

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS  
FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

by

**Mary J. Tomblin, B.S.**

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**To my family and the students I taught for several years  
at LJIS. I learned so much from them.**

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**ABSTRACT**

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FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

**Mary J. Tomblin, M. A.  
The University of Houston Clear Lake, 1996**

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**This report presents findings on the early work experiences of youth with learning disabilities. The study examined trends in students' career development by comparing employment characteristics during high school and 7 years after leaving secondary school. It was predicted that findings would comparatively agree with recent studies that showed a correlation between those LD students having participated in some type of vocational training in high school and more earning power and greater satisfaction with the job. Forty individuals diagnosed as learning disabled from ages 16 to 25 years were polled with a questionnaire to assess characteristics of employment satisfaction. Major findings indicated: youth with learning disabilities who participated in a vocational training program did achieve higher levels of satisfaction on their jobs and greater earning power. Less positive findings included lower income and less satisfaction among those who had no vocational training classes.**

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## **The Effectiveness of Vocational Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities**

### **Types of Learning Disabilities**

**A learning disability (LD) is often referred to as the “invisible handicap.” There is no outward sign of any discrepancy between the individual and the ability to perform any given task.**

**Types of learning disabilities have been researched and found to fall into two groups: reading disorders that cause difficulty in sounding and recognizing shapes of letters and words, and language development obstacles that impact oral and written expression. These children may stutter, lisp or have other pronunciation problems that are rarely associated with physical defects. Learning disabilities are a neurological problem and not an educational problem. These individuals can learn at different paces and usually in different ways. Most older students with LD are students who have short attention spans, possibly because they have never learned to read. Together, these two groups include approximately 4 million students with no mental or physical handicap but who did not learn to read, write and compute math facts in regular classes (Murphy, 1994).**

**Through research, learning disabilities have been found to have certain characteristics which are common to the term. A learning disability is characterized**



by an average or above-average intelligence with many being gifted who, for some reason, cannot read. There is strong evidence that learning disabilities are inherited and can be compensated for, but usually not outgrown. The term learning disabled does not signify mental retardation. McEven (1990) found the following common characteristics of the learning disabled individual to be:

1. Difficulties with reading, writing, speech and mathematics.
2. Problems with concentration, attention and socialization.
3. Difficulty with perception of time and space.
4. Impulsive behavior and low self-esteem.
5. Difficulty with organization and fine motor coordination. ( p.4)

Approximately 10-11 percent of the nation's population is affected by some type of learning disability. Many students with learning disabilities drop out of the mainstream and often become socially and economically dependent and, usually unemployable.

Annual reports to Congress on the Individuals with Disabilities Act show that nearly 7 out of 10 special education students drop out, "age out" (upon turning 22), are expelled, or leave school with unearned diplomas. It is estimated that only one or two in 10 complete a standard high-school curriculum of any kind (Wood, 1994). These rates continue to be persistent. The individuals who drop out have a tendency to believe they will never progress beyond the financial status of their present existence. Individuals with this background lack the psychological preparedness for any opportunities that might develop in their lifetime (Harris, 1983).

Individuals with learning disabilities have encountered many challenges in seeking employment following exit from high school. For students whose plans have not included college, making a successful adjustment from high school to post-high school situations has been a dilemma. Jobless individuals with learning disabilities have often lived within the extremes of poverty and dependence. If the LD population continues to grow during the next 20 years, society will be overwhelmed.

Before the medical field acknowledged the disorder, many individuals with LD were disregarded for positions within companies because they were thought to be mental misfits and social outcasts. Thus, the misconceptions of being lazy and/or inept were attributed to these individuals. Individuals such as these were viewed simply as being unable to perform the necessary tasks for a job. The individuals with learning disabilities were not hired by companies. The only type of disabilities acknowledged by large cooperations, labor unions and government were the physical disabilities, especially ones that occurred while on the job (Harris, 1983). In the event of physical injury, the employee was compensated by supplemental money. It was rare that an individual was given any compensation or aid for being functionally illiterate or for having any other type of problem concerning the mental capacity to do the assigned job tasks. For decades, physical and attitudinal barriers in the community and the work place have kept persons with learning disabilities from seeking and finding jobs (Heckman, 1994).

