

Autism In The Classroom

Preparing Individuals For Employment

Overview

Work is a key element of adult life. All of us learn and develop as workers based on our previous work experiences, such as summer and after school jobs, or career development activities such as shadowing, observing others at work, job tryouts and volunteering. Often individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) have limited opportunities for career development and work experience while in high school possibly because of communication or behavior challenges or because school personnel or parents may want to protect the individual with ASD or fear that the individual can not handle a work situation. Even students who plan to attend college or other post secondary training still need to understand how to obtain employment and keep a job.

Effective transition planning and services in high school can contribute to successful employment by providing work experience opportunities and by beginning to identify and try a variety of supports that may be necessary for the individual with ASD to have a successful work experience. We know that when support is provided in the work setting for individuals with ASD, there are higher job retention rates (Hinton Keel, Mesibov, & Wood, 1997) and in the United Kingdom a supported employment project reported that significantly more of the supported group found work than those who did not receive support. Job levels and wages were higher for the supported group and they were at work for a greater percentage of time.

Employment for the purposes of this unit can be part time or full time, in a supported work setting or without supports, as part of a mobile work crew, or as a paid internship. The individual

with ASD does receive a paycheck. Transition Planning and services in high school can provide a foundation for successful adult outcomes including employment. This unit will describe and examine the different types of supports that may be needed in the work setting for individuals with ASD and the role of the team in identifying how and when to use these supports. The role of the job coach as a critical support person will also be discussed, along with the key roles of the supervisor and co-workers, as well as the need to develop natural supports. Resources to implement strategies and examples of supports, such as visual, organizational and technology, will be provided.

Transition Planning: Laying the Foundation for Employment

Guiding Questions to answer as you read this section:

1. Why is transition a results oriented process?
2. How does age appropriate transition lay the foundation for employment?
3. Why are measurable post secondary goals important for a student's employment success?

Transition Services and the IEP

Transition services were mandated to be included in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in 1986 because of a lack of employment outcomes for students with IEPs when they graduated from high school. Later versions of IDEA transition legislation broadened the original emphasis on transition to work to also include transition to community and residential living and recreation and leisure. The current IDEA 2004 still emphasizes transition results and outcomes by requiring states to report data on several federal transition indicators, but IDEA 2004 also underscores the

importance of coordinated efforts in providing transition services within a student centered process.

In 1983, Madeleine Will, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) and a parent of a child with a disability, began to talk about the disconnect between what was happening for special education students in the schools under PL94-142 and what happened once these special education students graduated from high school. Students who were receiving a free and appropriate public education were not able to find employment or continue post secondary education. In 1986 a Harris Poll was released that underscored this disconnect between school and successful employment by citing unemployment rates of 66% for adults with disabilities ages 18-64. Madeleine Will envisioned successful transition as a bridge between school and work, and began to talk about what services were needed for a successful transition. She advocated for funding of transition demonstration projects in the 1984 PL 94-142 and the need for establishing linkages with adult service agencies like the Rehabilitation Services Commission. Finally, in the 1990 IDEA, transition was mandated to be included in the IEP.

The Transition Services and Employment Link

What has been happening with adults with autism who have graduated from high school? In the 1980's students with autism were not being identified in the large numbers we see today. Students with moderate support needs and those who were non-verbal were probably being served by the mental retardation/developmental disabilities system and were being placed in sheltered workshops. Those students with

high functioning autism (HFA) may have been served under IDEA categories of behavior or serious emotional disturbance and were just beginning a long cycle of obtaining employment and losing it due to social, communication, behavior, or sensory issues.

We now know that a wide range of individuals with ASD can work successfully in supported employments situations. Research from the Prospects program in the United Kingdom and TEACCH in North Carolina cite encouraging statistics. Individuals with ASD who use augmentative communication devices are able to work when they receive training and proper setup and programming of their devices to include phrases and vocabulary relevant to the work setting and other necessary supports. We know from authors such as Temple Grandin, who wrote *Thinking in Pictures* and *Developing Career Talents* among others, that she faced challenges in obtaining employment and in the work place because of her autism, but that she was able to make adaptations and be successful because of her skills and abilities. There is now a more open culture and technology that allows and encourages discussion around employment issues for individuals with ASD. There are web sites, blogs and discussion sites for individuals with ASD who are seeking employment. However there is still a high rate of unemployment and underemployment for individuals with ASD and challenges to provide more effective transition services and post- secondary training and resources. Transition planning and services still continue to be an important foundation for ensuring a successful transition to work for all students, but especially for students with ASD.

Key Considerations in Transition to Employment for Students with ASD

In the following sections are ideas to consider as students transition to employment. These include developing beginning job skills, teaching self-determination skills, conducting transition assessments, using data to design post-secondary goals, and completing comprehensive planning. Each of these areas needs to be addressed to plan transition to employment.

Simple Job Development Experiences

Parents can provide simple job development experiences by assigning household chores that incorporate following directions (with necessary visual supports), building on student interest or providing incentives for work completion. Teaching students functional life skills is also a high evidence secondary transition practice (Test, 2007). Educators may be able to partner with families by providing ideas and help with organizational or communication supports.

For example, video and peer modeling have been used to learn activities of daily living such as grocery shopping and making change.

National Secondary Transition and Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) has many resources on transition, including evidence based practices and a research to practice lesson plan library.

Click on Evidence Based Practices in the tool bar across the top and then the Research to Practice Lesson Plan Library link on the left of the page. <http://www.nsttac.org/>

Develop Self-Determination Skills

Parents and educators can help students develop self-determination skills. Self-determination skills include making choices and decisions, goal setting, problem solving and self advocacy.

Research shows that students with self-determination skills are better prepared to participate in

planning for their future and in making decisions. Students should be invited to attend their own Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting. Often, they will need preparation and skill training to participate in a meaningful manner. Involving students in their IEP process and self-determination interventions are both high evidence secondary transition practices (Test, 2007). Students can receive training to develop these skills using the Steps to Self-Determination Curriculum or learn to lead their own IEP meetings using the Self-Directed IEP Curriculum. This can help ensure that the transition planning process reflects their interests.

Case Study: Arlene

Arlene is a sixteen-year old student who is presenting a computer slide presentation at her annual IEP review. Arlene has been working on a career goal-planning unit with her classmates. They participated in a career assessment, researched careers of interest, and developed plans to achieve career goals using graphic organizers and peer discussion. Since Arlene doesn't use speech, she created a computer slide presentation of her plan and had a friend narrate it for her IEP meeting. Arlene was able to share her thoughts about her future with her parents and the school staff in a meaningful way.

