In Their Own Words:
The Post-Secondary Experiences of Young Adults on the Autism Spectrum

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Learning Objectives

1. Understand the **perspectives** of young adults with ASD about life after high school

2. Identify **barriers** to postsecondary participation and potential solutions

3. Identify **successes** in postsecondary participation and potential contributing factors
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About CSESA

Research & Development Center

Funded by the Department of Education (IES)

Purpose: To develop and study a comprehensive high school program for students on the autism spectrum

Intervention study
  ◦ 2 years in each school
  ◦ Randomly assigned to CSESA or services-as-usual

About the sample
  ◦ 60 high schools in 3 states (NC, WI, CA)
  ◦ 547 students with ASD
  ◦ 539 school staff
The CSESA Process and Interventions

- Student Inv. in IEPs
- Work-Based Learning Experiences
- Transitioning Together
- Social Competence Intervention
- Peer supports
- Peer networks
- Alternate Achievement Literacy
- Collaborative Strategic Reading-HS
- Evidence-Based Practices
- Alternate Achievement Literacy
- Collaborative Strategic Reading-HS
- Evidence-Based Practices
- Community-School Mapping
- Transition Planning
- Social Competence Intervention-HS
- Peer supports
- Peer networks
- Student Inv. in IEPs
- Work-Based Learning Experiences
- Transitioning Together

Academic

Independence & Behavior

Peer & Social Competence

Transition and Families

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Training and Coaching
ASSESSMENT
School & Student
PLANNING
Building a Team & Selecting Goals/Interventions
IMPLEMENTATION
CSESA Intervention
EVALUATION
Ongoing Monitoring

Community-School Mapping
Transition Planning

Student Inv. in IEPs
Work-Based Learning Experiences
Transitioning Together
Student Characteristics

Wide range of students on the autism spectrum

Diploma Status
- 57% Standard Diploma
- 43% Modified Diploma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Mean(SD)</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Responsiveness Scale-2 (n=502)</td>
<td>70.5 (12.3)</td>
<td>39-110 (82% ≥ 60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vineland Adaptive Behavior Composite Standard Score (n=454)</td>
<td>75.8 (16.6)</td>
<td>20-131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leiter Non-Verbal IQ (n=490)</td>
<td>85.8 (27.2)</td>
<td>30-141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outcomes of Young Adults with ASD

What happened to young adults with autism between high school and their early 20s?

- **Education**: Attended any postsecondary education (36%)
- **Living Arrangements**: Lived independently (19%)
- **Employment**: Had a job for pay (58%)
- **Access to Services**: Received any services (74%)

Pilot Follow-Up Study

Who? Small subset of students from CSES study who graduated high school

How? Interviewing young adults and parents about post-high school experiences

When? Approximately one year after graduation

Next Steps Collecting follow-up data from all young adults from the study
About the sample

**Total Sample:**
32 YAs who had exited high school

**Sex:**
27 males
5 female

**Diploma**
21 standard diploma
11 modified diploma

**Race/Ethnicity:**
18 White, Non-Hispanic
14 Non-White and/or Hispanic

**Household Income:**
6 families- <$40K
12 families-$40-99K
11 families- >$99K
[3 missing]
About the interview

5 sections

Rating questions
- Very unsatisfied ↔ Very satisfied
- Very unhelpful ↔ Very helpful

Yes/No questions about experiences

Open-ended prompts

Some examples are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internships</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applying to Jobs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Going to Career Fairs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
About the interview

If “No” to experiences
- Barriers
- Future aspirations

If “Yes” to experiences
- Successes
- Challenges
- Future aspirations

What are some things that stop you from being a part of educational experiences?
- I don’t want to
- It is hard to get there
- It costs too much money
- It is hard
- It is far away
- It is boring
- It is stressful
- I don’t know how to start
- I am not sure what I want to do

What educational experiences would you like to have in the future?
- Go to college
- Visit a college
- Go to a college fair
- Apply to college
- Take an online class
- Go to a trade or vocational school (e.g., culinary, automotive)
- Get an apprenticeship

You can use idea box below each question if you need some help thinking of answers.

