

Bridge to the Future IV

Addressing the Needs of Neurodiversity in Transition and Pre-Employment



EVOLIBRI

Welcome!



- **Introducing myself:**

- Jan Johnston-Tyler, Founder of EvoLibri Consulting in Santa Clara, providing multidisciplinary services to neurodiverse teens and adults for eleven years.
- A vendor for Department of Rehabilitation in California (vocational rehab)
- Certified as a Non-Public Agency with the California Department of Education (service provider to school-aged kids)
- Former high tech manager and 'visionary' – changed careers in the 2000s.
- Majority of our work at EvoLibri is with transition-aged youth.
- Partners with SAP, Microsoft, Stanford University and Medical Center, and Specialisterne in deploying and supporting neurodiverse hiring initiatives ("Autism at Work" programs)

Fun Facts...



Why is Autism So Hard to Support?



- **Uneven skill sets:** Often above average (or high) academic ability, poor executive functioning, advocacy, adaptive and socio-emotional skills
- **“New” diagnosis”:** Existing programs (secondary and post-secondary) often feel like ‘round peg, square hole’
- **Play to strengths:** Because academics are usually pretty strong if no learning disabilities present and EF can be scaffolded, often on diploma track, despite socio-emotional immaturity
- **Be like other kids:** Because there is often a push toward neurotypicality (“Be NORMAL”), many ASD₁ students plan to graduate and attend four year college

Some Will Make It...



- **Most won't...**
 - 36% attend post-secondary education (most – 70% – to community college)
 - Fewer than 20% were on track to graduate after 5 years
 - 39% had graduated after 7 years
 - Up to ½ of autistic students don't identify as autistic or ask for services
 - Only 33% of young adults receive independent living skills training post-high school
 - 58% of young adults/families said they needed more services to transition, mostly pre-employment and ILS
- **Seven years of college is a lot of money. San Jose State University - \$210k; UCLA – \$250k; Santa Clara University -- \$329k**

NATIONAL AUTISM INDICATORS REPORT: TRANSITION INTO YOUNG ADULTHOOD, DREXEL UNIVERSITY 2015

Need to Rethink Transition Plans...

- **No more impossible transition plans. *Please, oh please.***
- Transition plans, like IEPs themselves, are contracts between the student and the school district.
- If a student is planning to attend college, then the student should be prepared *in all aspects* – by the end of high school – to attend college *without or with little remediation.*
- If the IEP team cannot prepare the student in this way, the transition plan should be renegotiated with the student/family.
- **Informed Self-Determination.**

Horror Story (2017, Bay Area)

- “Upon graduation, Johannes will go to community college and then transfer to UC Berkeley where he will study astrophysics.”
- ASD II, significant learning disabilities (expressive language, dyscalculia, poor executive functioning). 100% special education classes, significantly below grade-level academically.
- Took one music class at local community college, was asked to disenroll because he was not able to ‘attend in the classroom’
- Family had no recourse other than a day program through RC.

What Went Wrong?



- On the surface, meets the criteria for 'box-checking transition':
 - Student used career assessment tools
 - Plan was multi-year (they "talked about it every year")
 - Plan was self-determined
- Where it broke – did not consider:
 - That dyscalculia was essentially a 'rule out' for astrophysics
 - That astrophysics requires a PhD for employment and that UC Berkeley is next to impossible to get into, and that jobs are few and far between
 - **That the student was wholly unprepared for any post-secondary life without significant support**
- Not INFORMED Self-Determination

Informed Self-Determination Means...



- ***Understanding the need for continued services:***
 - And who will provide them (regional center, DOR, private pay/insurance, school district, incoming school [college or supported program], parents/family)
- ***Understanding the rigors of college:***
 - Accommodations ONLY, and far fewer
 - Self determined and accessed
 - Consequences of poor outcomes
 - Cost and length of time to complete
- ***Understanding the job market (field of study):***
 - What jobs are available and how easy/hard they are to get (*Indeed.com*)
 - How much money one needs to make to live independently (*Salary.com*)
- ***That the student and family understand the level of disability, what it means practically, and how best to make the most of what the student DOES have in abilities.***

