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## How to Best Prepare Students With Autism for Post-secondary Schooling or Employment

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**HOW TO BEST PREPARE STUDENTS WITH AUTISM FOR POST-SECONDARY  
SCHOOLING OR EMPLOYMENT**

**A MASTER'S THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY**

**BY  
PAUL STARIHA**

**IN Partial FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTERS OF ARTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**AUGUST 2021**

**HOW TO BEST PREPARE STUDENTS WITH AUTISM FOR POST-SECONDARY  
SCHOOLING OR EMPLOYMENT**

**BY**

**PAUL STARIHA**

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**AUGUST 2021**

## **ABSTRACT**

Students with autism are leaving high school not prepared sufficiently to enter post-secondary education or employment. What are the best educational practices to change this? To answer this question, this thesis writer reviewed several articles in peer reviewed journals and examined programs like COMPASS, Project SEARCH, and ASSETS. This thesis will focus on when to begin preparing students with autism in high school for the real world that they will experience after graduation. Some thesis questions include: who should be involved in the planning and what curriculum would benefit in preparing students with autism for success in post-secondary education and future employment? The goal of this thesis paper is to better understand where we have come from on this journey of supporting students with autism, and where we still need to go.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### **Purpose for Thesis**

Students with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) have traditionally been under prepared or not prepared for post-secondary education or employment (Chandaroo et al., 2018). Students with ASD face challenges that students without a disability or another disability do not encounter. These students struggle with social skills more than others. They may not have the skills to succeed in a post-secondary education environment or skills for successful employment. The reason for this thesis is to try to assemble a process as well as curriculum that will better prepare students with ASD for post-secondary education and/or employment. By researching current articles and studies, this writer can expose students to a curriculum that will benefit them in becoming more independent and build their self-esteem. This thesis will evaluate what services and skills need to be taught to students with ASD to increase their successful transition to post-secondary education and work (Wong et al., 2020). Typically, special education students have little or no involvement in the IEP (Individual Education Plan) process except during evaluations. This is concerning because they do not attend or do not advocate for their needs. During the evaluation process they are asked questions about their plans or if they are aware that they will have to plan for independence, post-secondary education, or job skills. Transition goals are required on the Student's IEP when they turn 14 years of age. The transition areas include: recreational/leisure, home living skills, post-secondary education, job training, and community participation. Another area of concern is many times these evaluations take place when they are 16 or younger. Sometimes they do not get evaluated during their junior or senior year. This seems to be the best time to discuss future transition preparation with students with ASD. Some IEP meetings focus more on academic goals and little or no transition plans even though it is

required to be an essential part of the student's IEP. It does not take an evaluation to plan for post-secondary outcomes. Parents need more information so they can make informed decisions about services and programs that will help prepare their student with ASD during this transition process from high school to post-secondary experiences. Parents also need to be made aware of the services and programs available for their students with ASD. Many parents do not know what questions to ask or who to ask other than at the IEP meetings, and don't always come prepared to make choices or decisions. There is a need for a student-centered approach to empower parents and students to prepare for the IEP meeting not just for educational purposes, but also to come prepared with questions on transition needs of their student with ASD (Chandaroo et al., 2018). Students should, when they can comprehend, be researching transition plans to discuss at the IEP meeting. When students with ASD find a job/career in a field that interests them they have higher success rates (Dreaver et al., 2020).

According to the article, (Chandaroo et al., 2018), students with ASD rarely participate in their IEP meetings. Some lower functioning students with ASD do not even attend their IEP meetings. Many are not active participants in the IEP meeting. When students do participate they often talk about strengths, weaknesses, and areas of interest. Typically, students with ASD do not lead their IEP meetings or do work preparing for the IEP meeting. One of the reasons given for their lack of involvement is they may not understand the purpose of the IEP meeting. Typically, the IEP meeting is academic focused and transition planning is an add on item. The transition areas covered are post-secondary education and training, employment, and independent living. This needs to be examined and changed. To better understand what needs to be changed much of it is the approach. An example of a "cookie cutter" approach that one way will take care of all students. This cannot happen with students with ASD. They have a variety of needs and they are



not all the same for each individual. That is why the IEP needs to be just that- individualized. It is more than an education plan in the later years of high school. The IEP needs to be more of a preparedness plan. It needs to focus on the academic piece, but for most students with ASD, it also needs to have more focus on transition skills. It is a time to teach them independence and prepare them for post-secondary transition. There needs to be an evaluation of services that will best prepare students with ASD for the skills needed to be successful. By starting earlier than traditionally done, students will be set up to make a seamless as possible transition to life after high school. Stakeholders will also be better prepared to assist them in making these decisions. According to (Wong, et al., 2020) there are 6 areas that will determine the success rate in employment for students with ASD. Vocational-Related service and transition supports such as work experience during school time. Parent participation in special education activities and great involvement in the IEP meeting. Self-determination of the student with ASD to be part in transition planning. Academic performance of the student with ASD, higher performance leads to more options. Daily functioning skills of the student, how independent are they. Lastly, family background, especially the education level of the parents and income level. The higher education and income level predicted more success for students with ASD. Key service providers that are already established assist the student with ASD to be more successful. One such provider is Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS). Based on a study done on the report done by the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Service Administration Case Service Report database, students with ASD that are using their service are increasing (Chen et al., 2015). According to the study the services used most are counseling, job searches, and job-related services. At the time of this study it was found that students with ASD were the group who used VRS services the least of disability groups. A factor in that was the VRS counselors not used to working with

students with ASD (Chen et al., 2015). The results of not being properly prepared for post-secondary education and employment can be found in (Shattuck, et al., 2012). The study of Postsecondary Education and Employment Among Youth with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, showed very poor participation in either post-secondary education or employment. 34.9 % did not participate in either 2 years after high school. Compared with other disabilities those with ASD had significantly lower rates of employment and the highest rate of no participation in post-secondary education or employment.

### **Thesis Question**

What are best practices in preparing students with ASD for post-secondary education or employment opportunities?

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Information Gathering Methods

To find peer reviewed literature for this thesis the Bethel University Reference Library was used. Using educational research searches of Educational Journals such as; Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Autism, Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, The Journal for Vocational Special Needs Education, Research in Developmental Disabilities, and Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health within a 10 year period to focus on the newest information and research. Research needed to be relevant to the school setting and during the transition age from after middle school to the beginning of post-secondary. Keywords for the search included “Autism Spectrum Disorder”, “Vocational Programs”, “Post-Secondary education”, “Employment”, “Transition Outcomes” and “Young Adult.”