What are some things that have gone well in your job or work experiences?
- Doing work that I like
- Learning new things
- Getting my work done
- Getting along with boss/supervisor
- Getting along with co-workers
- Getting help when I need it
- Getting paid
- Amount of pay
- Work schedule
- Meeting new people

What are some things that have been hard in your job or work experiences?
- Doing work that I like
- Learning new things
- Getting my work done
- Getting along with boss/supervisor
- Getting along with co-workers
- Getting help when I need it
- Getting paid
- Amount of pay
- Work schedule
- Meeting new people
Adaptations for Full Follow-Up Study

**Pilot Follow-Up**
- Interviews were challenging for some YAs
- Lists of barriers, successes, etc. were long & specific

**Full Follow-Up**
- Simplified items to reduce the response burden
- Utilized new list of barriers from YA Card sort measure
From the Young Adults
Satisfaction with Life After High School

LIFE AFTER HS

- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Unsatisfied
Satisfaction with Life After High School

- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Unsatisfied

LIFE AFTER HS
- 0.0%
- 41.4%
- 58.6%

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES
- 16.7%
- 26.7%
- 56.7%
Satisfaction with Life After High School

- **LIFE AFTER HS**
  - Satisfied: 0.0%
  - Neutral: 41.4%
  - Unsatisfied: 58.6%

- **EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES**
  - Satisfied: 16.7%
  - Neutral: 26.7%
  - Unsatisfied: 56.7%

- **WORK EXPERIENCES**
  - Satisfied: 16.7%
  - Neutral: 26.7%
  - Unsatisfied: 56.7%
Satisfaction with Life After High School

- **LIFE AFTER HS**: 0.0% Satisfied, 41.4% Neutral, 58.6% Unsatisfied
- **EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES**: 16.7% Satisfied, 26.7% Neutral, 56.7% Unsatisfied
- **WORK EXPERIENCES**: 16.7% Satisfied, 26.7% Neutral, 56.7% Unsatisfied
- **SOCIAL LIFE**: 6.7% Satisfied, 16.7% Neutral, 76.7% Unsatisfied
Satisfaction with Life After High School

LIFE AFTER HS: 0.0% Satisfied, 41.4% Neutral, 58.6% Unsatisfied
EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES: 16.7% Satisfied, 56.7% Neutral, 26.7% Unsatisfied
WORK EXPERIENCES: 16.7% Satisfied, 56.7% Neutral, 26.7% Unsatisfied
SOCIAL LIFE: 6.7% Satisfied, 16.7% Neutral, 76.7% Unsatisfied
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: 13.8% Satisfied, 41.4% Neutral, 44.8% Unsatisfied
Helpfulness of High School

LIFE AFTER HS
- Helpful: 10.3%
- Neutral: 17.2%
- Not helpful: 72.4%

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES
- Helpful: 6.7%
- Neutral: 16.7%
- Not helpful: 76.7%

WORK EXPERIENCES
- Helpful: 23.3%
- Neutral: 13.3%
- Not helpful: 63.3%

SOCIAL & COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES
- Helpful: 13.3%
- Neutral: 10.0%
- Not helpful: 76.7%
Education – What is happening...

55% report some educational experience

University

Community college

Trade school

Online courses

Specialized programs for individuals with disabilities

No educational experiences
Education – Aspirations

• Medical school
• Transfer from community college to university
• Internships related to college major
• Take classes
Education – Successes & Challenges

Higher reports of success
- Grades and homework
- Liking classes, professors, and students
- Managing their schedule

Well the good thing was, was that it was a benefit as much as it was a curse was the lack of structure. Which means that if I needed to go walk out and take a break real quick, I could do that.

