Workforce Transition Considerations for Students with Autism

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Status of Employment?

What is/is not happening with transitioning youth with ASD and their participation in preparation and attainment of employment, both while in school and after they leave school?

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NTLS-2: Employment Outcomes

Newman et al. (2011) reported that up to 8 years after leaving high school:

- 63.2% of young adults with autism had worked at any point since graduation
- 37.2% of these young people were currently employed at the time of the survey
- Among those currently employed, averaged 24.1 hours of work per week
- Earned an average of $9.20 per hour
- 52.8% reported receiving any benefits (e.g., paid vacation or sick leave, health insurance, retirement benefits).

work

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Making the Case

"Findings indicate that **students with disabilities, who participate in paid employment and work experiences in high school, are more likely to be engaged in post-school employment, education, and independent living experiences** (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000; Benz, Yovanoff, & Doren, 1997; Bullis et al., 1995; Doren & Benz, 1998; Rabren, Dunn, & Chambers, 2002)" (p. 1)

CEC's DCDT FAST FACTS: Paid Employment and Work Experience (http://www.dcdt.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/DCDT_Paid_Work_Delphi_Final.pdf)

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Factors Contributing to Employment Outcomes?

What factors do you believe lead youth with ASD to successful post-school employment outcomes?

Full group discussion

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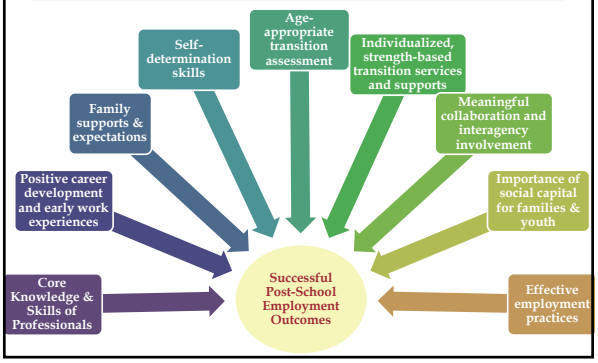
Factors Contributing to Successful Post-School Outcomes



Factors Contributing to Successful Post-School Outcomes

Core Knowledge & Skills of Professionals

Successful Post-School Employment Outcomes

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Core Knowledge & Skills?

What do you believe are the core knowledge and skills needed by transition stakeholder (spanning from school to post-school settings) in supporting transition of youth with ASD in employment?

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What are Your Skill Competencies?

Interesting project with the VA Autism Council to identify skill competencies for professionals and paraprofessionals serving individuals with ASD across the age span. (http://autismtrainingva.vcu.edu/)

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What are Your Skill Competencies?

- General autism
- Environmental structure and visual supports
- Comprehensive instructional programming (assessing strengths and needs to determine goals; intervention strategies; measuring progress; teams to develop/support programs)
- Communication (components of communication; strategies to increase communication abilities; measuring progress)

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What are Your Skill Competencies?

- Social skill development
- Behavior (factors influencing behaviors; behavioral analysis; behavior plans)
- Sensory motor development
- Independence (skills need for short and long term plans for independence and intervention planning; strategies to increase independence in functional and life skills; strategies to increase cognitive and learning abilities, academic skills; measuring progress)
- Resources are provided at the end of the PPT

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Factors Contributing to Successful Post-School Outcomes

Positive career development and early work experiences

Successful Post-School Employment Outcomes

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Positive Career Development and Early Work Experiences

Access to a **combination of career development experiences during middle and high school** can provide adolescents with authentic opportunities to acquire important work skills and values, inform their vocational decision making, and shape their career aspirations for the *future (Vondracek & Porfeli, 2006).*

Can you share a few examples of career development experiences?

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Career Development Skills

- Need for multiple opportunities to learn career-related skills and knowledge while still in high school: career awareness, vocational courses, early work experiences, work study; critical role of transition and career assessment

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Factors Contributing to Successful Post-School Outcomes

Family supports & expectations

Successful Post-School Employment Outcomes

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Family Supports and Expectations

Research affirms the **strong contributions parents can make toward career development and improved employment outcomes** for their transition-age children.

- For example, Carter et al. (2012) found that parents' work-related expectations were a significant predictor of whether young adults with disabilities found paid community jobs in the first 2 years after leaving high school.