### Thesis Goal

The goal of this chapter will be to review the literature published about students with autism. The applied literature will be on current methods already used to prepare them for employment and postsecondary training. This thesis will discover what has been successful and learn if there are gaps in the preparation for students with ASD to increase their employment opportunities and post-secondary education options to prepare them for future schooling or training.

Students with autism face challenges because of their disability. Students with autism are rule bound and think in black or white with little gray. They struggle with understanding social cues and communicating in social situations. Sometimes they are sensitive to textures or need to

do things in a certain order. These challenges affect them in post-secondary education and employment.

### **Transition Instruction**

In a study by (Kirby, 2020) entitled “Transition preparation activities among families of youth on the autism spectrum: Preliminary study using repeated assessments across a school year.” Parents of 15 adolescents and students with autism completed an in-person study. The researchers visited the university or their homes. Assessments were given to students over a school year. The research data showed that social skills activities helped prepare students for later employment. They learned about responsibilities and working with others. Either volunteer or paid work helped the students with ASD. The article concluded with the need for families to discuss their future and to ensure engagement in social activities for their youths.

Another area that needs to be addressed before employment can be found in the following article (Hendricks, 2010). “Employment and Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Challenges and strategies for Success” brought up the need to look at the characteristics of the individual. These include strengths, weaknesses, as well as specific interests. This will lead to an appropriate placement for employment. To carefully match the individual to the environment and include the proper supports to help better employment outcomes. Youth with autism have different needs in comparison to other students with disabilities.

One of the biggest areas of concern was noted in (Wong et al., 2020), “Identifying School-Based Factors that Predict Employment Outcomes for transition-Age Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder” using the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2(NLTS-2) data. The NLTS-2 was a longitudinal prospective study in 5 waves that collected data from 2001-2009. It was a nationally representative sample of high school students with disabilities in the process of

transitioning to adulthood. The youth were 13-16 years old when they began the study, and when the study was completed were 21-25 years old. Part of the analysis focused on students with autism. The conclusion of this article revealed a troubling pattern. Instruction and preparation for transition was found to be not adequate to prepare students for their transition to adulthood. It is unclear from the study using data from (NLTS-2) to know what should be prioritized in school-based services to meet the needs of employment of youth with autism. Other factors that were noted include the functioning level of the student led to different determinants of possible employment outcomes. Parent participation in transition planning was also a predictor of employment success.

Another article that used the NLTS-2 was (Shogren and Plotner, 2012), “Transition Planning for Students with Intellectual Disability, Autism or other Disabilities: Data from the National Longitudinal Study-2”. It used the data to answer questions from the survey to look at where their areas of need are. The study found that only 66% of ASD students with an IEP, had an IEP that linked their course of study with transition goals. Furthermore, only a small percentage of students took a leadership role during the IEP process. Another study based on the article (Kraemer et al., 2020), is “Quality of High School Programs for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder”. The article discussed the need for more research being needed on the implementation of strategies in schools to link a student’s program of study to post-school outcomes. A small percentage of students receive instruction focused on transition planning. Parents rarely met before the IEP meeting to plan for transition goals for after high school. They relied on the school to take the primary role in this area. The study further pointed out that most schools were using a one-size-fits all approach, which is outdated and does not meet the needs of the individual student. 55% of students with autism have needs related to vocational training,

placement, or support. There needs to be more of a focus on transition programming. The programming needs to have the following included: work-based learning activities, self-advocacy skill practice and instruction, social and communication skills, career exploration, and independent living skills.

### **Project SEARCH**

One of the few programs to directly offer solutions to low employability of youth with ASD is Project SEARCH (Wehman et al., 2020). The article, “Competitive Employment for Transition-Aged Youth with Significant Impact from Autism: A Multi-site Randomized Clinical Trial”, discusses the large number of students with significant impact from autism’s lack of employment. It brought it to light as a major societal problem which is that they were the group most likely to leave high school without competitive employment. The clinical research was done using Project SEARCH with ASD Supports. Project SEARCH is a transition-to-work internship program that uses supported employment. Students are exposed to different internship rotations in various employment settings. This exposes the student to more jobs and helps to find where their preferences are in regard to employment situations. They used 4 different hospitals across Virginia. The result was that an internship with specialized supports built into it could lead to competitive employment at a competitive wage with the chance for longevity in a career and positive work history. Another article (Schall et al., 2015) of interest that referenced Project SEARCH was “Employment Interventions for individuals with ASD: The Relative Efficacy of Supported Employment With or Without Prior Project SEARCH Training”. It concluded that while Project SEARCH benefited Students with ASD in supported employment, it was limited by how many students could go through the program. That the implementation of the Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) would lead to more students with ASD to be

served by Vocational Rehabilitation services in their state. This leads to many changes that would benefit students who needed supported employment, especially those with autism. As a result of these changes, more students would be exposed and participate in supported employment. The study determined that new pathways to employment must be found or created for youth with autism.

### **Programs in Other Countries**

Looking at how other countries work with youth with ASD gives valuable ideas and perspectives. An article by (Lee et al., 2019) based on a study in Australia, where students with autism work with volunteer mentors to learn computer based skills. The article, “I’m Destined to Ace This: Work Experience Placement During High School for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder” was a supported work experience placement program study. Brought up in the discussion was the uncertainty of being able to successfully transition to adulthood for students with autism. Students with autism were recruited to participate in a 5-10 days work experience, working 7½ hours a day. Through the process of the program, students with autism gained insight into the workplace. Participants with autism identified skills and gained experience and confidence. This shows that supported work placements during high school gives students with autism valuable experience of the world of work. The study showed that having the proper support, knowledgeable managers and supervisors, leads to a successful experience. Also, when students with autism are matched with areas of interest and strengths they already have, they are productive and it is a more meaningful experience. This article concluded that students who begin earlier to seek workplace skills could have a brighter future and potentially more support in their transition to adulthood.

### **Project SEARCH Revisited**

Businesses are seeing the value of youth with ASD through Project SEARCH. The article (Wehman et al., 2017), “Effects of an employer-based intervention on employment outcomes for youth with significant support needs due to autism”, was a collaborative effort between Virginia Commonwealth University, state vocational rehabilitation agency, a local community rehabilitation provider, and a public education agency. The study had 54 individuals with autism between the ages of 18-21 years. The time length was a full school year using Project SEARCH model, which was modified by adding additional supportive measures for students with autism. Students were taught work skills, which included social communication skills related to working on a job. Students also received supported employment for sections of the program. The supported employment was as an intern where they had an interest in learning the job. Table 1 breaks down the critical components of Project SEARCH with ASD support employment interventions by: activity, Project SEARCH guidelines for skills and tasks, methods used, and team leader for the activity.