### Learning Disabilities Linked to Unemployment

Approximately eight out of every ten able-bodied working age Americans have a job, but only one out of every ten Americans with a learning disability is considered a full-time employee (Woodard, 1993). With such disproportionate ratios, it is probably correct to contend that citizens with LD comprise a large part of the unemployed in the country.

Individuals with LD are being neglected in all employment opportunities and are frequently appearing in the welfare lines. Because of the severe inability to perform certain tasks while on the job, individuals with learning disabilities have been identified as among the most likely to be unemployed.

While unemployment continues to be a problem for many young individuals with learning disabilities, a common complaint from employers about young people today is that many seem unprepared or unwilling to work. Poor work attitudes and behaviors, along with inadequate basic skills, are the principal criticisms most often targeted at the young members of the work force (Vachon, 1990). These specific issues continue to create work hazards for learning disabled students as they progress into the role of an adult. There are also other factors involved with the predicament. Employer attitude toward the individual with LD is often negative and nonreceptive. This could be due to societal pressures, attitudes, or simply ignorance of the disorder itself.

### LD Defined

Ignorance of employers is a complication connected with the definition of the

term “learning disability.” The factors that contribute to these attitudes include the basic idea itself. The study of LD is a new field. There is difficulty in measuring the degree and the existence of the disability. Currently, the term “learning disability” has no universally agreed upon definition, a hindrance which has seriously impeded research and dialogue about the condition (Nightingale, 1992). Black (1979) uses a legal definition in connection with Workers’ Compensation Acts which identifies a disability as a composite of actual incapacity to perform the tasks usually encountered in one’s employment and the wage loss resulting therefrom, and physical impairment of the body that may or may not be incapacitating.

Even though there are noted common characteristics of LD, the term is still very difficult to define. For the most part, however, individuals with LD do exhibit one or more of the symptoms listed above. Most definitions include (explicitly or implicitly) (a) a measure of ability, (b) a measure of achievement, and (c) a determination of the magnitude of the difference between measures 1 and 2 necessary to constitute a “discrepancy.” As a result of these criteria, to be considered learning disabled, an individual’s level of achievement must be 80% or less of his or her ability (on a hypothetical scale). Because there is no consensus concerning the appropriate measures of ability, achievement, and the difference between the two, populations judged to be learning disabled under different definitions are not necessarily comparable (Nightingale, 1992). According to Harris’ 1986 survey of persons with disabilities observed (as cited in Vachon, 1990, p. 7):

**“Not working is perhaps the truest definition of what it means to be disabled in this country”.**

### **Employment in the United States**

**Quality of life, as defined in financial terms, is inherently linked to a higher earning potential among people. The average high school dropout earned about \$492 a month in 1990, compared to \$1,077 for a high school graduate, \$1,237 for a vocational-degree holder, and \$2,961 for a professional-degree holder, according to the American Association of School Administrators ( “Financial Aid,” 1996).**

**Thus, positions in the job market are sought through fierce competition. More often than not, there are too many highly qualified applicants for every job position. Waitresses, service station attendants, clerks, secretaries, mechanics, professional drivers, factory workers, computer programmers and managers are all considered highly competitive positions. Other examples include teacher’s aides, teachers, healthcare workers, lawyers and engineers (Ward, 1992). These jobs are often considered desirable by many young adults both with and without learning disabilities who are pursuing employment.**

**Several factors contribute to the advantage that some people have over others in respect to the job market. One is more socio-economic advancement. Having financial influence can enhance the application process. Other factors may be high self esteem and high academic achievement. Many companies will review an applicant’s high school or college transcripts as part of the interview process. Usually, if the applicant has**

no diploma or transcript, the minimum requirement becomes the Graduate Educational Development test, commonly called the GED.

The trend toward the employer being required to hire LD individuals is intensifying. According to a study by Vachon (1990), the movement to increase the rights of the LD individual has brought about research into what makes for a positive employment experience for the LD youth. Gainful employment is the first step toward achieving positive attitudes followed by the degree of job satisfaction a person feels about his or her position within the company.

