

To the Special Education Task Force,

The November US Jobs Report stated that 38.3% of people with disabilities are currently employed compared to 75.3% of people without disabilities. According to the Kessler Foundations, these are record high numbers for people with disabilities. Last year, only 36.5% of people with disabilities were gainfully employed. However, comparing the two statistics, people with disabilities are woefully unemployed. Programs like 18-21 transition programs work towards developing employment skills for students with disabilities so they can obtain and maintain gainful employment thereby increasing the tax base. Special education programs take funding: hiring, training, and keeping competent and passionate staff to teach students. The upfront funding yields a lifetime of results. Currently my program has about 45% of current and past students have employment. I am proud of our results as our employment numbers are higher than the national averages. Given more resources, we could do even better!

Also 18-21 programs work to build independence in young adults with disabilities. We teach skills like home care, cooking, managing money, hygiene, shopping, health, and nutrition, accessing the community, etc. These skills build independence and self-confidence and help people with disabilities to be included in society. Again, this all takes money. USD 453 is currently operating at a 2.7-million-dollar shortfall. The shortfall must be made up somewhere, somehow, and inevitably, that means shortchanging students. The proposed change will help all students, special education, and general education students. Please support Kansas students. Thank you for your time.

Jeanne Gray

Transition Specialist USD 453