Age Appropriate Transition Assessment

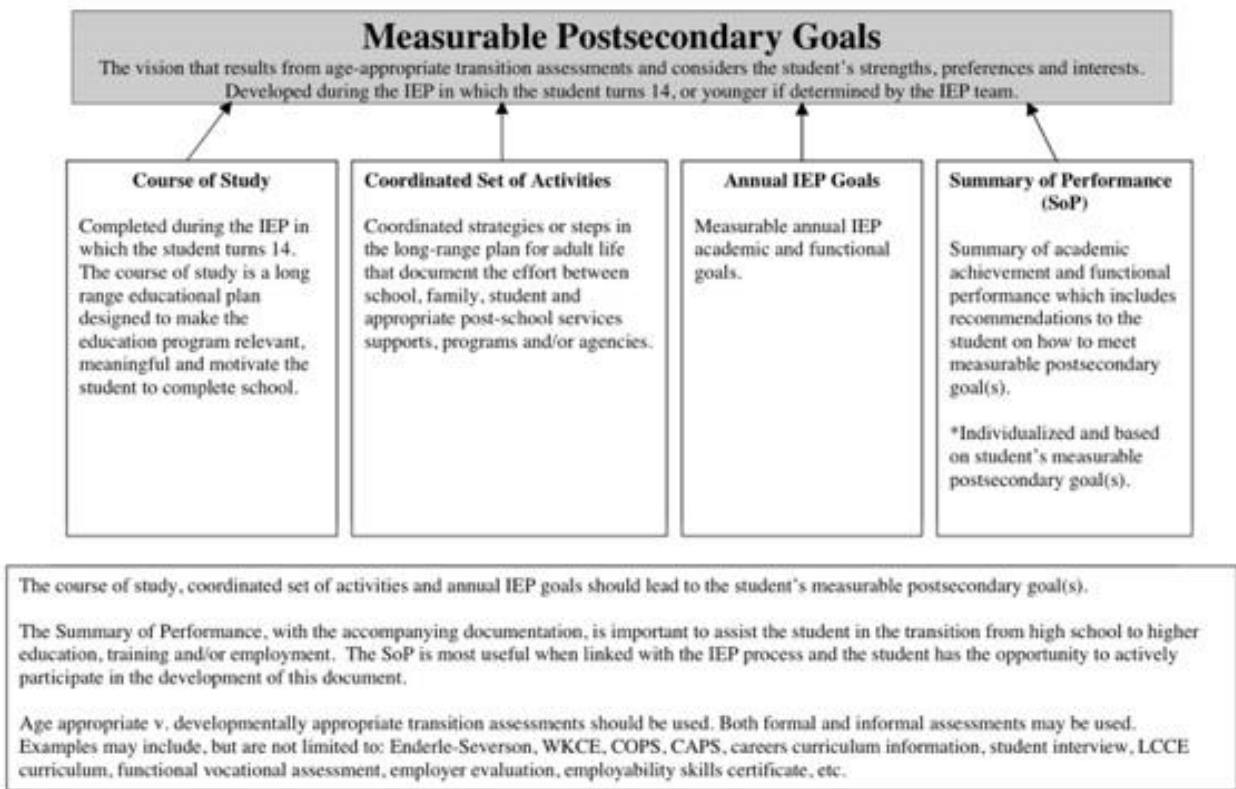
Age Appropriate transition assessment results form the basis for defining transition services and goals. Transition assessment activities give the student and parents opportunities to explore career interests and abilities through formal and informal testing and situational experiences in different work settings. Students with ASD who have strong visual abilities may also benefit from viewing short video clips of different jobs as a beginning exploration activity.

The link below has videos of many careers, skills and abilities, and possible work options. Two examples are shown on this page.

Career One Stop Job Video Listing:

<http://acinet.org/acinet/videos.asp?id=27,&nodeid=27>

Measurable Post-Secondary Goals



Measurable post-secondary goals for the student should be supported by data from age appropriate transition assessments and align with the student's course of study or vocational training.

Comprehensive and Collaborative Planning

Comprehensive and collaborative planning among the student, educators, families and adult service providers for post school employment goals needs to begin early so students can transition seamlessly from the local education agency to the needed community and post secondary providers.

Case Study: John

John, a student at the local career center consortium, is receiving skill training in grounds keeping and landscaping. The job training coordinator from his school district has arranged a paid internship with a local landscaping company that begins after he graduates. A job coach, paid for by the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR), attended John's transition meeting and will be evaluating the job site. The job coach will work with John and the new employer to provide the necessary visual, social, and organizational supports. Meanwhile, John and his family have researched course offerings at the local community college and he has applied to take one course in their landscaping degree program. John needed his entire team to design and carry out the plan for his future.

How Characteristics of Individuals with ASD Impact Job Development and Employment

Guiding Questions to answer as you read this section:

1. Can you describe some challenges that individuals with ASD may face while seeking employment and once they have found a job?
2. What are some assets that individuals with ASD may bring to the work place?

3. What are some jobs that may generally be suited to the characteristics of individuals with ASD?

Obstacles in the Workplace

Employment dilemma for individuals with autism spectrum disorder	
Obstacles	Assets
<input type="checkbox"/> Verbal & non verbal communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Accuracy in visual perception
<input type="checkbox"/> Social relationships	<input type="checkbox"/> Concentration
<input type="checkbox"/> Social behaviors	<input type="checkbox"/> Long term memory
<input type="checkbox"/> Special interests	<input type="checkbox"/> Special interests
<input type="checkbox"/> Heightened or subdued response to sensory stimulation	<input type="checkbox"/> Tolerance for repetitive activities

Madeline Rosenstein 8/06 (Hagner & Cooney, 2005)

On the left side of the list are common characteristics of individuals with ASD that present obstacles to employment. Not every individual with autism will demonstrate all of these characteristics. Problems with understanding verbal and non-verbal communication may result in difficulties following verbal directions on a job or reading an expression of annoyance or anger on the part of a supervisor or co-worker. One worker with autism, who repeatedly asked his boss questions after being given verbal directions, so annoyed his supervisor that he was accused of challenging his supervisor's authority. Being able to understand non-verbal cues often results in self-monitoring our behaviors or changing how we relate to others based on the reading of body language. Individuals with ASD are often unable to interpret non-verbal cues, and will continue to perform job duties and tasks incorrectly even though co-workers and supervisors think their

non-verbal cues should have been understood. Being unable to initiate or maintain social relationships with others in the work place may result in isolation from co-workers and supervisors, as well as few co-workers who can support and assist on the job when needed. Unusual social behaviors, such as rocking while waiting in line for lunch at the office cafeteria, or repeatedly talking about one topic only, or not engaging in reciprocal conversation, may also result in avoidance by others. Covering your head and eyes and not working because of sensitivity to bright lights or loud noises may result in lowered productivity that will endanger the job security of a person with ASD.

Assets in the Workplace

Employment dilemma for individuals with autism spectrum disorder

Obstacles	Assets
<input type="checkbox"/> Verbal & non verbal communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Accuracy in visual perception
<input type="checkbox"/> Social relationships	<input type="checkbox"/> Concentration
<input type="checkbox"/> Social behaviors	<input type="checkbox"/> Long term memory
<input type="checkbox"/> Special interests	<input type="checkbox"/> Special interests
<input type="checkbox"/> Heightened or subdued response to sensory stimulation	<input type="checkbox"/> Tolerance for repetitive activities

Madeline Rosenshein 8/06 (Hagner & Cooney, 2005)

Individuals with ASD often bring assets to the work place also. The assets, although not every individual with ASD has all of these, listed on the right side of the picture, such as accuracy in

visual perception, may be beneficial to individuals doing work that requires a lot of attention to detail or precision, like technical work, clock repair or filing.

Being able to concentrate on tasks for long periods of time is definitely an asset in many work situations. Long-term memory, especially for details, is also helpful for jobs that require building on background knowledge to complete tasks such as installing computer software or hardware, or being a reference librarian.

Case Study: Bud

Bud is a young man with autism who likes the sound of broken glass and china, especially porcelain toilet lids. He was matched with a job to meet his need for heightened sensory stimulation. His special interest and his ability to do repetitive tasks came together as assets. He obtained employment in a recycling center breaking glass so the raw material could be recycled. Of course, he is excelling, because it is a great job match! Some characteristics, such as special interests and a desire for routine and predictability, can be an asset for a job setting.

Case Study: George

George, generally a gentle and quiet worker in a library, became very upset if the work routine was disrupted in any way. He insisted that union meetings be held at lunch times or after work so his schedule would remain unchanged. This insistence did not endear him to his colleagues.

Sometimes a characteristic can be a liability in a job situation, and solutions need to be generated to ease the worker into accepting a change of routine.

Case Study: Mark

Here's a story, with a little attitude, on how autism can be seen as an asset in employment.

Malemployment, not only working far below your skill level but also at a task for which you are totally unsuited, is illustrated.