#### Vocational Programs: Intent and Mission

A sense of urgency does exist to do whatever is necessary to make students with LD employable and to upgrade them to competitiveness within the job market. For the almost 25 percent of people who are considered middle-aged adults, how they will support themselves is a direct result of their high school experience with employment issues (Wood, 1994).

The number of students in public schools has declined by several million since the crowd of the Baby Boomer years of the 1960s and early '70s, while the special education enrollment, which includes students with LD has increased from 3.7 million to 5 million (Wood, 1994). This increase has generated a great deal of attention focusing on how to improve the development and dissemination of curricula, particularly in the area of vocational and social skills necessary to maintain employment.

Programs in many public schools have been examined as a method to teach

various job-seeking strategies to students. To what extent do these programs insure success for the individual with learning disabilities with gaining employment? In addition, how much job satisfaction is there among individuals with learning disabilities and their employment encounters? Oftentimes, if people are satisfied with their job, they are less likely to leave the position, hence, less likely to become unemployed. The matter of employment tends to be important for the individual with learning disabilities at all ages during his or her lifetime. Therefore, if research indicates a link between successful employment rates among individuals who participate in job search programs, then the need for employment enhancement programs should be implemented and provided for each and every individual.

To elaborate on the solution to the ever increasing dilemma of unemployment among the LD would be to focus on teaching the youth how to become employable. Currently the answer for many would-be high school drop outs has been to link the student with a vocational interest. One study reports that the "school-to-work" transition in America is viewed as chaotic when compared with the "orderly," "smooth-functioning" transitions experienced by German youth who participate in apprenticeships (Ward, 1992). These apprenticeships are designed specifically for non-academically oriented youth. The main effect is to motivate these young adults by making learning tangible and relevant to market needs.

Many public schools have added incentive programs within their curricula. This might include metal shop, wood shop, auto mechanics and/ or cosmetology. Also many

high schools offer their vocational students an avenue of getting college credit for selected courses taken in concurrent enrollment with their high school classes. These courses are offered at local junior colleges and will apply toward a certificate or Associates degree.

Still another attempt at gainful employment for student with LD is known as VAC (Vocational Adjustment Class). At the end of eighth grade, an end-of-year ARD (Admission, Review and/or Dismissal) meeting is held for each student classified as LD. In this meeting, schedules for the following freshman year in high school are planned. The majority of students who are LD are placed in some type of vocational training class such as welding technology, cosmetology or small engine repair. A typical vocational job-search program may have the following characteristics. First, there are learning disabilities present and diagnosed within each of the students. When these selected students are entering high school, they are assigned to a job skills class for the year. Within this class, they are often taught how to effectively fill out job applications, solicit employers by telephone and to communicate both verbally and in written form. Deficits that have appeared as problems for students with learning disabilities have been those skills needed for a successful interview for a variety of jobs. Those skills include the basics such as effective decision-making, social skills and, more specifically, job-related social skills (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 1989).

For the student with LD, the next phase of the job-search program begins in their sophomore year. They are given opportunities to actually seek and apply for a job. This is supervised by a Special Education teacher who has already sought out employers who



are willing to hire individuals with LD. Finally, the student works a variety of hours ranging from 10 per week to 30 per week, depending on his or her schedule at home and on campus. The students ordinarily have regular classes during morning hours and then leave campus to go to their respective jobs.

To train unemployed individuals in the skills necessary to acquire jobs has become critical in the economic scope of youth today. To consider job satisfaction and job security as available to the individual who is learning disabled is also of critical importance. As the field of learning disabilities focuses more of its attention on adults, the persistence of the learning disability itself becomes less of an issue. In essence, the more the field addresses such issues as transitions from school to work, vocational rehabilitation needs and services and independent living and lifelong adjustment, the more apparent the notion becomes that being LD is a lifelong problem.

