



Transitioning Together: Pilot Program in a Local High School

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Introduction

The Center on Secondary Education of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (CSESA) focuses on developing, adapting, and studying a comprehensive school-and community-based education program for high school students with autism spectrum disorders.

As part of the CSESA partnership, high schools offer several instructional programs to families who have teens with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

Transitioning Together (cite) is an eight-week education and support program for families of high school students with ASD. The program provides information and support sessions for parents, and a social group for teens. Specific objectives include (1) reducing stress for families, (2) improving family coping strategies, and (3) supporting youth transitioning out of high school. In its' first year, CSESA piloted the Transitioning Together Program in a local Wisconsin high school.

Method

Participants. Seven teens with a range of developmental disabilities, twelve parents, and nine educators participated in the Transitioning Together program at a Midwest high school. Exit interview data from five teens, eight parents, and six educators were included in the analyses.

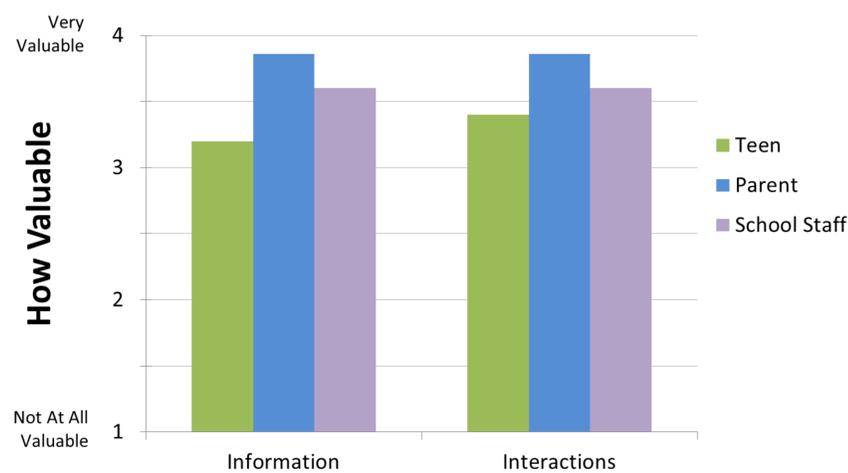
Procedure. Parent/educator sessions included information on employment and college planning, problem solving, adult independence, community involvement, legal issues, and health and well-being.

Teen sessions were adapted to address the needs of students with a range of disabilities, and included learning activities and games that emphasized social skills and transition planning.

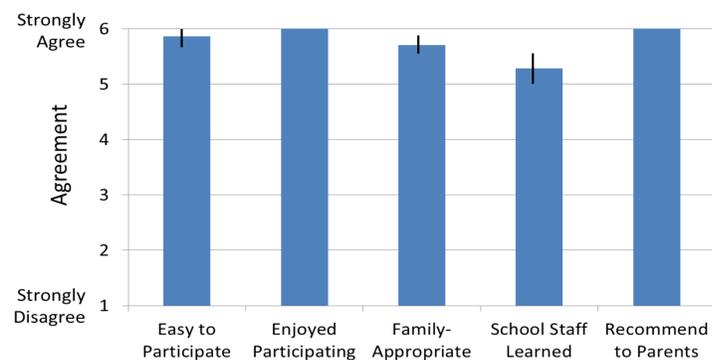
Measures. Exit interviews included demographic information, an open-ended response questionnaire, and a consumer survey. Parent, teen, and school staff questions related to satisfaction with aspects of the program.

Results

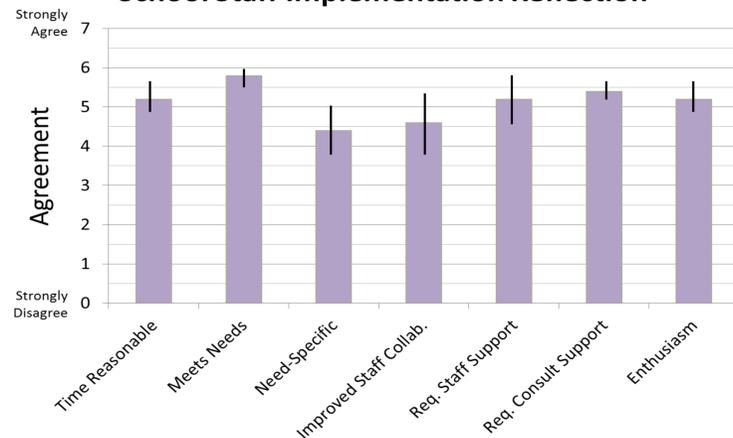
Program Evaluation Questions



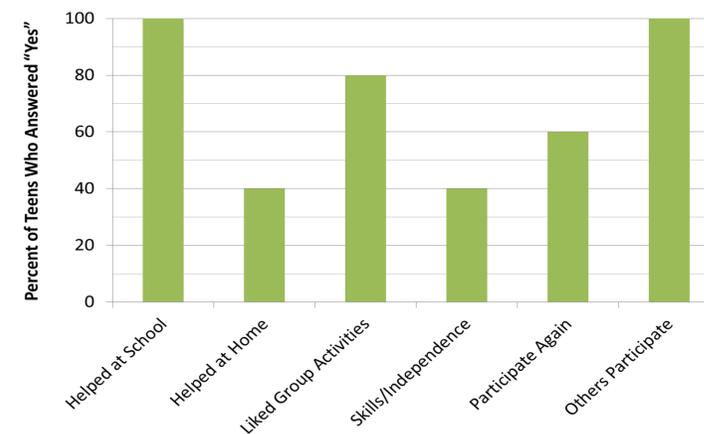
Parent CSESA Feedback Questions



School Staff Implementation Reflection



Teen Group Feedback



Conclusions

Overall, teens, parents, and school staff found the Transitioning Together program valuable, both in terms of the information provided during sessions and the opportunities provided to interact with other families. These data indicate that the program provides important social and informational supports that augment existing community resources.

Parents expressed resounding support for the program: Responses revealed that participants found the parent group easy to participate in, enjoyable and appropriate for their families in particular. All parents strongly agreed that they would recommend Transitioning Together to other parents.

School staff reported that the program met the needs of families and students and that the time required to implement the group was reasonable in a school setting. Although most were enthusiastic about the program, they also stated that they would need support and consultation to implement Transitioning Together at their school.

All teens agreed that the program helped them in school, and all recommended that similar teens participate in the program. Teen responses suggest that in future iterations, more group work could target improving home life and fostering independence.