive employment (Charette-Dussault & Corbiere, 2019). Employers may ask inquiring questions concerning hiring SWID but offering CBVPs will help diminish barriers and issues to employment and promote positive work opportunities for SWID (Riesen & Oertle, 2019). Supporting SWID to identify barriers and select coping mechanisms is a significant part of the transitioning process from youth to adulthood.

Implications

In this basic qualitative study, I examined high school special educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and the additional instruction to enhance students' with intellectual disabilities ability to attain meaningful employment. I utilized the data from this study to develop a Professional Development/Training Curriculum and Material series for special education educators to provide them with additional guidance and support in their facilitation of experiential learning experiences and identify evidence-based practices to

instruct employability skills. Appendix A consists of an overview, presurvey, postsurvey, and daily agenda for the PD project. The project will be highlighted in concise details in Section 3.

The results of this study may assist special education administrators and teachers make recommendations for changes to curriculums, instructional practices, and competency skills directing experiential learning experiences for SWID. The impact on educational policies may create new components of competencies and skill sets that are needed in CBVPs or experiential learning programs for SWID to experience success. In 2018, the educational agency overseeing school districts in a northeastern state enforced updated graduation requirements. According to the Ohio State Department of Education (2022) the updated requirements allowed students to select one of three pathways to graduate. Students can earn 20 credits of course requirements, a demonstration of competency on the State's Test, or a Demonstration of Readiness on one out of twelve seals. One of the twelve seals involved students demonstrating professional skills such as work-readiness and work ethic competencies by participating in CBVPs or experiential learning programs (Ohio State Department of Education website, 2022). According to Kolb (1984) experiential learning methods emphasize the critical linkages that can be developed between the classroom and the real world. Experiential learning programs are one method of choice for learning and personal development that may enhance the implementation and structure of experiential learning programs as pathways to graduation for students with intellectual disabilities to promote more engagement and independence

in community settings and build confidence in acquiring work skills to secure competitive employment.

Summary

There is a gap in employment rates between SWID and their non-disabled peers. Implementing experiential learning or community-based vocational programming is one approach that may assist SWID to develop employability skills to secure competitive employment after graduation. This method may also assist SWID in generalizing pertinent work skills acquired in the classroom to apply them in the real world of work. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory identifies the importance of students' active engagement in the learning process and the relevance of linkages between the concepts learned in the classroom and performed in the real world.

This section included an introduction to the research study, a statement of the problem, and the purpose of the study. The background information was presented, and definitions of the terms pertinent to the problem were stated. Section 2 will focus on the selected methodology. In the methodology section, I will highlight methods used to collect and analyze the qualitative data from the open-ended question during the semi-structured interviews utilizing Zoom platform for special education educators. Section 3 will present a brief description of the project. Section 4 will emphasize a discussion of the project's strengths and limitations in addressing the problem in the appropriate literature, an analysis reflecting personal growth, the reflection of the importance of the work, and directions for future research.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

This section opens with a description of a qualitative research method, an introduction to a basic qualitative approach, and the rationale for selecting this method. The role of the researcher will be defined in this chapter. Also, a description of the selection of research participants, the method of collecting, and analyzing data and the nature of the setting will be highlighted in this chapter.

There are two types of research methodology: quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research, as identified by Creswell and Creswell-Baez (2021) describes data in measurable, numerical formats, which is not appropriate for this study because of the focus on math computation content. Qualitative research methodology concentrates on the facts and characteristics of a specific phenomenon. Merriam and Grenier (2019) have defined qualitative research as a method to understand a situation from participants' perspective.

Qualitative research is a type of research that involves the analysis of non-numerical data. Researchers implement a qualitative approach to collect richly descriptive data from interviews, focus groups and/or observations to analyze the raw data (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). A study by Merriam and Grenier (2019) identified data as the basis of corroborating a social theory, set of ideas, or a problem that can be used to explain a topic of interest. Initial or open coding, which is also known as inductive coding, is a method within qualitative research and the beginning process of coding the raw data (Saldana, 2021, p. 148). Open coding or inductive coding assists with

identifying similarities and differences and requires persons to think on higher levels while implementing analyzing skills to determine what information is and is not relevant (Creswell & Creswell-Baez, 2021).

One reason I selected a qualitative research design for this study is due to the concise responses I received from the open-ended questions, which allowed relevant factors to emerge (Creswell & Creswell-Baez, 2021). The qualitative method makes it feasible to grasp the meaning of the inquiry being studied by allowing researchers to explore concepts, definitions, characteristics, and thoughts related to the research topic (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I implemented a qualitative approach as an active learner to engage with the participants in order to gain a thorough purpose and understanding of their perceptions and experiences. This study was suited for a qualitative methodology because even though the benefits of CBVPs are well documented, I desired to examine special education educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and the additional instruction to enhance SWID ability to attain meaningful employment is widely unknown.

This study utilized a basic qualitative research method, in which individuals construct the meaning as they interact with the world they are interpreting. Research by Merriam and Grenier (2019) noted the goal of a basic qualitative study is to uncover and interpret meanings regarding topics of interests. The intent of this basic qualitative study was to examine high school special educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and their perceptions about additional instruction to enhance SWID ability to attain meaningful employment.

Since this was a basic qualitative study, other qualitative research methodologies were considered, which included ethnography, phenomenology, and grounded theories. Ethnography methodology was eliminated as a choice because it is largely used in studies that focus on studying an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time (Creswell & Creswell-Baez, 2021). Phenomenology theory was also considered as a potential methodology for this study, but the goal of phenomenology study focuses on the essence or structure of an experience (Merriam and Grenier, 2019), which will not be effective for my study. Grounded methodology as identified by Creswell and Creswell-Baez (2021) is a process or action in the views of participants. This method was another potential choice for research but was not selected because the focus of this approach was addressing questions about how things change over time. The second reason I selected a basic qualitative study is due to the fact it focuses on understanding how people interpret their experiences and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Participants

I used purposeful sampling to select participants for this study. Purposeful sampling is utilized when researchers select participants who will best help them understand the research problem and research questions (Creswell & Creswell-Baez, 2021). The sampling selection for this study consisted of professional, certified special education educators/intervention specialists and transition coordinators who encounter daily interactions with the special education population in a high school. Purposeful sampling is the most effective approach for a basic qualitative study because it enables

the researcher to select a sample from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research (Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p. 14). A sample size for this study consisted of 10 certified educators who instructed high school SWID. I recruited certified educators such as Special Education/Intervention Specialists, Transition Coordinators, Work-Study Coordinators, Job Training Coordinators, Career-Based Intervention Coordinators, and Job Coaches. These were the criteria for this study due to the fact I obtained the needed information from these participants to address the problem and purpose of my study.

After obtaining approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study 01-21-22-0110805, I started the process of creating a consent form. I reached out to the partner organization by email and phone but did not receive a response; therefore, I submitted a change to IRB regarding participants. The change was approved, and I started the process of using LinkedIn to search for and gain access to online special education teacher organizations, and social media websites for participants. I posted information about seeking selective participants who were certified Special Education/Interventions Specialists, Transition Coordinators, Work-Study Coordinators, Job Training Coordinators, Career-Based Intervention Coordinators and Job Coaches currently teaching in a high school classroom with SWID that have access to a CBVP or experiential learning experiences, which aligned with the local problem.

When participants emailed me, I sent them an invitation (see appendix E) and consent form, informing the participants of the purpose of the study, confidentiality procedures, and their role as a participant. The time frame of the semistructured interview

was also identified. Once I received a written consent from participants a date and time were scheduled for the interview. I emailed each participant a Zoom meeting link. To protect the participants' identities, I assigned each participant a double-digit number (e.g., #12). I then used the double-digit number coding identification in the data analysis and reporting.

According to Creswell and Creswell-Baez (2021), an important first step in an interview is to set the interviewee at ease. My method of establishing a researcher-participant volunteer relationship involves active listening, open communication, mutual respect, and trust based on the confidential disclosure of the participants' roles and responsibilities in this study. I opened each interview with an icebreaker question about their day. Next, I discussed the purpose of the study, confidentiality procedures, and their role as a participant. During the scheduled Zoom meeting and in the consent form, I informed the participants of the time frame of the interview session. During each semi-structured interview session, I diligently maintained a friendly, nonjudgmental, and respectful discussion with each participant.

Data Collection

Qualitative research can produce explanation of the representation of the raw data. Data can be derived from an array of sources such as surveys (open-ended questionnaires), interviews (single, focus groups), observations (field notes), and documents (journals or artifacts; Creswell & Creswell-Baez, 2021, p. 14). I conducted semistructured interviews because these types of interviews allowed participants to freely explore and express their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about a particular topic and to

delve deeply into personal and sensitive issues (DeJonckheere & Vaughn 2019, p. 1). I conducted 10 online semistructured interviews. Semistructured interviews are identified by Billups (2021) as flexibly worded and based on a list of questions to be explored by participants. The one-on-one semi-structured interviews were held on Zoom videoconferencing platform and lasted between 25-45 minutes. Online interviews allowed participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms and at their own pace. The interviews were recorded with participants' approval. Recording the interviews ensured that the entire verbatim transcription was preserved for reviewing the data during the coding process to accurately comprehend special education educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills and their perceptions about additional instruction needed to enhance SWID ability to attain employment after graduation.

To accompany the semi-structured interviewing process, I created an interview protocol form to have questions prewritten before the interview (see Appendix C). Creswell and Creswell-Baez (2021) identified an interview protocol as a form that researchers may use during the interview to write short notes and quotes. Within 12 hours of each recorded interview session, I created a Word document. The Word document folder had a secure password to keep each participant's information organized for quick and easy retrieval when needed. I reviewed the notes on the interview protocol forms and placed the documents in a binder to help with organizing the data. The use of an interview protocol was effective with maintaining and retrieving data throughout the study (Creswell & Creswell-Baez, 2021). The binder was sectioned according to each

participant that consisted of contact information, transcriptions with research questions and answers, and interview protocol forms with notes.

Once data were collected, I printed out all the transcriptions in hard copy to circle key words and phrases based on each interview question. Open or inductive coding was carried out in my basic qualitative research study. Open coding is a great method to use to code qualitative studies because it allows the researcher to listen attentively to participant's words for clarity (Saldana, 2021, p.138). Coding is the labeling and creating of categories for sections or "chunks" of data in the dataset, which is the initial movement in the analysis process (Dhakal, 2022, p. 270). Inductive approach is an appropriate method for researchers who are eager to learn more about a specific topic (Creswell & Creswell-Baez, 2021).

I selected to code the data with the categorically approach identified by Saldana (2021). During the first cycle of coding, I extracted words, terms, and phrases from interviews, protocol forms, and wrote them manually on a dry erase board. I clustered the raw data according to common broad topics. I reviewed and compared the raw data collected from each participant's interview. Next, I developed categories that represented the experiences of participants. I used self stick color note pads to assist with the organization of categories. During the second coding cycle, I carefully condensed the data into smaller number of codes by comparing and previous categories with the newly combined codes. I focused on the newly created codes, searching for patterns among the codes and started coming up with themes. The themes related to the common topics and ideas proposed by the data (Saldana, 2021, p. 259). The categories of themes are concise

and detailed to illustrate specific thoughts and points of view were accurately presented.

To ensure internal validity, I conducted member checking. I contacted participants to review my interpretation of their responses for accuracy and clarity. Participants did not note any changes in their responses or researcher bias. Research by Creswell and Creswell-Baez (2021) supported member checking as a means of providing participants the opportunity to review my interpretations and defend their answers to ensure validity.

Presently, I work as a Transition Coordinator at an online credit recovery high school. This school has a large population of young adult students ages ranging from 16 to 22. Majority of the students have diverse cultural backgrounds and have returned to school to receive a high school diploma. In my previous employment, I served as a Job Training Coordinator and developed community-based internships where students work in various departments acquiring employability skills. In these roles, I have had the opportunity to observe the many obstacles that students with disabilities encounter in their job searches and in the workplace. Therefore, I developed a sincere interest in examining high school special educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and their perceptions about the additional instruction to enhance SWID ability to attain meaningful employment.

As the researcher for this study, I am the primary agent for data collection and analysis. In the role of a researcher, I was interested in understanding participants' perceptions and experiences, and the way they make sense of their lives (Creswell & Creswell-Baez, 2021). As the researcher, I sought to establish the meaning of a

phenomenon from the views of participants. Researchers collect and analyze data in particular ways depending on the question(s) they are trying to answer in their study (Kiger & Varpio, 2020, p. 2). A qualitative research study was designed to explore a multitude of individuals, events, and issues in special education. I selected a basic qualitative study design to help explore whether an instructional practice can improve learner outcomes, update curriculum, and reform policies. To remain objective throughout the collection and coding of the data, I controlled all my preconceived thoughts and focused exclusively on what the observable data displayed on transcriptions.

Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis are simultaneous processes in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell-Baez, 2021). To report accurate analysis of the data, I incorporated various methods of Saldana (2021) first coding and theming process.

