

Training Supervisors

by Howard T. Major

Through certain simple steps, educators can help agency supervisors do a better job of working with students.

Increasing the employability skills of students is an important educational goal, and service-learning is an excellent way to reach it. In order to be optimally effective, however, service-learning experiences must be designed with this specific objective in mind.

Last year in Kalamazoo County, Michigan, an experimental employment training project that included service activities increased students' effectiveness and employability by improving the supervision they received from agency personnel. The project offers a model that service-learning educators may adapt for their own programs.

Operated by the Interagency Collaborative Body (ICB), one of 30 such bodies in Michigan, the project's primary mission was to promote cooperation among schools, job training programs, service organizations, and the private sector so that they might better prepare young people to move more easily from school to jobs.

Developing skills that make each student more employable was an essential function of the project. Though students master some employability skills as a result of any job training, such skills occur much more consistently and are learned much more thoroughly when the supervisor is consciously working to foster them.

Unfortunately, few supervisors know how to do this, especially if they have had little or no experience in working with students. Obviously supervisory training is needed, but it is difficult to arrange. Supervisors may be unable (or unwilling) to take time to attend standard training courses. Also, many adults, especially bosses, are reluctant to

become trainees. What is required, then, is an unobtrusive form of training that takes little time and makes the supervisor a partner in rather than a recipient of the instruction.

The educator revises the training materials and duplicates enough copies to last the student, supervisor, and educator for the duration of the project. This enables the educator to check whether the supervisor shares the forms with the students soon after their arrival at the agency, whether the students receive periodic feedback, whether they have a chance to do different tasks, and finally whether they receive copies of all forms to take with them to show to potential employers.

ICB staff members saw the supervisory training procedure as an effective tool for helping young people make the school-to-work transition successfully. Supervisors appreciated the structure provided by the training materials that they helped develop, and students valued the clarification of goals, the continuous and specific feedback on their work, and the documentation of the skills they had learned.

Another factor to be considered is that supervisors must value their role as educators if they are to provide students effective learning experiences. One way to assure this is to give them some responsibility for designing these experiences. The supervisor must come to understand that it is critical to let students know what is expected of them and how well they are meeting expectations, to analyze jobs and assign tasks of increasing difficulty, and to record the skills that the students attain.

The ICB project developed the following steps for educators to use in giving supervisors the training they need to enable students to develop employability skills.

First the educator acquaints the potential supervisor with the dual goals of service and learning. The supervisor then makes a commitment to train the

students and describes the contribution that the student will make to the agency.

From this description the educator develops a preliminary job task analysis. National, state, and local guides are available as models. One source of these is the Vocational-Technical Education Consortium of States, which publishes task analyses. (For information on obtaining copies, write to V-Tecs, Commission on Occupational Education Institutions, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 795 Peachtree Street, N.W., Atlanta, Georgia 30365.)

Next the educator develops an employability skills checklist, a job specific checklist, and a summary rating scale (see accompanying samples). The educator sends these to the supervisor with a request for an appointment for a planning session. During the session they work together in modifying these training materials to apply specifically to the job the student will be doing. When both are satisfied with the products, the educator explains how the supervisor can use them to train the students. For example, the educator may point out that the checklists are most effective if students study them as soon as they start work (thereby making clear what is expected of them) and then receive copies with the supervisor's evaluations periodically (thereby learning how well they are living up to expectations).

The importance of the planning meeting cannot be over-emphasized. It gives the supervisor the guidance and support needed to guarantee the quality of the learning experience for the student and the quality of the student's service for the agency. At the same time the educator gets a clear picture of the agency's specific needs.

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Agency Supervisor's Checklists: Child Care

Employability Skills		Competency Profile: Summary Rating Scale																																	
<p>acceptable unacceptable</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the employee dress appropriately for the job? _____ 2. Is the employee punctual? _____ 3. Does the employee use appropriate language? _____ 4. Does the employee work well with peers? _____ 5. Does the employee comply with directives from the supervisors? _____ 6. Does the employee keep busy on the job? _____ 7. Does the employee perform quality work? _____ 8. Does the employee clean up the work site? _____ 9. Does the employee maintain a positive attendance pattern? _____ 10. Is the employee flexible? _____ 11. Does the employee possess the basic skills needed for the job? _____ <p>Comments: _____</p>		<p>Rating Scale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 - Awareness only 2 - Task accomplished with assistance 3 - Task accomplished by worker without assistance 4 - Worker is able to teach or demonstrate the task to others <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> </table> <p>Comments: _____</p>		1	2	3	4																												
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<h3>Job-Specific Skills</h3> <p>acceptable unacceptable</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did worker plan and implement activities designed to prepare a child for reading? _____ 2. Did worker plan and implement activities designed to stimulate the creativity and imagination of children? _____ 3. Did worker plan and implement language development activities? _____ 4. Did worker plan and implement problem-solving activities? _____ 5. Did worker plan and implement activities designed to enhance children's self-image? _____ 6. Did worker plan and implement activities designed to increase children's motor coordination? _____ 7. Did worker plan and implement activities designed to facilitate the cognitive development of children? _____ 8. Did worker plan and implement activities designed to encourage children's independence? _____ 9. Did worker plan and implement musical activities? _____ 10. Did worker plan and implement art activities? _____ 11. Did worker plan and implement field trips? _____ 12. Did worker plan and implement activities which avoid ethnic or sex-role stereotyping? _____ <p>Comments: _____</p>																																			