**Table 1.** Critical components of PS-ASD employment intervention.

Activity	Project SEARCH guidelines for skills and tasks	PS-ASD methods used	Team leader
Getting to and from the program via regular transportation (bus, car, etc.). Time varies based upon location	Preparing for day at work Reading bus schedule Occupying time Scheduling personal transportation	Task analysis Prompting Visual schedules Modeling	VR case managers, family, intern
Classroom orientation and preparation for the day, approximately 1.5h daily	Accepting correction from supervisor Greeting co-workers Solving work-related problems Calming self when frustrated Reviewing workplace-specific expectations and social skills Identifying job skill strengths and needs Practicing behavioral self-monitoring Practicing specific job skills Communicating with customers Developing a resume Attending a job interview	Task analysis Structured repeated trials Behavioral rehearsal Group instruction Modeling (live) Video modeling Differential reinforcement of alternative behaviors Functional communication training Prompting Social narratives Social skill training Redirection Technology-aided instruction Visual supports	Teachers and instructional assistants
Structured internship rotations in business, approximately 4h daily	Completing specific job tasks Transitioning between tasks Solving work-related problems Accepting supervisor and co-worker feedback Regulating and monitoring personal behavior Interacting with customers, co-workers, and supervisors Requesting assistance Following workplace procedures and rules Following personal work schedule Maintaining professional dress and demeanor Navigating the workplace campus safely and efficiently Managing work materials and equipment safely and efficiently Reporting work issues to supervisors	Antecedent-based job and task structure Differential reinforcement of alternative behaviors Extinction Functional behavior assessment Functional communication training Modeling Naturalistic instruction Peer-mediated instruction (by co-workers and supervisors) Prompting Positive reinforcement Redirection Scripting Self-management Social narratives Social skills training Task analysis Technology-aided instruction and intervention Time delay Video modeling Visual supports	Job coaches (CRP)
Business development, training, and marketing, 4-8h weekly	Providing general disability awareness to business employees Providing specific disability awareness regarding particular intern needs to specific internship departments Marketing interns to new departments Marketing interns for open jobs in the business Training co-workers to be internship mentors Meeting with departments to develop internship sites and tasks Coordinating with business to meet business needs	Adult learning and teaching strategies Visual schedules and supports Marketing material distribution Sales strategies highlighting intern assets Differential reinforcement of supportive staff behavior Ecological inventory Task and environmental structuring	Job coaches (CRP)

PS-ASD: Project SEARCH plus Autism Spectrum Disorder Support; VR: vocational rehabilitation; CRP: community rehabilitation provider.

They have 4 phases of supported employment: Job seeker profile, Job development, Job site training, and Long-term supports. The result of the study released promising results. Students

who completed the program had high employment, 87% employment, compared to those not in the program, 12% employment.

An article (Schall et al., 2020) written later also utilizing Project SEARCH, “The Effect of Business Internships Model and Employment on Enhancing the Independence of Young Adults with Significant Impact From Autism”, shows the effectiveness of project SEARCH. Project SEARCH was modified to include support for students with autism. The modifications were differing levels of support from limited support to daily extensive support. Some of the support was for medical needs. Youth with autism who participated in the study, using project Search+ASD gained competitive integrated employment at 73.4% compared to 17% who did not utilize project Search+ASD. A benefit of those in the program:

- Increased improvements in reading, solving problems, using technology, making educational decisions, engaging in self-management, making and keeping friends, participating in recreation and leisure activities, and using appropriate social skills at both data collection points in the study. Their peers in the control condition did not reap these benefits despite continuing in high school where these skills were the focus of those programs (Schall et al., 2020).

The study also concluded that gaining competitive integrated employment leads to increased independence in youth with autism. It also provides a financial benefit to them. These students also continued to improve compared to those not in the study. A side benefit was that students in project Search+ASD improved their academic skills also.

An agency that is providing services in regards to employment for youth with ASD is Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS). The article (Roux et al., 2020) “Vocational Rehabilitation Service Utilization and Employment Outcomes Among Secondary Students on the

Autism Spectrum”, is based on a study that used data from the Rehabilitation Service Administration Case Service Report (RSA-911). The case service report focused on youth with autism. The services most used by youth with autism were: job search, job placement, and on-the-job support. Youth with autism who utilized these supports resulted in nearly four times higher odds of employment. The information in the article provides evidence that youth with autism that use Vocational Rehabilitation services correlates to successful employment outcomes. Even though it was proven that these VR services benefit students with ASD, utilization of these services are low among this specific population. One of the most beneficial times for students with ASD to use these VR services is while they are still in high school.

### **COMPASS Model**

The next two articles are on Collaborative Model for Promoting Competence and Success (COMPASS). The first article (Ruble and Dalrymple, 2002), “COMPASS: A Parent-Teacher Collaborative Model for Students with Autism”, explains why they created the program and the second article goes over where it is today and adapts it to the transition needs of students with autism. COMPASS was designed to build collaboration between school personnel and parents, link assessment information and programs used, prevent problem behaviors by emphasising functional skills development, and lastly after IEP objectives are created, then teaching strategies are identified. One aim of the program was to raise the competence of the student with autism while raising the effectiveness of the person working with the student with autism. This is done by collaborative problem solving through assessments to gain information to improve final decisions on individual programs used. This would reduce different approaches and methods by parents, teachers, and therapists. There are 4 steps in COMPASS. Step 1 identification of personal and environmental challenges. Step 2 Identification of supports. Step 3 Identification

and prioritization of teaching goals. Step 4, Completing the action plan. The second article (Ruble et al., 2019), “Adapting COMPASS for Youth With ASD to Improve Transition Outcomes Using Implementation Science”, was a study by the same author as the first article, Lisa Rubble. Implementation science is the study of procedures designed to enable the use of evidence-based practices (EBPs) in community settings. One of the results from this study was the identification of 13 themes or factors impacting high-quality transition planning and implementation for young adults with ASD. These can be found in Table 3.