Prior studies have shown that forms of alternative education such as vocational training for youth, have proven to be beneficial in specific ways for individuals with learning disabilities? Research conducted by Azrin and his colleagues (1979) demonstrated that participation in Job Club programs, a type of job search program, was related to success in locating employment. Do individuals with learning disabilities enjoy job satisfaction as a direct result of skills obtained from job training programs, usually taken in public or private high schools? Do these individuals get equal and fair treatment from the employers they work for? Are their complaints and arguments viewed as legitimate and important? Using a between-subjects design, the present study has been

**designed to examine the benefits received from vocational programs for students with learning disabilities. Subjects will be chosen randomly with the only selection factor being that they be diagnosed with a learning disability. Subjects will be asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their work experience. The hypothesis of this study is that vocational training is probably associated with higher income, a sense of well-being, and greater employment conditions, including company policy and procedure in the work force.**

## **METHOD**

### **Subjects**

**Forty individuals who have been diagnosed with a learning disability were asked to examine general characteristics of a range of job-related situations. Subjects were paid for their participation. The participants were randomly selected from local facilities including Brazosport High School and Office of Disability Services (ODS) at University of Houston Clear Lake. Participants were also solicited from an advertisement in local newspapers. The only requirements for participation were that the subject be learning disabled and also be between the ages of 16 to 25.**

### **Materials**

**Participants completed a 30-item questionnaire designed specifically for this study that investigates the relationship between successful employment for learning disabled students who did participate in a job search program versus those who did not. The survey instrument was printed with a 14-point Times Roman font in order to accommodate a lower readability level for subjects whose learning disability involves reading difficulties (the questionnaire is included as an appendix). Respondents used a 5-point Likert scale to indicate their level of agreement (1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree) with each statement posed. These questions are worded to identify the job strengths and weaknesses with a numerical value as a scale. Based on prior research, these**

characteristics (strengths and weaknesses) have been described as desirable among individuals who have revealed their level of job satisfaction as high (Nightingale, 1992).

### Procedure

Participants were chosen within an age range of 16 to 25 years. A questionnaire was completed by forty men and women divided into two groups. Group A consisted of 10 men and 10 women who have participated in a vocational program. Group B contained 10 men and 10 women who had never enrolled in any type of vocational job- search program, either in high school or post high school.

Participants for this study were selected randomly from local facilities that specifically target the LD population. Programmatic approaches to functional literacy assessment and training will be investigated. The participants were asked if they wanted to participate in the study for pay. If they consented, they were then administered the questionnaire and told to complete and return it directly to the researcher. Written consent was obtained from each participant. As applicable, when participants were not of legal age, parents' written consent was also obtained. The researcher described the purpose of this study in complete detail to the participants. The researcher told the subjects that they were participating in a study to examine the effectiveness and benefits, if any, of vocational training programs for individuals with learning disabilities. In order to protect confidentiality, subjects were asked not to sign their names, were assured that their responses would be completely anonymous, completed the questionnaires out of

sight of the experimenter and returned them in a sealed envelope. Immediately following completion of the questionnaire, participants were given a coupon entitling them to a complementary meal at Luby's Cafeteria. Participants who chose to withdraw from the study prior to completion also received compensation for participation.

Questionnaires were assigned a code in order to guard the anonymity of each participant and ensure confidentiality. The treatment of human subjects has been in accordance with the guidelines established by the APA and all procedures have been approved by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of Houston Clear Lake.

Analyses of the men's and women's responses to the questionnaire addressed the following questions: (a) are the attitudes of men and women who received vocational training more positive than those who did not participate in any type of training?, (b) are the employment conditions in proportion to the respondent's participation in a vocational training program?, and (c) what is the relationship between income and participants of vocational programs and nonparticipants?

Analysis included the number by percentage in a frequency distribution of those who rated specific questions as per the rating scale of 1 to 5. Demographic information was also examined. T-tests analyses were conducted to examine the differences in job satisfaction between those who did participate in a job-search vocational program versus those who did not.

## **RESULTS**

**Analyses of the individual's responses to the questionnaire addressed the following questions: (a) are the attitudes of men and women who received vocational training more positive than those who did not participate in any type of training?, (b) are the employment conditions related to the respondent's participation in a vocational training program?, and (c) what is the relationship between income of those who participated in a vocational program versus those who did not?**

**Demographic information revealed that of the respondents who returned complete questionnaires, education levels were 10th grade, 39%; 11th grade, 31%; and 12th grade, 18.4%. Lowest percentages revealed 5% in 9th grade and 5% had some college.**

**Of the 40 participants used in the study, most were 10th graders with the mean time in school being 10 years 7 months. While only 5% of the 10th grade students earned approximately \$200.00 per week, none of the individuals who had some college made less than \$200.00 per week.**

