

## Executive Summary: The Business Leader Mentoring Program

**Objective:** To provide an overview of a program that pairs students with mild to severe disabilities with local business leaders to foster academic, career, and personal growth, thereby supporting their transition to post-secondary education, employment, and independent living.

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### Program Goals

The program aims to support students in several key areas:

- **Enhance Career Awareness:** Expose students to diverse career paths and essential job skills.
- **Improve Social and Communication Skills:** Provide positive adult interaction opportunities to develop self-advocacy and interpersonal skills.
- **Boost Self-Esteem & Confidence:** Build student confidence through personalized support and recognizing achievements.
- **Support Academic Engagement:** Research indicates that mentored youth often demonstrate better attitudes about school, improved attendance, and higher grades.

## The Teacher's Role

The classroom teacher's insights and communication are essential for the program's success. Key responsibilities include:

- **Providing Insight:** Sharing information regarding student needs, communication styles, and effective classroom strategies with the program coordinator (while adhering to all confidentiality and legal guidelines).
- **Collaborating on Goals:** Aligning mentoring activities with students' Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and current curriculum.
- **Monitoring Progress & Providing Feedback:** Observing student engagement and behavior, and promptly communicating updates or concerns to the program coordinator.

## Mentor Role and Training

Mentors are thoroughly screened, trained, and equipped to work effectively with youth with disabilities:

- **Guidance & Support:** Mentors act as role models, offering counsel and support (not as substitute teachers or therapists).
- **Focus on Strengths:** Utilizing a strengths-based approach to help students identify and leverage their unique abilities.
- **Accessibility & Accommodation:** Trained to ensure full participation through necessary accommodations.
- **Confidentiality:** Adhering to strict guidelines regarding student information.

## Best Practices for Collaboration

Effective collaboration between teachers and the program coordinator ensures a successful experience for all involved:

- **Proactive Communication:** Maintaining open lines of communication for real-time support and updates.
- **Setting Clear Expectations:** Defining roles for everyone involved (teacher, student, mentor, coordinator).
- **Regular Check-ins:** Participating in scheduled feedback sessions to discuss progress and challenges.