Saldana's first cycle methods are coding strategies that occur during the initial coding of the raw data (2021). This structured process involves reviewing the data from the interviews and protocol forms and writing extracts, developing categories, comparing and condensing categories to initiate codes, creating themes, and reviewing themes. In the following paragraphs, I will give a detailed synopsis of the data analysis of my study.

The data were analyzed according to the methods described in the following paragraphs. Within 12 hours of each interview, I reviewed participant's interview transcription sessions that were downloaded onto a Word document file. I developed a Word document folder with a secure password to keep each participant's information organized for quick and easy retrieval when needed. Each participant's transcription was

assigned a double-digit number, such as #12, for security. Before reviewing in detail the transcription of each interview, I reviewed the purpose of my study. During the interviews, I also wrote notes on the protocol forms. I used highlighters to emphasize recurring words and terms. I repeatedly compared participants' interview notes and transcriptions to avoid omitting pertinent information. This comparison process helped to inform the data collection process.

Coding is the labeling and creating of categories for sections or “chunks” of data in the dataset (Dhakal, 2022, p. 270). Coding separates the data from the semi-structured interviews into abstract ideas. Creswell and Creswell-Baez (2021) identified hand coding as the initial step in the analysis of qualitative research. I preferred hand coding because it allowed me to be more systematic while organizing the data into categories, which is the start of developing patterns. Once all of the raw data were collected, I proceeded to write all the similar words, terms, and phrases onto the dry erase board. Next, I arranged the interviewee's extraction of written words, terms, and phrases into columns according to each interview question. I eliminated words that were related, similar or overlapping to each other. The remaining words and phrases were arranged into categories using color-coded self stick note pads. I reviewed, compared, and condensed the lists of interviewee's extracts, reorganizing the categories, and compiled another list of words, terms and phrases as codes (see Table 1). To view an entire table of generated codes see Appendix D. Themes developed that represented the common concepts of the data.

Table 1*Example of Generated Codes*

Generated Codes	Extracts	Categories	Codes	Themes
Row 1	No State Curriculum Developed by JD, JTC, Transition Individualized Goals Employment Needs Best Practices Instruct Whole Student	Course of Study or Curriculum	No State standardized Curriculum Individualized according to Career Assessments results Vocational/Career Tech/Pathways Integrated with academic-standards Evidence-based instructional strategies Jobs/Careers Experiential/hands-on learning-Experiences Guided Practice	Program Structure
Row 2	Individualized by Career Assessment results Integrated with Core Academics Skills Learning Standards Competency Skills Employability Skills Work Site Terminology	Special Education Individualized	Paid jobs Strong work ethics Professionalism Meeting employer needs	Employment Success

Note. From “Attitudes Toward Dissertation Editors,” by W. Student, 2020, *Journal of Academic Optimism*, 98, p. 11 (<https://doi.org/10.xxxxxxxx>). Copyright 2020 by Academic Publishing Consortium. Reprinted with permission.

Once this step was completed, each interviewee’s data information was filed and assigned a double-digit number. The visual data board with the interviewee’s extracts, colorful self-stick notes pads with words or phrases as categories, codes, and themes were kept visible in my personal office throughout the course of this study.

Ethical Consideration

To incorporate principles of research ethics in my study, I assigned double-digit numbers to each participant. I also obtained consent from each participant. This consent protected participant’s anonymity and confidentiality. The consent also allowed participants the right to withdraw from my research study at any time. To protect the use

of all electronic information, I incorporated computer passwords, firewalls, antivirus software, and locked file cabinet to protect data from unauthorized individuals, loss, and/or theft. After five years, all participants' information in files and on computers will be discarded.

To ensure internal validity, I conducted member checking. Creswell and Creswell-Baez (2021) identified member checking as a means of providing participants the opportunity to review my interpretations and defend their answers to ensure validity. Member checking was performed on Zoom platforms and phone calls with participants to ensure correct accuracy of their responses to the interview questions. No leading questions were asked to avoid bias or to reveal assumptions. In my study, I did not encounter any discrepant cases that contradicted the main points of the data therefore, procedures to deal with discrepant cases were not needed.

Data Analysis Results

This study addressed the problem that a northeastern suburban high school community-based vocational program is not instructing employability skills to prepare SWID for employment after high school graduation. Despite efforts to create unique worksites or alternative ways for SWID to gain work readiness skills, unemployment rates have not improved. The purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to examine high school special education educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the CBVP and the additional instruction to enhance SWID ability to attain meaningful employment after graduation. Data were collected on Zoom platform during one-on-one interviews. With the use of a research developed interview protocol

form, I asked interview questions to explore special education teachers' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills and the additional instruction needed to enhance SWID ability to attain meaningful employment after graduation. The formal Zoom interviews lasted between 25 and 45 minutes. Within 12 hours of each completed interview, I reviewed the transcriptions and created a Word document with a secure password to keep each participant's information organized for quick and easy retrieval when needed. I conducted member checking with selective participants for accuracy and clarity of their responses. I did not encounter any discrepant cases that contradicted the main points of the data. I compared and coded each data sample collected from each participant's interview. Once the comparison and coding were finished, the themes started to become visible. I searched for discrepancies within the data but inconsistencies were not found in participant's responses to the interview questions. Through the interview questions I established for this study, I was able to understand special education educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and local high school special education educators' perceptions about the additional instruction needed to enhance SWID ability to attain meaningful employment after graduation.

In relation to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory cycle, I understood special education educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in a community-based vocational program and their perceptions about additional instruction needed to enhance SWID ability to attain meaningful employment after graduation. I

utilized the data collected during the semi-structured interviews to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What are local special education educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in a community-based vocational program?

Research Question 2: What are local high school special education educators' perceptions about the additional instruction needed to enhance SWID ability to attain meaningful employability after graduation?

Research Question 1

Research Question one was, "What are special education educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in a community-based vocational program?"

In my one-on-one semi-structured interviews with participants, I asked questions that were designed to assist me with understanding special education educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in a community-based vocational program. The research questions were developed for high school special education educators' to openly express their ideas, thoughts, and classroom instruction pertaining to the instruction of employability skills and about the additional instruction needed to enhance SWID ability to attain meaningful employment after graduation. During the interview process, I engaged in direct dialogue about their perceptions regarding instruction of employability skills in a CBVP. In addition, some probes questions, and comments were expressed to participants. Research by Creswell and Creswell-Baez (2021) identified Probing questions as a form of asking for more details, to clarify a point or concept.

Initial or open coding also known as inductive coding is the beginning process of coding the raw data (Saldana, 2021, p. 148). This approach permits the researcher to reflect intensely on the main concepts of the data. Open coding is an approach for analyzing qualitative data and creating categories for sections or “chunks” of data (Dhakal, 2022, p. 270). I started the process of coding by reviewing interviewees’ transcriptions and notes on the protocol forms. Next, based on the interviewees’ transcriptions and protocol forms, I extracted common words, terms, and phrases, and manually wrote them on the dry erase board. Different colors of dry erase markers were used to identify the words, terms, and phrases from each interview. I compared each interviewee’s responses and started eliminating similar and overlapping words, terms, or phrases. The remaining words, terms, and phrases were organized into categories using colorful self-stick note pads. Next, I selected to implement Saldana (2021) categorically approach to refine the categories into codes. I reviewed and compared the interviewee’s extracts, categories, and compiled a list codes. I developed a phrase or terms that was reflective of the meaning from the codes that were compiled together. From those compiled groups of coded data, 3 themes evolved to address research question number one. The three themes were as follows: (a) Program Structure, (b) Employment Success, and (c) Community Experiences. Saldana (2021) identifies themes as researchers construction or interpretations (p. 259). The themes presented information about the data for the purpose of my research study. Table 2 below provides a summary of the codes that were organized and used to develop the themes. A detailed description of the themes, along with supporting excerpts from interviews, is listed below.

Table 2*Codes and Themes for Research Question 1*

Codes	Themes
No State standardized curriculum	Program Structure
Individualized according to Career Assessments results	
Vocational/Career -Tech/Pathways	
Integrated with Academic Standards	
Evidence-based Instructional Strategies	
Jobs/Careers	Employment Success
Experiential/hands-on Learning Experiences	
Guided practice	
Paid jobs	
Strong work ethics	
Professionalism	Community Experiences
Meeting employer needs	
New skill sets	
Self-Confidence	
Self -Worth	
Independence/Self-sufficiency	
Contributing to Society	
Building a Portfolio	

Theme 1 Program Structure

The structure of a CBVP should focus on two central components. One component involves assisting SWID identify careers or jobs that match their career interests and/or future life goals. A CBVP is a researched-base best practice of a community experience utilized in schools to assist SWID with the development of employability skills and career awareness (U.S. Department of Education Department, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2020). Participant #84 stated, “Identifying students, preferences, interests, needs and strengths are the foundation of CBVP.” Incorporating academics into CBVP can assist teachers with collecting instructional data about SWID work performance skills such as reading a task analysis, time on task, following directions, socialization/communication skills, interaction with co-workers, customer service skills, developing a resume, and safety skills, which are

essential experiential skills towards having a successful working career. Participant #52 stated, “a curriculum must incorporate interacting in the community with life experiences such as composing a grocery list to cook a meal and taking a trip to the grocery store to purchase items.” This is an example of a hands-on, community engaged lesson for SWID. Even though a CBVP is individualized and/or student focused according to career assessment results, participant #40 stated that “a standardized curriculum is highly needed and many intervention specialists have written proposals of a CBVP curriculum utilizing best practices but the state has not approved a standardized CBVP curriculum.” Participant #58 stated, “some of those skills that are taught through community based job training program, for example, also touches upon life skills, functional living skills that we all need to be productive citizens.”

The second element is implementing evidenced-based instructional strategies to instruct SWID. Participant #52 stated, “special education is based on specially designed instruction or evidence-based instructional techniques that systematically meet and support students individual educational needs.” Ohio professional teaching standards identified evidenced based practices as content-specific instructional strategies that are utilized daily to effectively teach the central concepts and skills of the discipline. Participant #58 stated, “some of those skills that are taught through community based job training program, for example, also touches upon life skills, functional living skills that we all need to be productive citizens.”

Theme 2: Employment Success

Identifying the concept of experiential learning experiences is important for educators in the discipline of special education who provide instruction to SWID.

Participant #76 stated, “experiential learning experiences offer students with disabilities chances to pursue a decent standard of living, and that’s our ultimate goal.”

Comprehending the meaning of experiential learning and actually implementing these types of activities in daily lessons is pertinent for SWID to acquire meaning and purpose in learning. Participant #46 stated, “instructing academic and employment needs reduces employment barriers where all the students can participate in like a pay cooperative work or community based learning experiences, job shadowing, and short term field experiences.” Participant #29 stated, “having SWID enroll in career pathways or career technical programs may result in receiving a certificate in a career of interest, and obtaining competitive employment faster, which will increase independency and reduce the need for services of adult agencies.”

Theme 3: Community Experiences

When SWID have the guidance and motivation to participate in CBVP, they can have unlimited access to community experiences. SWID will have opportunities to participate in training sites such as internships, volunteer, and job shadowing experiences. Participant #84 stated, “SWID participation in these experiences, build confidence in order to apply for higher tier jobs in the future and have a better understanding of employer expectations to perform the job effectively.” Enrollment in a CBVP can help SWID develop strong work ethics, communication skills, teamwork skills, good customer

service skills, socialization skills, appropriate workplace behavior, independence, and pride in their work skills. Participant #60 stated, “that many special education students want to be out in the community doing what everyone is doing.” Participation in CBVP can instill character and strengthen SWID assertiveness to build new skill sets to prepare for the world of work. Participant #30 stated, “maintaining employment is going to build their confidence when it comes to applying for jobs.”

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was, “What are local high school special educators’ perceptions about the additional instruction needed to enhance students’ with intellectual disabilities ability to attain meaningful employment after graduation?” Through my one-on-one semi-structured interviews with participants, I asked questions that were designed to assist me understand special education educators’ perceptions about the additional instruction needed to enhance students’ with intellectual disabilities to attain meaningful employment. The research questions were developed for high school special education educators to openly express their ideas, thoughts, and classroom instructional experiences pertaining to the additional instruction needed in a CBVP to prepare SWID for future employment. During the interview process, I engaged in direct dialogue with participants about their perceptions about the additional instruction needed to enhance students’ with intellectual disabilities ability to attain meaningful employment after graduation. I asked participants probing questions. Research by Creswell and Creswell-Baez (2021) identified probing questions as a form of asking for more details, to clarify a point or concept.