**Overall frequency analyses for both groups of individuals revealed that for item 1, 22% strongly agreed that they were given the opportunity to use their skills. Item 2 showed 43% agreed that they were given recognition for work. Item 3 revealed 46% agreed that a fair amount of work was given to them. Item 4 revealed that 29% of the individuals agreed that they were given opportunity to supervise others. Item 6 showed that 17% of the people surveyed answered "1" on the question, meaning**

**“strongly agree.” Item 7 was agreed upon by 41% of the overall participants. Item 8 was answered with 22% of the respondents reporting “strongly agree” that their work was interesting. Item 19 revealed 67% of the participants reporting that their physical working conditions were good. Item 22 reveals that 55% of the people responding to the questionnaire reported having opportunities to participate in decision making about their job assignments. Item 25 reveals 29% of the people scored the questions as a 1 from the Likert Scale. These data are shown in Table 1.**

Table 1

**Frequency by Percent of Questions Answered  
by Categories**

<b>Question #</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strong Disagree</b>
01	22%	41%	22%	4%	7%
02	17%	43%	17%	12%	7%
03	19%	46%	14%	7%	9%
04	7%	22%	26%	24%	17%
05	9%	51%	7%	17%	12%
06	17%	39%	22%	14%	4%
07	17%	41%	22%	9%	7%
08	22%	36%	14%	12%	12%
10	36%	43%	7%	7%	2%
11	34%	34%	14%	12%	2%
12	29%	34%	17%	9%	7%
13	19%	22%	26%	19%	9%
14	24%	31%	22%	17%	2%
15	22%	19%	29%	19%	7%
16	22%	31%	26%	9%	7%
17	9%	41%	22%	17%	7%
18	9%	31%	24%	26%	4%
19	19%	48%	9%	9%	9%
20	12%	35%	27%	7%	17%
21	22%	22%	29%	12%	12%
22	19%	36%	17%	12%	12%
23	24%	39%	22%	4%	7%
24	24%	24%	19%	14%	14%
25	29%	22%	19%	14%	12%
26	17%	29%	24%	9%	17%

( Note: Questions are provided in the Appendix )



T-test analyses were used to examine traits and attitudes of the men and women who received vocational training as opposed to those who did not participate in any type of training. For these analyses only responses to items directly related to attitude were examined. These included: [ items 1 (“I was given the opportunity to use my abilities and skills”); 2 (“ I was given recognition for the work I did”); 3 (“I was given a fair amount of responsibility”); 4 (“I was given the opportunity to supervise other people”); 6 (“I have a sense of accomplishment from my job”); 7 (“I have an opportunity to do challenging work”); 8 (My work is interesting to me”); 22 (I have opportunities to participate in decisions”) and 25 (“ My boss is very open to my ideas related to my job assignment”)]. Analysis reveals in response to the questions listed above, those who received vocational training had a more positive attitude than those who did not receive vocational training  $\{t(16) = -5.69, p < .05\}$ . Table 2 identifies mean difference between vocational students and non-vocational students as being  $-.73$ , with many of the questions having significant mean differences.

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**Table 2**  
**Mean Attitude (and Standard Deviations) for Employees**

<b>ATTITUDE</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>vocational</b>	<b>2.18</b>	<b>.273</b>
<b>non-vocational</b>	<b>2.92</b>	<b>.278</b>

**Mean Difference =  $-.7389$**

**Note: n = 9 per group**

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To examine the individuals' responses to improved employment conditions for those who had vocational training compared with those who did not, t-tests were performed between the two groups of participants. For these analyses only responses to items directly related to employment conditions were used. These included : [ items 5 ("My work load is comfortable"); 10 ("I am given the opportunity to talk with my supervisor"); 11 ("I am given updated information on company policies, programs, and problems."); 12 (" I am made aware of promotion policies and practices at my job"); 13 ("I am given information of any overtime policies and practices"); 14 (" I am given information on job transfer policies and practices"); 15 ("My department does practice salary reviews, policies, and practices"); 16 (" I am made aware of performance review policies and practices"); 17 ("I was given information on promotional possibilities"); 18 (" I was given information on relocation policies and practices"); 19 (" My physical working conditions are good"); 21 (" On my job, there are opportunities for promotion"); and, 26 (" My company's sick leave policy is comparable to other companies in this area")]. In review of these questions, analysis reveals that there was a difference between employment conditions for individuals who had taken vocational training as compared to those who did not. Results show that individuals who had received training answered "1" meaning "strongly agree" or "2" meaning "agree" to the questions listed above, and reported better working conditions than those who had received no training {  $t(24) = -6.5, p < .05$ }. Table 3 compares mean ratings for individuals not involved in vocational training with those who were involved in some type of vocational training program.

