Effective Transitions to Higher Education for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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Is this your student?

- They can’t read the entire chapter because it’s “irrelevant”
- They score 35 on the ACT’s
- They make poor choices: can’t get off the internet long enough to study their academics
- They are fluent in four languages (self-taught)
- They can’t turn in the paper because it’s not perfect
- They could have written the textbook
- They don’t learn from mistakes: take 20 credits each semester then crash
- They find the cure for the common cold
- They can’t “repair” or change course after acquiring new info
- They can’t remember to refill or take their meds
- They have 150 IQ’s
- They get lost on campus on daily basis
Gaining admission is **NOT** the issue;

it’s completing the exit criteria!
The Laws: IDEA versus ADA

**IDEA**
- Responsibility on PARENT/SCHOOL for provision of services
- Insures SUCCESS
- IDEA: EDUCATION law
- ENTITLEMENT
- SPECIAL accommodations
- Focus is on the DIAGNOSTIC LABEL
- Disability = One of 13 categories

**ADA**
- Responsibility on the STUDENT to initiate provision of services
- Insures EQUAL ACCESS
- ADA: CIVIL RIGHTS law
- ELIGIBILITY
- REASONABLE accommodations
- Focus is on the FUNCTIONAL IMPACT
- Disability = Impairment + Substantial Limitation + Major Life Activity
Who is the Driver?

- High School
  - Parents/Guardians
  - Teachers
  - Counselors

- College

- The Student
High School:

- 5-6 hours/day of classes
- 1-2 hrs/day HW
- Frequent quizzes, non-cumulative tests
- Teaching content from textbooks
- 25-20 students
- One building

College:

- 4-5 classes each 3-4 hours/week
- 2 hrs/day/class hour
- 2-3 cumulative exams/semester
- Research, primary sources
- 10-300 students
- Entire campus
Major Skills Needed by Beginning College Students: **Classroom Preparation**

- Self-advocate with faculty, administration, peers
- Study habits/test taking skills
- Prepared for class
- Understands importance of timeliness (classes, HW, assignments)
- Organized, including organization of work area, neatness, deadlines
- Understands classroom etiquette (staying in seat, raising hand, not interrupting, etc.)

Adapted from Technology for Transition: College Planning State University of New York at Buffalo
Major Skills Needed by Beginning College Students: Social Skills

- Interacting appropriately (teachers, staff, students)
- Introducing self to someone
- Dating etiquette
- Interacting in social situations
- Dealing effectively with peer pressure (drinking, drugs, sexuality)
- Dealing with criticism, feedback or rejection
- Using telephone/email effectively
- Demonstrating problem-solving and decision-making skills

Adapted from Technology for Transition: College Planning State University of New York at Buffalo
“How do they expect us to learn time management when every hour here feels like three hours, a week feels like a year, and the weekends fly by like ten minutes?”
Normal College Development

- Develop competence
- Manage emotions
- Become autonomous & independent
- Develop mature relationships
- Establish identity
- Develop goals & purpose
- Develop integrity
Who is qualified?

Disabled students must be otherwise qualified:

- Able to attend classes and complete required work
  - e.g. academic standards are enforced
- Able to maintain appropriate behavior standards
  - e.g. conduct codes are enforced
- Able to advocate for self with minimum assistance
NEW + Change = STRESS!!!

- Lack of clarity
- Being misunderstood
- Social situations
- Confusion/chaos
- Unstructured time
- Having to rush
- Change/novelty
- Having things not go the way you wanted

Stress Thermometer

- 10: Impossible
- 9: Extreme anxiety or panic
- 8: Anxious, but Okay
- 7: Okay
- 6: No big deal
- 5: Okay
- 4: Anxious, but Okay
- 3: Extreme anxiety or panic
- 2: Impossible
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How to Prepare NOW

✓ Get current, comprehensive assessment
✓ Make sure all areas impacted are addressed
✓ Include all relevant medical providers
✓ Connect with DVR for funding
✓ Practice reading and understanding your assessment
✓ Know strengths and weaknesses
✓ Practice disclosing to teachers
All too common path of Freshman ASD student

Special Ed is all done
No more disability
I want to be like everyone else
STRESS
I am overwhelmed
What’s wrong with me
Depression, isolation
CRASH
Cleaning up “the mess”
Lost time, money, maybe irreparable damage
Maybe I do need DS……
“Can he PASS the course?
He could have written the textbook!
But... it doesn’t matter if he can’t get to class!”

Quote from physics professor, U of M
3. Find $x$.