Initial or open coding also known as inductive coding is the beginning process of coding the raw data (Saldana, 2021, p. 148). This approach permits the researcher to reflect intensely on the main concepts of the data. Open coding is an approach for analyzing qualitative data and creating categories for sections or “chunks” of data (Dhakal, 2022, p. 270). I started the process of coding by reviewing participants interviews and protocol forms. I extracted common words, terms, and phrases, and manually wrote them on a dry erase board. Different colors of dry erase markers were used to identify words, terms and phrases from each interview question. I compared each interviewee’s responses and started eliminating similar and overlapping words, terms, or phrases. The remaining words, terms, and phrases were classified into categories using colorful self stick note pads. Next, I selected to implement Saldana (2021) categorically approach to refine the categories into codes. I reviewed and compared the interviewee’s extracts, categories, and compiled a list codes. I developed a phrase or terms that was reflective of the meaning from the codes that were compiled together. From those compiled groups of coded data, 3 themes evolved to address research question number two. The three themes were as follows: a) Active Learning, b) Impact Future, and c) Collaboration. Saldana (2021) identifies themes as researchers construction or interpretations (p. 259). The themes presented information about the data for the purpose of my research study. Table 3 below provides a summary of the codes that were compiled into groups and used to develop the themes. A detailed description of the themes, along with supporting excerpts from interviews, is listed below.

Table 3*Codes and Themes for Research Question 2*

Codes	Themes
Soft skills	Active Learning
Hard skills	
Technology	
Transferable/Generalization of skills	
Connecting new knowledge with previous learning	Impact Future
Postsecondary Programs	
Higher-Education Learning Institutions	
Adult agencies	Collaboration
Community agencies	

Theme 1: Active Learning

It is very important for SWID to be actively engaged in their learning process. Engagement in the learning process allows SWID opportunities to utilize their critical thinking skills. For example, participant #84 stated, “Having SWID sell coffee, hot chocolate, and muffins, interacting with customers, adding money, and making change, gave them opportunities to develop their social skills as well as communication skills, because they interact with the students that were coming to get the coffee, hot chocolate or muffins the staff that were coming to purchase whatever they were serving.” This is an example of real world learning where SWID can connect new knowledge with previous learning and reinforce learning. Participant #76 stated, “community experiences it’s like volunteering first, and then pay, and understanding employers expectations about working and to have a basic decision making skills to make important career and life decisions.” When SWID demonstrate a connection with new and previous learning, it signifies a growth in knowledge.

Theme 2: Impact Future

SWID who exit high schools with career awareness and employability skills are more likely to be enrolled in a post-secondary institution of learning to receive additional employability training or improve competitive employment opportunities. Participant #40 stated, “It’s all about teaching people how to be independent, teaching students how to be independent and to succeed in adult life.” Enrollment in a higher learning institution assists young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities transition to adult life by providing them with an inclusive college experience. Participant #29 stated, “SWID participation in inclusive college programs can assist with improved functional/life skills, independence, and success in adult life.”

Theme 3: Collaboration

A well-planned CBVP has a component that addresses special education educators’ collaboration with adult programs, and adult agencies. A collaborative network supports the student and family with resources and experts to develop a future plan. A future plan that is designed to develop SWID academic and functional achievement and support the attainment of desired post-graduation goals (National Secondary Transition and Technical Assistance Center, 2022). Participant #40 stated, “It’s all about teaching people how to be independent, teaching students how to be independent and to succeed in adult life.” In order to achieve these objectives, schools and adult agencies need to increase their relationships regarding supports and services before SWID graduate. Participants #30 and #46 both stated, “school districts, students, and parents need more communication and connections to adult agencies before the

students graduate from high school.” Participant #48 stated school districts, students, and parents need more communication, connection, and collaboration with adult agencies and visibility in schools especially during IEP meetings to develop a solid plan to transition without any issues.” Participant #48 stated, “more collaboration with adult and other agencies can offer numerous opportunities for employment, careers, and life goals for SWID.” Participant #84 also stated, “some schools build partnerships with companies like Goodwill and they have their own customized employment strategies that were not shared with me.” Participant #46 also stated, “knowing that various adult agencies use different types of customize employment strategies then what I actually use are beneficial but confusing to SWID.” These excerpts clearly justify why collaboration among high schools and adult agencies need to be systematic and offer consistency in employment training strategies to eliminate uncertainty.

Outcomes

My study was implemented to address a concern that local high school students with intellectual disabilities are exiting their high school community-based vocational program without sufficient employability skills to attain meaningful employment. The purpose of this basic qualitative study is to examine high school special educators’ perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and the additional instruction to enhance students’ with intellectual disabilities ability to attain meaningful employment. After the completion of the semi-structured interviews with participants, I used inductive or open coding to analyze and identify themes within the raw data. Common themes were identified in connection with

the participant's interviews. To successfully instruct employability skills to prepare SWID for employment after graduation, participants need to develop CBVP to help SWID with identifying careers of interest and to become better skilled at instructing customized employment strategies.

When educators incorporate customized employment strategies to teach employability skills, SWID are more likely to capitalize on their strengths while testing the application of concepts learned in the classroom (Kolb, 1984). The process that links education, work and personal development is based on Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory. While participants identified mutual benefits of structures that focused on employability skills needed in CBVP, they presented limited understanding of implementing evidenced based practices such as customized employment strategies to instruct employability skills to SWID. Majority of participants are familiar with the concept of customized employment strategies but have not received adequate training to use customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP. Therefore, to prepare special education teachers to be successful with the implementation of customized employment strategies, educators required appropriate training.

As a result of my study's findings, I designed a project in the course of a 3-day professional development/training curriculum series. The professional development was designed to guide and support high school special education teachers with acquiring skills to implement strategies pertaining to customized employment practices. These customized employment strategies will assist SWID learn viable work skills to obtain and maintain employment opportunities after graduation.

Summary

Within Section 2 of this study, I examined 10 certified special education educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and their perceptions about the additional instruction to enhance SWID ability to attain meaningful employment. Within this basic qualitative study, data were collected in the style of interviews to explore the following two research questions: "What are local high school special educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program?" and "What are local high school special educators' perceptions about the additional instruction needed to enhance students' with intellectual disabilities ability to attain meaningful employment after graduation?"

I recruited 10 certified special education educators who instruct SWID in a local high school. The participants identified the instructional components of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and the additional instruction needed to enhance students' with intellectual disabilities ability to attain meaningful employment after graduation. Special education educators' identified a specific area where they required additional training to implement an evidence-based practice. The evidence-based practice was customized employment strategies.

Based on the findings in this study, a professional development training curriculum materials series was developed to guide and support high school special education educators' with skills to adequately use customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP to assist SWID find employment opportunities. The findings

from this study and training project may lead to recommendations for local change in educational systems and state levels involving instructional strategies, and curriculums leading to improved instruction in experiential learning and/or employability skills. The description and details of the professional development project are outlined in section 3.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

In my project study, I examined high school special educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and the additional instruction to enhance students' with intellectual disabilities ability to attain meaningful employment after high school graduation. The outcomes from my study resulted in a project that identified the act of implementing evidenced-based best practices, such as customized employment strategies through a professional development (PD). Within this basic qualitative study, I recruited 10 certified special education educators who currently instruct SWID in a local high school. Participants clearly demonstrated knowledge of state operating standards and federal regulations regarding the education of SWID. However, participants did acknowledge a need to become more proficient to use customized employment strategies in the classroom and in CBVP. The selected genre for my research consisted of developing a 3-day PD/Training Curriculum and Materials to present during a special education Professional Learning Community (PLC) meeting. These PD training project sessions will allow special education teachers to acquire knowledge on specific topics and collaborate within a framework on learning the procedures to instruct employability skills to assist SWID obtain employment after graduation.

The project for my doctoral research study is a 3-day PD/Training Curriculum and Material series. In addition to the 3-day PD, I intend to provide continuous guidance and support to special education educators with incorporating customized employment

strategies in the classroom or in CBVP. Invitations to attend the PD sessions were sent to Special Education Teachers/ Intervention Specialists, Transition Coordinators, Job Training Coordinators, Work Study Coordinators, Job Training Coordinators, and Career-Based Intervention Coordinators, and Job Coaches. A learning outcome or objective for the PD project is that special education educators will implement customized employment strategies to assist SWID find employment opportunities. The PD sessions focus on implementing evidenced-based practices specifically the instruction of the strategies of customized employment to SWID. Educators will practice strategies and techniques during the PD sessions, so they can effectively facilitate these approaches during classroom instruction or in CBVP experiential learning experiences. Giving educators opportunities to practice strategies and techniques is imperative to PD sessions due to participants identifying a need for both (strategies & techniques) in the research study. A study by Aguilar (2022) supported the idea that participation in PD training can be empowering and energizing for teachers. There is one main goal of my PD project, which is to train special education teachers to use customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP. By giving educators my contact information for continual guidance and support, educators will have opportunities to converse, and share ideas to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of instructing customized employment strategies.

Rationale

The problem addressed in this study is that local high school SWID are exiting their high school community-based vocational program without sufficient employability

skills to attain meaningful employment. School districts are graduating SWID, but SWID are not prepared for the job market. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021) indicated that the employment rates for SWID is lower than their nondisabled peers. This information indicates a gap in employment between SWID and their nondisabled peers. Current literature identified customized employment as an intervention to improve employment outcomes for SWID. Participants revealed that they understood the importance of customized employment strategies; however, they required adequate training to use customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP. The finds of this study is to create a PD series. The PD will focus on special education educators' implementation of customized employment strategies and utilizing these approaches to assist with closing the employment gap between SWID and their nondisabled peers.

Review of the Literature

Within Section 1 of my research study, I described the local problem, rationale, significance of the study and the identified research questions. Within the literature review section, I explicitly described the conceptual framework Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory. I also included discussions of special education statutes, transition services, CBVP and barriers pertaining to employment opportunities for SWID. The literature review within this section will concentrate on PD and the benefits of evidenced-based instructional practices, such as customized employment strategies, to instructors and students. To demonstrate saturation of the topic, I collected peer-reviewed articles from academic and educational databases and Walden University Library. The

following terminology was applied in reviewing the literature, which are: PD, Evidence-Based Practices, and Customized Employment Strategies.

Project Genre

As Coordinator of Transition Services at an online high school, I observed numerous challenges SWID face in their job searches and at the workplace. Due to these barriers, I became interested in exploring the perceptions of special education educators regarding the experiential learning skills that should be considered as offerings in a high school CBVP for SWID to become employed after graduation. Therefore, I developed a PD training curriculum series for this project study. The project genre for my study is a 3-day PD/Training Curriculum and Materials series to present and share with special education teachers how to use customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP (see Appendix C). My goal for this study was to train special education teachers to use customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP. A study by Sancar et al. (2021) agreed that schools cannot improve without improving the skills and abilities of teachers. Once CBVP are established, special education teachers can use customized employment strategies to assist SWID find employment opportunities.

Professional Development

PD is critical for teachers to improve the quality of the profession, student achievement, and school climate (Kelly & Brock, 2022). The 3-day PD series I designed for my project targets helping special education teachers with using customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP. Participants in my study acknowledged a need to become more successful with the implementation of customized

employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP. I selected PD as the genre for my project due to the fact PD fosters teachers with authentic learning that strengthens their teaching practice and networking experiences (Bastoni, 2020). According to Chen and Ney (2020), PD is designed to enhance instruction and learning experiences to meet target learning goals. Research by Islami et al. (2020) supports an effective networking PD brings about sustained change in teacher practice and is helpful for improvement in learner outcomes (Islami et al., 2022).

In order to support new behaviors that foster increased student learning, effective professional development for educators must be ongoing and sustained over time (Kelly & Brock, 2022). When designing professional learning opportunities for teachers, it is important to consider teachers' prior knowledge about learning, such as curriculum and assessment of their learning practices (Krismanto et al., 2022). The first step in organizing a PD series consists of clearly and concisely articulating the purpose to participants (Aguilar, 2022). Adult learners need the answer to this question specifically articulated to commit, and deeply engage as an active participant. As identified by Biggerstaff (2020), being an active participant in PD is critically important for all educators. Effective PD requires participants to take part in active learning and participation with colleagues to collaborate, share and discuss ideas (Yoon et al., 2020). When employees work together, they can collaboratively look for new exchangeable knowledge and identify experiential learning experiences that can positively influence their practices inside the school and within the community (Alkrdem, 2020).

Kolb's Experiential Learning method is the conceptual framework of this study. Kolb's (1984) learning by experience is a two-way process of engaging with the world. For youth seeking employment opportunities, learning is seen as a dynamic process. This dynamic process, according to Kolb (1984), leads to action or active engagement in the learning experience. For a learning experience to be meaningful, learning needs to be evaluated in the real world. CBVPs or experiential learning experiences provide active engagement or a tested reality into the world of work for SWID. For many educational agencies, Kolb's experiential learning theory may challenge a traditional career & technical vocational community-based course of study and elicit a curriculum change through PD. Research by Palermo and Thomson (2019) supported an association between perceptions of usefulness of professional development and positive changes to engagement in classroom instruction. Educators participating in PD tend to grasp what is known about how educators can make changes in their practice and promote students' success (Martin et al., 2019).

