

TUSCALOOSA NEWS

Job coach to help students

City schools, Easter Seals

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TUSCALOOSA | The Tuscaloosa City Schools has partnered with Easter Seals of West Alabama to hire a job coach to provide training and placement for students with disabilities.

According to the agreement, Easter Seals will provide the school system with the job coach. The coach, who has already been hired, will help develop jobs designed for special needs students and provide on-the-job training for students who have difficulty learning.

The school system has agreed to pay up to \$40,163.20 annually for the coach's salary, benefits, travel, training, supplies, telephone and administrative costs.

“With our kids who have significant delays, they need the extra coaching and help to pick up on job skills in a way that's going to make them successful at it,” said Bruce Prescott, director of special education support services for the school system.

“Our goal is to help these kids with job training and living arrangements so that when they graduate from high school, they're as independent as possible,” he said. “We do not want our students sitting at home. The coach will check with the students' supervisors and help them learn what they need to learn. For example, if a student needed to file records, the job coach would come in and maybe color code the files to help the student understand how to do the job better.”

This is the second job coach hired by the city school system.

Prescott said the students who will benefit from the job coaches are part of the system's World of Work program, which is for special education students who are on track to graduate with an Alabama Occupational Diploma instead of a full high school diploma. The program teaches students social and job skills, how to work out their transportation needs and more.

The program requires students to earn 270 hours of paid work experience during their senior year to earn a diploma.

Prescott said job coaches are vital to the process because they have connections to employers who are willing to hire and train students with special needs.

“Both our job coaches work very well with kids, and what’s important is that they have valuable contacts in the community to help our kids find jobs,” he said. “It’s very important that we provide them with that support on how to fill out applications, with interviewing skills and job coaching.

“The program’s been very successful,” he said. “Some of those kids will go on to take career technical courses. They may take classes at TCT and then go on to take technical classes at Shelton State Community College. We want them to be very successful in all facets of life. (Those are) always our goals.”

The World of Work program is provided at all three of the system’s high schools, as well as Oak Hill School.