What It Looks Like on Exit IEP



- **(YES, PLEASE!) Frank will:**

- Attend Diablo Valley College to learn how to be a college student
- Register with Disability Resource Services
- Study Computer Science, starting with classes he enjoys (Java, Python)
- Live in the family home
- Continue to learn independent living skills such as mobility and self-care
- Continue to learn emotional regulation by attending therapy in the community
- Continue to learn social skills by participating in Meetup groups such as Isle of Gamers
- Work with DVC to transfer to a four-year school such as Cal State East Bay's College Link program
- Register with DOR upon graduation for job placement support in tech

- **(ARGGH! NO!) Frank will:**

- Attend community college and study computers
- Live in the family home
- Get a job

The Big Five in High-Functioning Autism

- **Deficits in these domains = barriers to employment = IEP 'promise' not kept:**
 - Social skills
 - Emotional regulation
 - Executive functioning
 - Independent Living Skills
 - Self-advocacy

Social Skills



- Teaching social skills to high school students must move from social skills theory to practical application
- Must focus on:
 - Small talk/conversations
 - Entering/exiting conversations
 - Appropriate topics based on conversation partner
 - Collaboration (give and take)
 - Talking about difficult topics
 - Presenting ideas
 - Working in groups (NO pass on this!)

Emotional Regulation Skills

- Emotional regulation skills must be taught. Focus on:
 - Student must learn his/her own triggers (sensory, thoughts), his/her body and brain reactions, and remediation activities before meltdown ('fight', externalized) or anxiety attack ('flight', internalized).
 - Students must learn resilience to cope with frustration.
 - Students must learn how keep themselves motivated when bored with tasks.
- Many of these students will have anxiety and/or depression by age 17. Mental health must be addressed proactively.

Executive Functioning Skills

- Executive functioning skills are frequently poor. *This is probably the most common cause for failure in college.* Students should be taught how to effectively INITIATE and COMPLETE tasks independently:
 - How to adequately 'time map' using online calendar systems, breaking down large tasks into small tasks on calendar, and tracking goals to completion
 - How to use alarms and phone reminders to be on time
 - How to use unstructured time effectively to study, do homework, write papers
 - How to minimize distractibility

Independent Living Skills

- ILS skills must be part of transition planning if they are missing. Students must be able to:
 - Travel independently and safely (mobility)
 - Handle money to make transactions, create a simple budget, understand a W2 and pay taxes (financial literacy)
 - Handle simple household/personal chores (laundry, cooking, basic cleaning, make a doctor's appointment)
 - Attend to personal hygiene adequately
 - Establish and maintain an appropriate social life with peers

Self-Advocacy Skills

- This is huge in college!! The second most common reason for college failure. Students must be able to:
 - Identify what their needs are (“I got the wrong grade”, “I need help figuring out this project”, “I don’t understand this material”, “I think I have a skin rash”), then identify who can help, and then access that help in a timely manner.
 - Parents can help sort out what to do, but the student (generally) must do it on his/her own.
 - Schools can help students learn this skill by teaching students how to problem-solve the situation (“this is the problem”), brainstorm solutions (“this is how I can fix it”), and then take action.

Critical Skills for Success

- Mastery in these domains is vital, but not enough
- In practicality, these skill domains translate into **SUCCESS FACTORS**.
- Use the following as 'college readiness' checklists for mastery in:
 - Classwork
 - Homework
 - Success in the Workplace

Critical Skills for College -- Classwork

- ❑ **Attend class** – be on time with appropriate materials. Listen to and comprehend lectures.
- ❑ **Follow verbal and written instructions** in class independently.
- ❑ **Participate in class** – ask appropriate questions, answer teacher's questions.
- ❑ **Participate in group work** – help coordinate and work in teams on projects with other classmates. May require attending meetings outside of class, attending online (Google hangouts) meetings to discuss. May receive some accommodations to help navigate.
- ❑ **Perform peer reviews** – appropriately review, edit, and comment on peer's papers or lab notes in class.
- ❑ **Take notes** – take notes, record lecture or make arrangements for note-taker.

