

Prepared for Work. Ready for Life.

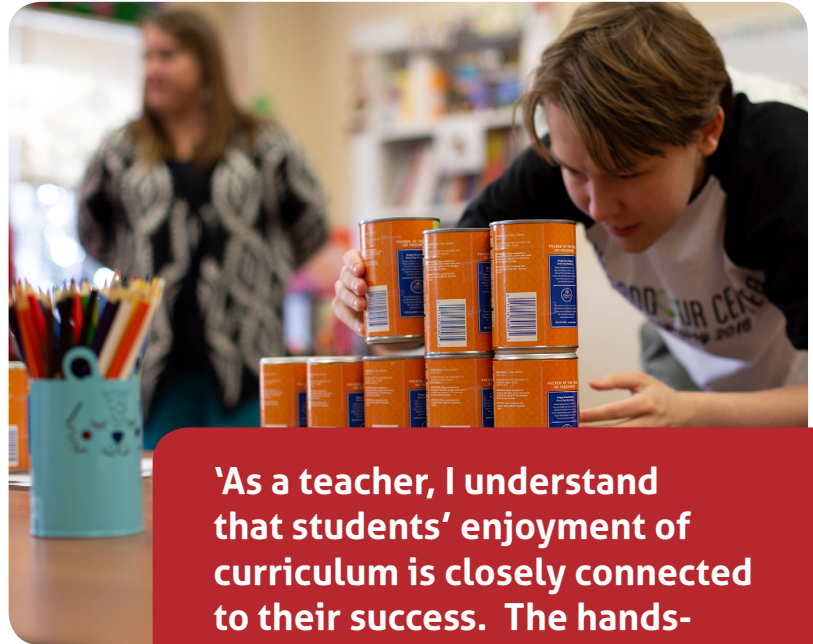
Practicing Job-Specific Skills Prepares Learners for Independent Living

We have students with a broad range of disabilities requiring differentiated levels of instruction. With the Project Discovery Adapted Curriculum from Education Associates, I am able to simultaneously engage a diverse group of learners.

- Ashley Goodpaster, Vocational Director, Stewart Home & School

Nestled quietly in a pastoral corner of Franklin County, Kentucky, one of the nation's premiere residential facilities for students with intellectual disabilities has been improving the lives of individuals and families for over 125 years.

The Stewart Home & School is dedicated to the complete care of its students and the fulfillment of all their needs – physical, educational, social, vocational and spiritual. For the past few years, this enrichment has included Project Discovery, a robust line of job preparation curriculum from Education Associates.



'As a teacher, I understand that students' enjoyment of curriculum is closely connected to their success. The hands-on components provided by Education Associates keep learners engaged with the lesson.'

Hands-On Practice Makes Perfect

Ashley Goodpaster is the Vocational Director for the Stewart Home & School. Among other responsibilities, she teaches a job preparation course focusing on identifying students' interests and pairing them with opportunities, both on campus and in the local community.

Titles in the Project Discovery line of curriculum each feature a hands-on, career-specific scope and sequence of lessons. The 'Adapted' version of each of these titles maintains the same depth of content but is structured for non-readers and other learners with severe and profound intellectual challenges.

Goodpaster has recently been using the Grocery Clerking – Adapted kit to introduce her students to the particular challenges and opportunities presented by jobs in a supermarket. Job and situation-specific role-playing scenarios, demonstrated by teachers and explored by learners, are just some of the tools in the kit provided by Education Associates.



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Flexible Curriculum = Dynamic Results

Goodpaster also remarks on the flexibility of instruction that the Project Discovery kits afford her and her students.

'Sometimes the classroom session takes an unexpected direction. The hands-on bagging lesson from the Grocery Clerking kit may spark a class conversation about recycling. Some teachers would stay closer to the instructor's notes, but I just go with it!'

The participants in the Stewart Home & School's Work & Life Skills courses range in age from 18 to 65 and present a battery of challenges to vocational and life skills development. A classroom of a dozen students may confront a mix of hurdles to comprehension and retention ranging from OCD and hearing-impairment to intellectual disorder and autism. With a dynamic group of students, Goodpaster utilizes a combination of assets provided in the curriculum, including video modeling, visual schedules and system of least prompts & time delay.



'After we watch the video modeling, I ask the students if they're ready to try the activity. Often, they ask me to demonstrate, but sometimes they are excited to jump right in!'

Video modeling featured in the Project Discovery curriculum is a major catalyst to the students' progress.'

Within each activity, Goodpaster employs her own intuition and experience, armed with the versatile curriculum, to meet the students' interests and aptitudes.

Through this system of exposure, class feedback and hands-on reinforcement of key skills, the students at the Stewart Home & School are growing their own independence by fine-tuning critical workplace and personal management abilities.

Job Preparation Fuels Life Skills

The longer she works with her community of learners, the more overlap Goodpaster sees between the development of skills for the workplace and the evolution of critical life skills. She comments on the ripple effect that carries from hard skills to soft skills and even general attitudes.

'After completing our Grocery Clerking course, students have an enhanced perspective on their daily life. They tell me about experiences they've had where other employees don't perform to the new standards they've learned. They have more confidence and higher expectations.'



In addition to these anecdotal results, Goodpaster charts her students' progress with objective metrics. Using the pre-tests and post-tests included with Project Discovery, she was able to document a 50% increase in Grocery Clerking content comprehension - 61% to 93%. These outstanding results are manifested in her learners' behaviors, both in her class and in their community.

An Impact on Community

For over a century, the Stewart Home & School has grown a collaborative relationship with the nearby state capital of Frankfort, Kentucky. Individuals and the residential school itself have maintained strong ties to local industry and commercial ventures. From positions at Chick-Fil-A to an upscale Italian restaurant, students have discovered meaningful ways to increase their own independence and give back to the community. One aspect of Ashley Goodpaster's position is to function as a liaison between the students and employers.

'In addition to our on-campus positions, some of our students have jobs in the local community. Since the curriculum is geared toward both job readiness and life skills, it is perfect preparation for this sort of progress.'

↑ 50%

**Grocery Clerking
Adapted Curriculum**

Pre-Test 61%

Post-Test 93%

In one of the most stunning displays of Project Discovery's effectiveness, the curriculum will trigger dormant competencies and abilities in the participants.

'I have older students who have previously worked the jobs we are studying. Often the Project Discovery curriculum will spark memories and activate latent skill sets. They will share their experiences with the class and even help with the lessons! This reinforces their own skills and helps me teach others.'

In this capacity, students function almost like a student teacher, fostering the progress of their peers and reinforcing confidence in their own abilities.

'My goal is for students to gain essential job skills and basic life skills. The hands-on activities included in Education Associates' curriculum keep students engaged and further their progress in these areas.'



What's Next?

It is clear in her speech and demeanor that Ashley Goodpaster has an abundant passion for her students' well-being and a profound faith in their capacity for self-reliance.

Summed up in a phrase, Goodpaster describes 'Self Care' as her ultimate desire for many of her students – the ability to govern their own lives. With a roster of dedicated professionals, armed with comprehensive Job and Life Skills curriculum, residents at the Stewart Home & School in Frankfort, KY are living this reality.



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