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Skills for the Future

The ultimate goal for every student in education is to help him or her become a contributing, independent, and successful member of their community; to become someone who is responsible, independent, and can make informed choices. Perhaps, we as educators and parents need to ask ourselves what skills students with autism should be developing during the early years in order to be successful in employment and daily living skills later on.

With this in mind, parents, and school staff can begin to put together a longitudinal plan for the child they are educating and supporting. School is the place for each student to learn the tools he or she will need to become an adult. There should be a balance between the academic, social, communication, and "life" skills that are necessary for each student's future success.

Some students have a tremendous amount of restrictions as to where they can work, and on what jobs are appropriate for them based on the skills that the person possesses by age 18. For example, people who have poor money skills would never be considered for a job as a cashier. Additionally, those who are not strong readers may find themselves restricted from professions at libraries, certain warehouses, offices, and banks.

This article suggests some skills that should be developed early that are of paramount importance to employment and daily living later on. People often don't think about these skills in relation to careers, future employment, and independent living. However, parents and educators should realize the necessity of these skills for future success. It is of extreme importance that people have an interest in the area that they work. However, it can be discouraging to a student to discover that he/she doesn't have the skills to allow them to work in their area of interest. Therefore, interest is not enough.

For students to have success in various job opportunities, there are skills that can be taught and enhanced throughout the school years. They are not skills that magically appear in high school, but are skills that are entrenched in education annually. It takes a different way of thinking to begin to see the functionality of some skills that are taught during the early years of school. It is important for students, parents, and educators to see the acquisition of every skill as creating another employment opportunity. Begin to see skills in terms of a lifetime of opportunities instead of skills for one academic year.

The following skills have been utilized by students on jobs. These

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types of skills can be introduced at the elementary level and naturally progress through the school years. These are not exceptional skills to teach, but are skills that benefit everyone. For some students on the autism spectrum, learning one or more of these skills can help him or her in a variety of areas for the rest of his/her life.

SKILL: Time Concepts

What to Learn	How Skills are Used
<input type="checkbox"/> Being able to read digital and face clocks. <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding terminology (quarter past, half past, quarter to, etc.). <input type="checkbox"/> Learning the importance of being punctual.	On every job, an employee will need to know what time they need to be there, what time to leave, when to take a break, and how to know when break is over.

SKILL: Letters

What to Learn	How Skills are Used
<input type="checkbox"/> Knowing the sequence of letters in the ABC order. <input type="checkbox"/> When alphabetizing, knowing that you have to look beyond the first letter.	<input type="checkbox"/> Alphabetical filing (libraries, offices). <input type="checkbox"/> Filing anywhere. <input type="checkbox"/> Working with mail.

SKILL: Numbers

What to learn	How Skills are Used
<input type="checkbox"/> Know numbers and numerical order or sequencing. <input type="checkbox"/> Know one to one correspondence.	<input type="checkbox"/> Filing by numbers as in medical offices (e.g., many places file numerically, 123.45 is smaller than 123.46). <input type="checkbox"/> Taking inventory. <input type="checkbox"/> Making deliveries and reading addresses.

SKILL: Money

What to Learn	How Skills are Used
<input type="checkbox"/> The value of coins and bills. <input type="checkbox"/> How to make change. <input type="checkbox"/> The concept of checks and credit cards.	<input type="checkbox"/> Being a cashier, bookkeeper, accountant, or banker. <input type="checkbox"/> This skill is important for employment, but also for individuals to manage their own money. <input type="checkbox"/> Balancing checkbooks. <input type="checkbox"/> Paying personal bills. <input type="checkbox"/> Doing personal shopping.

