



# Help wanted: Tips to prepare young adults for job hunting

By *Laura King and Alice Havel*

Parents of adult children with disabilities have more concern about their children's future than those of adult children without disabilities. This is especially true regarding employment, finances and quality of life.

According to 2011 data from Statistics Canada, 49 percent of individuals who reported having a physical or mental disability that limited their activity were employed, compared to 79 percent of those who did not report having a disability. Of course, the employment rate varies depending on the severity of the disability and level of education, amongst other things. The good news is that graduates with disabilities from CEGEP or university have employment rates similar to their non-disabled peers.

As the Adaptech Research Network team, we wanted to find out why some graduates of college or university were able to find jobs, while others were not able to do so. We conducted three studies that shared a common focus: to explore successful strategies for obtaining employment by recent post-secondary graduates with disabilities. We partnered with the Quebec Association for Equity and Inclusion in Post-Secondary Education (AQEIPS) and interviewed people with disabilities who had a job. We also asked our colleagues, who are disability service providers and employment counsellors, if they had any advice. The result includes a

10-point tip sheet, which you can use as inspiration for you and your child to start working on now.

Because schoolwork can take up so much time, parents often encourage their child to focus on their studies. Some parents are also concerned that many part-time jobs are too fast-paced or involve physical labour, thus are not suitable for children who have a disability. Because of this, when their child is ready to enter the job market as an adult, they have a blank CV. There are ways to overcome this. Lots of young people get their first work experience by volunteering. Others create their own jobs by providing some type of service to their neighbours. These experiences help develop confidence, life skills and experience for a CV.

Being able to speak English and French is important in Quebec, and there are more ways to improve language skills outside of the classroom. Consider community recreational activities, summer camp, watching videos or having dinner with friends fluent in French. Remember, the goal for your child is to improve their French, not necessarily to become bilingual.

According to Adaptech findings, successfully employed graduates with disabilities frequently mentioned disclosure of a disability and request for accommodations. This requires self-advocacy skills, which

take time to develop. Involving your child in decision-making activities (such as the preparation of their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is a great way to encourage autonomy. Helping your child understand their disability and what accommodations they might need will help them to communicate this to others.

Look at the tip sheet, then consider your child's unique situation. Together, you

may come up with other ideas on how to take the first steps down the road to getting a satisfying job.

For information, visit [www.adaptech.org](http://www.adaptech.org).

*Laura King and Alice Havel, research associates, prepared this article in collaboration with other members of the Adaptech Research Network.*

## 10 Tips for students with disabilities looking for employment

1. Network to find information and job leads
2. Volunteer and get work experience
3. Practice using both French and English
4. Prepare a CV and keep it updated
5. Develop interview skills
6. Research the company before the interview
7. Consider the advantages of part-time work
8. Decide if or when you want to disclose your disability
9. Remember that most employers can and will provide accommodations if requested
10. Learn about SEMOs – A branch of Emploi Québec that helps individuals with disabilities find jobs

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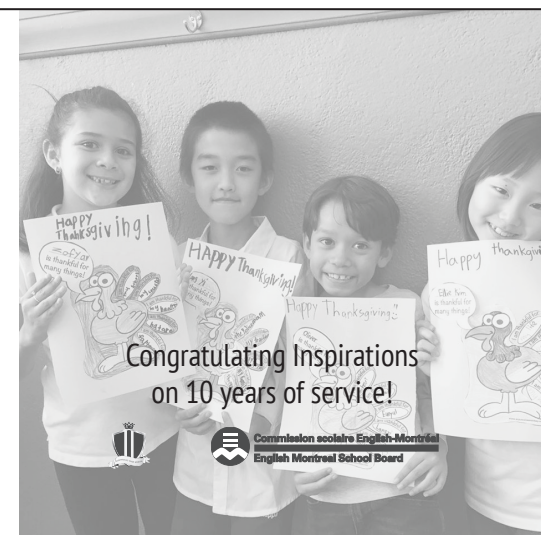
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