<b>TABLE 3</b>
Example of Environmental Supports: IEP Modifications and Adaptations
<b>Communicating to the person (receptive language supports)</b>
__ Slow down the pace
__ State positively what to do (e.g., “Let’s walk” instead of “Stop running”)
__ Provide more information in visual format
<b>Encouraging communication from the person (expressive language supports)</b>
__ Pause, listen, and wait
__ Encourage input and choice when possible
__ Provide alternative means, such as written words or pictures, to aid communication
__ Encourage and respond to words and appropriate attempts, rather than to behavior
<b>Social supports</b>
__ Build in time to watch, encourage watching and proximity
__ Practice on specific skills through natural activities with one peer
__ Structure activities with set interaction patterns and roles
__ Provide cooperative learning activities with facilitation
__ Facilitate recruitment of sociable peers to be buddies and advocates
__ Provide opportunity for shared experiences using interests and strengths
<b>Expanding repertoires of interests and activities</b>
__ Capitalize on strengths and individual learning styles
__ Over time, minimize specific fears and frustrations
__ Use rehearsal with visuals

Some of the key themes are the mismatch between educational goals and needed practical skills. Students with autism need to focus on practical skills and not just academic abilities. In addition, the key services that students with autism need and the timing of these services. The need for

improved communication between stakeholders. Lastly, addressed the need for improved goal setting. To increase the effectiveness of the study, a hybrid model was created to expand the implementation and intervention associated with the consultation intervention. This led to a multiyear study that has not concluded using the hybrid model.

Switching to post-secondary education preparation, but staying with the same program, COMPASS. The article (Ruble et al., 2019), “A Preliminary Study of Parent Activation, Parent-Teacher Alliance, Transition Planning Quality, and IEP and Postsecondary Goal Attainment of Students with ASD”, adapted COMPASS to transition and referenced it as COMPASS-T. The purpose of the study was to find out who was responsible for creating and implementing transition plans. How did these plans change over the final year of high school? Some of the goals they focused on for the students were: where will they be living after high school, what would their day look like, movement in the community for needs, budgeting, friendship, leisure activities, and accomplishment of post-school goals. These goals would also address post-secondary education plans. A key focus of the study was the alliance between school and parent in joint transition planning to increase the success in achieving goals involving transition. That quality of the participation by both groups would predict future success by the student. The study identified that parents and students were responsible for the implementation of postsecondary educational outcomes. Since most students with ASD do not participate in transition planning, it is up to the parents to plan, work with the casemanager on postsecondary education plans. The role of the casemanager is to assist the parents by providing them timely information to help with transition planning. The study also concluded that ongoing coaching and supporting parents and students as they are in the final year of high school requires more than a once a year meeting. That meeting one time a year to plan postsecondary goals is insufficient.

## **Transition Planning and Goals**

Staying with college enrollment, the article (Wei et al., 2016) “The Effect of Transition Planning Participation and Goal-Setting on College Enrollment Among Youth With Autism Spectrum Disorders”, outlined the importance of tying goals to post-secondary Education. The study was based on data from National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 referenced earlier. The questions asked were whether college enrollment rates for students with ASD were associated with their participation in transition planning or having a primary transition goal of post-secondary education in transition plans. The results of the study found that 40% of youth with ASD participated actively in their transition planning meetings and 24% had a primary transition goal of college enrollment. Those who did both of the above mentioned had higher odds of attending college.

Quote-

“This emphasizes the urgent need to effectively engage youth in the transition planning process so that their interests and desires are reflected in their plans.

Adding a specific goal related to college boosts college attendance for youth with ASD (Wei et al., 2016 p 10).”

The article further referenced that postsecondary education benefits youth with ASD by increasing their self-reliance, ability to pay taxes, and become civically engaged citizens. Generally creating more independence and less reliance on others was emphasized.

## **Use of Vocational Rehabilitation Supports**

Another article by (Rast et al., 2020) in an article entitled, “Use of Vocational Rehabilitation Supports for Postsecondary Education Among Transition-Age Youth on the Autism Spectrum,” established the support available to students with ASD. The data for the

study came from the U.S. Department of education's Rehabilitation Service Administration Case Service Report (RSA-911) for federal fiscal year 2015. The study revealed that students with ASD who received a postsecondary education were more likely to be employed. While employed they had high vocational skills, more employment satisfaction, and higher wages than those who did not have postsecondary training. The findings in the study also showed that students who used Vocational Rehabilitation services in postsecondary education or training were 1.59 times more likely to be employed than students with ASD who did not participate or use Vocational Rehabilitation services. The study also came to the conclusion that some youth with ASD may not be aware of the VR support for education available to them.

What will youth with ASD need when they do go to college is answered in the article (Elias and White, 2018) "Autism Goes to College: Understanding the Needs of a Student Population on the Rise", was from a study utilizing an online survey, which was nationwide in area. The survey took place over a 10 month period. The study revealed that students with ASD needed to learn how to advocate for themselves for needed services and accommodations while at school. Speaking up for themselves and self-regulation were shown as needed by youth with ASD. Parents reported that the most challenging areas for their students was in relation to time-management, self-determination, social isolation, and self-regulation. These directly relate to struggling with social tasks and skills of daily living. Students with ASD, to promote success at college, need to learn these skills while still in high school.

### **UK Study on Programming**

Looking at how another country works with youth with ASD is the article (Lei et al., 2020), "Evaluation of a Transition to University Programme for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder", was based on a study in the UK. The article was on a pilot program called "Autism

Summer School.” The study revealed that students with ASD need to develop independence in managing accommodations, financing, catering, and increased academic demands. The summer school was for two overnight stays and a curriculum delivered over 3 days. The curriculum was to relate directly to preparation for University life. 3 areas were the focus; work, rest, and play in the sessions. Later the participants in the Autism Summer School were given a questionnaire. The study lasted for 5 years and showed positive results. Through this type of programme, students who are thinking about attending a university can have their concerns about the transition reduced. The concerns are about academic, social, and daily living skills that are needed for student success. Successful transition planning was found to be a strong predictor of attending a university. It was revealed in the article (Chiang et al., 2012) that 61% of students who participated in transition planning and 74% who received instruction focused on transition planning went on to postsecondary education. Through the study a recommendation to Universities to offer tailored support to students with ASD. The support would be for pre-transition to the University, for their time while on campus or at the University, and to help prepare students with ASD for life after the University. Furthermore, there should be training given to staff at the University about how to help students with ASD.

