BEST PRACTICES IN VOCATIONAL TRANSITION ASSESSMENT FOR ADULTS WITH AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDERS

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Start with the Brain

**Left Hemisphere**
- Verbal
- Sequential
- Step-by-step
- Routine
- Talking in scripts
- Literal interpretation of language
- Procedural steps

**Right Hemisphere**
- Spatial & Simultaneous
- Holistic
- Fluid & Spontaneous
- Interpretation of Non-verbal social cues
- Synthesizer functions
- Figurative language
- Sorts relevant/irrelevant
Executive Functions
Executive Functions

- Focus
- Attention
- Concentration
- Impulse Control
- Inhibition
- Activity level
Autistic Spectrum Disorders

- Poor perception of social cues
- Literal interpretation of language
- Sameness & routine
- Poor inhibition of impulses
- Hyper-focus on circumscribed interests
- Hyper- and Hypo-activity
- Difficulty sorting relevant from irrelevant details
Case Study: Paul

- Master’s degree in Accounting
- Asperger’s syndrome
- IRS Tax preparation
- Temporary employment & de-compensation
- Back to the IRS

**Keys:** familiarity, routine & employer understanding
HFA: Strengths & Weaknesses

**Strengths**
- Non-verbal problem solving
- Mathematics
- P > V
- Unique perception of visual-spatial details
- Visual memory
- Art & Design

**Weaknesses**
- Verbal comprehension
- Language processing
- Speech communication
- Auditory memory
- Reading comprehension
- Written expression
- Social reciprocity
Case Study: Ted

- Computer expert in graphics design
- Web pages
- Technical giftedness
- Social problems at work
- Difficulty with small talk
- Conversations racing by

- Keys: Niche job, colleagues who value work
Case Study: Bill

- Treasury department
- Formulas, facts & figures
- Rote math problem solving
- Bureaucratic routine

- Problems: hygiene, weight, eating, loud voice
- Theory of Mind: Unable to appreciate another’s point of view
Asperger’s & NLD

**Strengths**
- Vocabulary knowledge
- Long-term memory for facts & details
- Auditory memory
- Literal comprehension
- Reading decoding
- Spelling
- Step-wise math

**Weaknesses**
- Language comprehension
- Perception of non-verbal social cues
- Visual perception of details
- Visual-spatial organization
- Clerical speed/accuracy
- Writing
- Math word problems
Case Study: Tom

- Military buff
- Civil war re-enactor
- Facts & Details
- Circumscribed areas of interest

- Keys: Turn area of circumscribed interest into marketable skill that someone will pay for
The Purpose of Education

“The mission of special (or general) education is not restricted to the teaching of academic subjects nor is it to protect students from a harsh adult environment. It is to prepare them to participate fully in the mainstream adult world”

_Siegel and Sleeter, 1991_
Employment: Autistic Adults

- Unemployment rate for the United States general population---5% (PA. 4.7%)
- Unemployment rate for adults with Asperger’s syndrome---88%
- Unemployment rate for adults with Autism---98%
IDEA Definition: Transition

A coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation.

The coordinated set of activities shall take into account the student’s preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

(Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1990, PL 101-476, section 602)
Transition Breakdown

- A *coordinated set of activities for a student*...
  - *Implications for IEP*
  - *Who provides the coordination?*
  - *What are the activities?*

- *...designed within an outcome-oriented process*...
  - *What are the desired outcomes?*
Transition Breakdown

- *which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including*
  - *post-secondary education,*
  - *vocational training,*
  - *integrated employment (including supported employment),*
  - *continuing and adult education,*
  - *adult services,*
  - *independent living or*
  - *community participation.*
Transition Breakdown

- *The coordinated set of activities shall take into account the student’s*
  - preferences and interests…

- *and shall include…*
  - instruction,
  - community experiences,
  - the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate,
  - acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.
Vocational Assessment

Best Practice Standards:

- **Assessment of interests, aptitudes, functional living skills and career maturity**

- **Team planning and the development of transition plans**

- **Consultation with others to facilitate learning and acquisition of necessary behaviors/skills**
Vocational Assessment

- Process of identifying an individual’s
  - physical,
  - mental, and
  - emotional abilities,
  - limitations and tolerances in order to...

- **Predict** current and future employment potential and adjustment.
Definition: Vocational Assessment

- ...a comprehensive process that utilizes work, real or simulated, as the focal point of assessment and

- vocational exploration, the purpose of which is to assist individuals in vocational development....
Definition: Vocational Assessment

- ...incorporates
  - medical,
  - psychological,
  - social,
  - vocational and
  - economic data
  - in the attainment of the goals of the evaluation process.”

Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association
### Vocational Assessment

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</table>
Battery of Tests

- Ability & Aptitude
- Achievement & Skill sets
- Personality orientation
- Career & Vocational Interests
- Life skills
- Functional Daily Living Skills
Vocational Transition Plan: 4 Components

- The plan, including goals and services, must be based on the **individual needs, preferences and skills** of the person with autism.

- Transition planning should be oriented to **life after high school**, not limited to what will be accomplished before leaving school.

- There should be a **master plan which includes long range goals** and a coordinated set of activities for each.

- The services provided should promote **positive movement towards a life** after school.
Handout Packet

- Post-Secondary Transitions for Young Adults with Disabilities by Edward Levinson
- Vocational Assessment for Transition Planning: Guidelines for Educators by Edward Levinson et al.
- Autism Society of American Position Paper on Adult Services for Autistic Individuals