Here it is.
How to Prepare NOW

- Run your IEP meetings
- Schedule your own appointments
- Refill your own meds
- Use a time management system
- Volunteer experience or job
- Take independent living skills class
- Get help with social skills
The Role of Disability Services

- **Narrow role**
  - Policy eligibility determination
  - Academic accommodations, referral

- **Broader role**
  - Assess availability and use of resources
  - Refer on and off campus
  - Function as point person
  - Teach campus community about AS
  - Teach skills to manage AS

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What are **NOT** Reasonable Accommodations

- **Fundamentally altering a course requirement** (examples: attendance, group projects, oral speaking, etc)
- **Code of Conduct versus Manifest Determination**
- Accepting violent or abusive behaviors
- Non-adherence to policies and procedures that are consistent with educational program
- Personal services such as toileting, clothing management, feeding, medications, etc.
- Aides or paras to keep student on task or monitor behaviors
Students must be able to describe their disability and how it may impact them in the following areas:

- Academics
- Housing issues
- Hygiene or self care
- Dietary issues
- Sensory overload issues
- Stress tolerance in general
- Transportation
- Behavior and conduct issues
- Conditions secondary to Aspergers
Strategic Education for Autism Spectrum Disorders ("SEASDS")

- Wolf & Thierfeld Brown, 2005
- Existing interventions do not address the needs of this population
- SEAS is a targeted intervention specifically designed for college students with AS
- Based on current research in deficient use of internal speech and strategy selection in adults and adolescents with AS
- Evidence based practice
Strategic Education Training

- Interprets the campus to the student and the student to the campus environment.
- Provides support through transition from home to college.
- Creates a structure for the student to follow.
- Assists the student with social issues/isolation.
- Eases out parental involvement to develop independence.
- Communicates with parents and family.
- Educates the student on issues possibly not covered in high school or at home i.e. hygiene, social skills, social appropriateness, etc.
Role of Disability Specialist

- Initial interview and intake with student, family,
- Documentation review
- Accommodations determination
- Letters to faculty
- Provide training, mentorship, supervision for Seas trainer
- Lead meetings with family, student, others at transition points
- Training to campus community
Roles and Benefits of SEAS Intern

- Work with student in or outside of DS office to address housing, dining hall, transportation issues
- Is closer in age and perspective to student (buy in)
- Can address social goals, friendships, club participation
- Expands the capacity of DS specialist to support student
- Provides role model
- Liaison to parents (more than specialist has time for)
- Seeks out appropriate resources for students (mental health, tutors, clubs, writing centers, etc)
- Teaches procedures to access campus resources

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Support and Train Faculty

- Use of syllabus statement
- Refer to DS before Judicial Affairs
- Work with DS to identify their essential standards and avoid compromising access
- Consider Universal Design strategies
- Provide Faculty Fact sheet
- Understand behaviors as functional (reasons underlying manifestation of symptoms), i.e. head on desk
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>(mis)Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head on desk</td>
<td>Sensory overload</td>
<td>Rude, sleeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimics or recites back</td>
<td>Time to process</td>
<td>Not taking speaker seriously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great expressive skills</td>
<td>Compensates for receptive skills</td>
<td>Overestimation of functioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odd speaking habits</td>
<td>Pragmatic Language deficits</td>
<td>Inappropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May not respond to facial</td>
<td>Difficulty with non-verbals</td>
<td>Leads to miscues in assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expressions, tone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not recognize you</td>
<td>Limited facial recognition</td>
<td>Aloof, rude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May not shift topic on cue</td>
<td>Does not automatically catch on</td>
<td>Self-absorbed, uninterested</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Educate Housing Staff

- ASD Fact Sheet:
  - Definition
  - Typical Symptoms
  - Possible Dorm Behaviors
  - Strategies
- Train C.A.s, orientation leaders
- Support early move-in, private rooms

Copyright: Bork, King, Thierfeld Brown, Wolf, 2007
Both SEADS trainers guide and assist students via sequenced modules including:

- Relationship Building and Transition
- Setting Goals
- Functional & Resource Assessment
- Accommodations
- Building Skills and Strategies
- Psychoeducation about AS
- Evaluation & Planning
Tools for SEADS student

- Provide student with DS “handbook”
  - Maps
  - Contact info: profs, T.A.s, DS, health center, writing center, etc.
  - Scripts/rules
  - Grade tracking forms
  - Calendar
  - Emergency Info
SEADS Bridge
from Secondary Settings

- Completion of Intake Questionnaire and Stress Test with assistance
- Meeting with DS, student, parent, case manager, VR counselor and others
- Visits to campus, residential housing, dining hall, etc.
- Accommodations for placement tests
- Sitting in on a class
- Meeting with college advisor
- Possible early move in
- Regular meetings with DS and parents as needed
- Enroll in summer course and possible on-campus job
Quotes:

- “My daughter would never made it through this year without SEADS support”. parent
- “He was certainly smart enough, but navigating the campus community without this support would have been a disaster” academic advisor
- “This support should be at ALL colleges” student
- "My sons university has not recognized that the needs of autistic students are quite distinct and separate from those required of other disabled students. The SEADS model acknowledges and honors the critical components of support, typically unrecognized by most disability service models". parent
- I now know what to look for, whether the student discloses or not”. Faculty
Success at College

Anecdotally, parent, staff and students report that:

- The earlier they begin the process of transition, the higher the likelihood of success.