Mark has autism and a cum laude degree from Yale. He got a job as a telemarketer and lasted a day and a half. He is now a research assistant testing computer code. His co-workers are all work study undergraduate students. He comments, "So, rather than just looking at the rumpled suit and diffident eye contact, employers might be well advised to give candidates with autism a second look. After all, what good is it to hire a neurotypical who dresses straight out of GQ [Gentleman's Quarterly magazine] and gives you a presentation worthy of a drum major if he or she is going to move on in six months? Besides someone like that will probably be making personal phone calls all day, whereas people with autism would seldom or ever do so. If these people are really looking for diligent, loyal employees, they just might find that people with autism fit the bill." (Romoser, 2000)

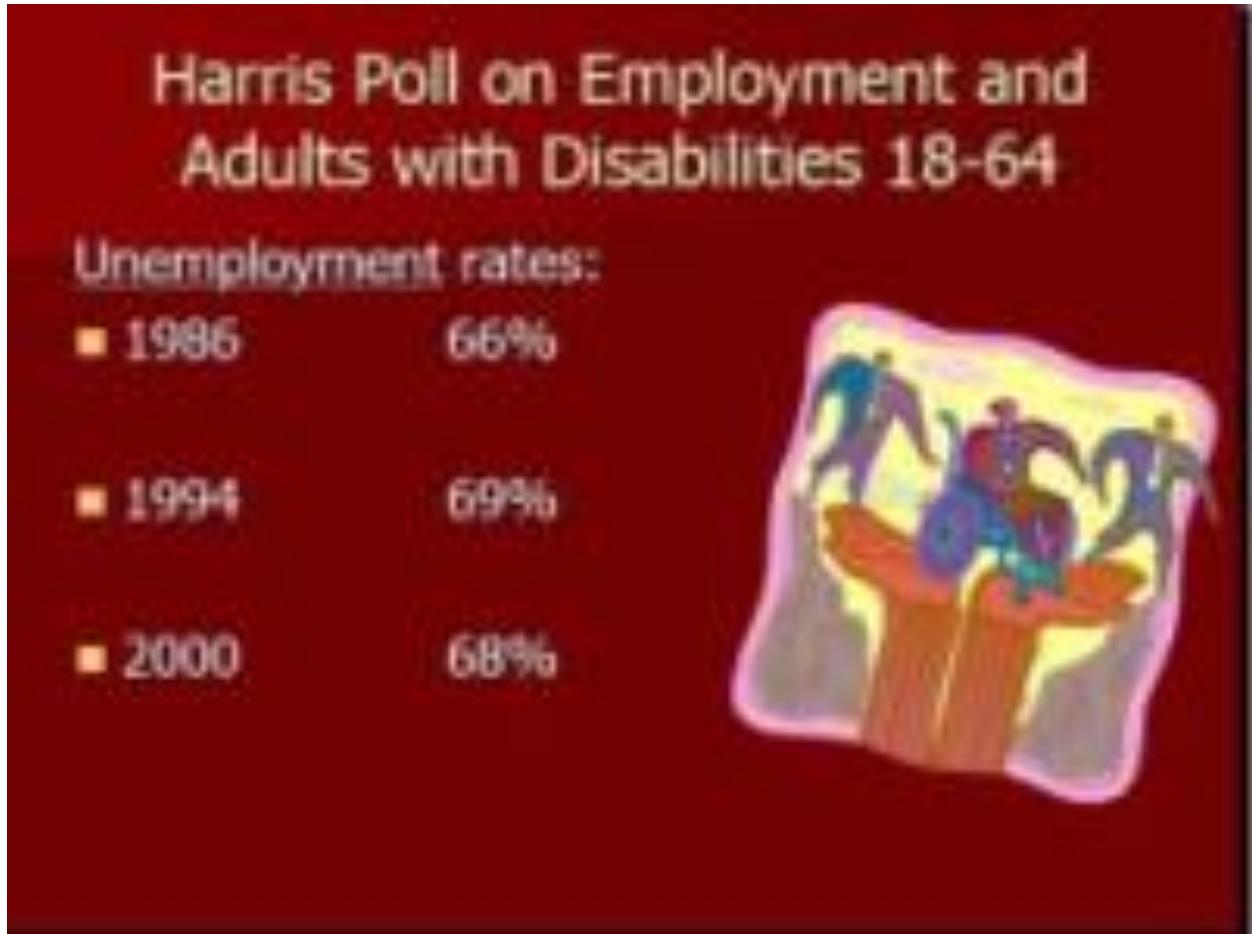
Supported Employment

Guiding questions to answer as you read this section:

1. What are some ways that supported employment helps individuals with ASD be successful on the job?
2. How does a job coach support a worker with ASD?
3. Why should natural supports be developed for an individual with ASD at work?

4. How are the supports that consumers and supervisors recommend for individuals with ASD similar?

Employment Figures



There have been three Harris Polls over the past twenty years that report on unemployment rates of persons with disabilities, age 16-64. As you can see it has not been an encouraging trend. These unemployment rates translate respectively to 24%, 21% and 22% employment rates for individuals with disabilities age 16-64.

- o Daniel Tammet in Born on a Blue Day (2007) reveals that in the United Kingdom the National Autistic Society reports that only 12% of people with high functioning autism or Asperger's Syndrome had full time jobs.

- David Test reports on rates of engagement for individuals with autism from data collected by the National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 (NLTS2, 2005). He characterizes engagement as working, attending post-secondary education, working and attending school, or job training alone. The rate of employment only for individuals with autism is 14%, post secondary education is 15%, employment and postsecondary education is 13.6% and job training only is 13.1%

The Effective Job Coach

In supported employment a person with a disability receives ongoing support (supervision, training, transportation) to secure & maintain a paid job in a competitive work environment.