For any student, but especially students with ASD, there is a need to learn “soft skills”. These “soft Skills” are social skills, self-confidence, and psychological wellness as it relates to employment and post-secondary education. In the article (Connor et al., 2020), “Building Skills, Confidence, and Wellness: Psychosocial Effects of Soft Skills Training for Young Adults with Autism”, they examined the ASSET program. It was a study based off of the UCLA PEERS program that was an intervention used to teach social skills. The Assistive Soft Skills and Employment Training (ASSET) program. The program teaches six core work-related social

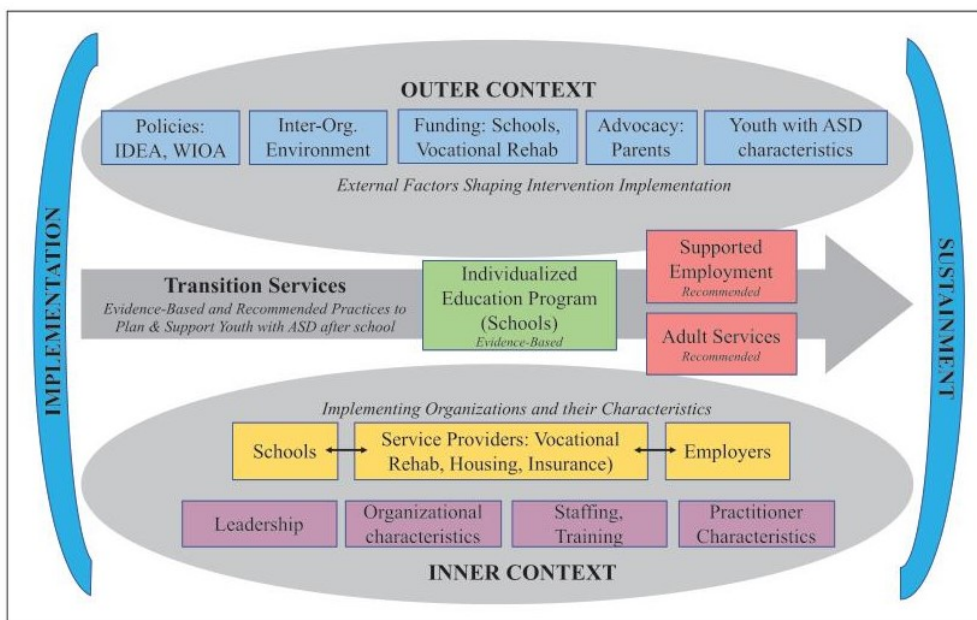


skills/soft skills. The skills taught were communication, attitude and enthusiasm, team work, networking, problem solving and critical thinking, and professionalism. Through the ASSET program youth with ASD went beyond “skills to pay the bills” to offering skills to increase social confidence and psychological wellness. The program/study showed long-term and statistically significant improvements not only in social functioning, but also in general self-efficacy and lessening anxiety.

### **Parents Future Vision for their Students**

Lastly, the final articles from parents' visions and stakeholders perspectives, an article (Chen et al., 2019) “Parent’s Future Visions for their Autistic transition-age youth: Hopes and Expectations”, shows parent support and expectations are a critical part in their student’s transition to adulthood. The study was conducted by focus groups and interviews with parents with transition-age youth with ASD. Questions were asked in relation to the transition process to adulthood. The eight domains covered in relation to adulthood are: community mobility, community participation, living situation, peer relationships, personal safety, post-secondary education, and work. The article relayed that many parents feel that there is not a clear road map in place to predict future success for their students. When there are clear plans and outlined goals with smaller objectives leading toward larger goals parents can be able to envision success for their student. The study concluded that providers working with families of autistic transition-age youth should understand how the parents see the future for their student in the eight domains. Parents might also benefit from clarifications of challenges and interventions to be used to help their students with “real-life” situations. The lack of a clear road map may affect how parents see future dreams and expectations for their students. The final article (Snell-Rood et al., 2020), “Stakeholder Perspectives on Transition Planning, Implementation, and outcomes for students

with Autism Spectrum Disorder”, goes into what is needed for success for youth with ASD. The study used 10 focus groups with 42 participants. The moderator used a semi-structured interview to ask a series of open-ended questions. These were then used to create an Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, and Sustainment (EPIS) conceptual model.



**Figure 1.** The EPIS framework shows interacting multilevel policies, collaborative relationships, and organizational factors that impact how transition services, as a complex intervention, are implemented long term. Source: Adapted from Moullin et al. (2019).

Stakeholders who had been involved in the COMPASS intervention identified what they felt needed to be improved. Skills needed to prepare youth with ASD are social, communication, and learning/work skills while they are in high school through the IEP process. Problems that came up from the focus groups include: inappropriate goal-setting, in effective communication between stakeholders, and inadequate involvement of all decision-makers needed to inform planning. All of the focus groups agreed to holding planning sessions before the IEP meeting to prepare participants to make informed decisions at the IEP meeting. There is a need for more direct communication between the following: school, families, the student, community providers, and service providers to make more educated decisions. Almost all of the focus groups also

identified the need for educating families and youth with ASD about the resources that are available to them to achieve post-school goals. Another need that surfaced from the focus groups was to expose youth with ASD to early career exploration and to learn job skills related to the community they live in. One service that should be explored early are those from VRS. Especially those needing WIOA services. The article concluded with a need for “careful assessment and planning to craft appropriate goals and the strategies to achieve them and better linking of schools to multiple agencies, organizations, and people” (Snell-Rood et al., 2020, p. 1173).

### **CHAPTER III: APPLICATION OF THE RESEARCH**

#### **Employment & Post Secondary Training Considerations**

Based on the research looked at earlier in the articles I reviewed, I have begun the process of addressing the needs of youth with ASD as it relates to employment and post-secondary education or training they will need once they have completed their high school education. What are the focuses, who is involved, preparatory material/curriculum, and skills needed by youth with ASD to be prepared for post-secondary education and/or employment? A recurring theme is the need for soft skills and work related skills. Soft skills will benefit youth with ASD in employment and post-secondary education. All functioning levels of ASD, lower and high functioning, will benefit from soft skills training. The “soft skills” needed by each

student will need to be addressed in the IEP for that student. The following application will benefit a large portion of students with ASD. The 5 soft skills needed for students with ASD to prepare them for employment and post-secondary education are: communication, enthusiasm and attitude, teamwork, problem-solving and critical thinking, and professionalism. The book by (Wentz, 2012) Soft Skills Training- A Workbook to Develop Skills for Employment, covers these 5 soft skills needed. The book gives students passages to read and discuss as a group. It then has an area for the students to respond and show understanding of the skill. Ground rules should be that we are all working on these soft skills and no one is an expert. The need to follow the “Golden Rule”, treat each other the way in which you would like to be treated during class discussions. During discussions we need to show each other respect and encourage each to participate. The golden rule can be a difficult concept with someone with ASD due the potential inability to empathize with others.

