

***Using Working at Gaining Employment Skills (W.A.G.E.S.) to Teach Social Skills  
and Occupational Skills***

**PRACTICE DESCRIPTION**  
(Research-Based Practice)

**What is the evidence base?**

This is a research-based practice for **students with disabilities including students with learning disabilities** based on one methodologically sound group experimental study with random assignment across 222 students.

This is a research-based practice for students with learning disabilities based on ( $n = 153$ ).

**Where is the best place to find out how to do this practice?**

- [Working at Gaining Employment Skills \(W.A.G.E.S.\) Curriculum](#)

**With whom was it implemented?**

- Students with disabilities (1 study,  $N = 222$ )
  - 153 students with learning disabilities
  - 18 students with emotional behavior disorders
  - 16 students with autism
  - 13 students with intellectual disability
  - 13 students with other health impairment
  - 2 students with traumatic brain injury
  - 7 students with an unspecified disability
- Average age was 16.4 years; students were in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade
- Males ( $n = 135$ ), females ( $n = 87$ )
- Ethnicity
  - None reported ( $n = 222$ )

**What is the practice?**

Working at Gaining Employment Skills (W.A.G.E.S.; Johnson et al., 2004) has been defined as “a job-related social skills curriculum consisting of 33 comprehensive lesson plans in four domains: (a) self-regulations, (b) teamwork, (c) communication, and (d) problem solving” (Murray & Doren, 2013, p. 100). W.A.G.E.S. is a school-based job-related social skills curriculum. Lessons are designed to be implemented in high school classrooms and are guided by a cognitive-

behavioral approach which aims to explicitly and systematically teach students skills related to identifying situations and problems, generating solutions to problems, and acting on problems through contextually appropriate social skills through activities that focus on “real-life” social interactions in competitive work settings. Each lesson plan could be facilitated by teachers, vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors, or other school personnel. Lessons consist of (a) an overview of the purpose of the lesson, (b) expected learning outcomes, (c) recommendations for review of prior knowledge, (d) required materials, (e) lesson-specific vocabulary, (f) a detailed activity, (g) a recommended assessment, and (h) a wrap-up/homework recommendation.

The study used to establish the evidence base for using W.A.G.E.S. to teach occupational and social skills (Murray & Doren, 2013) included using the W.A.G.E.S. curriculum 3 to 4 days per week for 50 min for approximately 4.5 months. Results indicated the intervention had greater vocational outcome expectations, greater occupational skills, and greater social skills than did students with disabilities in the control condition following the intervention.

### **Where has it been implemented?**

- Three “Specially Designed Instruction” classrooms (1 study)

### **How does this practice relate to Common Core Standards?**

- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1](#) – Speaking and Listening: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### **How does this practice relate to the Common Career Technical Core?**

- [Act as a responsible and contributing citizen and employee.](#) Career-ready individuals understand the obligations and responsibilities of being a member of a community, and they demonstrate this understanding every day through their interactions with others. They are conscientious of the impacts of their decisions on others and the environment around them. They think about the near-term and long-term consequences of their actions and seek to act in ways that contribute to the betterment of their teams, families, community and workplace. They are reliable and consistent in going beyond the minimum expectation and in participating in activities that serve the greater good.
- [Communicate clearly, effectively and with reason.](#) Career-ready individuals communicate thoughts, ideas and action plans with clarity, whether using written, verbal and/ or visual methods. They communicate in the workplace with clarity and purpose to make maximum use of their own and others' time. They are excellent writers; they master conventions, word choice and organization and use effective tone and presentation skills to articulate ideas. They are skilled at interacting with others; they are active listeners and speak clearly

and with purpose. Career-ready individuals think about the audience for their communication and prepare accordingly to ensure the desired outcome.

**References used to establish this evidence base:**

Murray, C., & Doren, B. (2013). The effects of *Working at Gaining Employment Skills* on the social and vocational skills of adolescents with disabilities: A school-based intervention. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 56(2), 96–107.  
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