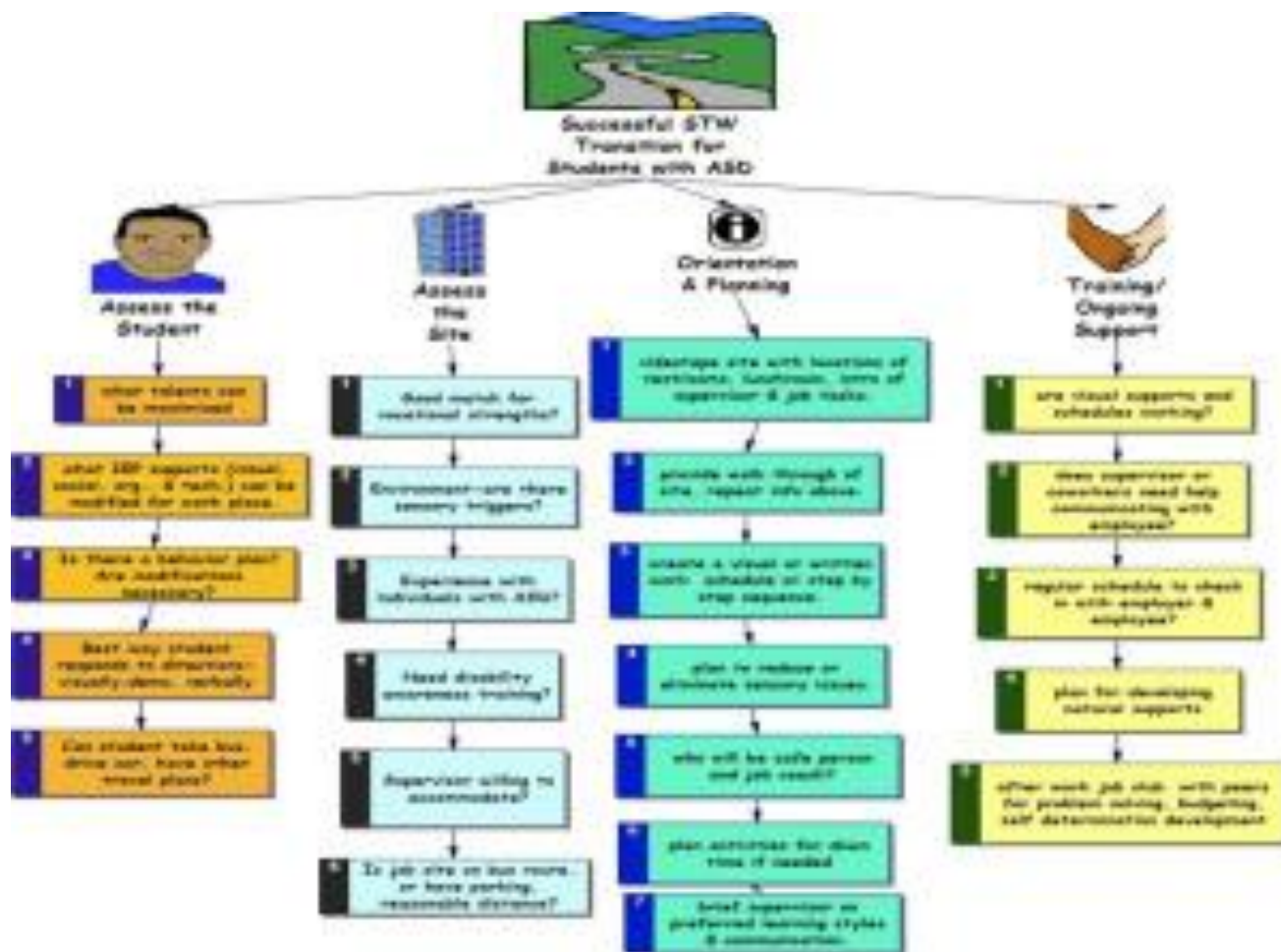
Role in Assessment: Through an assessment process and with other team members, the job coach must first determine if there is a good match between the individual with ASD, their skills, abilities and interests, and the work place and the demands of the job. If there is, the assessment process also identifies needed supports in the work setting. This requires knowledge of the individual, the work environment, understanding the work culture and an analysis of the job requirements. The assessment process will include the steps: assess, support, evaluate, and revise. Knowing the student/individual with ASD, understanding observable behavior, determining issues in the job environment, evaluating job demands, and supporting social and communication skills that will be needed will all be addressed in the assessment process.

Case Study: Josiah

Josiah, an individual with autism spectrum disorder, was working with his job coach, Louise, to figure out what supports he needed for a new job site. Louise had spoken with Josiah and his team about his employability assessments and needs. They decided Josiah would need some help developing visual supports for his new job, including a schedule for work, a time line for each task, and some step-by-step picture directions. Louise talked with Josiah about his sensory needs also. They built in some break times so he could get up for a walk or a snack, and made sure he had earplugs if the noise became too loud. Josiah, his team, and his job coach helped him have the best chance for a positive outcome at his new assignment by setting him up with the supports he needed.

Role as a liaison: The job coach is a critical person who provides and coordinates the ongoing supports and acts as a liaison, especially in the beginning of a new work experience among the worker with ASD, his supervisor and co-workers.

If the individual with ASD is transitioning from a school environment, some supports may already be in place and may only need to be modified for the new setting and tasks. This picture illustrates some of the important areas (student, site, orientation and ongoing support) that must be addressed in order to ensure a successful work experience for the student.



School to Work Strategies

This diagram highlights successful School to Work Transition Strategies for students with ASD including:

- Assessing the Student
- Assessing the Work Site

- Orienting and Planning, and
- Training and Ongoing Support.

This document is available in the Resources Section under “Materials”

More on the Effective Job Coach

You can see from the supported employment figures that rates of employment are higher when individuals with ASD are able to work in situations where needed supports are provided. These figures refer to TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children), a supported employment program in North Carolina, and Prospects, a supported employment program in the United Kingdom, and finally data from the Rehabilitation Services Administration. This is the federal agency that oversees the state Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, a funding program for vocational training and employment for adults with disabilities. Every state has a Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation that individuals with disabilities can apply to for help with finding employment. See the resources section for the web site.

With supports in place, research shows:

- 89% retention rate with provision of TEACCH support services (Keel et al, 1997)
- 68% placement in supported employment project in UK over 8 years (Howlin, 2005)
- 75.3% successful closure in supported employment versus 58.4% successful closure for competitive employment from total of 1323 individuals with autism who received services from RSA (Schaller & Yang, 2005)

This is what happens without supports:

- Difficulty maintaining employment because of poor communication, social skill deficits, and sensory issues
- Depression, anxiety, and anger were common with adults with ASD as a result of employment issues
- All but one from study were on medication for depression or anxiety (Hurlbutt & Chalmers, 2004)

Role as a Teacher: Often the job coach is thought of as the person that teaches and trains the individual with ASD to learn a new job. A job coach may write a clear, concise set of steps for all the tasks that the individual with ASD needs to complete. Perhaps a supervisor at the job thinks it is so well done and effective in teaching the job that it becomes the training manual for all new employees.

In this section, we are going to talk about the role of the job coach.

The job coach is a crucial support in maintaining employment for individuals with ASD. We know that individuals with ASD often encounter problems on the job, such as those listed in the left hand column. Also, a number of research articles have come up with successful strategies that can be used to address these problem areas. As another aside, job coaches are often not given any training about best practices to do their jobs. I think this is especially true for those job coaches who work for schools.

The problems:

Organization-- difficulty with coping with more than one task at a time, or needing a framework for how to get started with a task or a work system to complete a task-this could be a need for different color coding of parts needed for each step of a job and having all the material organized in the order that the individual will use it. Low productivity can also be due to the need for a work system, a schedule that may be needed to pace the individual through a job or just the use of a simple timer. In *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night*, a book about a young man with autism, the main character says, "I like timetables because they make sure I don't get lost in time." He doesn't like going on holidays with his parents because there's no timetable. Communication-- too many words can be confusing as can giving a long list of tasks all at once. Humor and sarcasm may not be understood, or accepting criticism may be very difficult. Inappropriate behavior--the individual with ASD who is working in a hot setting may not understand that taking off his shirt or pants so he doesn't sweat is not acceptable in the work place, or stopping his work to talk with an attractive young lady and following her is not acceptable either. Unexpected Changes in schedule or job tasks may also cause anxiety and outbursts. So here are some successful strategies that we know work in the right hand column:

Written instructions or instructions with pictures. This can be helpful too with communication and organization problems. The Work System that was briefly described where color coding and having material and tasks laid out in the order to be completed. The work system may also involve sorting aides or templates, jigs, baskets and counters for completed work.

Time tables and schedules may be needed for productivity and pacing. You will see some examples of schedules in the next section. Role playing may help the individual with ASD in social interactions with co workers and communication with supervisors. Practicing a

better response in a role play is a key component of learning social skills. Job Coaches and supervisors may find that demonstrating or modeling the way a job should be done is more effective than only verbally talking about the task. Following up with written instructions may also be needed. Co-workers especially may know the job best and when there are difficulties learning a task or with communication, involving them in the solution, not only gives them ownership in the success of their co-worker with ASD but also starts to build a relationship with the coworker directly instead of filtering interactions through the job coach. Job coaches are often told to "pay attention to who's paying attention to your worker". Those co-workers who are "paying attention" to the worker with ASD, are interested and by developing a relationship between the co-worker and the individual with ASD, the job coach is developing a "natural support" so that when the job coach begins to fade, the co-worker may naturally assume some of the support that the individual with ASD needs because they have developed a relationship.