Communication is covered in section 3- Oral Communication skills. Key points to cover- the 4 types of communication, p. 310-311. How to be an Effective Workplace Communicator, p. 313. Principles of Communication, p. 316. Positive/Negative Nonverbal Communication signals, p. 318-319. Quotes for Discussion, p. 322-323. The mentioned pages above can be read and discussed, role played (especially the nonverbals), to build understanding. Thinking skills activities are then used to check for understanding. Being an effective communicator, especially in the workplace, is a need for students with ASD. The following are some of the materials from the book.

## TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

### Oral Communication

Oral communication is the process of using spoken words to successfully get your message across to others by conveying your thoughts and ideas effectively. The spoken verbal communication relies on words but also includes visual aids and nonverbal elements to assist the delivery of the meaning. Oral communication includes presentations, speeches, discussion, and other forms. In oral communication, body language and tone of voice can play a major role in getting your message across.

### Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is the aspect of communication that does not involve verbal communication. It involves sending and receiving wordless messages. This includes facial expressions, body movements, eye contact, gestures, and posture. It is talking without speaking. Nonverbal elements are also included when using the spoken word. These elements include volume, voice quality, pitch, rate, and speaking style. Dance can be considered a form of nonverbal communication.

### Written Communication

Written communication is communication by means of written symbols. It is the clear expression of ideas in writing and includes using correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The ideas must be expressed so the reader can understand them. Written communication is the most common form of business communication. This includes emails, memos, reports, and articles.

### Visual Communication

Visual communication is the expression of information and ideas in forms that can be read or viewed. It is communication that relies on vision. Body language and gestures are part of this communication process. Visual communication can be expressed with images including drawings, designs, illustrations, and color. Other forms are video clips and television.

## PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION

### MOST PEOPLE REMEMBER

- 10 percent of what they read
- 20 percent of what they hear
- 30 percent of what they see
- 40 percent of what they hear and see

There's an old communications game, telegraph, that's played in a circle. A message is whispered around from person to person. What the exercise usually proves is how profoundly the message changes as it passes through the distortion of each person's inner "filter."

Communication is a two-way process of giving and receiving information through any number of channels. Whether one is speaking informally to a colleague, addressing a conference or meeting, writing a newsletter article or formal report, the following basic principles apply:

- Know your audience.
- Know your purpose.
- Know your topic.
- Anticipate objections.
- Present a rounded picture.
- Achieve credibility with your audience.
- Follow through on what you say.
- Communicate a little at a time.
- Present information in several ways.
- Develop a practical, useful way to get feedback.
- Use multiple communication techniques.

Communication is complex. When listening to or reading someone else's message, we often filter what's being said through a screen of our own opinions. One of the major barriers to communication is our own ideas and opinions.

From *PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION*, Center for Urban Transportation Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Reprinted with permission from Edward A. Beimbom, Professor of Civil Engineering Emeritus.

## How to Be an Effective Workplace Communicator

- Be brief and to the point.
- Be friendly and non-confrontational.
- Make everyone feel special.
- Be coherent.
- Think before you speak.
- Be courteous.
- Do not put on a show to make a point.
- Do not become overly emotional.
- Don't talk too much.
- Speak slowly and with confidence.
- Make eye contact.
- Address people by name.
- Smile when appropriate.
- Use correct grammar.
- Stay focused on the message you are conveying.
- Keep it simple.



The next soft skills covered are enthusiasm and attitude. The book, Section 1 Personal Qualities and Work Ethic, covers this in chapters 5-10 in Section 1. Chapter 8 Commitment and Willingness, Chapter 9 Willing to improve, and Chapter 10 Finish what you Start are loaded with great material. Key points are- Tips to Improve Your Self-Discipline, p. 170, Surveys Show, p. 171, Attitude, p. 173, Positive Self-Image, p. 203, and Watch Your Thoughts, p. 215. Material from the book as examples of the curriculum used follow.

## TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR SELF-DISCIPLINE

1. Make a to-do list of what you want to accomplish each day. Start small.
2. Even if you do not feel like it, accomplish your to-do list on a daily basis.
3. Think. Do not let your feelings control you.
4. Stay focused on finishing what you start.
5. Don't get discouraged. Give yourself positive feedback even when you don't accomplish everything you want.
6. Do something productive every day. Make it a habit.

*For a man to conquer himself is the first and noblest of all victories.*

—Plato (428 BC–348 BC)

Surveys show that 73% of all workers are less motivated today than they used to be, and 84% could perform significantly better if they wanted to. Perhaps most shocking of all, a full 50% of workers say they are exerting only enough energy to hang on to their jobs!

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# ATTITUDES

Charles Swindoll

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life.

Attitude to me is more important than facts.

It is more important than the past,

Than education, than money,

Than circumstances, than failures, than successes,

Than what other people think or say or do.

It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill.

It will make or break a company.

It will cause a church to soar or sink.

It will be the difference in a happy home or a home of horror.

The remarkable thing is you have a choice every day regarding the attitude you will embrace for that day.

We cannot change our past.

We cannot change the fact that people will act a certain way.

We cannot change the inevitable.

The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude.

I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it.

And so it is with you.

"Attitudes" is excerpted from the sermon, *Strengthening Your Grip on Attitudes* (SYG7A), by Chuck Swindoll. Copyright © 1981 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights reserved worldwide. Reprinted with permission from [www.insight.org](http://www.insight.org).

*Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome.*

—Booker T. Washington (1856–1915)

## DEVELOPING A POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE

- Avoid putting yourself down with negative self-talk.
- Do something nurturing for yourself every day.
- Form mental images of your real self.
- Surround yourself with positive role models.
- Read self-help books that reinforce your emerging positive sense of self.
- Write down ten positive statements about yourself and say them to yourself on a regular basis.

