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

Beginning with Acknowledgements and Thank Yous

CSESA

- Kara Hume
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Children and youth with autism and their families and the school staff members who have participated in our studies.

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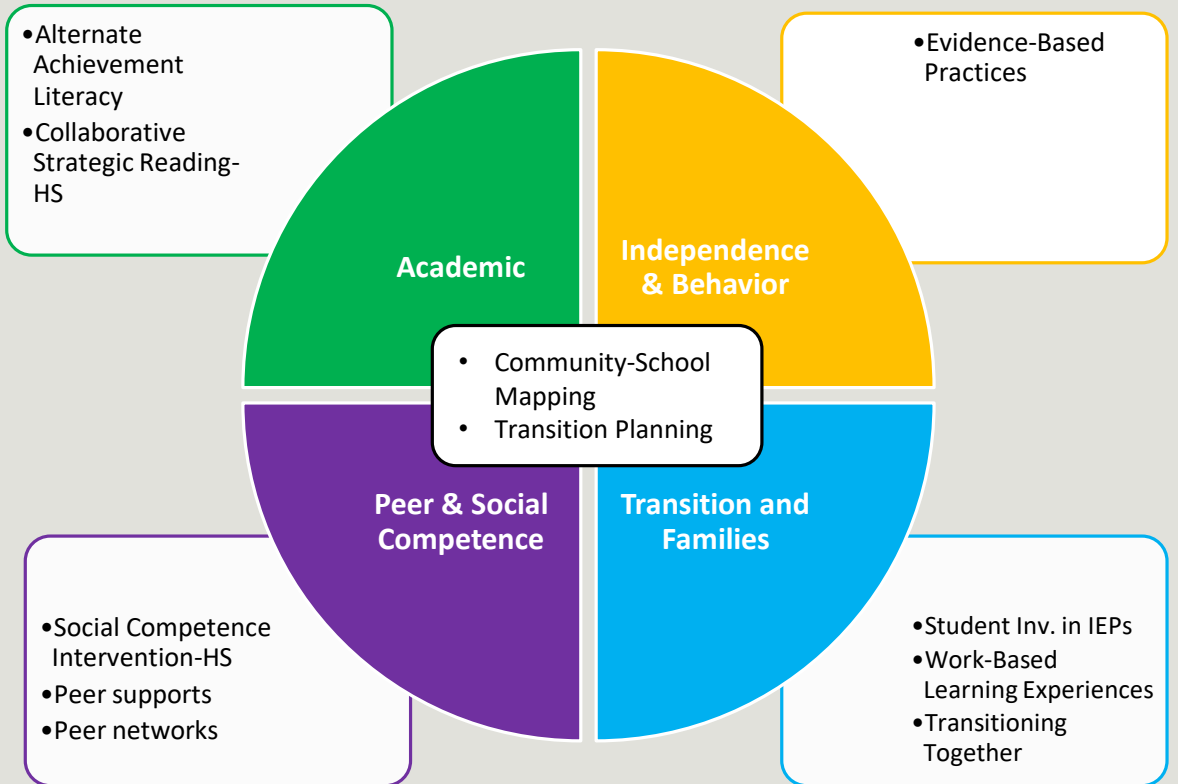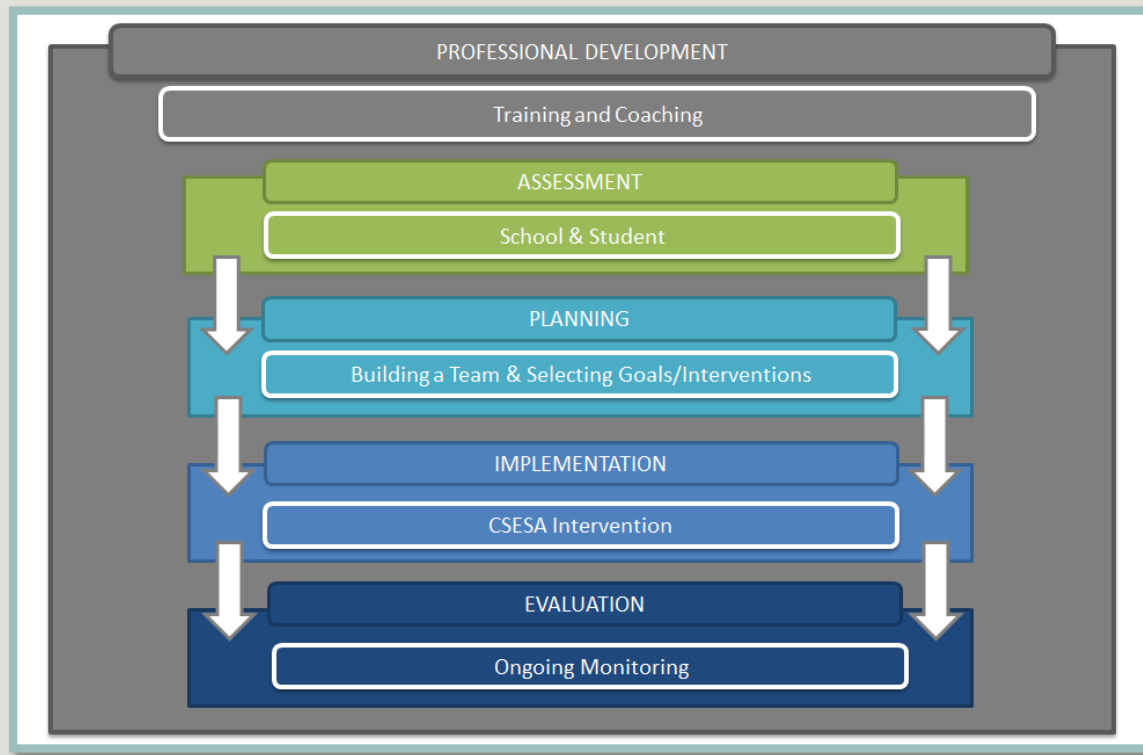
Intervention study
◦ 2 years in each school
◦ Randomly assigned to CSESA or services-as-usual

