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SPED Final Project- Intellectual Disabilities

1. To fully understand what an intellectual disability is, we must first look at definitions, describe characteristics, and explain areas of difficulty for these individuals. It is unknown how around fifty percent of intellectual disabilities are caused, but scientists believe that most instances are caused by genetics. There seems to be a number of possible prenatal causes, such as infections from the mother or environmental influences, which can cause one of the many different disabilities under the intellectual category.

To determine if an individual has an intellectual disability, they must take an intelligence test to identify their IQ. If their IQ is 70 or below, an adaptive and an academic skills assessment may be necessary as well. The current definition for this disability by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities is “a disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills. This disability originates before age 18.”(AAMR Ad Hoc Committee on Terminology and Classification, 2010, p. 1). This means that the disability directly impacts an individual’s academic success, daily living skills, and overall role in society, all before the age of 18. The Individuals with Disabilities of Education Act states that an intellectual disability is defined as, “significantly subaverage intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.” (DR ALVES). This proves the point that this disability must affect the child’s learning in a classroom setting in order to be identified and provided support for. In both definitions, they mention how this disability affects individuals both intellectually and adaptively. This draws attention to the fact that they may need additional support to improve their social, practical intelligence, and behavioral skills.

Social intelligence involves communicating with others, which also includes understanding and interpreting what someone is saying, which can be difficult for an individual with this disability. Communication is important in everyday life, as well as when pursuing a job because they will have to interact with customers, bosses, and other employees. Practical intelligence involves how to solve everyday problems that society thinks “normal” individuals should understand and have the ability to perform. They may struggle with tasks that involve problem-solving skills and flexibility if plans or instructions change.

Having a disability that affects one’s academic life throughout all twelve years of school must be extremely challenging, which is why there are different levels of support available for individuals with intellectual disabilities (DR. KAHN). These individuals may need help in academic areas, with memory, and with self-regulation skills. As we discussed in class, memory skills and self-regulation can be difficult for everyone at times and can impact how you do in school, at work, and in day-to-day life. Having to learn a new daily routine and memorize certain tasks can be troublesome for individuals with or without disabilities. Self-regulation comes into play because one must be aware of their actions and how others perceive them. Learning this skill can help them in the future because they can practice how they interact with others and grow from any feedback that others present to them. Learning different ways to manage time or to make work easier and more efficient takes great thought, but is worth it in the end. “Research documents that systematic instruction is critical for students with intellectual disabilities.” (Drasgow, Wolery, Halle & Hajiaghamohseni, 2017) This type of instruction includes consistent assistance from a teacher or aide and may result in finding a job with constant help difficult. In most workplaces, it may be necessary to work independently. This type of work may also require domestic and community skills, which can serve as a barrier for certain individuals in and of itself. Individuals with intellectual disabilities have high rates of unemployment due to all of these potential areas of difficulty.
2. The potential job chosen for our individual is a bakery worker. They would be employed as a baker and also work a cash register when needed. A baker is someone who makes bread, cakes, or other baked goods. This can be for a commercial purpose, retail purposes, or private purposes. Often times, if a person works in a goods and services environment, like a bakery, the employees will also work the cash registers. A cashier is someone who handles the payments and receipts in the store. So, our individual would need to be ready to operate two major pieces of equipment: a cash register and an oven.

         The responsibilities of a baker in a typical bakery can vary based on what the bakery specializes in. For the purpose of this project, the bakery this individual works in will bake dessert treats, from cakes to cupcakes to other pastries. The first thing a baker will typically do is ensure they have all of the proper batters in the fridge and extra ingredients if needed. The next step is preparing any baking equipment for use. This would include heating up ovens, making sure scales and mixers are clean for other employees, and that they have the correct pans and utensils. Now, the individual will begin the actual baking process. Typically, batters, minus specialty batters, will be prepared the night before to ensure speedy results in the morning. However, it is up to the baker to make sure the quality of the batter is up to standard and the proper consistency to make. All that is left for the baker is to pour the batter into the correct size pans, sheets, or cupcake tins. After everything has been filled, the next step is putting everything into the oven. The temperature must be correct and then everything is slid in. Watching is the most important part of baking. The individual must ensure they are the right color and watch a timer to make sure the baked goods are in for the right amount of time. The last and final step is taking everything out of the oven. This step involves a lot of caution since things will be hot, but once everything is out, they just leave on racks to cool and the decorators take over from there.