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Factors Contributing to Successful Post-School Outcomes

Self-determination skills

Successful Post-School Employment Outcomes

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Self Determination?

What do you believe are the challenges, as well as positive strategies to promote self-determination of youth with ASD?

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Fostering Self-Determination and Independence

"Correlational research strongly associates ***indicators of self-determination with an array of positive employment- and transition-related outcomes"*** (Cobb et al., 2009; Test et al., 2009; Wehmeyer et al., 2010; as cited in Lee & Carter, 2012, p. 993).

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Self Determined Lives

Strategies in supporting transition and self determination **begin with identifying likes and dislikes with subsequent goals that would support community involvement as defined by the individual** (Held, 2004).

Burton-Hoyle, Sally. 2011. Autism spectrum disorders: Strategies toward A self determined life for your child. *The Exceptional Parent (Online).*

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Self Determined Lives

- Discover and develop the gifts, strengths and interests of the young person with ASD.
- Provide opportunities on a daily basis for choice and control.

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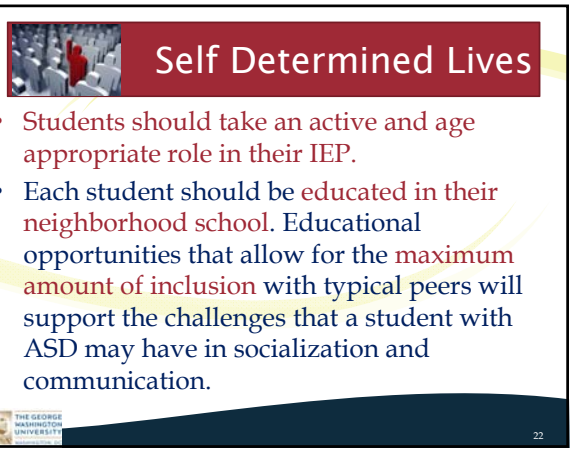
Self Determined Lives
• Students should take an active and age appropriate role in their IEP.
• Each student should be educated in their neighborhood school. Educational opportunities that allow for the maximum amount of inclusion with typical peers will support the challenges that a student with ASD may have in socialization and communication.
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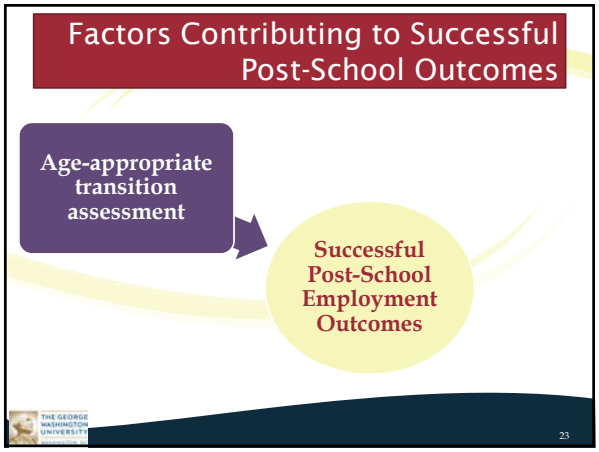
Factors Contributing to Successful Post-School Outcomes
Age-appropriate transition assessment
Successful Post-School Employment Outcomes
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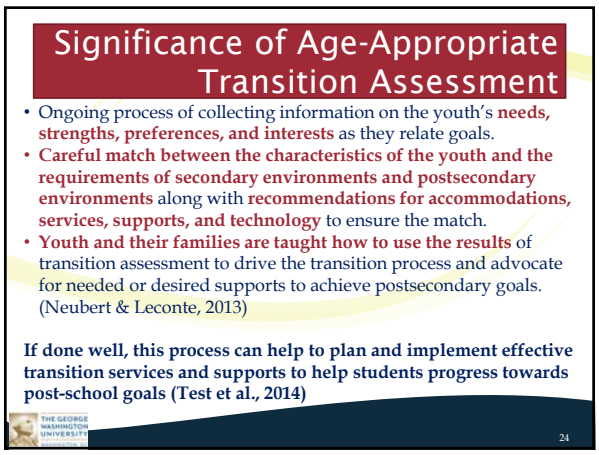
Significance of Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment
• Ongoing process of collecting information on the youth's needs, strengths, preferences, and interests as they relate goals.
• Careful match between the characteristics of the youth and the requirements of secondary environments and postsecondary environments along with recommendations for accommodations, services, supports, and technology to ensure the match.
• Youth and their families are taught how to use the results of transition assessment to drive the transition process and advocate for needed or desired supports to achieve postsecondary goals. (Neubert & Leconte, 2013)
If done well, this process can help to plan and implement effective transition services and supports to help students progress towards post-school goals (Test et al., 2014)
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A Holistic Approach to Assessment: Transition Domains

