

The Evolution of MCP's Social Café

In the summer of 2009, MCPRS' Life Long Learning Program introduced cooking classes to their adult students. Basic skills were taught including how to plan a menu, shopping for groceries, and cooking skills. As the students and the class flourished in both their abilities and imagination, the social café was born (as an extension to acquire vocational skills). Each student was given a "job" to either bake items, serve beverages, warm bread for toast, cleaning, or serving as the cashier. Since that time and to keep up with the café's demand and popularity, the administration has also had to expand in both our abilities and imagination as well.

In the fall of 2010, teachers and support staff began collecting baseline data on student individual performance at the cafe. How independent was each student at performing their assigned tasks? What kind of assistance did each student require to be successful? This information was collected and reviewed in the winter by our Education Coordinator. Then by the end January, each individual student, who was working a shift at the café, had an individualized objective to master certain skills and improve in their overall performance.



Now here we are in the spring and expanding upon our reach towards normalcy again, the students working in the social café have now begun to be paid for their labors at the end of the week. Much like their nondisabled peers, these students are being paid as reinforcement for tasks completed and based upon what their specific job requires them to be able to do. At the end of each week, profits are calculated and students are rewarded with a share of the funds based on what their "job" was, how well they performed, and where they are in meeting their individualized goal. And the students are more enthused and motivated by this than all the teachers, staff, and administrators put together.

It is our goal to make each student, who is working at the café, as successful and as independent as possible, so they can earn/enjoy the largest percentage of the profits that is possible for them. Some students are using their money to enjoy their weekends a little bit more. Some are saving their money to buy something later on that they would like to have. But every single one of them is learning new money management skills and vocational skills that hopefully someday they (and we) will be able to utilize within our surrounding community.