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 Characteristics

Wide range of students on the autism spectrum

Diploma Status
◦ 57% Standard Diploma
◦ 43% Modified Diploma

	Mean(SD)	Range
Social Responsiveness Scale-2 (n=502)	70.5 (12.3)	39-110 (82% ≥ 60)
Vineland Adaptive Behavior Composite Standard Score (n=454)	75.8 (16.6)	20-131
Leiter Non-Verbal IQ (n=490)	85.8 (27.2)	30-141

AGES: 13-20
AVERAGE AGE: 16

13.5% FEMALE
GENDER
86.5% MALE

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%

National Autism Indicators Report: Transition into Young Adulthood. A.J. Drexel Autism Institute's Life Course Outcomes Research Program, 2015. drexe.lu/autismindicators

Pilot Follow-Up Study

| | Who? | Small subset of students from CSESA 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

CSESA
The Center on Secondary Education
for Students with Autism

Young Adult Check-In

Thank you for participating in the CSESA project! We are using these questions to learn more about life after high school. Your participation is voluntary and you can choose to skip any question you do not want to answer.

As part of this check-in, we are going to ask you questions about **five (5)** areas:

☐		1) Life after high school
☐		2) Educational experiences
☐		3) Work activities
☐		4) Social and community activities
☐		5) About you

Some examples are

Interviews	
Internships	
Volunteering	
Applying to Jobs	
Going to Career Fairs	

How do you feel about your social life right now? On a scale of 1-5, 1 being "Very Unsatisfied" to 5 being "Very Satisfied".

Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	In the middle	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
①	②	③	④	⑤

How do you feel about the community activities you do right now? On a scale of 1-5, 1 being "Very Unsatisfied" to 5 being "Very Satisfied".

Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	In the middle	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
①	②	③	④	⑤

How helpful was your high school in getting you ready for social and community experiences after high school? On a scale of 1-5, 1 being "Very Unhelpful" to 5 being "Very Helpful".

Very Unhelpful	Unhelpful	In the middle	Helpful	Very Helpful
①	②	③	④	⑤

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 boring
• It is hard to get there	• It is stressful
• It costs too much money	• I don't know how to start
• It is hard	• I am not sure what I want to do
• It is far away	

What educational experiences would you like to have in the future?

• Go to college	• Take an online class
• Visit a college	• Go to a trade or vocational school (e.g., culinary, automotive)
• Go to a college fair	• Get an apprenticeship
• Apply to college	

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	• Getting help when I need it
• Learning new things	• Getting paid
• Getting my work done	• Amount of pay
• Getting along with boss/supervisor	• Work schedule
• Getting along with co-workers	• Meeting new people

What are some things that have been hard in your job or work experiences?

• Doing work that I like	• Getting help when I need it
• Learning new things	• Getting paid
• Getting my work done	• Amount of pay
• Getting along with boss/supervisor	• Work schedule
• Getting along with co-workers	• Meeting new people

