



Work-Based Learning Preparation Guide for Educators & Paraeducators

This guide is designed to help educators and paraeducators prepare students with disabilities for paid Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLEs). These experiences help students apply classroom skills in real-world settings, build independence, and develop work readiness. Your role in preparing students is essential for a successful transition from school to work.

1. Understand the Connection: Classroom ↔ Workplace

Many of the skills students practice in school are directly transferable to the workplace. Help students make the connection:

Classroom Skill	Workplace Equivalent
Following a schedule	Arriving to work on time, taking breaks
Completing classwork	Finishing tasks at work
Asking for help	Using self-advocacy on the job
Participating in group work	Working on a team
Using visual supports	Using checklists or task organizers at work
Practicing routines	Completing job tasks with consistency

Reinforce these links by helping students name the skill, where they've practiced it, and how it can help them at work.

2. Role of Paraeducators in WBLE Prep

Paraeducators can provide vital support by:

- Modeling job-appropriate behaviors (e.g., greeting others, using polite language)
- Assisting with role-plays of workplace scenarios (e.g., responding to feedback)
- Reinforcing time management, hygiene, and safety routines
- Helping with travel training or using visual cues related to job tasks

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- Communicating progress and support needs to the IEP or VR team

3. Accommodations: Classroom vs. Workplace

Accommodations are provided in both environments, but the process is different.

In School (IEP/504)	In the Workplace (ADA)
Mandated by IDEA or Section 504	Mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
Determined by an IEP/504 team	Requested by the employee (student)
Schools identify, provide, and fund supports	Employers must provide reasonable accommodations, but students must disclose their needs
Advocacy is often done by adults	Self-advocacy is essential; job coaches or VR counselors can assist

Educators play a critical role in teaching students how to:

- Understand and name their needs
- Practice asking for support in different ways (verbally, with scripts, AAC)
- Transition from school-led planning to self-advocacy in adult environments

4. Collaborate with the WBLE Team

- Participate in IEP or transition planning meetings focused on WBLE
- Provide input on transferable skills and support strategies
- Share behavioral strategies, routines, or visuals that work well
- Help prepare classroom environments that mirror job expectation

Your impact is lasting. The structure, encouragement, and strategies you provide now will help students navigate new environments, speak up for themselves, and grow into successful workers.