Table 3

**Mean Employment Conditions (and Standard Deviations) for Two Types of School Related Conditions**

<b><u>EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS</u></b>	<b><u>MEAN</u></b>	<b><u>SD</u></b>
<b>vocational</b>	<b>2.11</b>	<b>.266</b>
<b>non-vocational</b>	<b>2.90</b>	<b>.346</b>
<b>Mean Difference =</b>		<b>-.78</b>

Note. n = 13 per group

Analysis of the relationship between nonparticipants of vocational training and participants of training in regards to income was performed using between subjects t-tests. Results showed a higher mean income for those who did receive some type of vocational training in high school. A lower income mean was found for individuals who reported not having participated in a vocational training program { $t(38) = .89, p < .05$ }. Table 4 reveals mean ratings of the two groups compared.

Table 4

**Mean Income (and Standard Deviations) for Two Types of Employees**

<b><u>INCOME</u></b>	<b><u>MEAN</u></b>	<b><u>SD</u></b>
<b>vocational</b>	<b>107.89</b>	<b>55.10</b>
<b>non-vocational</b>	<b>92.38</b>	<b>55.08</b>
<b>Mean Difference =</b>		<b>15.51</b>

Note: n = 20 per group

## DISCUSSION

The major purpose of the present research was to further investigate the causal relationships between those individuals with learning disabilities who participated in vocational training programs as compared to those who did not. By using similar methodology, the present investigation attempted to replicate findings, corresponding to the present hypotheses, of a previous study conducted by Wagner et al. (1992). The present results supported the central hypothesis; vocational training is associated with higher income, a greater sense of well-being, and better employment conditions. This study agrees with earlier research that identified benefits for students with learning disabilities.

Previous studies have shown that among students in both urban and rural communities, obtaining employment have been difficult for individuals with learning disabilities (Vachon, 1990). Hypotheses were that vocational training for students with LD would make a difference in the amount of money earned, more positive attitudes about their jobs and that employment conditions would be more favorable to the employee.

One interpretation of the present findings is that individuals who did participate in vocational training in high school did have a greater sense of well-being as a result of

better working conditions and adequate money earned. Interpretations such as this should be made with extreme caution. Currently there is some debate as to whether new programs proposed by government administration to school districts will work. For example, a recent investigation conducted by Heckman (1994) states that the Clinton administration has made job training a major priority. A new approach to training and education has been proposed. Heckman argues that the current plans are based on assumptions that have been discredited in careful empirical studies. These studies focus on real income of male high school graduates and high school dropouts. The reader should note that this study also focused on achievement oriented attitudes and income. In another recent study, Ward (1992) found that apprenticeship programs in Germany are working extremely well with the youth who are not academically inclined. In agreement with this study, a clear majority of the respondents in this study who had received vocational training made positive statements about their employment situations.

Attitudes about the employment environment were answered with positive statements. Most people who received vocational training answered the questionnaire in a way that revealed positive feelings about their work. Participants who were less positive about the statements ( i.e., answered with a "4" meaning "disagree" or "5" meaning "strongly disagree") had not participated in any form of vocational training. In responding to statements about attitude, the items which revealed the most useful information were "My work is interesting to me" and " I have an opportunity to do challenging work." These two questions showed large mean differences between those

who took vocational training and those who did not. This would seem to imply that a more positive attitude stems from agreeable work relationships with others. An implication to this would be that individuals with learning disabilities are taught social skills within the vocational training classes. In many vocational training classes, social skills are readily available for students to utilize and implement on the job (Woodard, 1993). As a result, vocational training is probably associated with more positive attitudes towards work.