Disability awareness training either through a brief in person meeting with the supervisors and co-workers or leaving pamphlets geared towards employers about supervising workers with ASD. You will see two examples in Section 6. One is done by JAN (the Job Accommodation network) or another on Supporting Individuals with Autism in Integrated Community Jobs, may also help prepare coworkers and supervisors for what to expect. The Disability Awareness meetings may also help other employees understand that the individual is not being rude or unfriendly in social situations but just may not have great social skills. Later on we will talk about that in some situations it may be better to do on the spot disability education. Knowing some of the characteristics of autism leads to understanding why it might be necessary to modify a work procedure using step-by-step instructions or pictures. Many of these strategies come from an article by Howlin who did research on an eight year long successful supported

employment project in London. This is Joyce, a Job Training Coordinator hired by a school district but who works at a technology company in Northeast Ohio and acts as a job coach for 10-12 students with disabilities, some with autism, who have part time internships at different sites in the company during the school year. She also provides skill training on some of those soft skills like interviewing, relating to co-workers and supervisors and particular hard skills, like use of Microsoft Office, that may be needed. She is a former business education instructor. What you see on this slide is a list of job coach services and supports that she provided for Jerry, a young man with Asperger's who works as an assistant for an office manager. Jerry does a variety of tasks, some utilizing his technology skills, such as setting up databases and macros, doing Power Points. He also does some office tasks such as packaging materials and sending out via UPS for other staff in his unit. He also inventories videos and does other office work. It is a large company with 3 floors and many different departments. On his first day, Jerry was very overwhelmed and had a "meltdown". Part of his anxiety related to being able to navigate around the building without getting lost. He was able to figure out the coding system for the hallways and offices and this self-help strategy reduced some of his anxiety. You can see the variety of supports that Joyce provided. In conversation with Jerry, he appears very competent. This list is typical of the sorts of supports that are often needed and if not provided can result in a loss of employment. For example, Keel et al., found that the provision of support services resulted in an 89% job retention rate after 1 year. Often these supports extend beyond assistance with job routines and tasks and extend to the social arena as well. As you can see this list includes social interactions and grooming. Longer job retention has also been correlated with higher levels of social inclusion and social acceptance on the job. You will find out some more about Jerry, when you "meet" his supervisor in the next PowerPoint titled: The Role of the Supervisor.

Here are some other examples of strategies that job coaches may use: On the spot Disability education---A job coach was able to briefly explain to a co-worker about a young man with ASD and his need to pace up and down the hall periodically. The job coach explained that this was a coping strategy and the pacing helped control anxiety and usually meant that he needed to take a break and just walk up and down the hall. Develop Understanding and acceptance-When a co-worker came in at the start of the day he would tell the young man with ASD several tasks that should be done, but he would see that the young man just stood there and didn't get started. The Job coach was able to explain that the young man had difficulty with multiple tasks (less was more when giving directions) and didn't know how to get started. In fact, he was getting upset and frustrated because he wasn't getting his work done. If the co-worker told him just one task at a time and if he could establish a routine or an order in which he wanted the work done, it would be better for the young man. Also, the job coach worked with the co-worker to write down some step-by-step instructions for common tasks in simple language. Here are some more examples:

The job coach may need to help the individual understand when the boss is angry, because the young man with ASD is unable to understand the social cues, such as a look of annoyance on the supervisor's face. Or the coach might need to help the young man learn the social rule that when someone expresses interest in a hobby, respond briefly and get back to work. Scripts that can be taught for particular social situations and role playing often help keep situations predictable and may help with coping with some of the social demands of the job. One young man with ASD commented on how he became comfortable with job interviewing because the same questions were usually asked. He learned the script and had practiced the answers so the situation had become predictable. Adaptive Behavior scales, like the Incredible 5 Point Scale, are visual and

make emotions concrete by assigning numbers to a range of emotions or reactions to a situation. The scales can also offer alternative responses based on each degree of emotion or reaction. You will see several examples of Adaptive Behavior scales for employment in the next section.

Paul Wehman came up with this approach to task accommodation and it s a good framework for how to approach accommodations on the job. The last resort after everything else has failed is teach the coworker to understand. Here's an example and a great explanation of how someone with ASD feels when he is asked too many questions. This example comes from the book, again, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Christopher*, the main character says this about too many questions, and this is a quote, "He was asking me too many questions and

they were stacking up in my head like loaves in the factory where Uncle Terry works. The factory is a bakery and he operates the slicing machines. And sometimes a slicer is not working fast enough but the bread keeps coming and there is a blockage. He asked me another question. I rolled back onto the lawn and pressed my forehead to the ground again and made the noise that father calls groaning. I make this noise when there is too much information coming into my head from the outside world. ...this noise is all you can hear and then you know you are safe because you can't hear anything else." So.... after hearing that explanation would you have a better understanding of why Christopher pressed his head to the floor and groaned when asked too many questions? Would you be more tolerant of this behavior if Christopher could not change it?

Of course some individuals with ASD may not be able to articulate why they are behaving a certain way, but the job coach who knows the individual may be able to, and this understanding on the part of the co-workers can be a very effective accommodation. So in conclusion we can

see that skilled job coaches can play a key role in the success of individuals with ASD in maintaining employment.

Development of Natural Supports

Supports that occur naturally in a work setting or environment are referred to as natural supports. Family and medical leave, wellness programs, employee assistance, basic skills training, coaching, mentoring and apprenticeships are formal supports that are available in many work settings. Informal supports can be a watch alarm prompting an individual when to take a break and when to return to work, a co-worker assisting another employee with completing a task, or a supervisor listening to the employee vent about a customer or co-worker. We all have natural supports in our work settings.

Case Study: John

John, who has autism and has difficulty communicating, uses a natural support available at work, email. Whenever possible, John finds it easier to understand email communications that come from his boss or co-workers. With email he can concentrate on the message and not have to worry about trying to figure out what the expression on his supervisor's face means or get distracted when talking to co-workers by loud noise or other people walking by while he is talking.

Job coaches are paid by state or community agencies. Some employed individuals with ASD also use their own wages to pay for a job coach so they can continue to work. This is a work related expense and if they are receiving Social Security benefits, this expense can be deducted from their income so they can continue to receive benefits. See Resources for links to these organizations. There is usually a limit to the length of time funding is provided. Job coaches,

once supports are in place, may be able to fade themselves from the work situation if they are able to develop natural supports in the work setting. However, some individuals with ASD may always need some sort of supports or a job coach to maintain employment.

Natural supports are important for a number of reasons:

- Building in natural supports from the start, such as a co-worker, friend, calendar, clock, or other objects that serve as cues, can increase independence
- Job coaches, while a positive force for the individual with ASD, may also hinder the development of communication and interactions between the worker with ASD and co-workers.
- Job coaches can utilize input from co-workers, as they know the job and will appreciate being seen as important
- Developing friendships with co-workers is linked to longer job retention rates for individuals with ASD; suggesting the consumer speak with a co-worker about a problem is a natural support
- Supporting a consumer by teaching friendship skills is important; one study stated only 2 of 18 supported employees had friends at work and 2 went on occasional outings but had not made real friends (Howlin, 1999)

Consumers' Views of Work and Supports

Individuals with autism list major obstacles to employment that are a result of the characteristics of ASD in several research studies (Schaller & Yang, 2005, Hurlbutt & Chalmers, 2004, Muller, Schuler, Burton & Yates, 2003). Here are some consumer recommended supports:

- Assistance with job search process
- On-site job coaching, training, and organization
- Facilitation of social interactions
- Mentoring services run by and for individuals with ASD that link new workers and job seekers with mentors to help solve problems

Consumer View of Job Seeking: These include difficulties with contacting employers, interviewing and follow up because of weak social skills, and difficulty creating resumes because of poor organizational skills. Some adults with ASD felt very awkward and tense in interviews and did not know how to answer questions directly or went into too much detail. Others, once they had gained experience interviewing, were somewhat comfortable because they were able to follow a script. Questions did not deviate much from a set pattern.