To organize a successful PD, teachers must embrace modern instructional curricular methods and implement various learning activities to identify new experiential learning skills. Research by Shdaifat and Al-Huson (2020) agreed teachers always need to expand their knowledge about modern trends in the educational and instructional technology fields. Currently, PD has transformed school districts from outdated and complacent institutions to diverse learning settings that are designed to meet the needs of all students from preschool through college years. Districts meet their educational needs by incorporating curriculums that align with state learning standards to support each

student's academic, social, and emotional skill development. Incorporating PD meetings can help educators acquire knowledge and devise a plan of slow consistent implementation to gather data and analyze before the final stages of adopting a new curriculum or instructional method.

Evidence-Based Practices

Evidence-based practices (EBPs) are extremely pertinent methods for individualizing instruction for SWID. These techniques demonstrate how specific modifications and accommodations may impact fidelity of implementation. EBPs are identified by Rowe et al., (2021) as an intervention that “demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes” or “demonstrates a rationale based on high quality research findings” which may improve student outcomes” (p. 28). The focus within special education educators' courses of study program is identifying EBPs or specialized instructional techniques to help SWID learn academic content. EBPs can help shape how educators design lessons, learning environments, and experiential learning activities.

EBPs are practices that have evidence of positive effects during instruction with SWID. Evidence-based practices have been shown to decrease challenging behaviors, improve academic performance, and create a stable learning environment in the classroom is reinforcement (Sobeck & Reister, 2021). The National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (2022) has identified EBP as “instructional methods and strategies proven through research to be effective to teach youth specific transition-related skills” (p. 3). Some of these instructional methods are identified as instructional or

intervention techniques and are specified in IEPs and transition plans that assist SWID with acquiring course content of daily living or functional skills. Regular school-wide PD for all staff is more likely to produce the desired outcomes of EBPs (Ennis et al., 2020).

EBPs can offer increased emphasis on professional standards, measures of competency, and teacher effectiveness (Rogers, 2019). EBPs in special education can offer new direction for researchers and practitioners to consider as the discipline continues to progress. Implementing EBPs for students with disabilities is a forward moving process due to the fact they can possibly offer promising results for SWID.

Customized Employment Practices

Instructors can use a focused intervention practice identified by Hume et al., (2021) to address a single target skill or learning goal for SWID. A specific focused intervention practice that is used to instruct and assist SWID to obtain and maintain competitive employment is customized employment practices (Risen et al., 2021). Customized employment became a part of federal law with the passage of the workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in 2014 and is defined as a flexible process designed to personalize the employment relationship between a job seeker and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both (Smith et al., 2019). Flexible strategies include job exploration; customizing a job description based on current employer needs or unmet employer needs; developing a set of job, duties, a work schedule, work arrangement, and the specifics of supervision, and determining a job location; and providing services and supports at the job location (Inge et al., 2022, p. 3). Research by Remund et al. (2022) supported the implementation of the following four customized employment strategies,

which are: (A) discovery, getting to know the job seeker; (B) placement plan, job development and matching (networking); (C) training and support; and (D) job retention services are effective practices to assist SWID with acquiring skills to attain and maintain employment. Discovery is the first step in the customized employment process and illuminates the critical skills, interests, support needs, and ideal conditions of employment that ultimately serve as the foundation for negotiating and creating work that “fits” for an individual (Salon et al., 2019). The discovery process is a proven evidenced-based practice that enables SWID to find jobs that are a good fit with an employer who values and needs the talents they have to offer (National Disability Institute, 2021).

A 30-day Placement Plan Worksheet is identified by Donovan (2021) is an erasable form that organizes employment tasks, activities, and due dates to keep everyone focused on the job search. The next phase is networking, which Brewer and McCarthy (2023) agreed that networking supports a student’s knowledge and abilities to successfully enter the professional field (p. 1). Job retention services are strategies to help maintain employment for individuals at risk for job loss (Thomas & Morgan, 2021, p. 92). Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs are implementing customized employment strategies due to the fact recent legislation identifies customized employment approaches as an employment outcome under the public VR program (Section §361.5(c)(15) – USDOL, 2014b; H.R. 803, 2017) and because of “real world” evidence that customized employment strategies improve competitive, integrated employment outcomes in SWID (Smith et al., 2019). Research by Smith et al., (2019) agreed that customized employment practices are processes such as networks and connections that assist in understanding

preferences, skills, and support needs of the job seeker, and provide insight into potential employment opportunities within the community. Utilizing these four customized employment strategies can support and inform teachers regarding information on instructional methods that can be used as a foundation for data collection.

Project Description

The PD session in the special education department at the study site is called Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings. Research by Brodie and Chimhande (2020) agreed that PLC sessions are designed as forums for teachers to engage in regular ongoing, systematic inquiry into practice, and developing collaborative solutions to problems of practice (p. 118). These forums allow educators to explore their strengths and weaknesses when identifying and implementing evidenced-based practices that will benefit all learners especially SWID. PLC meetings are designed specifically for high school Special Education Teachers/Intervention Specialists, Transition Coordinators, Job Training Coordinators, Work Study Coordinators, Career Based Intervention Coordinators, and Job Coaches. The majority of these individuals are specialists who develop and implement transition plans that include career exploration, transition activities, career assessments, career goals, post-secondary education options, employment opportunities, independent living, and community engagement for SWID. These specialized educators collaborate and share relevant and current information regarding transition services for high school SWID.

I developed a PD training curriculum materials series that can be shared throughout a 3-day special education staff meeting. The training sessions named

“Instructing Customized Employment Strategies” will be held during special education PD sessions during the school year. Before the start of the first meeting, I will pass out the agenda and pre-survey to all teachers to collect before the start of the training session (see Appendix A).

The Instructing Customized Employment Strategies training sessions will start daily at 8:00 am and conclude at 3:30 pm with a one-hour lunch break and two 15 minute breaks during each of the three days. The findings in my study suggest high school special education educators need more training in implementing customized employment strategies when instructing employability skills to SWID. To move forward with addressing the needs of high school special education educators, the first day of the PD will focus on defining and identifying customized employment and the four strategies of customized employment using a Power Point Presentation. It is important for educators to have a thorough understanding of CBVP and customized employment strategies to intelligently converse with employers to welcome the establishment of CBVP in their businesses. Instructing the strategies of employability skills is the fundamental framework of CBVP, which is helping SWID learn workforce readiness skills to obtain competitive employment opportunities in the future. The first day of a successful PD is important to provide participants with a purpose, goal, and learning outcome, and detailed information of the content. The focal point of the second PD day involves facilitating the implementation of customized employment to instruct these strategies to assist SWID find employment opportunities. Helping educators understand the importance of using effective customized employment strategies may result in positive

outcomes for SWID. The morning session will start with a synopsis of PD goal and learning outcome, followed by a review of previous day concepts. Next, participants will view the webinar: Best Practices in Employment Services: Key Strategies for Finding and Maintaining a Job. Further, a discussion on identifying the purpose and strategies of the 30-Day Placement Plan Worksheet. Lastly, a discussion on identifying the purpose and strategies of Job Retention Services. The afternoon session will involve a hands-on activity with all participants. Each participant will be assigned to a group consisting of three educators to complete an experiential learning activity. Each member of the group will select a role such as the teacher, student, and recorder. The student of each group will receive a brief summary of a high school SWID they will portray. The teacher will conduct a career assessment with the student to identify strengths, preferences, interests, needs, and career goal. The recorder will compile all the information from the career assessment to guide the development of an employment goal. The third step consists of creating a 30-day placement plan worksheet to schedule and organize job search tasks to achieve the desired employment goal. The fourth step will involve developing two job retention strategies to help the student maintain competitive employment. Having teachers engage in an experiential learning activity will demonstrate the significance of incorporating customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP to assist SWID in preparing for, and maintaining competitive employment.

Day three of the PD will highlight each group sharing their assignment with all attendees to receive feedback from colleagues. Each group will identify and share each step in the process, explaining how they arrived at the employment goal, as well as the

two retention strategies to help the student maintain employment. After lunch, participants will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of implementing the strategies of customized employment practices and completing the 30-day placement plan worksheet. According to Martin et al., (2019), it is important for participants to share their interpretations of the PD. The culminating activity involves asking educators to complete the post-survey.

During the concluding activity, I will post my personal contact information. Leaving my contact information will allow teachers to contact me for continual guidance and support with the implementation and instruction of customized employment strategies after the 3-day PD series have concluded. According to Aguilar, (2022) a positive PD session will build everyone's skills, knowledge, and capacity to meet the mission and make sure that educators can see the direct line to that grand future plan.

Resources, Supports, and Potential Barriers

I will need a variety of resources and materials to effectively deliver the PD/Training Curriculum Material Learning Experience Project series to participants. These items include the following: (2018) Defining Customized Employment as an Evidenced-Based practice: The Results of a Focus Group Study, (2021) Lead Center, Guided Group Discovery Participant Workbook, and (2019) webinar: Best Practices in Employment Services: Key Strategies for Finding and Maintaining a Job, a 30-Day Placement Plan worksheet, my laptop, a projector, pre and post surveys, and my Power Point Presentation (see Appendix A). In addition, I will need a variety of colors such as highlighters, markers, chart paper, pacon chart stand, and access to the internet.

There are potential barriers that may affect the PD, such as internet outage, technical issues with the internet connection or equipment. Also, participants' unwillingness to learn new concepts, collaborate with colleagues, or contact me for ongoing guidance and support. To avoid possible issues, I will make copies of the (2018) *Defining Customized Employment as an Evidence-Based Practice: The results of a Focus Group Study* and (2021) *Lead Center's Guided Group Discovery Participant Workbook*, and a *30-Day Placement Plan Worksheet*. By securing and preparing the PD location before the presentation, acknowledging the purpose, and goal for the training series at the opening, and stating a fact about the topic explicitly focusing on its relevance to the participants, many of the potential barriers may cease to exist.

Project Implementation

I have been instructing employability skills to high school SWID for eighteen years; therefore, I am very knowledgeable about the problem in this study. Avdeeva et al., (2021) argued that facilitators guide rather than direct a PD session. Therefore, as the researcher of this basic qualitative study, I will serve as the facilitator and guide of the PD training series (see Appendix A). Based on the results of this study and analyzing the data, I discovered participants did not feel confident in their skills or supported to apply customized employment strategies. Therefore, I developed a 3-day PD series that will focus on training special education teacher be successful with using customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP to assist high school SWID find employment opportunities after graduation.

As the facilitator of the PD, I will establish a climate for participants to feel comfortable to collaborate ideas, explore thoughts, and ask questions during each session. A study by Avdeeva et al., (2021) supported the idea that to create a safe, secure environment, an effective facilitator will encourage involvement from participants and allow time for reflection and discussion. At the start of the first session, I will open with a surprising fact to gain the attention of the audience. During the daily reflection of each session, participants will identify and discuss what new knowledge they have acquired to use customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP to assist SWID find employment opportunities.

Project Evaluation Plan

In my project study, I explored special education educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and their perceptions of additional instruction to enhance students' with intellectual disabilities ability to attain meaningful employment. The results of the data revealed special education educators' have not received adequate training to acquire knowledge and skills on using customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP. The outcome from my study resulted in a project that identified the act of employing evidence-based best practices such as customized employment strategies through a PD. The key stakeholders are the special education educators therefore, the purpose of this project was to prepare special education teachers to be successful with the implementation of customized employment strategies. The goal of the PD was to train special education teachers to use customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP. The

learning outcome or measurable objective is as follows, special education teachers will implement customized employment strategies to assist SWID find employment opportunities. To successfully instruct or train special education teachers on how to use customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP, I will start with stating the definition of customized employment. Next, I will identify each strategy used in the PD presentation with a clear, concise definition, and detailed explanation using visual examples on how to implement each strategy. Then after much discussion and feedback, I will ask participants to divide into groups of three to participate in a hands-on activity to give a practical exhibition to help understand how to use customized employment strategies in the classroom or in a CBVP to assist SWID with their employment search. Having participants actively engaged in critical inquiry, synthesis, and stimulating discussion and feedback can help with achieving the learning purpose, goal, and objective of the PD presentation. Also, by giving the audience an opportunity to participate in a hands-on, experiential learning activity that focuses specifically on using strategies of customized employment.

Evaluation and thinking are the two most complex cognitive activities in the human cognitive processing. According to Liu et al., (2022), evaluation is the process of making value judgments on certain ideas, methods, and materials (p. 2). The evaluation plans for this project are formative and summative methods. An evaluation or assessment identified by (Hoeft, 2020) can provide a means for shared reflection and construction of knowledge.

Evaluation and assessment techniques can help understand an individual's learning process. A study by Bashir and Akram (2020) agreed with the idea that a formative assessment improves instructional methods and provides students feedback throughout the teaching and learning procedure (p. 117). Instructors can conduct formative assessments by implementing short, regular quizzes, as well as entry, exit tickets or surveys to regularly assess individuals' learning progress. Research by Simonson et al., (2022) agreed that summative assessments should provide an objective and accurate representation of performance over time (p. 175). Examples of summative assessments can be standardized tests, a final exam or project.

