

# Digitability + SAINT JOSEPH'S UNIVERSITY

## Field-work Pilot



**Devina Harnita** is currently enrolled at St. Joseph's University and is working to complete her Master's Degree in Education. After enrolling in Digitability's unique professional development opportunity, Devina was able to develop a new set of skills and a new sense of confidence for pursuing her career as a teacher. Below is Devina's reflection about her time as a Digitability Fieldwork Candidate.

I first heard about Digitability through an email I received from St. Joseph's university. I was really interested in doing fieldwork to get more hands on experience in the classroom and develop professionally as an educator. I also strongly support the company's mission which is to teach students with neurodiverse needs work-ready skills, digital literacy, and social skills in preparing them to obtain employment in this tech-driven society. Digitability provides a bridge to overcoming barriers to employment and achieve student independence.

### Initial training with Digitability

During the initial training I had with Michele and Catherine, I learned more about the 4 levels of Digitability's Work-Ready training model. Each lesson plan has differentiated supplements, work-simulations, and video lessons. We spent time practicing and role playing, and Catherine and Michele provided feedback on my strengths and identified evidence-based practices that would improve my implementation, such as positive reinforcement and positive narration. Later, when I used these practices for the first time in classroom, I was able to engage every student and have them participate at their individual levels.



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- Devina Harnita



## First day in the classroom

At Perkiomen Valley, the students were very inviting and eager to learn about technology. It was the first time I had worked with such a wide range of specific student needs and it took time to get to know each student and their needs. Digitability taught me strategies to ensure that EVERY student could participate, use digital language, and learn basic internet terminology.

## Technology in education

This experience has taught me just how much students love to engage with technology at home and in the classroom. I realized that using technology everyday doesn't necessarily prepare you to teach it. Digitability does an amazing job of making digital literacy explicit and applicable to students' daily experiences. It has been an enjoyable ride for me to use and teach technology in the classroom so students may apply these skills in the workplace.

## Social and communication skill development

By understanding the evidence-based practices used in Digitability, I was able to effectively communicate with students who had a variety of communication needs and different levels of expressive and receptive language. For example, I was able to use image exchange cards to represent concepts visually or adapt the level of questioning to a yes or no answer throughout the warm-ups, guided watching, and informal assessment activities.





## Behavior and classroom environment

One of the most important things I learned during this experience was the introduction to Digitability's Classroom Economy, a token economy behavior system that uses boundaries and reinforcers to prepare students for the real world. Using the Classroom Economy, students earned dollars when they exhibited behaviors that promote success.

For example, students earned participation dollars for raising their hands and participating during the lesson. The Classroom Economy teaches students proper workplace communication and socialization, and also financial literacy (using money language, counting money, paying bills, purchasing items).

Students were very eager to receive money for participating. Teachers were amazed by how the dollar reward was able to get every student engaged and participating with minimal assistance. I think the dollar system is an effective incentive for rewarding students who practice appropriate classroom and workplace behavior. I'm excited to learn more about this behavior system. For example, in Level 2 of the Classroom Economy, students learn about workplace boundaries and how to self-regulate behaviors that can be problematic in the workplace.

## Collaboration with school administrators and teachers. To understand needs of student Differentiation

While the classroom teachers were more than happy to let me lead, I was able to seek out their advice and insight about students' needs, as I began forming relationships with students in the class.



I really loved how Digitability also engages every adult in the classroom to model workplace behavior and to promote a healthy and collaborative learning environment.

Every adult in the classroom (teachers, aides, teacher assistants) is given a job or title such as financial officers (they tally up the dollars), CEOs (they write the checks), bankers (they cash their checks), bill collectors (they collect money for wifi, for renting out their desks, for using classroom resources, etc.) to reflect real world working environment that students can expect to be a part of.

## Feeling equipped with teaching tools for any classroom:

I would recommend the program for teachers of any grade. All lesson plans are pre-written and user-friendly for teachers and are cross-functional among all secondary education courses. My experience implementing the lesson plans was almost intuitive with the amount of material provided to me. All lesson plans are already tailored to accommodate each student's needs, eliminating the majority of work from the teacher and allowing them to focus on implementing the best, evidence-based practices into their classrooms.

This experience has increased my confidence in my teaching abilities as well as leadership skills, allowing me to focus on my role as a teacher without sacrificing any of my students' needs. I have learned a new set of teaching skills and practices that I will bring with me into my own classroom. I am excited to see what the future will bring as I continue to learn, grow, and develop personally and professionally as a representative of Digitability.