Adaptations for Full Follow-Up Study

Pilot Follow-Up

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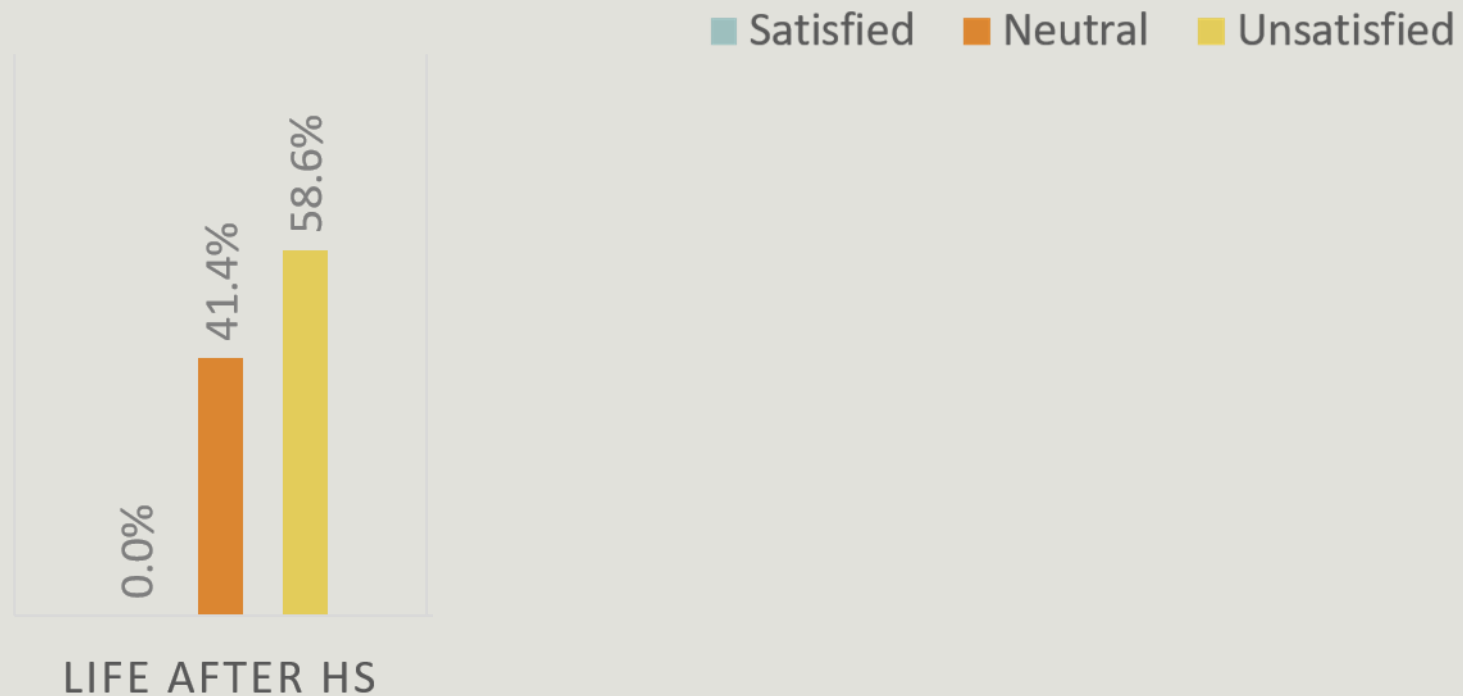- Lists of barriers, successes, etc. were long & specific
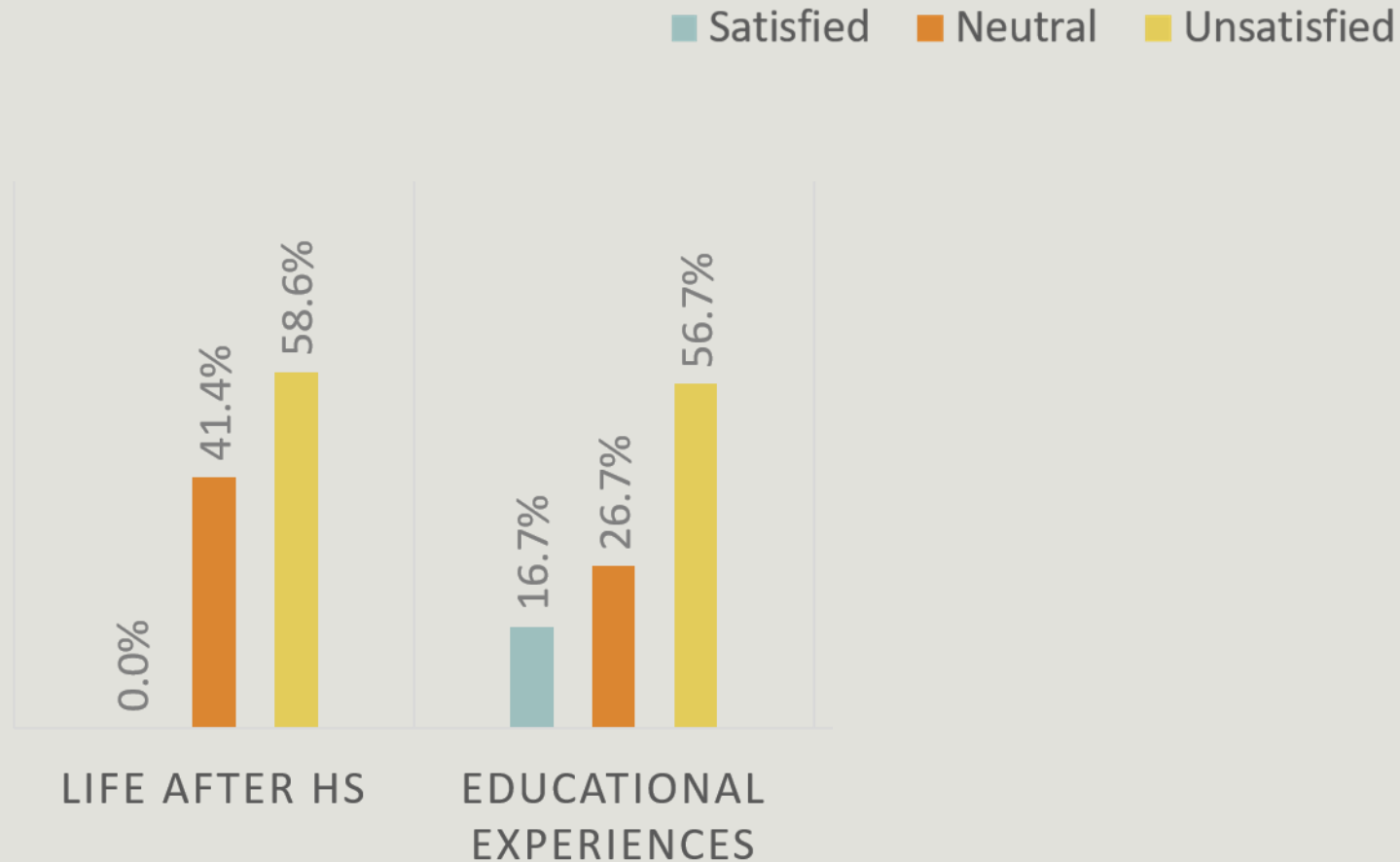
Full Follow-Up