Yes, you know the beautiful thing about structure it, it is kind of like prison, after a while it becomes just comfort, what happens at this time pretty much stays at this time but so the structure can be a comfort but at the same time it can also really limit your ability to which is like the real world oh wait emergency stuff.

Yes, so the lack of structure was both great and a struggle.
Education – Successes & Challenges

Higher reports of challenges and lower reports of success
◦ Homework (again!)
◦ Making friends and joining activities
◦ Getting help
◦ Paying for school

“Um, any difficulties I had were mostly interaction and or uh writing it down. Because it, everything in my brain is usually just firing too fast and uh, I usually end up saying something stupid or my writing gets highly erratic. But if I take my time I actually get things out.”
Education – Barriers

More frequent barriers
- Cost
- Unsure of what they want to do

Less frequent barriers
- Desire or initiation
- Transportation or distance
- Being hard, boring, or stressful

Maybe not go to college but take little classes. I know you don’t go to college to become a beekeeper or something but you can take little classes. Yeah I would do that

What classes would you take?

Classes about how to take care of bees and stuff. Kind of like with insects
About the Young Adult

Attending a community college
Wants to be a teacher
Not currently employed but has been trying to get a job for several months
Education - Implications

How can we support students around post-secondary education?

- Include accessing courses outside of college systems
  - Local Art Center, Parks and Recreation
- Connect with scholarships geared towards students with ASD
- Focus on time management (more down time in college schedule) and self advocacy (visit disability services)
## Community and School Resource Mapping (CSRM)

**Community and School Resource Mapping**
This is the manual for Community and School Resource Mapping. It has sample maps.
Download: [Community and Resource Mapping Manual.pdf](#)

**Community and School Resource Mapping Training Powerpoint**
This is a pdf version of the Community and School Resource Mapping Training Powerpoint.
Download: [Mapping Training.final_pdf](#)

**Sample CSESA Community Map**
This is a sample community map to help you.
Download: [CSESA-Community Map.pdf](#)

**Sample CSESA Community Map in Spanish**
This is a sample community map in Spanish to help.
Download: [CSESA Community Map_SPANISH](#)

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### Therapy Options for My Child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency Name</th>
<th>Program Summary</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABLE Youth</td>
<td>Helps people ages 3-22 in wheelchairs to live independently and participate in sports</td>
<td></td>
<td>(615) 973-5372 <a href="http://www.ableyouth.org">www.ableyouth.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Speaks Art Therapy Enrichment and Services</td>
<td>Individual/group art therapy for people with disabilities (home, school, or day program)</td>
<td>700 Wilsonwood Place Nashville, TN 37205</td>
<td>(217) 204-1552 <a href="mailto:tsartspeaks@gmail.com">tsartspeaks@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp Will: Therapeutic Summer Day Camp</td>
<td>Specialized day camp for peoples ages 6-23 with physical/developmental disabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td>(615) 790-5719 ext. 21 <a href="http://www.wcparksandrec.com/semers-therapeutics/activities">www.wcparksandrec.com/semers-therapeutics/activities</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Parks and Recreation Department (Disabilities Programs)</td>
<td>Adult day program, monthly weekend activities; summer day camps for adults/children</td>
<td></td>
<td>(615) 882-8479 <a href="http://www.nashville.gov/parks">www.nashville.gov/parks</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical Bridges (music therapy)</td>
<td>Music therapy services to individuals with disabilities in the Nashville area</td>
<td></td>
<td>(888) 607-2734 <a href="http://www.musicalbridges.com">www.musicalbridges.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive RePercussions (music therapy)</td>
<td>Group therapeutic drumming</td>
<td></td>
<td>(615) 688-3786 <a href="http://www.positiverpercussions.com">www.positiverpercussions.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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  - B-1.2 Job Simulation
  - B-1.3 Task Prompts
  - B-1.4 Creating a Task Analysis
  - B-1.5 Job Characteristics