SKILL: Measurements

What to learn	How Skills are Used
<input type="checkbox"/> The various types of measurements (e.g., cup, quart, pint, inch, foot, yard, ounce, pound, ton). <input type="checkbox"/> Knowing the measurement abbreviations (e.g., c, qt, pt, in, ft, yd, oz, lb, T). <input type="checkbox"/> Learning fraction concepts (e.g., 1/4, 1/2, 3/4, 1/8, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/> Cooking or food preparation in restaurants. <input type="checkbox"/> Baking for bakeries. <input type="checkbox"/> Doing construction. <input type="checkbox"/> Doing landscaping (measuring grass seed, fertilizer, etc.). <input type="checkbox"/> Picture framing. <input type="checkbox"/> Weighing laundry. <input type="checkbox"/> Working in grocery, food bank, or warehouse. <input type="checkbox"/> Each skill can also be used at home for cooking, and purchasing items for working in and around the home.

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*(Continued from page 2)***SKILL: Matching/Sorting**

What to learn	How Skills are Used
<input type="checkbox"/> Being able to know different shapes, sizes, colors, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Being able to match letters, numbers, shapes, sizes, words. <input type="checkbox"/> Knowing concepts such as soft/hard, hot/cold, meat/produce. <input type="checkbox"/> Being able to match actual money to cash register statement.	<input type="checkbox"/> Sorting plastic, glass, or paper items to recycle. <input type="checkbox"/> Sorting clothing as a laundry assistant. <input type="checkbox"/> Sorting items that are hot/cold etc. to bag in a grocery store. <input type="checkbox"/> Sorting foods for preparation in restaurants or at home. <input type="checkbox"/> People use matching skills to deliver mail (address to envelope), deliver newspapers, and deliver flowers. <input type="checkbox"/> Retrieve items off shelves in grocery or other retail stores. <input type="checkbox"/> Money skills are huge because retail wants people to be able to do a variety of jobs, not just stock shelves, and retrieve items, but also to use the cash register.

SKILL: Reading

What to learn	How Skills are Used
<input type="checkbox"/> Being able to read print and cursive writing. <input type="checkbox"/> Being able to comprehend what is read.	<input type="checkbox"/> Many jobs require reading. Being able to become a more independent adult also requires some reading skills. <input type="checkbox"/> Reading the want ads. <input type="checkbox"/> Creating a resume. <input type="checkbox"/> Reading and filling out job applications. <input type="checkbox"/> Completing paperwork on the job for tax purposes. <input type="checkbox"/> Doing data entry requires being able to decipher other people's handwriting. <input type="checkbox"/> Reading a recipe or written instructions to prepare food at home or on the job. <input type="checkbox"/> Reading an order that must be filled as in a warehouse. <input type="checkbox"/> Reading labels on cleaning products. <input type="checkbox"/> Reading addresses for delivery. <input type="checkbox"/> Voting as an adult takes reading skills; the ultimate right of every citizen. <input type="checkbox"/> Finally, reading will help anyone to study to take and pass the driver's test which would open even more employment options and independence.

SKILL: Social/Work Etiquette

What to learn	How Skills are Used								
<input type="checkbox"/> Value work. <input type="checkbox"/> Realize office hierarchy. <input type="checkbox"/> Follow directions. <input type="checkbox"/> Have basic social skills. <input type="checkbox"/> Being open to trying new things and changing your routine.	<p>If you value work, you will put in effort and should do a better job. No matter where the individual is (home, school, or work), someone is in charge. It vital that the individual understand there is a boss to listen to for success.</p> <p>Many jobs require people to be able to interact with others. If one can't interact readily, employment opportunities become extremely narrow.</p> <p>The following jobs require good social skills:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">▲ Cashier</td> <td style="width: 50%;">▲ Retail</td> </tr> <tr> <td>▲ Nurse</td> <td>▲ Waiter/Waitress</td> </tr> <tr> <td>▲ Customer Service</td> <td>▲ Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>▲ Bank</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>Many businesses are not static. They change routines, managers, work forms being used, timelines, and management style. The more flexible people are, the more successful they will be in the world of work.</p>	▲ Cashier	▲ Retail	▲ Nurse	▲ Waiter/Waitress	▲ Customer Service	▲ Office	▲ Bank	
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