The central goal of an evaluation is to improve learning and assessment is a tool to help achieve this goal (Hoeft, 2020). Utilizing both types of evaluation and assessment measures in my project will help to regulate instruction and verify if participants are better prepared to teach the strategies of customized employment skills to adequately prepare high school SWID for employment after graduation.

At the beginning and conclusion of the PD series, I will ask participants to take a pre-survey and post-survey (see Appendix A). Incorporating a group experiential learning activity will help to determine if the PD goals and objectives of each session are being successfully achieved. I will evaluate the outcomes of my study by asking each participant of the PD series to select two SWID to implement customized employment strategies, such as Discovery methods and 30-day Placement Plan Worksheets. I will ask the educators to invite me to a lesson when they are instructing customized employment strategies. Observing and taking notes during educators' implementation of customized

employment strategies will ensure they are instructing these practices correctly. Having educators work continuously on a 30-day Placement Plan Worksheet and incorporating specific employment activities that are aligned with the results from the Discovery methods with the selected SWID, may indicate that the strategies actually will assist students with obtaining employment within 30 days. I will ask educators' for a copy of the Discovery methods results, and the 30-day Placement Plan Worksheets (the names of the SWID will be changed due to confidentiality). Reviewing and analyzing my notes, the Discovery methods, and 30-day Placement Plan Worksheets will help evaluate if using customized employment strategies, as an intervention will improve employment outcomes for SWID.

Project Implications

I designed a PD/Training Curriculum Materials series to prepare special education teachers to be successful with the implementation of customized employment strategies to assist SWID find employment opportunities. The Instructing Customized Employment Strategies project has the capability to benefit high school special education educators, SWID, and society. My project has the potential for local change on two different educational levels, which are local and state levels. The implementation of customized employment strategies can positively affect local stakeholders and special education teacher's instruction of employability skills to SWID. On the local level, school districts may develop beneficial partnerships with community organizations and businesses to assist with managing work/training or volunteer programs to deliver customized employment strategies to assist SWID with entering the workforce. Incorporating specific

components of customized employment strategies may help teachers collaborate with postsecondary agencies to create a positive environment for SWID to make smooth transitions to developing relationships with helpful resources in the future. Further, the PD training sessions will assist high school special education teachers with enhancing their planning and instruction to enhance the learning of SWID. Utilizing evidence-based practice such as customized employment strategies will assist special educators' with identifying individualized methods to assist SWID learn work skills and other important life skills. Lastly, implementing these practices may improve instruction in employability skills and/or experiential learning experiences that have been an ongoing problem with the research site from 2015 to the present.

Local change on the state educational level may lead to alteration of the mechanisms for developing updated operation policies and standards for the education of children with disabilities. These changes may involve updating curriculums and instructional practices that can improve SWID learning outcomes. Additional funding from the state may help local school districts with hiring and training more qualified staff, and expanding experiential learning experiences and/or CBVPs in the community.

For SWID, a positive social change may enhance the implementation and structure of experiential learning programs or CBVP to promote an increase in positive integration, engagement, and independence in the community. Businesses may develop programs that help SWID make a transition to employment and create philosophies that support hiring SWID, which focus entirely on their abilities. Companies may initiate disability awareness training programs to train employees on various disability statutes,

cost effective accommodations, and interviewing skills for recruiting and hiring SWID. These disability programs may help current employees feel better prepared to learn how to implement customized employment strategies to assist SWID learn job tasks, which can ultimately enhance productivity, increase retention and reduce high turnovers. These social changes may occur slowly and consistently over time resulting in positive profound effects for society and ultimately reducing the unemployment rates for SWID. A study by Inge et al., (2022) agreed that when implementing customized employment strategies at the work/training site may help employers become more aware of how hiring SWID may bring value to their businesses. Providing training programs to assist SWID enter the workforce is a positive endeavor to give back to the community and influence a new marketing strategy to appeal to new employees, customers, and the community.

Summary

In review of section 3, I described the implementation of a 3-day PD/Training Curriculum and Materials project. I explained in concise detail the rationale and evaluation method of the PD project series. Additionally, I presented a review of literature related to the genre of the project and the impact of local and social changes. In section 4, I will concisely discuss the strengths and limitations of the project and highlight an analysis regarding personal growth.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

In this basic qualitative study, I examined high school special educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and their perception of additional instruction to enhance SWID ability to attain meaningful employment. The findings from this study resulted in a 3-day PD/Training Curriculum and Materials project that identified how special education teachers can use customized employment strategies in a classroom or in CBVP to assist SWID find employment opportunities. I will share this PD training project with high school special education teachers during a 3-day PLC meeting.

Within this section, I discuss the strengths and limitations of my project and consider alternative approaches. Further, I reflect on my growth as a researcher, scholar, and developer of a project. Lastly, this section includes a synopsis of recommendations for future research and the conclusion of the research study.

Implementation of customized employment approaches can expand employment opportunities for SWID. Research has identified that employment for SWID increases when educators utilize customized employment strategies (Inge et al., 2022). As I reflected on the results from my study, teachers identified challenges with instructing employment skills; therefore, my first strength of this project is to enhance the knowledge base of special education teachers. Having educators create a 30-day placement plan worksheet will provide a framework for collaboration skills with community resources and agencies. Further, to assist SWID develop communication skills to interact

successfully with additional team members to assist with implementing practices of customized employment strategies to secure employment opportunities.

To identify another strength of my project, I reflected on the barriers SWID face when seeking employment opportunities. The second strength of my project is to increase the employment rates of SWID. Having SWID participate in customized employment strategies may empower students to think positively and have more self-confidence to approach employers, complete applications, and apply for jobs.

A limitation of this project may occur when school districts do not have funds to help teachers successfully develop and maintain community-based vocational programs that incorporate customized employment strategies. Therefore, SWID may not receive adequate support to learn employability skills. In addition, SWID may have lower intrinsic motivation to seek employment opportunities, which may cause employment rates to decrease for SWID.

A limitation of this project is that it does not address all elements of the customized employment strategies during the 3-day PD training curriculum material series. Twelve components comprise customized employment strategies, which are the following: a) discovery, b) informational interviews, c) active listening, d) create a 30-day placement plan, e) networking with community actions teams, f) networking with individual support teams, g) job development, h) portfolio, i) practice, j) job shadowing, k) job negotiation, and l) job retention services (Inge et al., 2022). Since I developed this project from the analysis of data collection findings from individuals participating in Zoom interviews, it may serve as a limitation due to the fact, I did not review all 12

customized employment strategies. Therefore, some special education teachers may still lack the knowledge, skills, and confidence to instruct employability skills using customized employment strategies. Ongoing guidance, support, and resources may be offered during more PD meetings to discuss the remaining components of customized employment strategies.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

To address the problem of this study, which is that local high school SWID are exiting their high school community-based vocational program without sufficient employability skills to attain meaningful employment. I explored high school special educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and their perceptions on additional instruction to enhance SWID ability to attain meaningful employment. As an alternative approach, I could have interviewed only high school Transition Coordinators. I could have also observed Transition Coordinators or Special Education Teachers instructing employability skills using customized employment strategies in the classroom or in a CBVP. I could have collected data using surveys or questionnaires about instructing employability skills and inquiring about which customized employment strategy participants performed in their lessons. Lastly, instead of conducting a basic qualitative study, I could have executed an action study design.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

As a doctoral candidate attending Walden University, I challenged myself and acquired knowledge as a scholar. I accepted feedback, patiently made numerous

revisions, scheduled appointments with the writing center, and continued to progress through this doctoral journey with guidance from my advisor, chair, and co-chair. While searching for a conceptual framework, my skills as a researcher were greatly enriched. I have always enjoyed academic writing; however, composing a dissertation really elevated all my skills to a higher level.

I entered the teaching profession to have the opportunity to profoundly impact the lives of students with disabilities. As an advocate for SWID, I am committed to creating a positive educational environment that will promote student learning and achievement. I am very passionate about improving the educational and employment outcomes for SWID. As a scholar at Walden University, I will continue to use my skills and knowledge to contribute to positive social change in the field of special education.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

I believe that all children are born with unique abilities, skills, talents, strengths, and needs. As an educator, it is my responsibility to develop and strengthen these qualities. As a special education teacher, I must provide SWID with a high quality educational environment that incorporates various evidenced-based instructional approaches that support, challenge, and encourage the use of critical thinking skills.

All special education teachers and specialists who have daily interactions with SWID must be prepared to effectively instruct customized employment strategies. When special education educators are properly trained to facilitate these practices, they possess skills to provide SWID with plethora of opportunities to become competitively employed.

Participation in my project research study helped me to identify and understand the needs

of special education teachers regarding the instruction of customized employment strategies. Designing a PD for high school special education teachers to discuss incorporating customized employment strategies may promote the improvement of education and employment outcomes to prepare SWID with pertinent skills to become productive citizens in a global society.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Within this basic qualitative study, I explored special education teachers' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and their perceptions of additional instruction to enhance students' with intellectual disabilities ability to attain meaningful employment. The results from the data revealed that special education teachers named specific elements that should be included in a CBVP curriculum. Educators also verified pertinent instructional methods areas where additional training is needed such as with the implementation of customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP to assist high school SWID find competitive employment after graduation.

Research by Butterworth et al. (2023) agreed that implementing supported and customized employment in all their components is essential for supporting job seekers with disabilities to fully achieve their career goals and towards improving employment outcomes (p. 477). Having high school special education teachers participate in a project training session and complete a hands-on activity has the capability to benefit the instructional attainment of specific employability skills, support IEP goals, transition services, and career planning for SWID. The PD training project may assist high school

special education teachers with implementing evidence-based best practices such as customized employment strategies to positively affect instruction within real world businesses. In return, SWID will benefit from these specialized approaches by becoming more actively involved in programs that offer workforce training and employment opportunities to increase employment rates, community involvement, and independent skills.

My project has the potential to elicit local change at schools and state levels. At the schools, local change for special education teachers may involve connecting and developing partnerships with community businesses to develop programs to assist SWID entering in the workforce. These programs will bring numerous opportunities for SWID to highlight their employability skills and abilities to employers. Change on the state educational level may lead to alteration of mechanisms for developing updated operation policies and curriculums for the education of children with disabilities. Positive social change may involve promoting the implementation of CBVP or experiential learning programs within businesses to increase SWID presence in the community, life skills, and employment opportunities. In return, these community programs may prosper businesses by making them stronger, more productive, and value diversity in the workplace. By providing an environment that helps to integrate SWID may reduce negative stigmas, prejudices, and increase employment rates for SWID. Hiring SWID can reflect positively on the culture, morals of companies, and allow SWID to make positive contributions to society.

Future research is needed to explore the effectiveness and expand the practices of customized employment strategies to support professionals and vocational rehabilitation counselors who work with SWID. Research by Butterworth et al. (2023) identified that although most experts rated customized job development as critical for successful employment outcomes, only 62% of employment experts agreed that customized job development activities were implemented well (p.468). Therefore, to promote adequate training, I can offer presentations of this training project at state educational service centers, state support special education team meetings, Transition Coordinators Network sessions, and local high school special education PLC meetings, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor seminars, and employment consultant meetings. In addition, to ensure school districts and agencies are accurately implementing customized employment strategies, I can offer my services to perform demonstrations and evaluate the administration of the practices.

Conclusion

Within this study, I focused on special education teachers' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and their perceptions of additional instruction to enhance SWID ability to attain meaningful employment. The outcomes suggest it is important for special education teachers to focus on customized employment strategies to support the acquisition of employability skills. Research by Inge et al. (2022) agreed that when educators engage in customized employment, practices, professionals may increase their expectations as they learn more

about SWID skills, interests, and preferences in natural community settings and within real world businesses.

According to the Hudson Institute's Report Workforce 2020, "the United States will face a tight labor market in the coming decades." Presently, companies are experiencing a labor shortage and are seeking qualified employees. While businesses are putting forth efforts to hire individuals with disabilities, the establishment of CBVP will prepare SWID with essential employability skills to successfully meet the needs of employers and maintain competitive employment. The results of this research study may impact local education agencies and state leaders by instituting changes in instructional strategies, which can lead to improved competency skills, enhanced experiential learning experiences, and updated curriculums in CBVPs for SWID to learn employability skills. Businesses taking the initiative to train and hire SWID may help SWID become successful long-term employees with access to employment benefits such as health insurance, raises, and retirement or pension plans (Brucker & Henly, 2019, p. 125). Having employers see the benefits and value of hiring SWID, and creating successful collaborative workplaces will impact a positive social change towards a unified working society.