Daniel Tammet in Born on a Blue Day (2007) relates a job interview he had with a panel of three people. He detected an accent when one of them spoke and when he found out she was from Finland, he talked non-stop about what he knew about this country. The interview did not last long. He thought this was good and that he had done well because he maintained eye contact, was dressed nicely, and was friendly. He was very upset when he was told he had not been chosen for the position.

Consumer View of Social and Communication Aspects: Once on a job, some adults with ASD have difficulties learning routines and understanding the "hidden curriculum" or work culture and social interactions of the workplace. Many reported a failure to understand instructions which meant they were unable to properly complete a task. All of these factors resulted in frustration and low self esteem and failure to find or maintain suitable work.

From the consumer perspective, a good job match would include the job being based on technical skills or special interests, minimal social skills, clearly defined routines, adequate time for learning new tasks, no excessive sensory stimulation, and possibly a part-time work schedule.

In an article, "Employment and Adults with Asperger Syndrome" (2004), Hurlbutt and Chalmers interviewed six adults with Asperger Syndrome (ASD) about their employment experiences. All of the adults in the study had difficulties with successful employment, in finding work that matched their abilities and keeping jobs once they were employed. Depression, anxiety and anger were common with adults with ASD and were often the result of employment issues.

In another follow up study (Muller, Schuler et al, 2003), 18 adults with ASD were interviewed to gain a consumer perspective on strategies for improving job placement and retention. Almost all reported long periods of unemployment, lack of career advancement and overall negative work experience. However there also were isolated vocational successes attributed to a good job match or a tolerant supervisor or co-worker. The majority of respondents reported difficulty with communication, understanding instructions and the hidden meaning of messages.

Muller's study quoted, "I look at my friends who work...and to me they're like social geniuses. I feel like somebody who's had a stroke and forgotten how to walk...That's the closest metaphor I can get...Imagine if you're doing this thing that's completely natural to you. You have a stroke and you can't walk anymore. Or you can't speak. You have to learn all over how to do that again. That's sort of the closest analogy I can come up with for lacking any social skill"(2003).

Training for Those in the Work Environment: Role of the Supervisor and Accommodations

Supervisory and management style has a great deal to do with the success or failure of an employment experience of an individual with autism. Supervisors play an instrumental role in providing support to workers with disabilities. It is also important to recognize that the support needs of employees with disabilities are similar to a variety of employment related issues that occur among individuals with no known disabilities (Unger 1999). In the following movie, all of the strategies were actually done by the supervisors of 14 successfully employed adults with autism.

The follow is a transcript from a video regarding the role of the supervisor

In this section, we're going to talk about the role of the supervisor.

This is Carol, Jerry's supervisor at a large technology company. Jerry is a young man with Asperger syndrome, who I mentioned in the previous PowerPoint on the Role of the Job Coach and then discussed some of the supports that his job coach provided. Carol has supervised Jerry for several years and has watched him grow in his job. This excerpt from an interview I had with her highlights some of the organizational issues that Jerry has on the job. He is someone who has difficulty getting started on a task, does not know where to begin and could definitely benefit from written step by step instructions and a consistent work schedule. His supervisor utilized a large white board in his office to have Jerry write down notes and tasks about how to complete these tasks. She also refers to the difficulty that he had working with a variety of people, especially when it came to sending out packages and completing other requests. Jerry preferred to only work with Carol and take work orders from one person. Because of the difficulty Jerry had with prioritizing tasks he got frustrated when he received multiple requests and would tell some people he couldn't do the task. Later on in the interview Carol also mentioned some of the

social difficulties that Jerry had. He did not interact with co-workers socially and even Carol, who would invite him to lunch and made an effort to include him in the social events at work, commented that she considered it a milestone when after several years of working with her, one day he asked her about her family and children. He had never done that before.

All of the supports on this and the next three slides were actually done by the supervisors of 14 successfully employed adults with autism. Of those 14 successfully employed adults with autism, 12 needed job modifications.

Let me say a little more about the use of organizers, the third item on this list. Using a graphic organizer or a visual diagram to structure a job is another organizational tool. If any of you have used Inspiration software you are familiar with the ability to create a diagram or flow chart which shows the big picture, in this case of a task or job, but the diagram can also show some of the details and steps needed to complete each section. Many individuals with ASD are great visual learners and this is an asset that can be used in learning a task, sequencing and following directions. Google has a free software program called Sketch Up, which is a visual design tool that has been embraced by educators and students with ASD for a variety of projects. Google hosts a group, Project Spectrum that was created to give people with autism the opportunity to express their creativity and develop a life skill using Google Sketch Up 3D modeling software. This project has resulted in employment for some users with ASD who were able to capitalize on their visual, design and technology skills. If you want to see some examples of the Sketch Up project, You Tube has some video examples.

In the next section of this unit you'll also see some examples of social stories, schedules and behavior scales that may be strategies to use for keeping the social demands predictable, orientation to a new setting, and dealing with the anxiety caused by down time.

This slide deals with some supervisory strategies that are pretty straight forward and emphasize supports in the social and communication area and making transitions, especially when any change causes anxiety. Preparing the individual with ASD for job changes by letting them know as much as possible beforehand is important. Again if possible provide pictures of what the change might look like and new visual schedules and supports.

Co-workers spend a lot of time with their fellow workers with ASD. A good supervisor will recognize this and also that the coworkers often know best how to do a particular job and may have very helpful suggestions for how to make it easier for the co-worker with ASD.

Encouraging a mentor relationship is good for the worker with ASD and good for the co-worker.

Those of you from a school background may know about the concept of providing a "Safe Person" for the individual with ASD, someone they know they can go to if there are problems or if they are upset or angry. Initially the supervisor may perform that role for the worker with ASD until coworkers can initiate natural supports. Most of us have relationships with our co-workers where we talk with them about problems at work or vent about some new rule or procedure that we don't like. They are our natural supports. Initially it also helps if the supervisor is able to anticipate that problems will arise and that some may not be related to performing the job directly, like transportation problems or forgetting lunch, but can affect job performance.

So you're probably thinking at this point, "WOW! What supervisor is going to do all this?!"

Remember, I said at the beginning that these were all strategies and supports that came from a

study done by Hagner and Cooney and the title of the article says it all---"I Do That for Everybody: Supervising Employees with Autism". When you are assessing a job site for a good match for someone with ASD, remember to think about the importance of the skills and the flexibility of the supervisor, who can make or break the job success. Another good resource for the employers is The JAN Job Accommodation Pamphlet for Supervising Individuals with ASD, which also lists many strategies and supports for employers. You'll see a copy of that in the next section of the unit. Video courtesy of Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence

This is a listing of job accommodations that workers with ASD may request if needed. Many of these have been provided by supervisors on their own. This listing comes from *Transition to Adulthood*, a free guide from the Organization for Autism Research (<http://www.researchautism.org/>), noted in the **Resource Section**.