### College Ready

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Activities</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Shadow a student in a major of interest</td>
<td>• George Washington University’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conduct a role-play with a disability</td>
<td><a href="http://www.heath.gwu.edu/assets/33/toolkit.pdf">http://www.heath.gwu.edu/assets/33/toolkit.pdf</a> will give you tips on how to speak to your school’s guidance counselor and request upcoming opportunities to shadow at a local college/university.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>services counselor</td>
<td>• Norwich University’s <a href="http://www.norwich.edu/academics/pdf/disabilitiesHandbook.pdf">http://www.norwich.edu/academics/pdf/disabilitiesHandbook.pdf</a> will provide you with information to consider some of your learning challenges and ways to strategize methods to help you overcome some of those temporary barriers applicable to navigating through a college campus or learning about the graduate assistant (GA) position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conduct a role-play with a professor</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Employment – What is happening...

- Food service
- Retail
- Family-business
- Conservation Corps
- Volunteering
- Struggling to find work or keep work
- Not working by choice

65% are reporting some work or vocational activities

Actually, one of the things is that um I am not exactly a people person um and like most of the jobs that seem to be open to me are the retail positions and you have to be extremely customer focused and I feel like I struggle with that sometimes.
**Employment – Aspirations**

“What job do I want to have in the future? Well, it’s more of a career but…what I would like to do is do music production.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology &amp; Audio/Visual/Web Arts</td>
<td>Video games and related technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Music Production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blogging/Videoblogging/Web comics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail/Service</td>
<td>Tire shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hotel Concierge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pet setting business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping Professions</td>
<td>Veterinarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science &amp; Social Science</td>
<td>Meteorologists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Archeologist</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Geologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical/Manual</td>
<td>Home remodeler</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bee Keeper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employment – Successes & Challenges

Higher reports of success
- Enjoying work
- Learning new things
- Getting work done
- Getting paid

Lower reports of successes
- Getting along with boss and meeting new people
- Getting help if needed
- Amount of pay and work schedule

Higher reported challenges (relative – very low overall)
- Enjoying work
- Amount of pay

I uh don’t exactly have the easiest time trying to find a job I have about um sent many job applications had a few interviews and I have only recently actually found a got uh in uh acceptance a job acceptance and so yeah it has been hard but I think it’s pretty much uh I’m pretty happy with it.
Employment – Barriers

More frequent barriers (relative – not many noted overall)
  ◦ Transportation
  ◦ Time
  ◦ Having the help they would need

Less frequent barriers
  ◦ Desire
  ◦ Finding jobs and matching interests
  ◦ Uncertainty about type of job
  ◦ Applications and interviews

Potential solutions

It’s the uh, this is completely you know not on there but its because of voc rehab and how it goes, how it channels you through to another organization, the process the government the paperwork, it takes forever. That is what is limiting. There is nothing I can really do about it.
Employment – Audio Clip

About the Young Adult

Attending a community college
Working at a grocery store
Employment - Implications

How can we support students around employment?

- Focus on the steps to GET the job (in addition to the hard skills of the job)
  - Interview for on-campus positions
  - Practice presentation skills about self
  - Identify strengths and areas of weakness

- Ensure some retail/food service experiences
  - How to relate to student interest? (Vet → Retail at pet store)
Teens Talking to Teens

Thinking Ahead About Life After High School

There are some goals to be thinking about as you plan for life after high school. It could be higher education (colleges or universities) or even getting experience in the job world (volunteering, internships). You can start working on these goals in high school. If you want to go to college or a university, you can start looking at schools that are right for you. You will want to think about finances, academics, the location, and if the school has the major you are interested in (e.g., history, computer science). If you want to get experience in the job world, you can send your resume to places that are hiring or taking volunteers or interns.

Start Exploring

☐ Look for colleges with interesting majors
☐ Ask parents for ideas

At School

☐ Pick classes that link to career goals
☐ Join an activity or club
### Community Participation – What is happening...