References

- A Guide to Postsecondary Education and Youth with disabilities, (2020). www.ed.gov
- Aguilar, E. (2022). Good PD includes resilience training: Creating the conditions for teachers to learn is essential. *Educational Leadership*, 79(8), 74–75.
- Alkrdem, M. (2020). Contemporary leadership and its role in converting traditional schools into professional learning communities. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*, 8(2), 144–171.
<https://doi.org/10.17583/ijelm.2020.4298>
- American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, (2018) website.
Retrieved from <http://www.aaidd.org>
- Association of University Centers on Disability (AUCD), (2020). <https://www.aucd.org>.
- Avdeeva, I., Shutova, O., Adonina, L., & Kokodey, T. (2021). Facilitative approach to teaching and learning. *Advances in social science, education, and humanities research*, 598, 537–541: *Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on Social Science and Higher Education (ICSSHE 2021)*. Atlantis Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.211122.150>
- Baer, H., Welker, K., & Cox, C. (2021). Work performance and support needs analysis of students with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 55(3), 335–344. <https://doi-org.eresources.cuyahogalibrary.org/10.3233/JVR-211167>
- Bashir, S., Karim, T., & Akram, N. (2020). Teachers focus to practice formative assessment technique: Assessment of class practices of prospective teachers. *Journal of Arts & Social Sciences*, 7(2), 116–125.

<https://doi.org.eresources.cuyahogalibrary.org/10.46662>

- Bastoni, A. (2020). UDL professional development and CTE educators. *Techniques Connecting Educators & Careers*, 95(5), 18–21.
- Beeler, A. (2023). Future skills, the 20 skills and competencies everyone needs to succeed in a digital world. *Corrections Today*, 85(3), 68–70.
- Betti, A., Biderbost, P., & Domonte, A. G. (2022). Developing students' soft skills through the flipped classroom: Evidence from an international studies class. *International Studies Perspectives*, 23(1), 1–24.
- <https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/ekab014>
- Biggerstaff, P. A. (2020). Best Practices and innovations conference 2019: Professional development & community come to the forefront for CTE administrators. *Techniques: Connecting Education & Careers*, 95(1), 14–15.
- Billups, F. (2021). Interview protocols. In *Qualitative data collection tools: Design, development, and applications*. Sage publications.
- <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071878699>
- Blanck, P. (2019). Why America is better off because of the Americans with disabilities act and the individuals with Education act. *Touro Law Review*, 35(1), 605–618.
- Bonati, M. L., & Dymond, S. K. (2019). Service learning and students with severe disabilities: Examining participation and curricular goals. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 57(1), 42–55. <https://doi.org/10.1352/1934-9556-57.1.42>
- Bouck, E. C., & Joshi, G. S. (2016). Transition and students with mild intellectual

disability: Findings from the national longitudinal transition study-2. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 39(3), 154–163.

<http://doi.org/10.1177/2165143414551408>

Brewer, S. W., & McCarthy, K. (2023). Teaching networking skills in an introductory course: Impact of a linkedin assignment on student perceptions and behaviors.

Marketing Education Review, 1–8. <https://doi-org/q0.1080/10528008>

Brodie, K., & Chimhande, T. (2020). Teacher talk in professional learning communities.

International Journal of Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology, 8(2), 118–130.

Brucker, D. L., & Henly, M. (2019). Job quality for Americans with disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 50(2), 121–130. [https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-](https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-180994)

[180994](https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-180994)

Buncher, A., & Daston, M. (2022). The intersectionality of race, disability, gender, and employment through Project SEARCH Lens. *Journal of Vocational*

Rehabilitation, 56(3), 223–229. <https://doi-org/10.3233/JVR-221186>

Butterworth, J., Migliore, A., Lyons, O., Mahoehney, D., Eastman, J., Foos, P., &

Zaleska, A. (2023). Supporting employment consultants to implement supported and customized employment. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 61(6),

468–480. <https://doi.org/10.1352/1934-9556-61.6.468>

Charette-Dussault & Corbiere, (2019). An integrative review of the barriers to job

acquisition for people with severe mental illnesses. *Journal of Nervous & Mental*

Disease, 207(7), 423–537. <https://doi-org/10.1097/NMD.0000000000001013>

- Chen, S., & Ney, C. (2020). 5 strategies to increase CTE teacher recruitment, engagement, and retention through pd. *Techniques: Connecting Education & Careers*, 95(5), 14–17.
<https://doi.org.eresources.cuyahogalibrary.org/10.3233/JVR-170871>.
- Civil Rights Division, (2022). <https://www.justice.gov>
- Clark, K.A., Konrad, M., & Test, D. W. (2019). Teaching soft skills to students with disabilities with upgrade your performance. *Journal of Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 54(1), 41–56.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell-Baez, J. (2021). 30 essential skills for the qualitative researcher (2nd ed.). Sage Publication, Inc.
- Davis, M. T., Cumming, I. K., Park, N. M., & Sheperis, C. J. (2021). Project SEARCH: Analysis of employment outcomes for students with disabilities across two districts. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 87(4), 48–57.
- DeJonckheere, M., & Vaughn, L. M. (2019). Semistructured interviewing in primary care research: A balance of relationship and rigor. *Family Medicine & Community Health*, 7(2), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1136/fmch-2018-000057>
- Dell'Armo, K., & Tasse, M. J. (2019). The role of adaptive behavior and parent expectations in predicting post-school outcomes for young adults with intellectual disability. *Journal of Autism and developmental Disorders*, 49, 1638–1651.
<https://doi1007/s10803-018-3857-6>
- Dhakal, K. (2022). NVivo. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, 110(2), 270–272.
<https://doi-org.eresources.cuyahogalibrary.org/10.5195/jmla.2022.12171>

- Donovan, L. (2021). Best practices in employment services: Key strategies for finding and maintaining a job. <http://thinkcollege@umb.edu>.
- Ennis, R. P., Royer, D. J., Lane, K., Dunlap, K. D. (2020). The impact of coaching on teacher-delivered behavior-specific praise in pre-k-12 settings: A systematic review. *Behavioral Disorders, 45*(3), 146-166.
<https://doi.10.1177/0198742919839221>.
- Hoefl, J. (2020). Assessment of formation and assessment as formative. *Teaching Theology & religion, 29*(2), 75-77. <http://doi.org/1011/teth.12544>
- Hume, K., Steinbrenner, J. R., Odom, S. L., Morin, K. L., Nowell, S. W., Tomaszewski, B., Szendrey, S., McIntyre, N. S., Yucesoy-Ozkan, S., & Savage, M. S. (2021). Evidenced-based practices for children, youth, and young adults with autism: Third generation review. *Journal of Autism Developmental Disorder, 51*(11), 4013-4032. <https://doi:10.1007/s10803-020-04844-2>.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), (2023). [Sites.ed.gov/idea/](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/)
- Inge, K. J., Graham, C., Brooks-Lane, N., Wehman, P., Griffin, C, Inge, W. (2018). Defining customized employment as an evidence-based practice: The results of a focus group study. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 48*(2), 155-166. [doi.10.3233/JVR-180928](https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-180928)
- Inge, K. J., Sima, A. P., Riesen, T., Wehman, P., & Brooks-Lane, N. (2022). The essential elements of customized employment: results from a national survey of Employment providers. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin. 1*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00343552221088256>

- Islami, R. A. Z. E., Anantanukulwong, R., & Faikhamta, C. (2022). Trends of teacher professional development strategies: A systematic review. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 10(2), 1-8. <https://doi.org.10.34293/education.v10i2.4628>
- Judy, R. W., & D'Amico, C. (1997). *Workforce 2020: Work and Workers in the 21st Century*. Indianapolis, IN: Hudson Institute.
- Kelly, C. L., Brock, L. L., Swanson, L. W., & Russell, L. W. (2022). Teacher engagement scale for professional development. *Journal of Educational Issues*, 8(1), 261-278. <http://doi.org/10.5296/jei.v8i1.19636>
- Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE guide No.131. *Medical Teacher*, 42(8), 846-854.
<https://doi.org/10/1080/0142159x2020.1755030>
- Kolb, A., & Kolb, D. (2005). Learning styles and learning spaces: Enhancing experiential learning in higher education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 4(2), 193-212.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential Learning*. Englewood Cliffs; NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Kocman, A., Fischer, L., & Weber, G. (2018). The employers' perspective on barriers and facilitators to employment of people with intellectual disability: A differential mixed-method approach. *Journal of applied Research in Intellectual disability*, 31(1), 120-131. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0014402919889888>.
- Krismanto, W., Setyosari, P., Kuswandi, D., & Praherdhiono, H. (2022). Social media-Based professional learning: What are teachers doing in it? *Qualitative Research in Education*, 11(1), 89-116. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/qre.9698>.

- Lamb, D. (2020). For whom the bell curves. *Progressive*, 84(6), 47-51.
- Lead Center (2021). Frequently asked questions: Using customized employment's discovery and group discovery models to promote job seeker success in American job centers. www.leadcenter.org
- Lindsay, S., Lamphey, D-L., Cagliostro, E., Srikanthan, D., Mortaji, N., & Karon, L. (2019). A systematic review of post-secondary transition interventions for youth with disabilities. *Disability & Rehabilitation*, 41(21), 2492-2505.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288>.
- Liu, T. Ru, B., & Zhang, Y. (2022). The design of a moral education evaluation system for college students based on a deep learning model. *Scientific Programming*, 1-10. <http://doi.org/10.55/2022/5408200>.
- Manning, T. R. (2023) Repeal Title IX. *First things: A Monthly Journal of Religion & Public Life*, 31-36.
- Mazzotti, V. L., Rowe, D. A., Kwiatek, S., Voggt, A., Chang, W., Fowler, C. H., Poppen, M., Sinclair, J., & Test, D. W. (2021). Secondary transition predictors of postschool success: An update of the research base. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 44(1), 47-64.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2165143420959793>
- Martin, L., Kragler, S., Quatroche, D., & Bauserman, K. (2019). Transforming Schools: The power of teachers' input in professional development. *Journal of Education Research and Practice*, 9(1), 179-188.
- Moyle, P., & Hackston, J. (2018) Personality assessment for employee development:

Ivory tower or real world? *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 100(5), 507-517.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00223891>.

Merriam, S. B., & Grenier, R. S. (2019) *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Muharib, R., Alrasheed, F., Ninci, J., Walker, V. L., & Voggt, A. P. (2019). Thinning schedules of reinforcement following functional communication training for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities: A meta-analytic review.

Journal of Autism & Developmental Disorders, 49(12), 4788-4806. <https://doi-10.1007/s10803-019-04191-x>

National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) (2022).

<https://www.transitionta.org/>

Odom, S. L., Hall, L. J. M., & Steinbrenner, J. R. (2020). Implementation science

research and special education. *Exceptional Children*, 86(2), 117-119. <https://doi-org/10.1177/0014402919889888>

Ohio Administrative Rules, (2023). <http://www.codes.ohio.gov>.

Ohio Department of Education, (2019). <http://education.ohio.gov>.

Ohio Department of Education, (2021). <http://education.ohio.gov>

Ohio Department of Education, (2023). <http://education.ohio.gov>

Ohio Department of Education, Office of Exceptional Children, (2020) website. Special Education Profile Summary. <http://www.edresourcesohio.org>.

Ohio Employment First Transition Framework and the 8 Predictors of Transition Planning Success (2020). <https://www.ocali.org>.

- Olaru, G., Burrus, J., MacCann, C., Zaromb, F. M., Wilhelm, O., Roberts, R. D. (2019). Situational judgment tests as a method for measuring personality: Developing and validity evidence for a test of dependability. *PLoS One*, *14*(2), 1-9.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0211884>
- Ord, J. (2012). John Dewey and experiential learning: Developing the theory of youth work. *Youth & Policy*, *108*, 55-72.
- Pacer Center: Champions for Children with Disabilities, (2020). <http://pacer.org>.
- Palermo, C., & Thomson, M. M. (2019). Large-scale assessment as professional development: Teachers' motivations, ability beliefs, and values. *Teacher Development*, *23* (2), 192-212. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2018.1536612>
- Remund, C., Jones-Parkin, T., Hase, H., & Riesen, T. (2022). Preparing community rehabilitation providers to deliver a provision of employment supports: A tiered training approach. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, *56*(2), 193-201.
<https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-221182>
- Riesen, T., & Oertle, K., M. (2019). Developing work-based learning experiences for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities: A preliminary study of employers' perspectives. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, *85*(2), 27-36.
- Rogan, P., & Rinne, S. (2021). Launching a statewide employment first initiative: Indiana's work to include coalition. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, *54*(3), 255-260. <https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-211133>.
- Rogers, B. (2019). Strengthening of the case for teacher judgement: A critique of the rationalities and technologies underpinning Gonski 2.0 's renewed call for

evidence-based practice. *Social Alternatives*, 38(2), 36-41.