(Trainor, Patton, & Clark, 2005)

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Transition Domain Assessment Activity

Let's discuss the potential strategies to gather assessment data, utilizing transition domains:

- *What assessment data would you collect that would be valuable to informing students' career development process?*
- *What are the potential sources of this data?*
- *How might you infuse environmental assessment data, to inform the career "matching" process?*

Factors Contributing to Successful Post-School Outcomes

Individualized, strength-based transition services and supports

Successful Post-School Employment Outcomes

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Individualized, Strength-based Transition Services and Supports

Emphasizing and aligning with age-appropriate transition assessment:

Transition services must be individually designed to reflect the **unique needs, strengths, interests, and preferences** of each student.

(Lee & Carter, 2012)

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Factors Contributing to Successful Post-School Outcomes

Meaningful collaboration and interagency involvement

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Successful Post-School Employment Outcomes

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Meaningful Collaboration and Interagency Involvement

"**Cultivating strong linkages between students and needed services—as well as among various service providers themselves in a given community**—can ensure that the needs and opportunities identified during transition planning are adequately addressed and delivered in coordinated ways" (Lee & Carter, 2012, p. 992).

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Factors Contributing to Successful Post-School Outcomes

Importance of social capital for families & youth

→ **Successful Post-School Employment Outcomes**

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Person Centered Planning

Person centered planning (PCP) should occur at major transition points in the school career of a student with ASD. A person centered plan is a process that identifies the skills, strengths and needs of the student and can help the family prioritize their needs and supports and plan for the future of the student from school to life in the community. Outcomes are developed that are rooted in the strength of the family and student with an emphasis on future living, working and recreational opportunities.

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Strengthening Supportive Relationships

To address social-related challenges, effective transition planning addresses the importance of **fostering supportive relationships with family members, peers, formal service systems, and nature community support.** (Hughes & Carter, 2011)

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RELATIONSHIPS: Formal Service Providers

- **Network of formal supports, but may not be enough**
  - Vocational rehabilitation
  - Centers for independent living
  - Employment providers
  - Intellectual disabilities agencies
  - Mental health agencies
  - Agencies specializing in ASD and transition

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RELATIONSHIPS: Natural Community Supports

- **"Falling off the cliff" – importance of natural community supports**
  - Youth with ASD may not be eligible for formal services, gaps in services, time-limited supports
  - Use of **Social Capital concepts** – mapping informal and community supports

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Helping Youth & Families Build Social Capital

What is social capital?

- The value of social relations and the role of cooperation and confidence to get collective or economic results.
- Is the crux of social relations, and consists of the expected benefits derived from the preferential treatment and cooperation between individuals and groups.
- Network of social connections that exist between people, and their shared values and norms of behavior, which enable and encourage mutually advantageous social cooperation. (Test et al., 2014)

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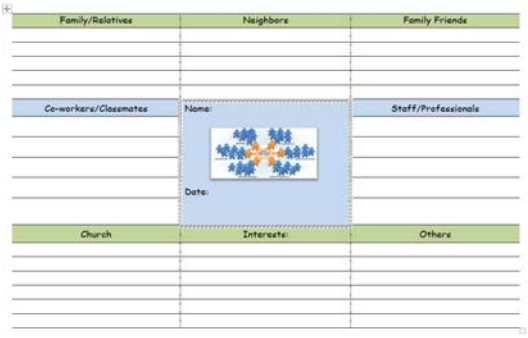
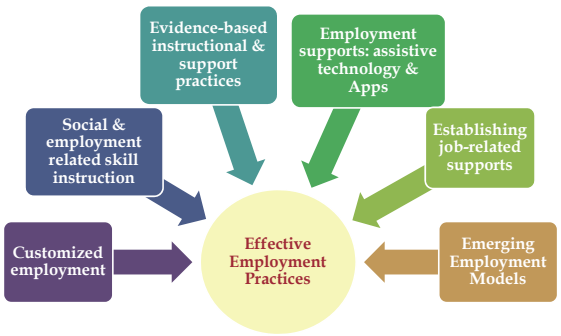
Tool to Assessing Support Networks: Social Capital