- Simplified items to reduce the response burden
- Utilized new list of barriers from YA Card sort measure
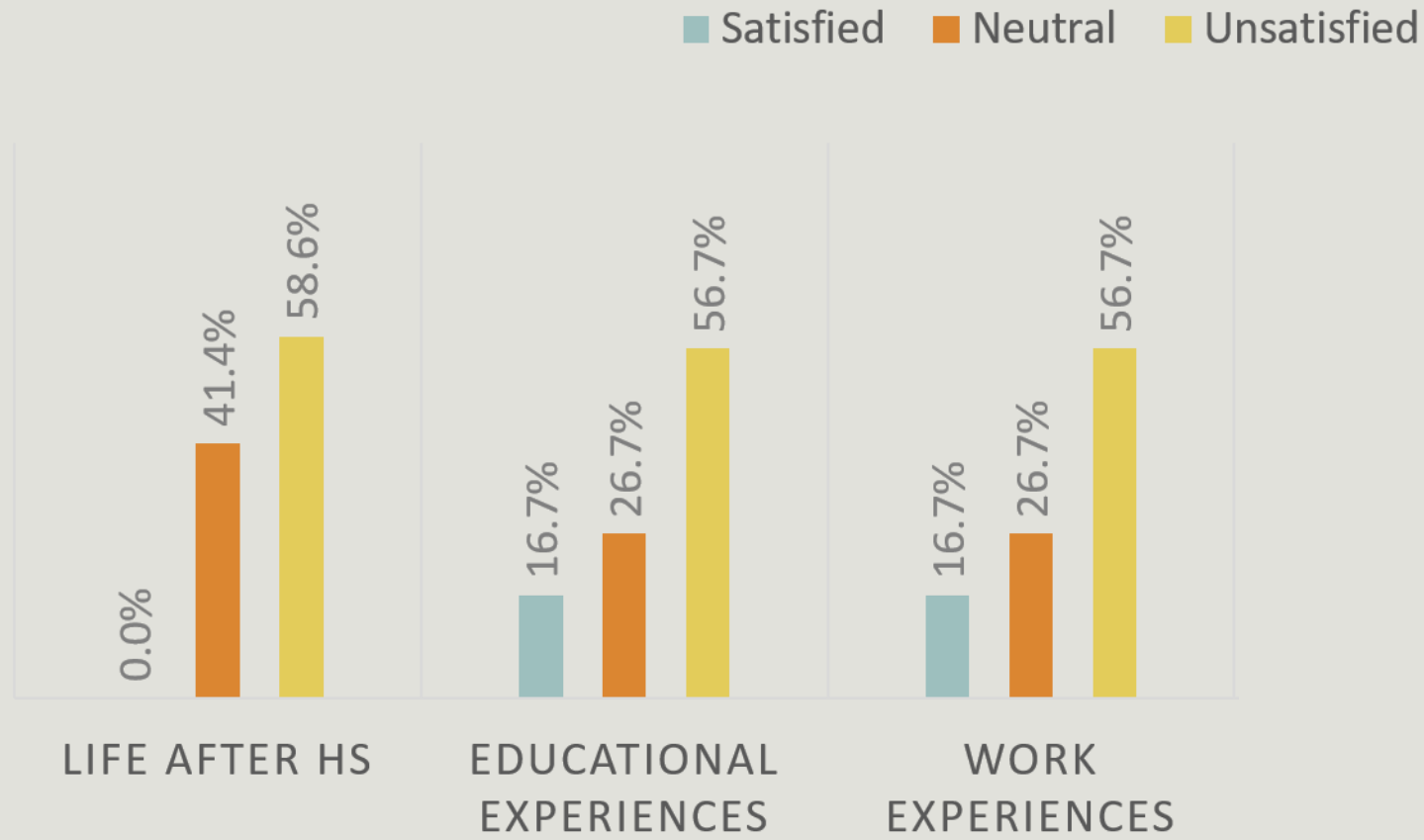
From the Young Adults