- Rooney-Kron, M., & Dymond, S. K. (2022). Participants of students with intellectual disability in community-based work experiences: A scoping review. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 47(2), 90-110. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15407969221093378>
- Rowe, D. A., Mazzotti, V. L., Fowler, C.H., Test, D. W., Mitchell, V. J., Clark, K. A., Holzberg, D., Owens, T. L., Rusher, D., Seaman-Tullis, R. L., Gushanas, C. M., Castle, H., Chang, W-H., Voggt, A., Kwiatek, S., & Dean, C. (2021). Updating the secondary transition research base: Evidence- and research-based practices in functional skills. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 44(1), 28-46. doi:10.1177/2165143420958674
- Salon, R. S., Boutot, N., Ozols, K., Keeton, B., & Steveley, J. (2019). New approaches to customized employment: Enhancing cross-system partnerships. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 50(3), 317-323. <https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR191013>.
- Sancta, R., Atal, D., & Deryakulu, D. (2021). A new framework for teachers' professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 101, 103-305. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103305>
- Scheef, A., & Mahfouz, J. (2020). Supporting the post-school goals of youth with disabilities through use of a transition coordinator. *Research in Educational Administration & Leadership*, 5(1), 43-69. doi:10.30828/real/2020.1.2
- Shadaifat, A. K. S., & Al-Huson. (2020). The future role of vocational education teachers in the professional learning communities in public schools from the perspective of principals and academic supervisors in Jordan. *International Journal of Higher*

Education, 9(5), 322-337. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v9n5>

- Shin, J. & Ging, L. (2019) Producing human capiak: A critical discourse analysis of title II of the workforce innovation and opportunity act (WIOA). *Adult Education Quarterly*, 69(3), 163-183. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713619834663>.
- Singh, T., & Shah, N. (2023). Competency-based medical education and the McNamara fallacy; Assessing the important or making the assessed important? *Journal of Postgraduate Medicine*, 69(1), 35-40. https://doi.org/10.4103/jpgm.jpgm_337_22
- Simonson, S. R., Earl, B., & Frary, M. (2022). Establishing a framework for assessing teaching effectiveness. *College Teaching*, 70(2), 164-180. <https://doi-org.10.1080/87567555>
- Smith, K., & Rayfield, J. (2019). STEM knowledge, learning disabilities and experiential learning: Influences of sequencing instruction. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 60(2), 222-236.
- Smith, T. J., Ching, D., Weston, A., & Dillahunt-Aspillaga, C. J. (2019). Achieving competitive customized employment through specialized services (ACCESS). *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 50(3), 249-258. <http://doi-org.10.3233/JVR-191004>.
- Sobeck, E. E., & Reister, M. (2021). Preventing challenging behavior: 10 behavior management strategies every teacher should know. *Preventing School Failure*, 65(1), 70-78. <http://doi.org10.1080/1045988x.2020.1821347>
- Sundar, V., O'Neill, J., Houtenville, A., Phillips, K., Keirns, T., Smith, A., & Katz, E. (2018). Striving to work and overcome barriers: Employment strategies and

successes of people with disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 48, 93-109. <https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-170918>.

The Minnesota Governor's Council of Developmental Disabilities, (2023).

mn.gov/mnddc

Thomas, F. & Morgan, R. L. (2021). Evidenced-based job retention interventions for people with disabilities: A narrative literature review. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 54(2), 89-101. <https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-201122>.

Trainor A. A., Carter E. W., Karpur A., Martin J. E., Mazzotti V. L., Morningstar M. E., Newman L., Rojewski J. W. (2020). A framework for research in transition: Identifying important areas and intersections for future study. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 43(1), 5–17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2165143419864551>

U. S. Department of Education Department), Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, A transition guide to postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities, Washington, D.C., 2020.

United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, (2019). <https://www.bls.gov>

United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, (2021). <http://www.bls.gov>

Valentini, B., Carter, E. W., Bumble, J. L., & Hill, E. (2019). Employer views on school-business partnerships involving students with severe disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 50(3), 365–377. <https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-191019>

What is the Americans with Disabilities Act? National Network, (2020). <http://adata.org>.

Whittenburg, H. N., Schall, C. M., Wehman, P., McDonough, J., & DuBois, T. (2020).

Helping high school-aged military dependents with autism gain employment through Project SEARCH + ASD supports. *Military Medicine*, 185, 663-668.

<https://doi-org.10.1093/milmed/usz224>

Yoon, S. A., Miller, K., Richman, T., Wendel, D., Schoenfeld, I., Anderson, E., & Shim, J. (2020). Encouraging collaboration and building community in online asynchronous professional development: Designing for social capital. *International Journal of Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning*, 15(3), 351–371.

Appendix A: The Project: Instructing Customized Employment Strategies

Outline for 3-Day Professional Development Training Curriculum

Materials Project

Overview of the Professional Development Experience

Purpose:

This professional development training curriculum materials project was developed due to special education educators' have not received adequate training to use strategies of customized employment in classroom or in CBVP. The purpose of this project is to prepare special education teachers to be successful with the implementation of customized employment strategies.

Audience:

The target audience is high school Special Education Teachers/Intervention Specialists, Transition Coordinators, Job Training Coordinators, Work Study Coordinators, Career Based Intervention Coordinators, and Job Coaches.

Need to be Addressed:

Special education educators' have not received adequate training to acquire knowledge and skills on using customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP.

Goal:

To train Special Education Teachers to use customize employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP.

Objective:

By the end of this professional development training curriculum materials learning experience, special education teachers will have worked collaboratively to have implement strategies of customized employment to assist SWID find employment opportunities.

Evaluation:

I will have two evaluation assessments, formative, and summative. Formative Assessment (pre-survey) will be completed at the start of the PD presentation session. Summative assessment (post-survey) will be completed at the conclusion of the PD presentation session.

Overview:

Participants will engage in active learning environment to develop an understanding of Defining Customized employment as an Evidence-Based Practice

(2018) and instructing Best Practices in Employment Services: Key Strategies for Finding and Maintaining a Job (2019). Participants will apply components discuss, and share ideas of using components of best practices of customized employment strategies, such as Discovery, Informational Interviews, Career/Transition assessments. Equipped with new knowledge participants will complete a career assessment and use information to create a 30-day Placement Plan Worksheet to help students engage in job related tasks to obtain employment, and two retention strategies to help SWID maintain employment. Participants will work together during the course of the school year to implement strategies of customized employment.

This PD/Training Curriculum Material Project was developed by Miriam Bohles for the purpose of assisting special education teachers with acquiring knowledge and skills to assist SWID find and maintain competitive employment opportunities. After reviewing current literature on the employment gap between SWID and their nondisabled peers. I designed this PD/Training Curriculum Materials Project to incorporate recommended best practices into the learning experience.

Resources/Materials:

- Agenda
- Pre-Survey & Post-Survey
- Inge, K. J., Graham, C., Brooks-lane, N., Wehman, P., Griffin, C., & Inge, W. (2018). Defining customized employment as an evidence-based practice: The results of a focus group study. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 48*(2), 155-166.
- (2021) Lead Center, Guided Group Discovery Participant Workbook
- (2019) Webinar: Best Practices in Employment Services: Key Strategies for Finding and Maintaining a Job. Presented by Laura Enein-Donovan, Institute for Community Inclusion at UMassBoston for Think College
- 30-Day Placement Plan Worksheets
- Internet connection
- Projector
- Laptop
- Power Point Presentation

WELCOME EDUCATORS

Professional Development Training Curriculum Material

Learning Experience Project Series

Agenda Day 1

Formative assessment such as a pre-survey will be given to each participant after participants sign the sign-in sheet. This survey will help evaluate the knowledge participants have about customized employment and strategies before attending the PD presentation. The pretest will be collected before the start of the presentation. Facilitator will open PD presentation with a surprising fact. The opening fact is “Did you know that implementing customized employment strategies in all of their components is essential for supporting SWID fully achieve their employment and career goals” (Butterworth et al., 2023, p. 477).

Welcome

Facilitator will review:

Purpose: To prepare Special Education Teachers to be successful with the implementation of customized employment strategies.

Goal: To train Special Education Teachers to use customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP.

Learning: Special Education teachers will implement customized employment

Outcome: Strategies to assist SWID find employment opportunities.

Introduction

Facilitator reviews agenda for the three days

The definition of Customized Employment is a plan to improve employment outcomes for individuals with a disability. The definition of Strategies of Customized Employment are multi-approaches to help SWID find employment opportunities.

Break

One type of a Customized Employment strategy is Discovery Strategies. Discovery Strategies will help to know and build rapport with your students. Types of Discovery Strategies are Career Assessments such as Ohio Means Jobs, I SEEK, Life Skills, and O*net. These various types of Discovery Strategies will identify SWID Preferences, Interests, Needs and Strengths, also known as PINS.

Lunch

Welcome back and review afternoon agenda

Another type of strategy is Informational Interviews will focus on students and their interests. These interests consist of skills students have, want, and need. Also, identification of a job choice, job interest, or job match and career goal(s).

Break

Strategies and examples of Gathering Information for Informational Interviews includes talking to family members, friends, and teachers.

Questions/Answers/Discussion/Reflection**End of day 1**

Welcome Educators

Professional Development Training Curriculum Material

Learning Experience Project Series

Day 2 Agenda

Facilitator will open with review of the:

Purpose: To prepare Special Education Teachers to be successful with the implementation of customized employment strategies.

Goal: To train Special Education Teachers to use customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP.

Learning: Special Education teachers will implement customized employment
Outcome: strategies to assist SWID find employment opportunities.

Speaker will Review: Day 1 Definition of Customized Employment and Strategies:

- 1) Discovery Strategies
- 2) Informational Interviews

Questions/Discussion

Webinar: View Best Practices in Employment Services: Key Strategies for Finding and Maintaining a Job

Discussion/Reflection about Webinar

Break

Speaker will state Definition of a 30-Day Placement Plan Worksheet with Examples: A tool that helps create action steps and tracks employment progress. A Placement Plan Worksheet includes the following:

- A month-long plan towards finding a job
- Tasks to be accomplished monthly
- Due dates for each task
- Names of people who are responsible for supporting SWID with completing specific tasks

Lunch

Welcome back and review afternoon agenda

Questions/Discussion

Speaker will State Definition of Job Retention Strategies with Examples: Are multi-approaches to help SWID maintain employment. Teachers can help SWID maintain employment by implementing the following:

- Talking to student
- Talking to employer
- Observe student needs at work site

Questions/Answers/Discussion/Reflection**Break**

Participants divide into groups of three. Participants will work on Group Activity

Questions/Answers/Discussion/Reflection**End of Day 2**

Welcome Educators

Day Professional Development Training Curriculum Material

Learning Experience Project Series

Agenda Day 3

Facilitator will open with the Review of:

Purpose: To prepare Special Education Teachers to be successful with the implementation of customized employment strategies.

Goal: To train Special Education Teachers to use customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP.

Learning Special Education teachers will implement customized employment
Outcome: strategies to assist SWID find employment opportunities.

Speaker will Review Day 2 of Customized Employment Strategies:

- 30-Day Placement Plan Worksheet
- Job Retention Strategies

Questions/Discussion

Break

Group Presentations:

Participants will complete a career assessment and use information to create a 30-day Placement Plan Worksheet to help students engage in job related tasks to obtain employment, and two retention strategies to help the student maintain employment. This activity will enhance their understanding of customized employment and how the implementation of customized employment strategies will help SWID with their employment search.

Lunch

Welcome back and review afternoon agenda

Continue with Group Presentations

Break

I will summarize the main points and restate pertinent facts that include the following:

- 1) Definition of Customized Employment
- 2) Definition of Strategies of Customized Employment
- 3) Definition of Retention Strategies
- 4) Restate how the use of customized employment strategies will help SWID find and maintain employment opportunities.

Questions/Answers/Discussion/Reflection

Facilitator will handout Summative Assessment/Post-Survey: The Post-Survey will help evaluate the knowledge participants acquired during the PD presentation.

End of day 3

Instructing Customized Employment Strategies

Presented
by
Miriam Bohles



Slide 1

Instructing Customized Employment Strategies

- Overview of the Professional Development
- Pre-Survey
- Opening with a Surprising Fact
- Welcome

Slide 2

Gap in Practice

- A qualitative study was conducted in a region to gain information about the following research questions:
 1. What are local high school special educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program?
 2. What are local high school special educators' perceptions about the additional instruction needed to enhance students' with intellectual disabilities ability to attain meaningful employment after graduation?

Research Basis

- After conducting research with special education teachers on the literature of SWID employment was reviewed to learn more about the current instruction of employability skills.
- Best practices for instruction of employability skills
- State of professional learning utilizing employability skills for special education educators
- State of preparation of special education teachers through professional development experiences

Developed for the Identified Need

- The professional development that will take place over the next three days is as follows:
- Based upon the need assesses through local data
- Designed around best practices in the instruction of employability skills for SWID
- Advances professional development by addressing gaps in the special education teachers' preparation of instruction of employability skills for SWID
- Researched based

Instructing Customized Employment Strategies -- Overview of the training

- Special Education Teachers will consider their role as leaders in the area of instructing best practices in Employment Services: Key Strategies for Finding and Maintaining a Job (2019).
- Special Education Teachers will apply best practices in customized employment services and key strategies for helping SWID find and maintain a job.

Instructing Customized Employment Strategies— Program Goal

- By the end of my three day professional development, special education teachers will be trained to use customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP.