Critical Skills for College -- Homework

- ❑ **Study** – access study materials from a variety of sources independently (text books, library, online, handouts). Independently study. Typically, study 2 hours for every 1 hour of lecture. May receive tutoring or academic help, should locate and use academic success resources.
- ❑ **Complete homework** – homework completed independently and turned in on time. Math/science problems must be solved in own handwriting and must 'show your work'. No reduced homework, no late work.
- ❑ **Research** – perform independent research and write own findings/reports. This may include lab work.
- ❑ **Take quizzes/tests/finals** – all tests to be completed independently, typically without notes. May receive accommodation for extended time/quiet room, and (rarely) may have questions read, but questions cannot be reframed or reworded.
- **AND:**
 - ❑ **Self-advocate** – students must ask for all accommodations themselves – each term, with each professor. Because of FERPA, parents are not allowed to act or communicate on behalf of the student without specific written permission and with significant limitations.

Critical Skills for Employment

- Pre-Employment Skills (Workability)
- Emotional and Sensory Management
- Communication
- Executive Functioning
- Digital Collaboration
- Career Management

Why These Skills?

- This is the list of the top skill domains that need to be remediated in all incoming participants in *SAP's Autism at Work* program. **Identified by business as barriers to employment.**
- The first four skills, in order to be truly 'post-secondary ready', must be taught (or started) in high school for good **employment** outcomes later in life.
- **THIS IS THE DIRECT LINK TO SUCCESS!**

Why Are These Important Skills?

- **Pre-Employment Skills (Workability):** Resumes, interviewing, holding a job (or volunteer position) all significantly help teens learn about work (and 'adulthood' in general) and looks great on a resume later.
- **Emotional and Sensory Management:** Young adults who continue to struggle with this area are generally not employable until and unless they can handle these areas effectively in a variety of settings.
- **Communication:** Employers need employees who can receive and give communication in a professional, calm, and timely fashion. Need to learn about undersharing, oversharing, appropriateness of content, appropriateness of who to contact.
- **Executive Functioning:** This should be clear. Work requires being on time, managing workload, and staying motivated and focused.

More Real-Life Horror Stories

- **Mark has a Masters in Computer Science.** He is now 29, and has been working at Amazon Prime for two years, 15 hours a week. He has no idea how to find a salaried position, write a resume, interview for this job. His anxiety is through the roof.
- **Susan was escorted off campus by security.** She was deeply upset about the recent news about the climate, and started texting workmates that she was going to kill all Republicans. She is making well over \$100k a year.
- **John has difficulty with doing 'boring' tasks.** He thinks they are beneath him, and breaks his boredom by playing video games at work. He has been written up for this several times. He is making over \$90k a year.
- **Sridhar was very ill and went home.** Instead of contacting his manager, he decided just to leave for a few days and not notify anyone. He is making over \$130k a year.

Need to Rethink Our Models

- **Special Education for HF autistic students should consider:**
 - Regular core curricula including AP/Honors classes for the vast majority of this group
 - Transition plans that seriously consider where the student is and what s/he will need to learn in order to be successful at their stated goal. Not just 'go to college' but 'graduate from college in a reasonable time and get a job'
- **And MUST contain the following:**
 - Well-designed resource classes that teach *specific executive functioning skills* needed both in high school and beyond
 - Social pragmatics instruction that include *self-advocacy* and *interactions with adults, peers, strangers in a variety of settings*
 - Transition/Independent Living Skills instruction that include *mobility, finances, personal care, emotional regulation*

Old Models Aren't Working...

- **Special Education was originally built for significantly impaired students:**
 - 1965 – “Handicapped” children
 - 1970s – “Retarded” children
 - 2000s – “Disabled” children
- **Nearly all education has moved to focus mostly on academics:**
 - Lost Home Ec, Woodshop, Vocational training
- **And the world got significantly more complicated for kids**

Remediating Our Special Ed Programs



- So far:
 - Identified the general domains of missing skills
 - Identified the specific needed skills for all post-secondary life (employment or education)
 - Identified the specific needed skills for employment
- To improve outcomes:
 - Ensure all IEPs use INFORMED Self-Determination (my next book!)
 - All diploma track students should receive proper remediation by being in better programs before graduation:
 - Gap analysis of existing
 - Revamping programs

Perform a Gap Analysis!



