



## ***The Uniquely Abled Academy® Replication Guide***

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### ***Element 1: Match the Individual to the Job***

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In 2022 according to the CDC 26% of the US population had some type of disability. That is 86 million people. And those individuals have an unemployment rate twice as high as those without a disability.

A problem of this magnitude will not and has not been solved with charity or government grants. A sustainable solution that can work for 60 million people must simultaneously solve a problem for businesses.

The #1 problem for business is access to a skilled workforce. The term “skilled worker” doesn’t just refer the skill of performing a particular task, like operating a machine. The term skilled also includes abilities, such as the ability to tolerate high repetition and yet maintain detailed focus. Such abilities are often the critical aspect to success in a job.

These two problems are potential solutions for each other. What is in the way of them being implemented as such?

Words create worlds. Historically, what world has been created, what comes to mind, when we say someone is disabled?

- What are they missing?
- What can’t they do?
- What compromises am I going to have to make to employ them?
- What is the cost?
- Is the benefit worth the cost?

An insight we had is that when one ability is diminished, the body makes up for it by causing other abilities to be extraordinary (unique abilities). For example, people with diminished vision often have extraordinary senses of touch and hearing.

What world is created, what comes to mind, when we say someone is uniquely abled?

- What are they really good at?
- How might their unique abilities help me?
- What new things might be accomplished utilizing their unique abilities?



Then the question to ask is, “What job could use this individual’s unique abilities?” For example, being a masseuse for someone who has diminished vision and consequently heightened senses of touch and hearing.

So the first element of a successful vocational education program<sup>1</sup> for the uniquely abled includes:

- Shifting the perception of disability to include these unique abilities and extraordinary potential.
- Match the unique abilities of a population of individuals with the needs of a career job.

There is a high unfulfilled demand for skilled workers. For example, current Uniquely Abled Academies (UAAs) focus on training individuals with level 1 autism to be CNC (computer numerical controlled) manufacturing machine operators, a well-paid job where there is a very high shortage. The unique abilities of many level 1 autistic individuals are a perfect match for a CNC machinist.

- Repetitive tolerant and detail focused.
- Able to focus for long time periods.
- Often high intelligence.
- Often mechanically inclined.
- Focused on accuracy, able to detect when something isn’t right.
- Likes working alone.
- Follows rules.
- Does what they say they will do.
- Dislikes transitions to a different company.
- Very appreciative of having a job.

See [Exhibit 1.1 - Information about Autism](#) for information about what autism is and isn’t.

See also [Exhibit 1.2 - Information about Autism and Employment](#).

See [Exhibit 1.5 - Tools for identifying the unique individual abilities of an individual](#) and [Exhibit 1.6 - Tools for identifying a job that matches a given set of abilities](#).

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<sup>1</sup> We will use the term “vocational education” as the focus of the UAA Replication Guide. From “Career Education and Vocational Education: A Comparison, by Irene Clements (available at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED141494.pdf>

“By design, career education is broad in its coverage of occupations to achieve the goal of providing sufficient information and experiences for career decision making. Vocational education is narrow in that its goal is to provide skills, training, knowledge, and social interaction competencies to prepare individuals for entry into paid employment in a specific job or job cluster.