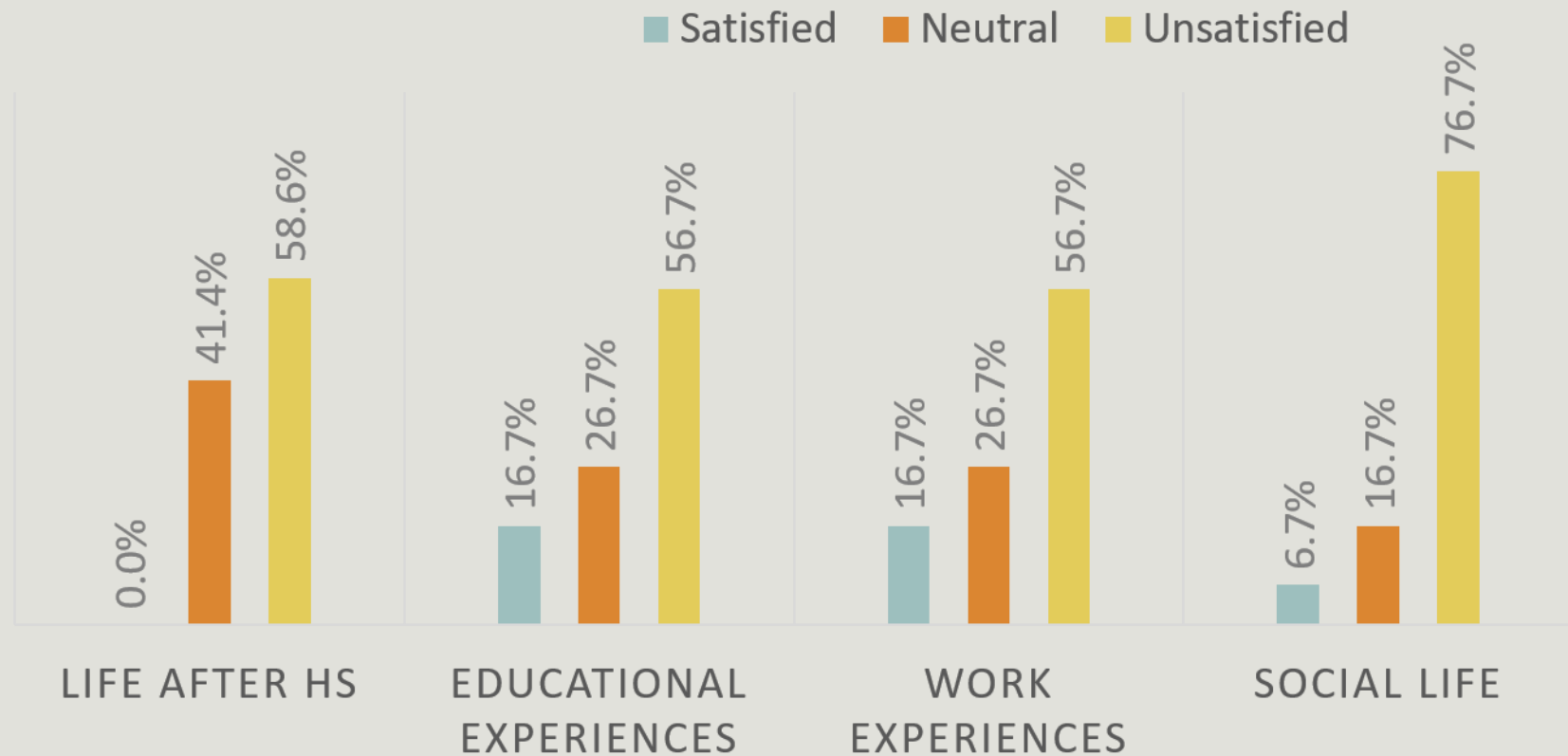# Satisfaction with Life After High School
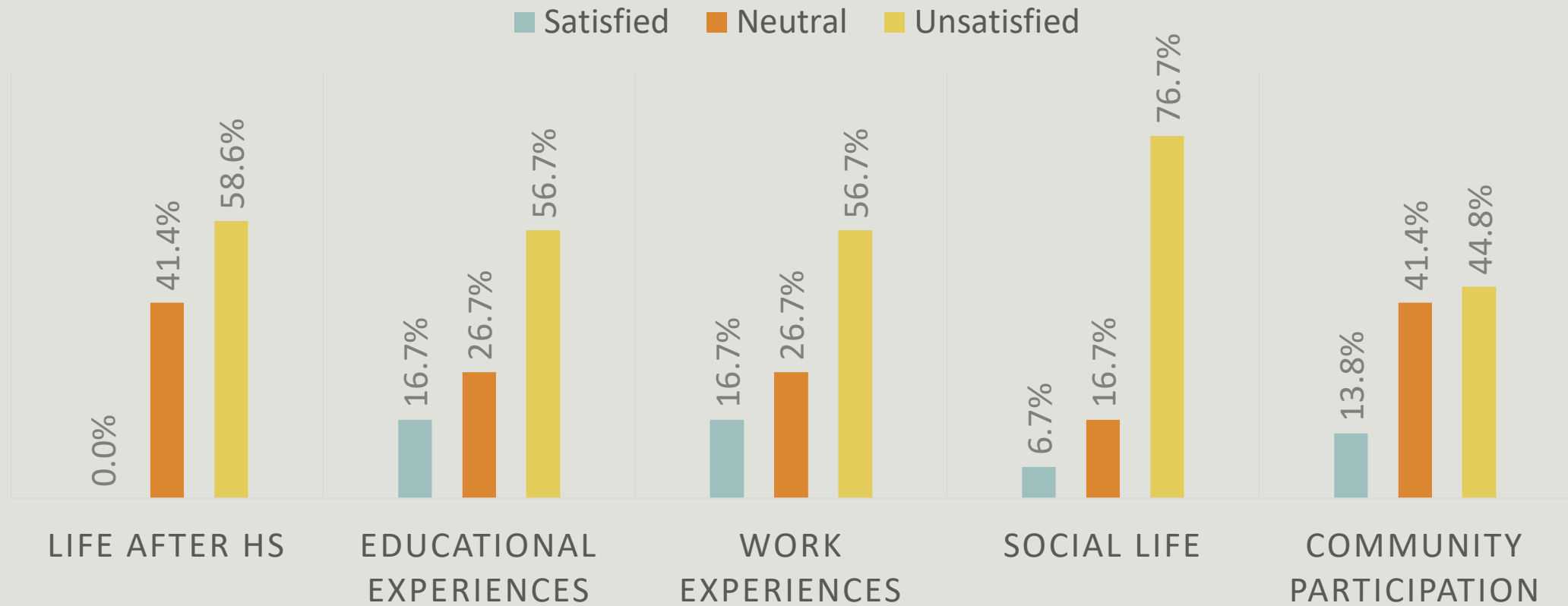
Satisfaction with Life After High School