- The more resilient and better able a student is at dealing with change, the more successful the college experience will be.

- The higher the levels of motivation, self determination and self efficacy, the higher the level of academic and social success.
Gaining Readiness:
Recommended ways for students on the spectrum to begin college

- Take generals at Community College
- Consider 18-21 programs (Vector, Transition Plus, etc)
- Enroll in summer bridge program
- Live at home first year
- Access additional community resources
- Gain assistance with independent living skills
user: edina73  password: social2012
user: 19rsa4  password: 8car49

How Not To Talk

to a job interviewer about your first job

Are you looking for your first job? Do you have Asperger’s Syndrome? Are you 18 to 21 years old? Here’s your chance to practice a job interview with an employer – in private, at your own pace – and get valuable feedback on the answers you picked.

These scenarios are a Special Service Project of the Hennepin-Carver Youth Council, which is affiliated with the Hennepin-Carver Workforce Investment Board. This software is funded by a grant from Hennepin County, Minnesota.

Before role-playing, click here for job interview tips.
Hello, Lisa King. I'm Jim McCarthy. So, how was the traffic on your way here?

"he says"

"you say"

Fine.

It wasn't too bad, actually -- just the usual stuff.

There was a 12-minute delay on the 94 exit ramp, a 20% speed decrease on 169 and a 6-minute backup at 5th St.
Wow, you really have a head for figures.

"he says"

I like numbers.

"you say"

Sorry -- I guess I'm not here to analyze the regional traffic flow, am I?

Everyone's brain records mathematical data, but most people tune it out. Traffic is full of statistics if you just pay attention to it.
Conclusions

- AS poses unique challenges
- Areas of need cross multiple domains of impairment & student life
- Accommodations & interventions reflect nature of impairment and area of difficulty
- Needs change over time given:
  - Skills training
  - Development
  - Environment
Transitioning to Work for Students with Asperger’s Syndrome

G. Ruth Kukiela Bork, M.Ed
Northeastern University
The student with an Asperger’s Syndrome diagnosis should begin preparing for the world of work much earlier.

- There are real advantages to testing out job readiness skills in the protected environment of the college setting.

- Encourage students to become clients of your state division of vocational rehabilitation.
Assess Student Skills

- Focus on competencies and challenges
- Assess student skills:
  - glean information from
    - students
    - parents
    - faculty, particularly of classes where students have worked on projects, group projects and labs
Look for information that provides insights on:

- ability to accept feedback
- ability to identify/perceive an issue once it has been pointed out
- problem solving ability
- types of things that are stressors
- how s/he handles stress
- coping strategies
- Other things to assess:
  - Student’s learning style
  - Important environmental factors
Developing an educational module using your campus as a field site

- Identify field site characteristics that are polar opposites:
  - Controlled contact with the public
    - more formal environment, such as the Provost’s Office, the President’s Office. Or the Development Office
    - more informal environment, such as the mail room, trades workers’ offices, custodial staff office
Developing an educational module using your campus as a field site

- Identify field site characteristics that are polar opposites (cont):
  - Frequent contact with the public
    - more formal offices such as the Office of Admissions, Bursar’s Office, Health Center
    - more informal offices such as the Athletics Center, Student Activities Center
Other important areas of focus:

- Academic offices vs. administrative offices

- The physical environment:
  - Private offices vs. cubicles
  - Open floor space vs. counters
Other important areas of focus (cont.)

- General work culture
  - Arrive on time
  - Follow the dress code
  - Meet task/project deadlines
  - Understand how to address others

- Specific office policies:
  - Absences
  - Eating at your desk
  - Office “don’ts”:
    - Making personal phone calls
    - Playing computer games
Identify your partners on campus

- Office of Career Services
- departmental liaisons
- mentors
Campus field sites

- Identify various field sites around your campus that represent different office cultures
- Use work sheets to help students focus on points important to their own personal development
- Use mentors to engage students in discussions that focus on their individual areas of need
Putting training to the test

- Work with your liaisons to create volunteer positions on campus
- Foster the mentor/mentee relationship
- Collect data from the mentors and departmental liaisons to enhance students’ job readiness
Focus on “fitting in”

- Office dress code
- Grooming and hygiene
- Office comportment
- Telephone equipment
- Learning new vocabulary
Focus on fitting in (cont.)

- Learning office routines
  - Time sheets
  - Lunch hours
  - Breaks
  - Doors
Transitioning from the Educational Mode to the Internship/Job

- Getting ready to interview
- The issue of disclosure
- Working with a mentor
- Understanding the organizational chart
- Getting things done
- Handling stress and anger
- Getting along with others on the job