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DESIGNING A SCHOOL-BASED BUSINESS/WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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Abstract

The following poster presentation will provide the audience an overview of an effective work experience program, specifically designed for students with disabilities, but which incorporates collaboration with the general education population. The work experience program will cover a multitude of skills including, but not limited to, communication skills, marketing skills, technology, social skills, inventory systems, purchase orders, outside vendors, etc. This program, designed originally for one specific school, has now been integrated throughout one large suburban school district in Virginia, including on-site programs and off-site programs. Should time allow, the presenters will further discuss how transportation has been incorporated to bus the students to alternative locations providing a valuable service to employees across the city. The self-contained students involved in the program are served in the least restrictive environment and have had the opportunity to work with faculty, staff, and other students that they would, typically, not have the ability of which to interact. Although the program has been designed for the high school population, it can be modified to suite middle school-aged students, as well. The presentation will begin with the history of the model, explaining briefly how the idea came to fruition. Afterwards, presenters will explain how faculty of teacher educators can help new and experienced teachers design a building-appropriate model conducive for student success. The benefits of the program will be shared, along with actual data of each program (as it varies by SES), and how the program can help students of varying abilities, the school, and the community. Specific time will be allotted for participants to manipulate the spreadsheets and technology necessary for effective implementation of such a program.