The **Job Accommodation Network** also provides a free pamphlet for employers on accommodations for individuals with Asperger's Syndrome. You can follow this link to view the pamphlet. <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/media/asperger.html>

Appendix K: List of Reasonable and Common Job Accommodations

ADA guarantees that your young adult may request certain accommodations in the workplace. Your young adult may need others, depending on his needs and where he is working. These accommodations may include:

- ◆ Pictures or drawings of the task
- ◆ Templates of forms or documents
- ◆ A note taker
- ◆ A voice recorder
- ◆ Written instructions
- ◆ Daily checklists
- ◆ Written or verbal reminders
- ◆ Written or picture instructions next to machines, such as postage machine, copier, printer
- ◆ Minimal clutter in the work environment
- ◆ Minimal noise in the work environment (such as no radios or music)
- ◆ Large tasks broken down into small steps
- ◆ A "Where to" guide for resources or coworkers
- ◆ A timer or alarm as a reminder
- ◆ Additional hands-on training
- ◆ Headset for telephone or a speaker phone
- ◆ Multiple breaks
- ◆ Performance feedback presented visually (charts, diagrams)
- ◆ Mentor or job coach
- ◆ Information for coworkers about ASD
- ◆ His own desk or workspace
- ◆ Checklist for completing task
- ◆ Timelines for completion of task
- ◆ Assignment of one task at a time
- ◆ Training on appropriate workplace behaviors (e.g., interacting with customers)
- ◆ Notice before changes (such as rearranging supply closet or change in job-related work)
- ◆ Consistent supervision by one person
- ◆ Prioritization of tasks
- ◆ Regular feedback on performance (positive and constructive)

On the Job Strategies for Individuals with ASD

In this section there will be descriptions and examples of different types of strategies that can be used in employment settings. Many of these are visual supports that have been created using

simple technology like presentation software, such as Power Point, or word processing software, such as Microsoft Word. Some examples have been downloaded from Web sites and either adapted or used as is.

On the Job Visual Supports

Here's an overview chart that looks at some different ways technology can be used for work place supports. You may be familiar with these strategies in a school setting but they can be easily adapted to meet support needs in a work situation. Collaborate with your team members to get the necessary supports.

There are some excellent uses for technology with consumers. Try making slide shows, such as Power Point, to illustrate social stories, orientation to a new work setting, or to reinforce a skill. Determine if an electronic organizer or calendar will help with organization skills. Try using folders and a filing system for word processing tasks. Graphic organizers are an excellent support for laying out a project.

If you would like to know more about visual supports, see the unit on Visual Supports. There are also books and videos in the OCALI library that will also provide more in depth information on the strategies briefly described.

Here are some other ideas about using technology. This picture also lists PowerPoint as an orientation tool. All of us, and especially individuals with ASD, are anxious when starting a new job. Would you feel a little more relaxed if you were able to see your new job setting, see some of your co-workers and learn a little about your new job duties before you started the job? Or see a map of the building and see where the cafeteria and the bathrooms are located. With a digital camera, a slide show of relevant job information for a new worker can be easily created. The

individual with ASD can view the show with a PowerPoint player as many times as they want and be better prepared for what to expect the first day and with a little less anxiety. How many of you have worked with individuals with autism, who experienced a meltdown on the first day in a new situation because they did not know what to expect. This same concept could also be done with a video recorder or DVD recorder. If you have students who work as interns at different community setting every year, these Power Points and videos could be used over and over. You may also be able to have students in a computer skills class create these as class projects.



Follow this link: http://www.autisminternetunits.org/up_doc/ClevelandClinicorientation.pdf to view the PowerPoint that demonstrates how an orientation to a new job could be designed. This is a fictitious situation.

Social and Communication Strategies

View this Powerpoint to see some examples of social and communication supports from Picture SET. Picture SET is a collection of downloadable visual supports that can be used by students for both receptive and expressive communication in the classroom, at home, and in the community. The web site link for Picture SET is <http://www.setbc.org/pictureset/Default.aspx>

Follow this link: http://www.autisminternetunits.org/up_doc/SocialSkillVisualSupportStrat.pdf

To see the social skills visual supports PowerPoint.

Social Stories are another common strategy used to help the individual with ASD make more appropriate behavior choice especially in social situations. The social story you will view, deals with a common situation, down time. Individuals with ASD often prefer structure and get anxious or upset when the work routine is interrupted. Here's an example of a PowerPoint developed for this situation. In this case the social story may be printed out and put in a notebook for the student to read and review when there is down time.

Follow this link to see on “What can I do – Ways To Use My Downtime” PowerPoint:

http://www.autisminternetunits.org/up_doc/DowntimeSocialStory.pdf

Strategies for Employment Settings Based on Characteristics of ASD

Implications for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	
CHARACTERISTICS OF ASD – GENERAL	Strategies
<p>Individuals with an Autism Spectrum Disorder often face challenges in the sensory environment that result in responses and reactions that can be difficult for others in the workplace to understand. These characteristics can intensify in situations such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitions to new environments or people • Changes in schedules and routines • When stressed due to work demands, stress, time constraints, or difficulties outside of the workplace <p>When assessing a workplace environment as a potential workplace environment, consider the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Will someone learn to live with having lower the work performance of the individual with ASD? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise or specific sounds? • Bright or dim lighting? • Smell/odors? • Heat/cold? • Lack of privacy? 2. Are there situations that could be much to the environment that would reduce or eliminate the sensory challenges? 3. Could the individual benefit from coloring, or starting activities to deal with these sensory issues that occur? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offer flexible strategies and environmental adjustments, for instance sensory issues are documented in the IEP. Consider these interventions: Could they be adjusted? Can these be used for the work setting? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Schedule starting time 15 minutes earlier to reduce crowding when entering work site. b. Allow extra breaks, as long as efficiency and effectiveness is not compromised. 2. Provide individual with a strategy such as ear buds with soothing music to help with stress in crowded areas or unpleasant sounds. 3. Place the individual in a corner or end desk/work area rather than by a door or in the middle of a group of co-workers. 4. Use dividers to provide personal space. These may be true office dividers or materials such as file folders, screen screens, curtains, or book shelves. 5. Allow dividers as headphones or avoid placing the individual near a co-worker that uses heavy perfumes or odors. 6. Experiment with different types of lighting. Some work well with natural lighting, some with indirect lighting and some are the soft overhead light. 7. Explore opportunities of the workplace or the workplace jobs that will allow the person that needs to move or work in a natural manner. Jobs such as delivering mail or packages, returning items to shelves or bins, greeting co-workers may allow for a natural sensory break. These can also provide the worker with the “heavy work” that can be calming for many individuals. 8. Sensory processing challenges and sensitivities will often intensify in stressful situations, unfamiliar routines and with unfamiliar people. Create predictability for sensory needs. Strategies, such as pictures, signs, social scripts, and clear expectations of what to expect during the workplace, especially when changes are to occur.

The full table is available by clicking [here](#). This table was developed as part of the *Transition To Adulthood Guidelines for Individuals with ASD*. The complete guidelines, including the full employment section, can be downloaded from the OCALI web site at www.ocali.org in the Resource Section or from this link http://www.ocali.org/transition/trans_guidelines.php