From 7 KINDS OF SMART, REVISED & UPDATED EDITION by Thomas Armstrong, copyright © 1993, 1999 by Thomas Armstrong. Reprinted with permission from Plume, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

*When you are classified as “at risk,” “disadvantaged,” and “underprivileged,” they are talking about your income. But don’t let this determine your outcome, because your mind is not at risk. Your mind is not disadvantaged, and your mind is not underprivileged.*

—Cleo Fields

*Watch your thoughts,  
for they become words.  
Watch your words, for  
they become actions.  
Watch your actions, for  
they become habits.  
Watch your habits, for  
they become character.  
Watch your character,  
for it becomes your  
destiny.*

—Author Unknown

Teamwork is the next soft skill that needs to be worked on. It is found in Section 4 Interpersonal and Teamwork Skills. In addition to the material in the book I also would recommend some group activities like building structures together or my favorite survival games like lost at sea or how to survive a zombie apocalypse. Survival games encourage the students to think about what they may need to survive in the real world. Students can only have so many items. It also allows them to discuss within a safe group why they chose the items. For the survival games I first have them come up with their own ranked items and then put them into groups of 3-4 students to work together to rank the items for their group. Two key examples from the book follow, Teamwork, p. 350 and One person can, p 351.

## TEAMWORK

Cooperative effort on the part of a group of people acting together in the interest of a common cause

### WORKFORCE TEAMWORK SKILLS

- Do not judge others.
- Respect each individual worker and contribution.
- Be ready to comprise.
- Use clear communication.
- Know the common cause is for the good of the company and not the individual.
- Be willing to share information.
- Support and trust each other.
- Be willing to help other employees.
- Be responsible for the actions of the team.
- Perform duties even through conflict.



## EMPLOYMENT NOTES

In the book *The Art of Happiness at Work* by the Dalai Lama and Howard C. Cutler, M.D., the Dalai Lama makes the following observation about the workplace environment:

One person can change the atmosphere of the workplace environment. You can see examples, for instance, of a very tense group of coworkers who don't get along, and then a new employee shows up, one who is warm and friendly, and after a while the mood and attitude of the whole group changes for the better. In the same way, sometimes you will see the opposite occur, where people at work are getting along and are friends, but then someone new will start work there, someone who is a troublemaker, and then that one can affect the whole group and cause conflicts and problems. So each of us can have an effect on others, and even change the atmosphere at work. And in that respect, a low-level worker might have more impact on one's immediate surroundings at work, at least in one's department, than the boss.

From *THE ART OF HAPPINESS AT WORK* by His Holiness The Dalai Lama and Howard C. Cutler, M.D., copyright © 2003 by His Holiness The Dalai Lama and Howard C. Cutler, M.D. Published by Riverhead Books, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

Problem-solving and critical thinking are soft skills needed in the work environment. They are covered in Section 2 of the book Problem solving and other Cognitive Skills. Key areas in the book- 6 Steps to Problem Solving, p. 240-281 goes through it step by step. The 6 steps are outlined in the book in the following.

## 6 STEPS TO PROBLEM SOLVING

1. Define the problem.
2. Get the facts. Focus on the important facts.
3. Think of different solutions to the problem.
4. Analyze the solutions and come up with a plan.
5. Carry out your plan.
6. Evaluate the effects of your plan.

**Decision making is part of problem solving and a critical thinking skill that students with ASD need to learn to do in a work environment and in post-secondary education, as well as life. These two skills are ones that when they are improved lead to more independence for students with ASD after high school. An example I would use is Decision Making, P. 264. I included the following.**

## DECISION MAKING

Decision making is part of the problem-solving process. Decision making is simply choosing from among alternatives. You make hundreds of decisions each day: what time to wake up, what to wear, what and where to eat, what to do, what music to listen to, whom to be with, where to work, and so on. Your decisions shape your life. You begin to grow and develop as an adult once you can accept the truth that you are what you are today because of the choices you have made in the past and the choices you make today will shape your future.

To make wise decisions, your decision-making process should be based on your values and priorities, on what is important to you, on what you want to accomplish, and on the consequences of the decision. Control your own decisions and do not let your emotions control your decisions.

Your ability to make wise decisions will never improve unless you formulate your own values. The most important value you can develop is honesty. The first person you have to be honest with is yourself. Do you believe that you can accomplish more than what you have? How often do you lie to other people? Do you ever steal? Do you have to lie in order to get out of trouble? If you are an honest person, you do not cheat, steal, or lie. In order to be an honest person, do not put yourself in a situation in which you have to lie. It is very hard to be an honest person. Honesty is something no one can ever take from you.

When making a decision, always be aware of what is important to you in life and what you want to accomplish in life. Both of these factors should influence your decision. Finally, and just as important, assess the consequences of your decision. All decisions have consequences. Keep your assessment of the consequences in line with what you are trying to accomplish.

**Professionalism is covered in section 1 Personal Qualities and Work Ethic in the book. The chapters that cover this are, Chapter 4 Your Own Standards, Chapter 5 Any Job Is a Good Job, Chapter 6 Constant Change, and Chapter 7 Accept and Adjust. An example of the curriculum I would use found in the book are Job Success, p. 123, Initiative, p. 125, Harnessing The Power, p. 144, and Employment Notes, p. 154. The following are examples.**



## JOB SUCCESS

In order to be successful on a job, employees have to care how other people view them because they are judged by their behavior. Any negative behavior displayed outside of work should not be displayed during work. Employees must be professional with customers, coworkers, bosses, and vendors on every job. Displaying positive behavioral traits while at work will increase your chances for a pay raise, promotion, and continued employment.

You will be judged by your actions. Loud and disruptive behavior, playful behavior, and profane language are the most common downfalls of most entry-level workers. It is usually just a bad habit to talk loud or to always use curse words. This may not offend you, but it does offend other people. It indicates to your boss that you lack self-discipline and the ability to control yourself. A basic job trait is to be considerate of others. Using loud and profane language is not being considerate of others. This sends a message to others around you that you are inconsiderate. Do not waste your hard work. Have people view you as you really are—an excellent worker and a person who cares about being employed.

## INITIATIVE

Doing something above and beyond your job-related responsibilities

Helping other people without being told

Seeing an activity through to completion

Not having to be instructed every day on what needs to be done and when to start

Not having to be supervised

Cleaning your work area without being instructed

Discovering better ways to perform your job

Solving work-related problems to help the company increase profits

Helping new employees adjust to the job

## EMPLOYMENT NOTES

When you see something that needs to be done and it is outside of your job description, it does not hurt to just do the extra work. Initiative is a building block to being successful on a job.



## HARNESSING THE POWER

Harnessing the power of action & habit is to harness the power of everyday. Whatever falls into our daily routine gets done on a regular basis. Whatever doesn't usually gets postponed, rejected or ignored. We *become* what we do on a regular basis.