Instructing Customized Employment Strategies- Overview

Agenda for the Professional Development

- Day 1: Defining Customized Employment and Strategies
- Day 2: A Deep Dive into Teacher Content Knowledge Base of Instructional Quality of Employment Best Practices
- Day 3: Developing Teacher skills to Implement strategies of Customized Employment to assist SWID find and maintain employment

Welcome to Day 1

Miriam Bohles ----- Facilitator

Special Education/Transition Coordinator

- Pre-Survey
- opening with a surprising fact: “Did you know that implementing customized employment strategies in all of their components is essential for supporting SWID fully achieve their employment and career goals” (Butterworth et al., 2023, p. 477).
- Target Audience: Special Educators/Intervention Specialists, Transition Coordinators, Work-Study Coordinators, Job Training Coordinators Career-Based Intervention Coordinators, and Job Coaches
- Purpose: To prepare Special Education Teachers to be successful with the implementation of customized employment strategies.
- Goal: To train Special Education Teachers to use customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP.
- Learning Outcome: Special Education teachers will implement customized employment strategies to assist SWID find employment opportunities.

Slide 9

Definition of Customized Employment

- is a plan to improve employment outcomes for individuals with a disability.

Definition of Strategies of Customized Employment

- are multi-approaches to help SWID find employment opportunities.

A Deeper Dive: Types of Customized Employment strategies

Discovery Strategies

- will help to know and build rapport with your students.

Types of Discovery Strategies

- Career Assessments such as Ohio Means Jobs, I SEEK, Life Skills, and O*net
- Identify SWID Preferences, Interests, Needs and Strengths, also known as PINS.

A Deeper DIVE: Type of Customized Employment Strategy

Informational Interviews

- will focus on students and their interests.

To Identify

- skills students have, want, and need
- a job choice, job interest,
- Job match
- career goal(s).

Gathering Information for Informational Interviews

- family members,
- Friends,
- teachers.

Welcome Day 2

Open with a review of:

- **Purpose:** To prepare Special Education Teachers to be successful with the implementation of customized employment strategies.
- **Goal:** To train Special Education Teachers to use customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP.
- **Learning Outcome:** Special Education teachers will implement customized employment strategies to assist SWID find employment opportunities.

Review: Day 1 Definition of Customized Employment and Strategies:

- 1) Discovery Strategies 2) Informational Interviews
- **View Webinar:** Best Practices in Employment Services: Key Strategies for Finding and Maintaining a Job
- Discussion/Reflection about Webinar
- Break
- **State Definition of a 30-Day Placement Plan Worksheet with Examples:** A tool that helps create action steps and tracks employment progress.
- Lunch
- State Definition of Job Retention Strategies with Examples: Are multi-approaches to help SWID maintain employment.
- Questions/Answers/Discussion/Reflection
- Break
- Participants divide into groups and work on group activity

Slide 14

A Deeper Dive: Definition of a 30-Day Placement Plan Worksheet

a tool that helps create action steps and tracks employment progress.

Includes:

- A month-long plan towards finding a job
- Tasks to be accomplished monthly
- Due dates for each task
- Names of people who are responsible for supporting SWID with completing specific tasks

A Deeper Dive: Definition of Job Retention Strategies

are multi-approaches to help SWID maintain employment

Teachers can help SWID maintain employment by:

- Talking to student
- Talking to employer
- Observing student needs at work site

Welcome Teachers
Developing Teacher Skills
Agenda Day 3

Open with a review of:

- **Purpose:** To prepare Special Education Teachers to be successful with the implementation of customized employment strategies.
- **Goal:** To train Special Education Teachers to use customized employment strategies in the classroom or in CBVP.
- **Learning Outcome:** Special Education teachers will implement customize employment strategies to assist SWID find employment opportunities.

Review Day 2 of Customized Employment Strategies:

- 30-Day Placement Plan Worksheet
- Job Retention Strategies
- Break
- Questions/Discussion
- **Group Presentations:** Participants will complete a career assessment and use information to create a 30-da Placement Plan Worksheet to help students engage in job related tasks to obtain employment, and two retention strategies to help SWID maintain employment.

Slide 17

Welcome Educators

Continuation of Agenda Day 3

- Lunch
- Questions/Answers/Discussion
- Break

Summarize the main points and pertinent facts:

- 1) Definition of Customized Employment
- 2) Definition of Strategies of Customized Employment
- 3) Definition of Retention Strategies
- 4) Restate how the use of customized employment strategies will help SWID find and maintain employment opportunities.
- Questions/Answers/Discussion/Reflection

Summative Assessment such as a Post-Survey

Slide 18

MY Contact Information

- My contact information is listed on the last slide so participants can call or email me for follow-up and support with using customized employment strategies in their classrooms or in CBVP.

Miriam Bohles

Special Education/Transition Coordinator

Email:

miriam.bohles@waldenu.edu

Cell: (216) 548-1016

Appendix C: Professional Development: 3-Day Agenda

Day 1

Time	Presentation of Activity
8:00-8:30 am	Sign in and take Pre-Survey
8:30-9:00 am	Introduction Fact / Introduce Myself
9:00-9:30 am	Goals/Objectives of PD
9:30-10:00 am	Define Customized Employment
10:00-10:15 am	Break
10:15-11:15 am	Define & Introduce strategies of Customized Employment
11:15-11:30 am	Discussion/Questions
11:30-12:30 pm	Lunch
12:30-1:00 pm	Explain Practices of Discovery Strategies
1:00-1:30 pm	Explain Strategies of Information Interviews
1:30-1:45 pm	Break
1:45-2:30 pm	Explain Strategies of Gathering Information
2:30-3:00 pm	for Informational Interviews
3:00-3:30 pm	Questions/Answers/Discussion
	End of Day 1

Day 2

Time	Presentation Activity
8:00-8:30 am	Sign in & Review Goal & Objective of PD
8:30-9:00 am	Review Definition of Customized Employment
9:00-9:30 am	Review Definition of Strategies
9:30-10:00	View Best Practices in Employment Services Webinar---Discussion/Reflection
10:00-10:15 am	Break
10:15-11:15 am	Define & Explain Strategies of 30-Day Placement Plan Worksheet
11:15-11:30 am	Define & Identify Job retention Strategies
11:30-12:30 pm	Lunch
12:30-1:00 pm	Questions/Discussion
1:00-1:30 pm	Divide Participants into Groups of 3
1:30-1:45 pm	Break
1:45-2:30 pm	Participants work on Group Activity
2:30-3:00 pm	Participants work on Group Activity
3:00-3:30 pm	Questions/Answers/Discussion/Reflection
	End of Day 2

Day 3

Time	Presentation of Activity
8:00-8:30 am	Sign in & Review Goal/Objective of PD
8:30-9:00 am	Questions Regarding Group Activity or about
9:00-9:30 am	Customized Employment Strategies
9:30-10:00	Groups Finalize Work on Group Activity
10:00-10:15 am	Break
10:15-11:15 am	Group Presentations of 30-Day Plans
11:15-11:30 am	Group Presentations of 30-Day Plans
11:30-12:30 pm	Lunch
12:30-1:00 pm	Group Presentations of 30-Day Plans
1:00-1:30 pm	Group Presentations of 30-Day Plans
1:30-1:45 pm	Break
1:45-2:30 pm	Summarize the main points and pertinent facts
2:30-3:00 pm	Questions/Answers/Discussion/Reflection
3:00-3:30 pm	Participants take Post-Survey
	End of Day 3

Appendix D: Generation of Codes

Table D4*Generation of Codes*

Generation of Codes	Extract	Categories	Codes	Themes
Row 1	No State Curriculum Developed by JD, JTC, Transition Individualized by IEP goals-employment needs Best Practices Instruct Whole student Job/Careers Guided practice	Course of Study or Curriculum	No State standardized curriculum Individualized according to Career Assessments results Vocational/Career -Tech/Pathways Integrated with academic standards Evidence-based instructional strategies Experiential/hands-on learning experiences	Program Structure
Row 2	Individualized by Career Assessment Academic Skills Learning/Standards Competency Skills Employment Skills Work Terminology	Special Education Individualized	Paid jobs Strong work ethics Professionalism Meeting employer needs	Employment Success
Row 3	Career Assessments- Match skills needed to pursue careers/job Work based learning	Transition Goals	New skill sets Self-confidence Self worth Independence/Self-sufficiency Contributing to society Building a portfolio	
Row 4	Jobs Self-confidence Build self-worth Practice in real world			
Row 5	Punctuality Work Ethics Self-advocacy skills Decision Making skills	Careers	Good Worker Skills	

Generation of Codes	Extract	Categories	Codes	Themes
Row 6	Technology/ Computer skills Hard skills- Technical skills	Hard/Soft Skill	Soft skills Hard skills Technology Transferable/Generalization of skills	Active Learning
Row 7	Employment Community Experiences Experiential Learning	Community Engagement	Connecting new knowledge with previous learning	
Row 8	Complete Applications for better employment Apply to postsecondary programs	Higher Education	Postsecondary Programs Higher- Education Learning Institutions	Impact Future
Row 9	Financial Stability Being self- sustainable Contribute to Society Independent	Adulthood		
Row 10	More/better Interagency Collaboration Effectiveness Identification of Employment Strategies Employers knowledge of disability Employers empathy to remove barriers	Interagency	Adult Agencies Community Agencies	Collaboration

Note. From “Attitudes Toward Dissertation Editors,” by W. Student, 2020, *Journal of Academic Optimism*, 98, p. 11 (<https://doi.org/10.xxxxxxxx>). Copyright 2020 by Academic Publishing Consortium. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix E: Invitation

Dear Educator,

I am a doctoral student attending Walden University in Minneapolis, Minnesota, conducting a research study examining Employment Training for Graduating Seniors Who Have An Intellectual Disability. The problem to be addressed in this study is that local high school students with intellectual disabilities are exiting their high school community-based vocational program without sufficient employability skills to attain meaningful employment. The purpose of this study is to examine high school special educators' perceptions about the instruction of employability skills in the community-based vocational program and school special educators' perceptions about additional instruction to enhance SWID ability to attain meaningful employment. In addition, to explore whether an instructional practice can improve learner outcomes, elevate employment ratings, and reform educational policies for SWID.

The semistructured interviews are designed to last less than an hour. The interview questions are the only data that will be collected in this study. The interview will be conducted on Zoom platform. The interviews will be recorded, and a consent form will be created to inform you of using a recording device. There are no known risks associated with participation in this study. Your participation in my study will help teachers identify experiential learning skills that should be considered as offerings in a high school community-based vocational program to assist SWID attain employment after graduation.

Your data will be kept confidential, and the study will pose no risk to your privacy. The data collected from the study is for educational purposes and will be published in aggregated form. The study records and collected data will be kept secure and confidential. I would be happy to share the results and findings after the research has been concluded. After five years, the data will be destroyed. Please do not hesitate to ask questions about the study before participating or during the study. I can be contacted by email at miriam.bohles@waldenu.edu.

Best,
Miriam Bohles
Doctoral Candidate
Walden University

Appendix F: Interview Questions Protocol Form # _____

1. What type of community-based vocational program is offered to students with (SWID) to acquire employability skills in your school district?
2. What is your role with the community-base vocational program (CBVP)?
3. What type of employability curriculum is being instructed in the CBVP?
4. What are the weekly employability goals for SWID participating in the CBVP?
5. What type of instruction about PINS (Preferences, Interests, Needs & Strengths) is being instructed in the CBVP?
6. How can the instruction of PINS benefit SWID employment outcomes in a CBVP?
7. What type of employability skills do you want SWID to gain by participating in a CBVP?
8. What type of employability instruction is important for SWID to have in today's job market?
9. How can the instruction of employability skills in a CBVP lead to better employment for SWID after graduation? 9b. How can the instruction of employability skills in a CBVP lead to better education for SWID after graduation? 9c. How can the instruction of employability skills in a CBVP lead to better independent living for SWID after graduation?
10. What type of community collaboration of employment services and supports are available for SWID after graduation?

Appendix G: Permission for Figure 1

Re: Permission to Place Illustration in Dissertation

To: Miriam Bohles

david.kolb@case.edu
Sat 11/12/2022 12:09 PM

Hello Dr. David Kolb,

I am Miriam Bohles, a doctoral candidate attending Walden University. I am currently in the process of composing my dissertation and utilized your Experiential Learning Theory (1984) as my conceptual framework. I am requesting your permission to incorporate an illustration of the Experiential Learning Circle Model in my dissertation. Once my dissertation is approved, I will send you a copy. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Miriam Bohles,
Walden University Doctoral Candidate

Shawn Medero <[REDACTED]>

To: Miriam Bohles

Tue 11/15/2022 1:24 AM

Hi Miriam,

I work with Alice & David Kolb on all matters concerning licensing, reprints, and research materials related to their work on Experiential Learning.

You have our approval to include the Experiential Learning Circle Model graphic in your dissertation. We look forward to reading your dissertation in the future.

Let me know if you have further questions.

Best,
Shawn Medero
Director of Licensing & Technology
Experience Based Learning Systems, LLC