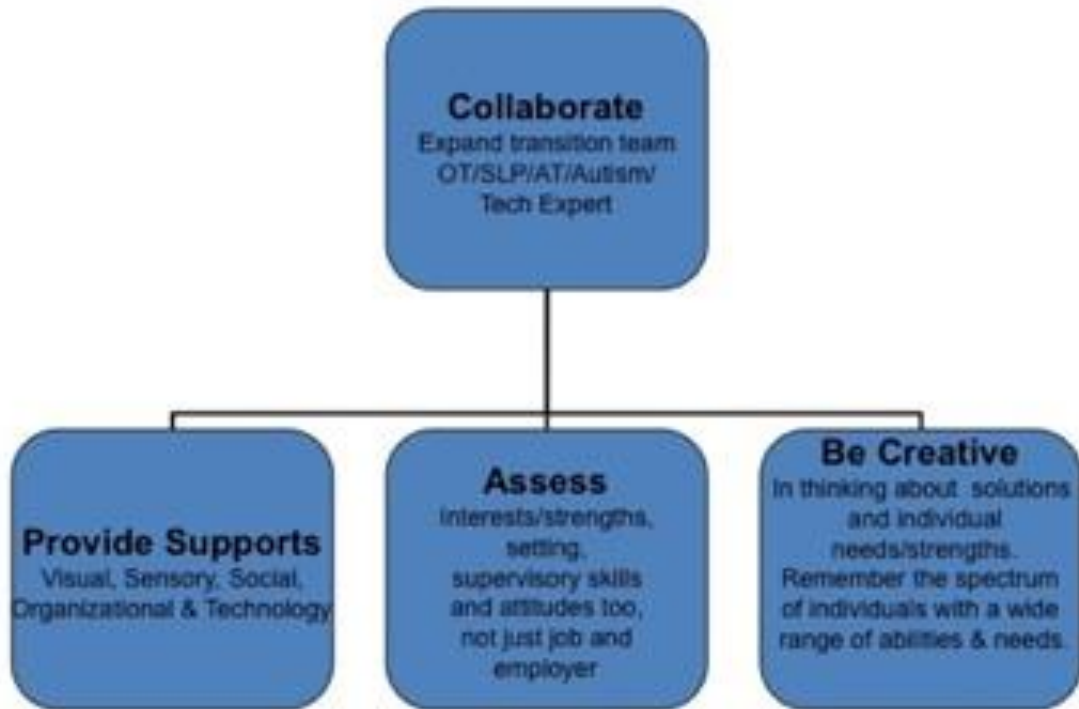
Summary

-
- High school transition activities such as assessment, career development and work experience need to start early and should be ongoing. These in-school activities are predictors of successful post school employment. Because of the varied needs of individuals with ASD, there is no one size fits all.
 - Transition Team Planning in high school, including collaboration with families and community agencies and self-determination, are important elements of successful transition to employment for individuals with ASD. Opportunities to practice self-advocacy and to make choices and decisions contribute to successful life skills and can begin early at home and at school.
 - Individuals with High Functioning Autism (HFA) may still need support and skill training in the areas of social skills, organization, and communication even though they have the skills and abilities to perform the requirements of the job.
 - Special interests and skills of individuals with ASD can contribute to successful employment with a good job match that builds on these interests. Matching the work environment, including an evaluation of sensory issues, with the needs of the individual with ASD and the flexibility of co-workers and supervisors are also important considerations. Supervisors who accommodated individual differences or built on strengths promoted successful work experiences.
 - Individuals with ASD are often under employed and find and lose jobs quickly creating a cycle of low self-esteem, anxiety and mental health problems. Customizing employment and providing supports including a job coach may help to break this cycle.

- Because of difficulties with organization, social skills, and communication many individuals with ASD need assistance with job development, job interviewing and job retention.
- Individuals with ASD have higher rates of employment and job retention when the necessary supports are identified, evaluated and provided consistently in supported employment settings.
- Individuals with ASD when surveyed state a preference for part time work, detailed job training, directions, limited social interaction and no excessive sensory stimulation.
- After work job clubs can provide ongoing support, peer models, and problem solving opportunities that have proven successful in maintaining employment.
- The Job coach is an important interface between the individual with ASD and the work setting. The job coach can do one-minute situation specific education with workers about why behaviors are occurring and can foster understanding on the part of the co-workers and supervisor. The job coach can act as a social interpreter for the individual with ASD and can also help develop natural supports with coworkers who can do the same.
- Natural supports can be promoted and encouraged in the workplace and community and in some cases provide a viable option for long-term support for individuals with ASD.

Successful Transition Table

Successful STW Transition for Students with ASD



Quiz

1. Individuals with ASD find jobs
 - At about the same rate as other individuals with disabilities
 - At the same rate as other job seekers
 - At a lower rate than other disabilities
 - At a higher rate than others with disabilities

2. Self-determination contributes to positive transition outcomes by
 - Letting students determine their own course of study
 - Teaching students goal setting, decision making, planning skills
 - Telling students how and when to plan after high school
 - Giving some students a chance to lead their own IEP

3. Families can be involved in the transition planning process by
 - Participating in training about resources for transition, eligibility, funding
 - Giving their children opportunities to make choices and decisions at home
 - Having siblings model self-care and daily living skills

4. When planning for employment for an individual with ASD a key point to remember is
 - Assess the student for any sensory triggers
 - Make a good match thinking of skills, interest, and the job

Teach the student to lead his own IEP meeting

Have a student join and after work job club

5. Individuals with ASD often face which employment challenge

Communicating effectively with co-workers and supervisors

An inability to do work that requires attention to details and repetition

Lack of work skills

None of the above

6. When individuals with ASD lose jobs, it is often because

They don't have the skills and training to do the job

Their lack of social skills cause problems on the job

Supervisors don't know how to make accommodations

They don't show up for work on time

7. Job interviewing is easier for individuals with ASD

When they learn a script for answering questions

When they practice interviews with different employers

When they see themselves interviewing successfully on a video

8. The job coach is an important interface between the individual with ASD and the work setting because

The job coach can educate co-workers about why behaviors are occurring

A good job coach can help the individual keep a job

The job coach can help develop natural supports

All of the above

Citation and References

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Auties.org provides self employment ideas for people with autism www.auties.org

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<http://www.researchautism.org/resources/reading/index.asp>

Transition to Adulthood Guidelines for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

This is a complete guide with sections on Legal Issues, Age Appropriate Transition Assessment, Employment and more. You may download individual sections

http://www.ocali.org/transition/trans_guidelines.php

Ohio Autism Spectrum Disorder/Pervasive Developmental Disorder Guidelines

<http://ddc.ohio.gov/Pub/Child.htm>

Video on Autism and Employment

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erFrIz9HNMg>

Attainment Company has software, assistive technology, videos and books for transition skill development.

<http://www.attainmentcompany.com/>

'**The John Jones Show**': How one teacher facilitated self-determined transition planning for a young man with autism <http://www.worksupport.com/resources/viewContent.cfm/256>

Career One Stop Job Video Listing <http://acinet.org/acinet/videos.asp?id=27,&nodeid=27>

Creating High Expectations (CHE) is an innovative project designed to light a spark in middle and high school students with disabilities by: engaging the student in thoughts about a career & post-secondary education; making the most of attending a transition event and subsequently, knowing how to be an active participant in one's own transition planning.

A series of lesson are offered as units in three critical areas:

- Assistive Technology,
- Career, and
- Leadership.

In addition, resources are provided for students, educators, and families.

<http://www.create.org.vt.edu>

Rubrics for Transition, Volume III software and manuals can be borrowed from OCALI www.ocali.org or purchased from <http://www.tensigma.org/transition/>

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TEACCH <http://www.teacch.com/>

Picture SET is a collection of downloadable visual supports that can be used by students for both receptive and expressive communication in the classroom, at home, and in the community. This searchable database allows you to find a wide range of useful visual supports for different curriculum areas, activities, and events.

<http://www.setbc.org/pictureset/Default.aspx>

National Secondary Transition and Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) has many resources on transition including evidence based practices and a research to practice lesson plan library. <http://www.nsttac.org/>. Click on evidence based practices, then the lesson plans.

Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission (RSC) is the state agency that provides vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to help people with disabilities become employed and independent. Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR) is the arm of RSC that assists people who have physical, mental and emotional disabilities by providing vocational rehabilitation and other services. Students with ASD should apply for Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR) Services from a local BVR office. Contact information for local offices can be found on the BVR/RSC website http://www.rsc.ohio.gov/VR_Services/BVR/bvr.asp

Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Employment options through DODD support systems include, but are not limited to, community competitive employment, supported employment, mobile work crews, enclaves, entrepreneurship and sheltered employment. While DODD may be the lead agency for employment services for an individual with ASD, the service providers (i.e. the job developer, job coach, transportation to work, etc.) may be a separate agency or individual that works jointly with DODD. In some cases, DODD will directly provide these services. <http://ododd.state.oh.us/>

Employees with Asperger Syndrome, from the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), Suzanne Gosden Kitchen <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/media/asperger.html>

This pamphlet helps employers with effective accommodations and compliance with the

American with Disabilities Act (ADA). It gives an overview of Asperger's Syndrome and how to accommodate each of the characteristics in a work setting.