Factors Contributing to Successful Post-School Outcomes

Effective Employment Practices



Effective Employment Practices

Customized employment

Effective Employment Practices

Customized Employment

National trend with focused research on customized employment as an effective employment strategy for youth and adults with significant disabilities. Building on the supported employment model, customized employment emphasizes:

- *Negotiating an employment relationship that meets the needs of the job seeker and the employer*
- *Not based on existing jobs that an employer has defined.*

DISCOVERY PROCESS WORKS! Requires a detailed understanding of individual skills and interests (Callahan, 2003; Griffin et al., 2008)

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Effective Employment Practices

Social & employment related skill instruction

Effective Employment Practices

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Social and Employment Related Skill Instruction

Youth with ASD often evidence **substantial social-related challenges** that may make it more difficult to navigate interpersonal interactions with coworkers, supervisors, and customers; adapt to fluctuating social expectations across settings and persons; or develop enduring and enjoyable relationships with their coworkers (Lee & Carter, 2012, p.994).

Thus, it is ***important to connect students to vocational coursework, volunteer activities, internships, and hands-on work experiences within which such skills can be developed over time.***

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Effective Employment Practices

Evidence-based instructional & support practices

Effective Employment Practices

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Evidence-Based Instructional & Support Practices

- **Self Management**
  - Teaching students to monitor, record and reinforce their own behavior (assistive technology)
- **Video-Modeling**
  - Use of assistive technology for pre-rehearsal of a job skill by watching it being performed
- **Visual Supports**
  - Tools that help students follow events and activities independently (Edom et al., 2010)

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Effective Employment Practices

Employment supports: assistive technology & Apps

Effective Employment Practices

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Employment Supports: Assistive Technology

- Study found employees with ASD who have been trained to use Apple iPod Touch PDAs as vocational supports in the workplace, show an improved functional performance and reduced behavioral challenges.
- This reduced the amount of intervention that a job coach was need to provide to ensure stable employment.
- It increased the employees' independence, ability to problem solve and manage emotional/behavioral challenges.

(Gentry et al., 2012)

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Apps

Primary iPod touch Apps

- Task reminder alarm linked to Calendar App
- Memo for Task Description
- Auditory Cues via Voice Memo
- Video Task Sequences
- GPS maps
- Games

(Gentry et al., 2012)

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Effective Employment Practices

Establishing job-related supports

Effective Employment Practices

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Establishing Job Related Supports

To equip youth to recruit their own supports, educators and job coaches should teach students and young adults with ASD their ***rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (2008) and show them how to effectively request reasonable work accommodations*** likely to facilitate their success on the job.

(Lee & Carter, 2012)

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Establishing Job Related Supports

Coworker supports are critical for youth with ASD to access on the job. Although such support is considered natural to the setting, **many coworkers are still likely to need explicit guidance from job coaches on how best to interact** with and assist their coworker with a disability. (Hagner & Cooney, 2005)

Supervisors might benefit from learning strategies related to providing **clear and consistent instructions, schedules, and consequences.** (Lee & Carter, 2012)

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Effective Employment Practices

Emerging Employment Models

Effective Employment Practices

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Emerging Employment Models

In an interview with Dr. Scott Standifer, Clinical Assistant Professor for the Disability Policy & Studies office (DPS) at the University of Missouri, who is a national leader around ASD and employment, shared emerging employment models…

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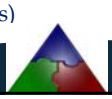
Corporate Development Model

- Identify a company that believes it is useful and productive to hire youth/adults with ASD
- Universally design workplace so accommodations are "built in" and readily available to anyone
- Build an inclusive environment
- May involve carving out an ASD-friendly work environment
- Build in supports in workplace culture (inclusive, diversity, educational components)



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Corporate Development Model

- Project SEARCH – Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU): http://worksupport.com/projects/project.cfm/38; http://www.vcu-autism.org/
- Ken's Krew (Partnering Organizations: Home Depot & DVS/Caremark): http://kenskrew.org/index.html

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Corporate Development Model

Example: Walgreen's Distribution Center

- Senior VP of supply chain and logistics had an idea sparked an innovative and inclusive way to look at productivity, efficiency and opportunity at Walgreens distribution centers. Right time when company was investing in new technology to modernize systems, machines and processes, as well as a universal design.
- Partnership with local agencies – recruitment, hiring, training people with disabilities.
- Training for managers

