

Domain ②: Career Curricula

The central goal of any career curriculum is to help students build academic and occupational competencies that will allow them to meaningfully participate in the workforce. The ultimate goal for all students is to become gainfully employed in the community in a job that matches their skills and abilities, as well as their interests. Career curricula and vocational experiences can be a powerful gateway to that reality.

Career curricula for students with disabilities can be delivered in a couple of different ways. A school can offer career development elective classes for students in a more traditional academic course of study that leads to a state approved diploma, or they can embed the curriculum throughout an alternatively structured course of study (i.e., Occupational Course of Study).

A rigorous career curriculum should help students:

- ✓ Develop an awareness of their individual interests and aptitudes,
- ✓ Better understand the job market and the requirements of certain industries or jobs and how that might fit with their qualifications, interest and abilities,
- ✓ Build work habits, behaviors, attitudes, and skills through school-based and community-based experiences that will increase the likelihood of employment, and
- ✓ Gain exposure to a variety of work tasks and environments.

Providing students with access to meaningful career preparatory experiences is beneficial given that “students who were taking prevocational or vocational classes and received some type of career-related service such as career skills assessment and job skills training were significantly more likely to secure paid work. Participation in internships, tech prep, or entrepreneurship programs had the strongest association with paid work” (Carter, Austin & Trainor, 2011).