Employment conditions such as knowledge of company policies (e.g., sick leave and vacation pay ) and procedures such as promotional reviews for salary increase will usually pique an employee's interest, thus allowing for some degree of stability within a company. Improvement in communications between employees and their boss was reported to be needed by those who did not receive any vocational training. Among participants who had vocational training were reports of adequate or above adequate working conditions.

Prior research by Ward (1992) reported higher earning power as a characteristic of financial success. American culture values personal earning power highly. This acquired skill can give an individual autonomy and in some instances provide an outlet for authority and decision making. Data from this study indicated a mean income of \$107.89 per week for those who had taken vocational training, while non-vocational student's earned on average \$92.38 weekly. Results from this study indicate that vocational training is associated with higher income.

While conducting my study, some resistance came from several of the government agencies. Because of confidentiality laws governing the anonymity of individuals with LD, several of the facilities were unwilling to participate in the study or to offer any information on the issue. This might be considered a negative aspect to the study of learning disabilities in that people are kept ignorant of the facts. According to a study by Vachon (1990), increased public awareness is required for the rights of individuals diagnosed with LD to be put into proper perspective. For the present time, this was a limitation to the study because of restricted samples.

Since the number of individuals with LD has increased to 5 million (Wood, 1994), and since this study as well as others reveal heightened benefits from vocational training programs, recommendations for future trends should be geared to the advancement and placement of vocational programs on all secondary school campuses. This study attempted to verify employment satisfaction of individuals with learning disabilities up to 7 years after leaving secondary school. However, employment issues continue to plague the individual with LD for many years beyond the length of time used in the present study (Wood, 1994).

The present investigator wishes to emphasize that techniques or instruments used to measure attitude on job related issues may or may not elicit reliable responses from individuals. Longitudinal investigation should continue beyond 7 years from graduation date in order to achieve maximum benefit from the studies performed.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Sample Questionnaire: Employee Survey**

**EMPLOYEE SURVEY****Number:** \_\_\_\_\_**Gender: Male** \_\_\_\_\_ **Female** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please indicate your level of agreement with the items below using the following scale:**

**1= Strongly agree****2= agree****3= Neutral****4=disagree****5=Strongly disagree**

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. I was given the opportunity to use my abilities and skills.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. I was given recognition for the work I did.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. I was given a fair amount of responsibility.

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. I was given the opportunity to supervise other people.

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. My work load was comfortable.

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. I have a sense of accomplishment from my job.

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. I have an opportunity to do challenging work.

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. My work is interesting to me.

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. I received vocational training in high school.

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. I am given the opportunity to talk with my

supervisor.

\_\_\_\_\_ 11. I am given updated information on company policies.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I am made aware of promotion policies and practices at my job.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I am given information on job transfer policies and practices.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I am given knowledge of any overtime policies and practices.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. My department does practice salary reviews policies and practices.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I am made aware of performance review policies and practices.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I was given information on promotional possibilities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I was given information on relocation policies and practices.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. My physical working conditions are good.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I have opportunities for career development.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. On my job, there are opportunities for promotion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I have opportunities to participate in decisions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. The geographical location of my job is adequate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. A benefit to me is the opportunity to move to another location if  
desired.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. My boss is very open to my ideas related to my job assignment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. My company's sick leave policy is comparable to other companies.

Place an (X) in the blank that most describes you.

27. How old are you?

\_\_\_\_\_ 16--18

\_\_\_\_\_ 19--21

\_\_\_\_\_ 22--23

\_\_\_\_\_ 24--25

28. My income is ...

\_\_\_\_\_ under \$30.00 a week

\_\_\_\_\_ about \$45.00 a week

\_\_\_\_\_ about \$100.00 a week

\_\_\_\_\_ over \$200.00 a week

29. I work

\_\_\_\_\_ 40 hours per week

\_\_\_\_\_ less than 40 hours per week

\_\_\_\_\_ more than 40 hours per week

30. My educational level:

\_\_\_\_\_ finished 11th grade

\_\_\_\_\_ finished 10th grade

\_\_\_\_\_ did not go beyond 9th grade

\_\_\_\_\_ some college

\_\_\_\_\_ graduated from high school

I am a female/male (circle one)