

# WORKTOPIA EXCHANGE

Exchanging **knowledge**

Exchanging **learnings**

Exchanging **ideas**

## SETTING THE STAGE:

### WHAT EMPLOYERS VALUE AND HOW TO SET THE STAGE WITHIN THE HOME ENVIRONMENT

#### WHAT WE KNOW

Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are capable of amazing things – including work and establishing a career, but having a job and developing potential career possibilities needs to begin early. Why?

**Work-based learning during school leads to better post-school employment outcomes and these early work-based experiences can play a key role in future career development.<sup>1</sup>**

#### WHAT WE ARE LEARNING

EmploymentWorks<sup>1</sup> and CommunityWorks Canada<sup>2</sup> provide meaningful opportunities for individuals with ASD to explore their interests and abilities in a wide variety of workplace settings while **targeting skills that employers value** such as social-communication, interpersonal and lifelong learning skills.



At the beginning of each program, participants, and if appropriate their parents/guardians, are asked if they have any particular **employment related goal** that they would be interested in targeting during the program.

**63%** of the individual goals targeted had positive performance changes

Feedback from some participants has been that they have ‘no clue’ what to focus on, and parents have shared that they have never really considered employment specific skills for their child.

The great news is that the foundation for many of the skills that employers value are skills that can be targeted and **worked on within the home environment**. The use of video can help to capture strengths and reflect on abilities.

SKILL AREAS VALUED BY EMPLOYERS <sup>2</sup>	FOUNDATION SKILLS	REFLECTION
<b>SOCIAL COMMUNICATION</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide directions to complete a complex task</li> <li>Restate instructions or paraphrase what is expected when provided with a complex task</li> <li>Inquire when unclear directions are provided</li> <li>Address different communication partners appropriately (e.g. a family member in contrast to a store clerk)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were the steps clear?</li> <li>Were instructions summarized succinctly?</li> <li>Were questions used to clarify expectations?</li> <li>Was language adjusted to match communication partner?</li> </ul>
<b>INTERPERSONAL</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in teamwork activities (board games, extracurricular activities)</li> <li>Introduce a new activity/event</li> <li>Complete a new chore/activity with others</li> <li>Willing to attend to personal hygiene and grooming when engaging in social interactions with others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How are group activities managed? Turn-taking? Cooperating with others?</li> <li>Ability to lead a group activity?</li> <li>Willing to engage in a new activity/event?</li> <li>Ability to accept and respond to constructive feedback?</li> <li>Ability to be independent in completion of multi-step tasks</li> </ul>
<b>LIFE LONG LEARNING &amp; WORK ETHIC</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsible for planning and executing an activity or an event (e.g. planning a meal)</li> <li>Complete a task balancing quality and quantity</li> <li>Reliable/committed when engaged in extra curricular activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsibility for preparing self to attend programs and/or send regrets if absent?</li> </ul>

Percentages based on data collected from Spring 2015 through Winter 2017 program cycles.

## IDEA EXCHANGE

Parents and guardians play a key role in preparing their child for the world of employment and the work related expectations they have for their children are a significant predictor of whether young adults with ASD and other disabilities go on to find paid employment after leaving high school.<sup>3</sup>

Engaging your child in these types of activities may help you envision your child as an employee, and “**set the stage**” for future workplace success.