Working as a cashier is a little easier than being a baker, but just as important to the establishment. Most cash registers or cash systems allow you to select a word or picture of what the buyer is getting. If not, knowing the price of specific items and being able to type it in is important. Another responsibility is being able to communicate prices and costs to customers. Speaking clearly and loudly is important so customers are not confused or have to ask you to repeat. Handling money should be done with caution as well. This is the biggest responsibility of a cashier and includes ensuring that money and receipts are handled properly. They must be able to count dollars and coins, as well as be able to handle credit/debit transactions. The cashier is responsible for the money once it is placed into their hands. They must make sure the proper amount of money is given to them and the proper amount is handed back to the customer.

For an individual with an intellectual disability, some of these tasks may be difficult or require another approach. Those with this disability have a hard time with planning, practical understanding, reasoning, and other things in these areas. Socially, following directions can also be difficult. This could be an area of difficulty in any workplace, but a bakery especially. The individual may struggle in understanding the steps to operate the oven or cash register. They may also struggle with concepts like time, which is where a timer would come in handy. They could also have a difficulty with counting money. When working at the cash register, they could struggle in giving the correct amount of cash back to the customer or counting how much the customer gave them to start with. Aside from practical things, they may struggle in making personal relationships. Interpersonal skills and self-esteem are two areas of issue and with these, making friends and being welcoming to customers could be difficult for the individual.
3.- a. In order for our individual to be successful, some accommodations may need to be put into place. For example, making some tasks easier for the worker until they get accustomed to the job may result in higher quality work. Our student may require a longer or more detailed training program, specifically because they are being trained for two different types of jobs. It may be necessary for training to be done with a skilled professional in the task instead of a more “on your own” approach, thus allowing the individual to ask questions and fully understand what they are required to do. They may also need some adjusted training materials in this new environment. Having a step-by-step guide for certain tasks or picture cues may help the student identify the order of what they must do. For instance, some cash registers have pictures of the food available to make working behind the register quicker and easier. Or, creating a recipe card for certain foods may be necessary to help our individual do their job efficiently. Our individual may also require extra help and support in social situations such as interacting with customers. Teaching them good customer service and friendliness to other coworkers is very important for the establishment to run smoothly. They might also have to be taught the importance of the job they are completing and understand that they may be under great pressure at times. Working under pressure is challenging for anyone, but individuals with intellectual disabilities struggle with it even more. There may need to be an additional cashier or baker on exceptionally busy days to prevent the individual from becoming too overwhelmed with so much stress and social stimulation.
b. As listed above, our individual may require a number of accommodations in order to be fully successful and comfortable in their work environment. This may include specific training materials, longer or more detailed training programs, or even additional help from other employees. One specific material that may be useful to our student is a cash register with verbal or picture cues for the different types of food offered. This can help them complete the ringing up process quicker by seeing exactly what they need to pick and already having the price programmed in. Not all cash registers have this programmed in and require individuals to type in each order and the separate prices for each one. This can be very time consuming and confusing. It is fairly inexpensive, if not free for some places, to pre-program names of food offered into the computer systems. Considering that correctly counting change is also a necessary skill in this job, they may need additional training materials to help with that. Thankfully, most systems will automatically do the math for you and give you the correct change. However, having a calculator nearby could be a beneficial training material for a student. If the company has the financial means, the cash registers that deposit change to the customer automatically may be a good investment to help trainees and other employees alike. This can assist in the training process by creating one less thing for the trainee to learn and include an electronic support for the individual. To assist with baking, recipe cards could be a very helpful training material for our individual. Pictures and simple commands written in order will help the individual understand what they must do to finish the baking process. This will eliminate any confusion or forgotten steps. All of these supports may be necessary to help the individual complete their training in an efficient and simpler way. These supports can help the individual feel more independent in their workplace and may help them work alongside others better because they will be doing their own task. These supports are also necessary to build their customer service skills because they need to be able to do these skills while working with customers. These supports will help eliminate frustration for the individual and give the individual experience in the workplace.