"Well I don’t have any activities near me and I am not sure whether talking to random people online counts."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Engagement</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making/seeing friends</td>
<td>Sports &amp; exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing/missing friends</td>
<td>Clubs at schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanging out with family</td>
<td>Performing arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability-related groups</td>
<td>Religious/faith groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online interactions and friendships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not any dating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

55% are reporting some social or community engagement
Volunteer opportunities
Making friends
Hanging out with friends
Dating
No desire for change
Community Participation – Successes & Challenges

Higher reports of success
- Meeting new people

Lower reports of success
- Feeling less lonely or less bored
- Scheduling activities
- Transportation, finding nearby activities, and finding affordable activities
- Finding activities that align with interests

Higher reports of challenges (few overall)
- Meeting new people
- Boring activities

Um I’ve been making a few new college friends and I think I am pretty satisfied with the amount of friends I am making right now. Like I am starting to actually go out with people um starting to actually do activities with my friends outside of just going to my house and I feel like that is pretty fun doing that with my new friends.

Well friendships have been tightened, getting better friends...I know how to hang out with my friends, help them out with things. Like helping my friend move into an actual house because his apartment was always falling apart.
Community Participation – Barriers

More frequent barriers (all quite low)
- Desire or uncertainty about interests
- Time
- Finding activities that align with interests
- Meeting new people

Less frequent barriers
- Transportation and money
- Finding it stressful or boring

I’m not really one for social interaction because a lot of people you meet out there are usually very toxic. I mean, a lot of people from my high school that I hung around with, I came in conflicting ideologies with them, so. I kinda just backed off from them. And others I just had no common ground with.
Community Participation - Implications

How can we support students around community involvement?

- Ensure curriculum and conversation related to:
  - Dating
  - Internet safety
- Consider peer networks at work based learning sites
- Connect students to community groups related to interest areas (e.g. how to find a Meetup group)
Supporting Success and Safety in Relationships

Like other teens, many teens on the autism spectrum desire friendships and romantic partners. Due to challenges with social communication, some teens with ASD may have limited experience dating and could benefit from explicitly learning skills associated with successful and safe dating experiences. Teens with ASD may benefit from developing skills in the following areas: basic dating readiness skills, safety skills related to dating, and social skills related to dating. School staff and families both play important roles in supporting these skill areas.

Basic Dating Readiness Skills

- Identify the purpose of dating. Educators should spend time discussing what dating is. For example, dating is a shared experience between two people and it should involve someone who the teen likes and who likes them back.

Internet Safety for Teens with ASD

We live in a digital world where communication via the internet is the norm. Friends are made and maintained virtually on sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Social media may be an accessible venue for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to build and maintain social relationships, as well as learn new things and explore new ideas. While there are many benefits to using the internet, there are also risks and with easy access to the internet, teens with ASD must learn about these risks and how to protect themselves.

What are the risks?

Fixation on Games or Social Networking Sites

Teens with ASD are vulnerable to becoming compulsive internet users. They may struggle to shift from a fantasy gaming world to real-life social interactions which reduces opportunities to practice and learn social communication skills. Here are ideas related to limiting obsessive technology use:

- Set clear limits on internet use and use a timer for the teen to indicate when the internet should not be used. Different times can also be used.
Summary

- Narrow sample of students
  - Primarily those accessing standard diploma

- Education and Employment outcomes better than anticipated (when compared to other samples)

- Outcomes are not translating to reports of satisfaction
  - What is missing?
• Do differently when you get back to work on Monday?
• Change for next year?
• Advocate for in a system or community near you?

What is one thing you will …

Your colleagues?
Your students/clients with ASD?
Families of individuals with ASD?

What is one piece of information you will share with…

Moving Towards Action
Find CSESA

HTTP://CSESA.FPG.UNC.EDU/

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/CSESA.ASD
Learning Objectives

1. Understand the **perspectives** of young adults with ASD about life after high school

2. Identify **barriers** to postsecondary participation and potential solutions

3. Identify **successes** in postsecondary participation and potential contributing factors
Thank you so much!

Any questions?