Satisfaction with Life After High School

Helpfulness of High School
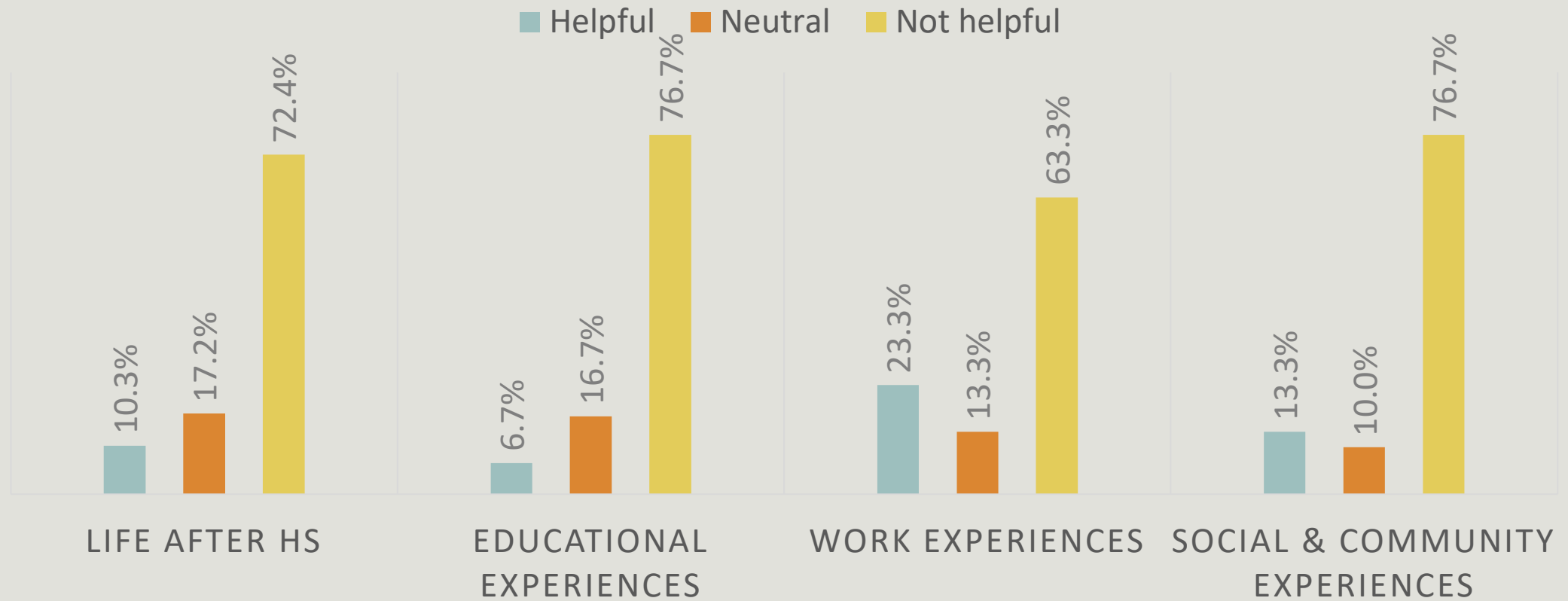
■ Helpful   ■ Neutral   ■ Not helpful

LIFE AFTER HS
- 10.3%
- 17.2%
- 72.4%

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES
- 6.7%
- 16.7%
- 76.7%

WORK EXPERIENCES
- 23.3%
- 13.3%
- 63.3%

SOCIAL & COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES
- 13.3%
- 10.0%
- 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, so the lack of structure was both great and a struggle.

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.

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 with here <u>mostly interaction</u> and or uh <u>writing it down</u>. Because it, everything in <u>my brain is usually just firing too fast</u> and uh, I usually end up saying something stupid or my writing gets highly erratic. But <u>if I take my time</u> I actually get things out."

Education – Barriers

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

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

Education – Audio Clip

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 Scho

Download: 📄 Mapping Training.final_.pdf

Sample CSESA Community Map

This is a sample community map to help get you

Download: 📄 CSESA-Community Map.pdf

Sample CSESA Community Map in Spanish

This is a sample community map in Spanish to gi

Download: 📄 CSESA Community Map_SPANISH

I WANT TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT RECREATION, ART, & MUSIC THERAPIES FOR MY CHILD. WHO SHOULD I CALL?			
Agency Name	**Program Summary**	**Address**	**Contact Information**
ABLE Youth	Helps people ages 3-22 in wheelchairs to live independently and participate in sports		(615) 973-5372 www.ableyouth.org
ArtSpeaks Art Therapy Enrichment and Services	Individual/group art therapy for people with disabilities (home, school, or day program)	700 Wilsonwood Place Nashville, TN 37206	(217) 204-1562 tg.artspeaks@gmail.com
Camp Will: Therapeutic Summer Day Camp	Specialized day camp for peoples ages 6-23 with physical/developmental disabilities		(615) 790-5719 ext. 21 www.wcparksandrec.com/seniors-therapeutics/activities
Metro Parks and Recreation Department (Disabilities Programs)	Adult day program, monthly weekend activities; summer day camps for adults/children		(615) 862-8479 www.nashville.gov/parks
Musical Bridges (music therapy)	Music therapy services to individuals with disabilities in the Nashville area		(888) 687-2734 www.musicalbridges.com
Positive RePercussions (music therapy)	Group therapeutic drumming		(615) 669-3786 www.positiverepercussions.com