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Dedicated Start-Up Models

Business specifically designed for individuals with ASD:

Roses for Autism: Business model that would train and employ individuals with ASD. Jim Lyman approached a college friend in Connecticut with the idea of turning his large rose farm operation into the business model, which has become Roses for Autism. (http://www.rosesforautism.com/pages/story-of-farm)

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Dedicated Franchise Models

Rising Tide will provide franchise car wash opportunities dedicated to providing employment for people with autism. They have chosen a franchise model to give families affected by autism the ability to secure employment for their individual with autism, and many others like them, without the need for business expertise. Rising Tide will use a for-profit social enterprise model to afford franchisees the ability to maintain ownership rights. (http://www.risingtidecarwash.com/about-us/)

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Specialisterne Model

Specialisterne, which translates from Danish as "The Specialists" is a socially innovative company where the majority of employees have a diagnosis on the autism spectrum. Employees work as business consultants on tasks such as software testing, programming and data-entry for the public and private sectors.

http://specialisterne.com/

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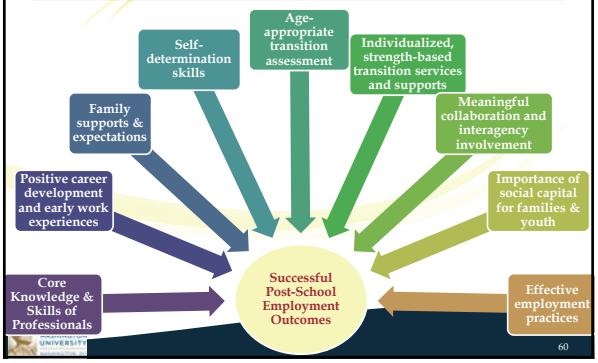
Factors Contributing to Successful Post-School Outcomes



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Check out GW Transition Programs!

If you'd like information about GW's programs, please contact Dr. Kester:

- Online transition certificate program
- Online transition master's program (partial scholarships available) (optional specialization in ASD)
- Six credit non-degree Autism Specialization

http://gsehd.gwu.edu/programs/secondary-special-education-and-transition-services

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Need to Stay Abreast of Emerging Field of Research & Practice

National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center Secondary and Postsecondary Outcomes of Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder Annotated Bibliography

- The summary includes both in-school and post-school outcomes for students with ASD in the areas of education, employment, social functioning, independent living, and multiple outcome areas.

http://nsttac.org/content/national-secondary-transition-technical-assistance-center-secondary-and-postsecondary

nsttac

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Building Core Knowledge of ASD Resources

- The Center on Secondary Education for Students with ASD: http://csesa.fpg.unc.edu/resources
- The National professional Development Center on ASD: http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/
- IDEA Partnership: ASD Community of Practice: http://www.ideapartnership.org/creating-community/cop-in-practice/autism-spectrum-disorder/369-dialogue-guides/topical-guides/secondary-transition-dg.html

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Building Core Knowledge of ASD Resources

- OCALI – Autism Internet Modules: http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/
- Autism Speaks –Toolkits: http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits
- National Autism Resource & Information Center – Autism now: http://autismnow.org/

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Building Core Knowledge of Transition and Unique Considerations of Youth with ASD Resources

- OCALI – transition-specific information: http://www.ocali.org/topic/transitions/
- VCU – Autism Center for Excellence: http://www.vcuautismcenter.org/index.cfm
- Devereux Autism Handbook: http://www.autismhandbook.org/index.php/Main_Page

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Self Determination, Self Advocacy & Youth Leadership Resources

- Autism Self Advocacy Network: http://www.autisticadvocacy.org/modules/smartsection/category.php?categoryid=8
- Wrong Planet: http://www.autisticadvocacy.org/modules/smartsection/category.php?categoryid=8

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ASD Employment Resources

- Autism Speaks Employment Toolkit: http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/employment

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AT Resources

Assistive Technology Supports for Individuals with ASD: http://www.wati.org/content/supports/free/pdf/ASDManual-1.pdf

Autism Transition Handbook: http://www.autismhandbook.org/index.php/Assistive_Technology

Autism Speaks Apps: http://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-apps

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