The power of everyday either works for us or it works against us—but it's always working. Sow on a daily basis and you *will* reap. Fail to sow on a daily basis and you may very well weep. Tapping into the power of habit is one of the surest ways to take control of our lives.

*Destiny is not a matter of chance, but a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for; it is a thing to be achieved.*

—William Jennings Bryant

There is a mysterious element to character and destiny. There *are* forces beyond our control which influence how our destiny unfolds. Yet, not everything is out of our hands.

We can change the way we think. We can consciously shape our habits. We can polish character.

Destiny is the fruition of a life. It's also a road we walk. When we walk *consciously* we bring the process of our life to a whole new level. We see that we can accept, change and evolve. Our path becomes an upward spiral of personal growth and fulfillment on so many levels.

From the Internet website [evolutionarypathways.com](http://evolutionarypathways.com)  
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## EMPLOYMENT NOTES

You might as well accept the fact that there could be times at work when you will not be treated fairly. The sooner you accept this, the more prepared you will be to deal with it. There will be other employees who are treated better than you and they will not deserve the treatment. They will receive higher pay, better job assignments, a better schedule, and more perks. A lot of times on a job it depends on who you know and not what you know.

The best way to deal with unfair treatment is to use it as motivation to outperform other employees and move up or on to a better position.

The worst way to deal with this is to develop a negative attitude toward your supervisors, constantly complain about it, or have it affect your productivity. Stay focused on what you are trying to accomplish.

Lastly, in the application area, there needs to be more interaction between all stakeholders in preparing students with ASD for post secondary challenges. Typically, there are interactions every 3 years that include an evaluation and annual IEP meetings. Students with ASD need more than this to be adequately prepared to enter the work force and/or post-secondary education. In the article written by Snell-Rood, (Snell-Rood et al., 2020), that discusses the stakeholders perspective on transition, it lobbies for more meetings with stakeholders as the students with ASD are ending their high school years. All of the agencies that will be working with the students with ASD past high school need to be involved in more frequent meetings. My application for this would be to have the required evaluations and IEP meetings for Freshman and Sophomore students, an extra meeting with Junior students, and at least three additional meetings with Seniors. For the Juniors it would be in the beginning of the school year and near the end of the school year. For Seniors it would be the same as the Juniors except one in the middle of the school year. It is imperative that all stakeholders be involved in the meetings during the Senior year. The focus in the Junior and Senior years would be to involve students in a work experience. Whether that is a paid or volunteer position.

## CHAPTER IV: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

### Summary of Literature

My research has led me to look to see what other countries are doing in this area to prepare students with ASD for post-secondary education and employment after high school. In Italy the family is fundamental in participating in the transition planning in the school and social inclusion (Laghi and Trimarco, 2020). The use of COMPASS, referenced in research articles, in the planning area of an IEP. They also feel strongly about using peer mediated intervention. This is the practice of teaching effective strategies to peers for them to interact with students with ASD, with a special focus on social skills by increasing social opportunities. There are 3 key elements that are used in Italy. First key element is the involvement of parents and teachers in evaluating the student with ASD strengths and challenges in regards to transition outcomes. The second key element is the use of peers. Peers are trained to be peer buddies in the general education classroom. The third key element is the parents' involvement in constructing the future plans for their student with ASD. Also, others involved are a network of health and social services especially during the transition years. According to a study (Dreaver, et al., 2020) that took place in two countries, Australia and Sweden, there are 3 themes that lead to successful employment for students with ASD. A strong knowledge-base of ASD is important for employers and supervisors of students with ASD. A structured and physical environment with a routine of work tasks favorable for employees with ASD. Clear communication strategies in written and verbal form is also beneficial for these students. Lastly, a job match is extremely important in promoting successful employment of students with ASD. The job is decided based on their skills, strengths and interests. Another study done in Australia (Lee, et al., 2020) was a 3-year longitudinal survey study in the first wave. The results from this is a strengths-based

approach which specifically targets the strengths and abilities of students with ASD. The goal is to build on these strengths and interests to increase confidence, self-esteem, social skills, and relationships by providing a sense of belonging. Other countries recognize the need for social skills training and parent involvement. To find their students strengths and interests and use them to be successful in future employment or further education. The concluding remarks in (Anderson et al., 2020, online no page #), “Young adults with ASD and their families celebrate the gifts of those on the autism spectrum, and hope for a bright future. At the same time, many are conscious of the barriers that hinder these young adults’ ability to find and maintain meaningful employment. These include a lack of pre-employment experiences, insufficiently addressed interfering issues (such as anxiety or social skills deficits), and external systems unmindful of their strengths and needs.” This sums up the reasons for this thesis.

### **Limitations of Research**

Much of the current research is based on the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 done in 2000. 21 years have passed since then. The information in it would not reflect the current programs being done. Many of the current studies and programs are still in progress and final research/results are unknown.

### **Implications of Future Research**

Future research still needs to be done to empower parents in which services are most beneficial for their students with ASD. What programs work best for students with ASD? What is the effectiveness of peers working with students with ASD? What is the success rate when soft skills are taught to students with ASD?

## **Professional Application**

I am a special education teacher. I have begun adding into my curriculum and when working with my caseload more focus on teaching soft skills. These would be: communication, enthusiasm and attitude, teamwork, problem-solving and critical thinking, and professionalism. I believe these prepare students with ASD for post-secondary education and future employment. Another area that I have addressed is the planning of transition occurrences with stakeholders during students with ASD during their junior and senior years. The results have been positive. Many of my students who did not have employment before they graduated now are entering the workforce earlier. This benefits them as well as my other students. The experiences and skills they are working on can be discussed in a group situation with higher effectiveness. The students with employment can directly relate to those who don't have employment experience, and highlight the reasons for the soft skills we are working on together. More services are being used to prepare students with ASD because earlier transition planning is happening with more frequency. This results in less anxiety seen in my students with ASD. While they still are anxious about graduating, they now know more about what they will encounter as their high school time is finishing. Parents are less stressed because they feel more knowledgeable about what the future will look like for their student with ASD. As I continue to work with the curriculum of soft skills and increase the planning occurrences for my student, they will be best prepared for post-secondary education and employment.

## **Conclusion**

I believe that if we can teach soft skills to students with ASD they will be more successful in all areas of their lives. If we can find students with ASD strengths and interests and

use it to match them with training opportunities and employment, students with ASD will not only experience success, but will be more successful and happier in their employment. More earlier involvement and frequency of planning by stakeholders will also prepare students with ASD for more success in the areas of employment and post-secondary education.

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