Table of Contents

College Ready	
Student Activities	• Shadow a student in a major of interest • Conduct a role-play with a disability services counselor • Conduct a role-play with a professor
Resources	• George Washington University's http://www.heath.gwu.edu/assets/33/toolkit.pdf will give you tips on how to speak to your school's guidance counselor and request up-coming opportunities to shadow at a local college/ university.) • Norwich University's http://www.norwich.edu/academics/pdf/disabilitiesHandbook.pdf 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.

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."

Technology & Audio/Visual/Web Arts
- Video games and related technology
- Music Production
- Blogging/Videoblogging/Web comics

Retail/Service
- Tire shop
- Hotel Concierge
- Pet setting business

Helping Professions
- Veterinarian
- Teacher

Science & Social Science
- Meteorologists
- Archeologist
- Geologist

Technical/Manual
- Home remodeler
- Welder
- Bee Keeper

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.
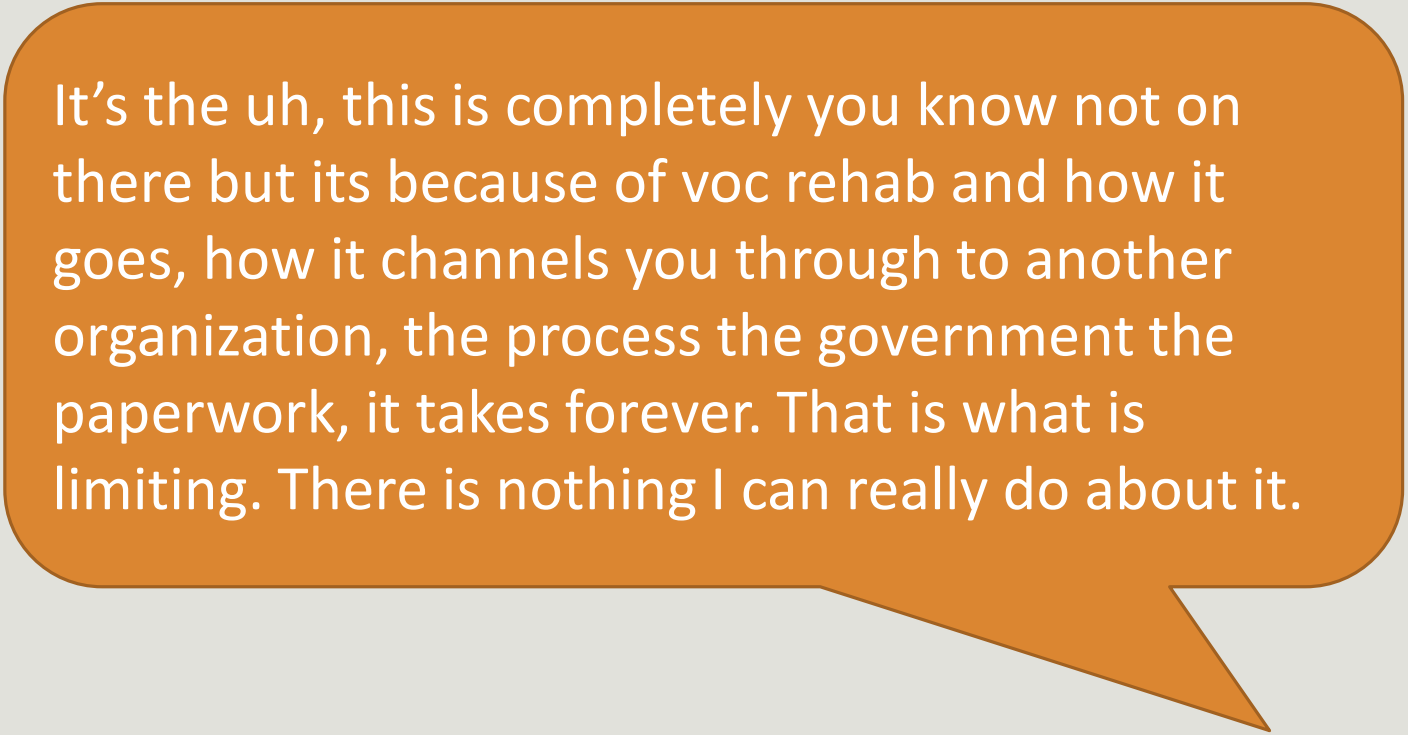
Employment – Barriers

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

CHELSEA

Hey! Mom keeps asking me what I'm doing after graduation... IDK

WHAT!? Matt – start now! So u can do what u really want to do.