c. Training programs are essential for any new employee, but especially so for any individual who may need additional supports or help. An individual with an intellectual disability may need an extended or more detailed training program. This is to ensure that they are fully aware of all the tasks that they must complete and how to do them without assistance from a manager or coworker. Our training program is for both baking and working a cash register, so they may already need a longer program to learn all skill sets. To begin training for baking, we must make the individual aware of where everything is located from the oven, to baking utensils, and of course, ingredients. Once fully aware of where the materials are and where to prepare the desserts, they must then begin learning how to prepare the desserts by hand. This may need to be done on the spot or just be prepped for baking the next day. This task may require additional supports, such as the recipe cards mentioned above so that the individual can remember each individual recipe and how it is made. These can be created and taught using short, simple tasks written down in order for the individual to follow next to their prepping and baking station. These cards will include the tools, ingredients, appropriate temperature, and full baking time needed to bake each dessert. During the training period, the trainer will also be showing, assisting, and watching the individual practice each skill to ensure that they are completing it correctly. If a task list is too challenging for the individual to follow at first, pictures may be printed in order for them to follow instead. This will make it easier for them to identify exactly what it is they are looking for and what they must do with it to create their finished product.
 To learn how to work a cash register, an entirely different training program is required. The trainer’s approach to this program will mostly be impacted by the type of cash register that the establishment uses. When hiring someone with an intellectual disability who may struggle with a strictly manual register, the company may need to consider updating or at least, modifying their register to be easier to use. To begin the training process, regardless of the type of register being used, a trainer will show the individual where the cash register is located and ensure that they know the items offered in their store. This may require picture practicing or “studying” so that they can remember the name of each pastry. When I was a waitress, I always took a menu home to study so that I was knowledgeable about what my restaurant offered. This is a good practice to follow in any food establishment, so our individual could do this and also practice with their trainer. The trainer will then begin showing the individual how their specific cash register works. If the cash register does not have pre-programmed words, phrases, pictures, or prices, the individual must be taught how to type all of those requirements into the system manually. Some individuals with intellectual disabilities may struggle with this task and become frustrated by the amount of time it takes to complete. If this is the case, pre-programmed items may need to be entered into the system for them. When using a pre-programmed system, the individual will simply need to be showed in their training what the pastries are called and what they look like. By doing this, the individual can simply click the button corresponding to the customer’s request. A trainer will first show them how this is done, then get them to practice putting orders in for the trainer, and finally only watching them handle the whole ordering process to ensure that they are prepared to work alone.
 Individuals with intellectual disabilities may struggle with dealing with money, which can make being a cashier even more difficult for them. However, the trainer can supply additional supports to make this task easier. Most cash registers today will automatically calculate how much change is required, so all the individual will have to do is count up the bills and coins to return. However, if the system is not automatic, then the trainer may need to supply a calculator for the individual to use. Learning to use the calculator may need to be an additional step added to the program if the individual is not already aware how. Some systems today even automatically dispense change into a little dish for the customer to take themselves. This register would be most ideal for an individual with an intellectual disability because only minimum math would be required if any. If this register is available to the individual, the trainer will only need to teach them what each button on the machine does. They will need to show them what to press and how to process each type of payment, whether it be with a credit card or cash. Learning how to work these features may be one of the most important parts of being a cashier. There are also additional commands in the system such as printing a receipt, completing and clearing an order, and sending an order to the bakers. These skills will be showed to the individual by the trainer, then practiced with the trainer, and finally, observed to prepare for individual work. Task lists or cue cards may be necessary for individuals who are just learning because the mass amount of commands may be too much to remember at one time. This list can be posted near the cash register with pictures and descriptions of the buttons and what each one does for them. It may also be necessary to create a task list that reminds the individual the order in which they must complete a transaction with a customer. This will help the individual stay focused on the task at hand and prevent any confusion between buttons or orders.
 These training programs and materials will eventually help build the individual’s social skills with customers, co-workers, and managers by communicating effectively when learning how to complete these new tasks and taking orders from customers. Proper communication is required when telling prices and items offered, asking questions, and completing payments and orders. They will also build the individual’s independence by teaching them how to complete these tasks alone, and providing supports so that they do not feel as if they always have to have someone showing or reminding them. These training programs may seem tedious to the individual at first, but will teach them how to be a successful baker and cashier by showing them how to work well with others, work a cash register, handle and count money correctly, bake a number of delicious pastries, how to operate different baking utensils and ovens, and how to politely interact with customers.