- What programs do you have now for this population? What could be used, repurposed, or enhanced?
- Based what you have, identify gaps to check if you are adequately covering:
 1. Pre-employment
 2. Social/Communication
 3. Emotional/Sensory
 4. Executive Functioning
 5. Independent Living Skills
- What skill sets do you need to bolster in your programming based on this stated need from business?
- What resources do you have or can you use? (Training for other populations? Resources from the internet? Purchase off-the-shelf solutions?)
- Who can you collaborate with? (Other districts, DOR, non-profits, non-public agencies, LEAs)

Gap Analysis

- What programs do you have now for this population? What could be used, repurposed, or enhanced?

Program	Strengths	Weaknesses	Supports...	Revamp?
Workability	Good work experience	Focusing on sup. employment	Pre-employment	Yes. Expand for HF students
SS Group	Instructor	Focused on remedial skills	Social Skills	Yes, consider purchasing PEERS
Resource	Well-meaning teacher	No real focus on skills, only on 'keeping up'	EF	Need actual curriculum; break down by need
None			ILS	New
None			Emotional	New

Develop a Plan!



- What could be used, repurposed, or enhanced?
- What skill sets do you need to bolster in your programming? **Think about what skills are actually needed in college, and working in a 'real' job.** This is on the school districts and DOR, *no one else!*
- What resources do you have or can you use?
- **Who can you collaborate with?**

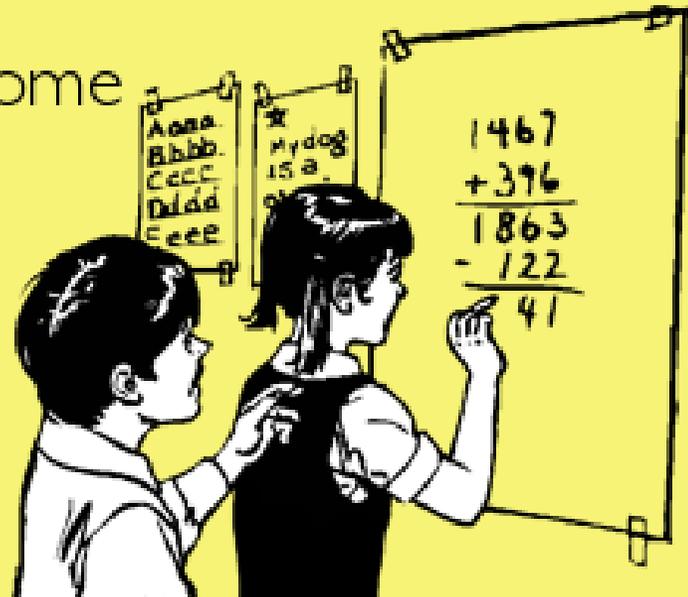
What About WIOA?

- Who can tell me about the linkages between DOR, CDE, and WIOA funding, and how funding is going to be applied to serving secondary students? (‘Cuz I don’t know, and can’t seem to find out!)
- There doesn’t seem to be a concerted effort at the State level driving this down to the LEAs.
- My ‘gauntlet’ – these challenges are best addressed when groups of smart people work together!

Missing Education Across the Board

I'm glad I learned about
parallelograms instead
of how to do
taxes. It's really come
in handy this
parallelogram
season.

somee cards
user card

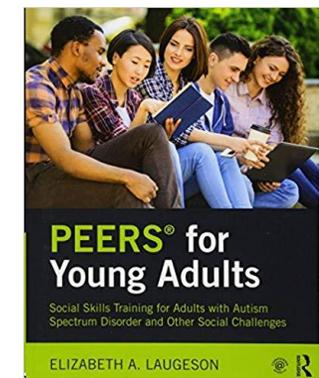
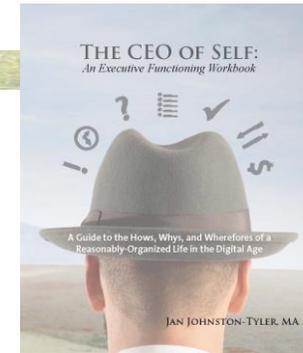


Final Thoughts...

- Much of 'non-academic' education from yesteryear is gone
- These skills are often lacking in all high school graduates
- Life in general is far more complex today, adding more skills' gaps
- Families are burdened just getting rent paid and food on the table
- **We know what kids need to succeed. It's up to us.**

Cheap Pitch...

- For executive functioning (*curriculum coming soon*):
- For independent living skills:
- For workplace skills:
- For social skills (not ours):



That's It!

- *Questions, Comments, Concerns?*