Hmm... I like video games. IDK what I would be good at.

Check out this site. See what career you like https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/majors-careers

Image Credit: Creative Commons

Matt Mobile

Join clubs that interest u. Sooo many at school... student TV, video game design.

Ohhh yeah! Haven't tried those yet.

Do it! Joining looks good on college applications.

NICE! 2 for 1 ☺

And ask Mr. Hecht about his programming class.

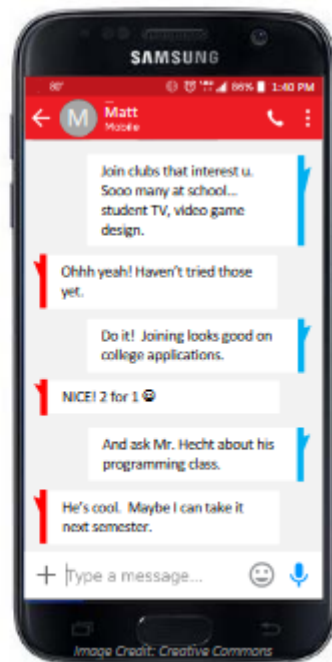He's cool. Maybe I can take it next semester.

Image Credit: Creative Commons

At School
☐ Pick classes that link to career goals
☐ Join an activity or club

Social Engagement

Making/seeing friends

Losing/missing friends

Hanging out with family

Disability-related groups

Online interactions and friendships

Not any dating

Activities

Sports & exercise

Clubs at schools

Performing arts

Religious/faith groups

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."

55% are reporting some social or community engagement

What are the things you're interested in now? Do you get to try out and do the things you like?

Hanging out with friends really interests me because I've never really thought about having friends in my life.

Community Participation – Aspirations

Are you looking to like find a significant person in your life, or?

Hahaha…If I can find a woman to put up with me, I'd be really glad, but I don't see that in the near future

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.
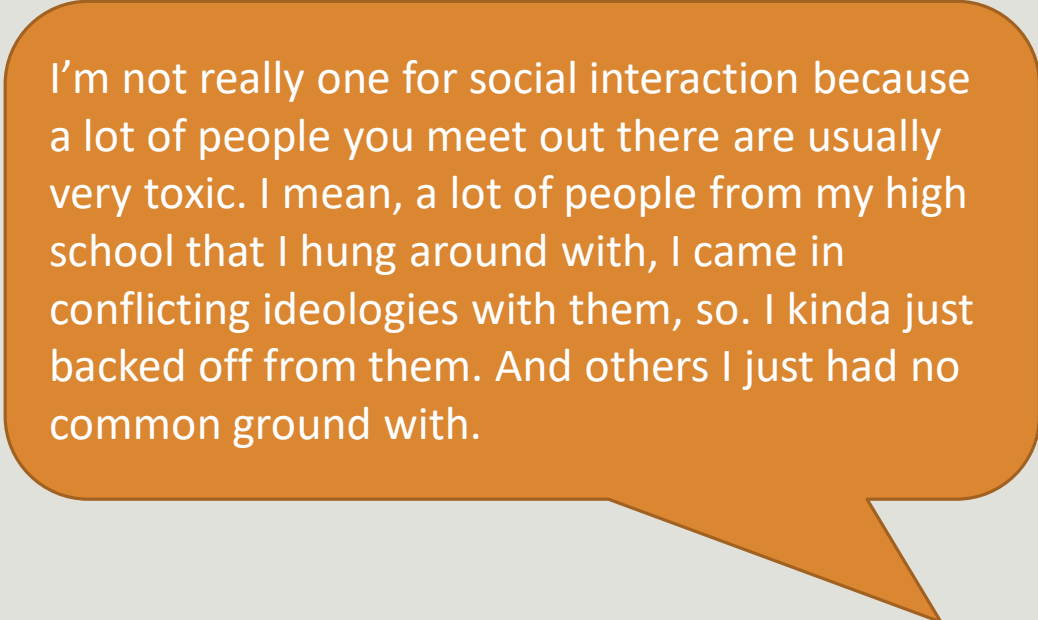
Community Participation – Barriers

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

Autism at-a-Glance is a series of practitioner and family-friendly documents created by the Center on Secondary Education for Students with ASD (CSESA) designed for high school staff members supporting students on the autism spectrum, as well as family members of adolescents with ASD. The purpose of the *Autism at-a-Glance* series is to provide a current summary of topics relevant to high school students with ASD

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.

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autism at-a-glance

February 2016

Autism at-a-Glance is a publication of the Center on Secondary Education for Students with ASD (CSESA)

Internet Safety for Teens with ASD

Autism at-a-Glance is a series of practitioner and family-friendly documents created by the Center on Secondary Education for Students with ASD (CSESA) designed for high school staff members supporting students on the autism spectrum, as well as family members of adolescents with ASD. The purpose of the *Autism at-a-Glance* series is to provide a current summary of topics relevant to high school students with ASD as well as practical tips and resources for school and community personnel and family members.

This *Autism at-a-Glance* was designed to support high school staff and family members in supporting adolescents on the autism spectrum as they begin to explore the internet.

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 their interests. 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 day to day activities. Compulsive internet use also limits in-person 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 use is finished. Software timers 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?

What is one thing you will …

- 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 piece of information you will share with…

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

Moving Towards Action

Find CSESA

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?