

Bridging the Gap: Post-Secondary Employment & Education Strategies for Students with Autism

Dr. James Williams

Certified Rehabilitation Counselor
Advanced Certified Autism Specialist
National Pre-ETS Director/Chief Operating Officer
Bloom Consulting
Adjunct Professor of Education/Counseling,
St. Edward's University, George Mason University, and Northwestern College

OUR WEBSITE: <https://www.bloomconsultingco.com>

1

Top 10 Mistakes in Transition...

- Goals are too broad and don't include the specific steps a student will need to take to reach the goal.
 - (Example: Bob will go to college when he graduates.)
- Goals are too specific and focus on a minute detail which may not actually impact a student's functioning.
 - (Example: Bob will not wear blue clothing more than 3 days in a week.)
- Goals based solely on the student's or family's hopes, dreams, and/or interests without considering the student's current academic, physical, mental, or intellectual functioning.
 - (Example: Bob wants to be a heart surgeon but has a 3rd grade reading and would most likely never be able to pass the MCAT to get admitted.)
- Goals are focus only on academics and do not include the other two domains mentioned in IDEA: post-secondary employment and independent living. IQ is not always a predictor of success.
 - (Example: Bob is 17 years old and has a goal of successfully answering 7 out of 10 Algebra problems correctly, but his mother dresses and bathes him everyday.)

2

Top 10 Mistakes Continued...

- Goals do not consider the actual job market that the student lives in or is willing to move to and whether it's feasible that they can obtain a position with their training or degree.
 - (Example: Bob has a BA in History because it's his hobby, but doesn't want to teach.)
- Goals are based upon suggestion and influence from others and not necessarily the student's informed choice.
 - (Example: Bob's parents want him to be an accountant because it pays well and his Dad is an accountant, so they send him to college for that, but he skips class due to lack of interest and doesn't pass anyways.)
- Evidenced-based, functional vocational evaluation was either not conducted or, if it was, it was done by staff who lack the appropriate certification, licensure, or training.
 - (Example: Special education teacher training programs generally provide no training/coursework on teaching or evaluating transition or vocational skills, however many schools unfairly ask teachers to conduct vocational assessments without providing any training or guidance on how to actually administer or interpret the findings.)

3

Top 10 Mistakes Continued...

- Connection to adult services providers/agencies was either not provided or, if it was, the parent was not educated as to what the agencies actually provide, what their limitations are, and when they should contact them.
 - (Example: Bob didn't get on the Medicaid Waiver waitlist until he was 18, however the list takes 10 years to receive funding, so he won't have the service when he actually needs them most.)
- Parents usually receive little, if any, training focused on preparing them for their child's graduation and the many changes that will occur regarding their legal, financial, and educational status.
 - (Example: Parents did not know their financial holdings and income will impact their child's ability to receive SSI or that adult services are eligibility-based.)
- School and/or parents wait too long to start transition planning and services which means the student does not have the amount of time needed to adequately prepare remedy transition-related skills deficits.
 - (Example: Bob's school waited until he turned 14 to start discussing transition and found that he had significant skill deficits which would take much longer than 4 years to address.)

4

The Result of These Mistakes:

- The Workforce Participation Rate of Adults with Disabilities
 - 21.5% versus 68.4% for Adults without Disabilities (includes those employed and unemployed actively seeking work) (Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, March 2018)
 - Only 55.1 percent of young adults with Autism held paying jobs during their first six years out of high school, the lowest percentage among the disability categories examined. (Shattuck, 2012)
- Many people with disabilities are in low wage jobs that perpetuate their dependence on the government and their family members. This is particularly devastating for high-functioning individuals with higher earning potential. (Carley, 2016)

5

7 Habits of Highly Successful Individuals with Disabilities

1. **Self-Advocacy**
 - The ability to communicate one's talents, skills and needed accommodations to others...." (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998, p.2)
2. **Self-Determination**
 - The ability to choose and enact choices to control one's life - to the maximum extent possible - based on knowing and valuing oneself, and in the pursuit of one's own needs, interests, and values. (Campeau & Wolfman, 1993, p. 2)
3. **Motivation**
 - The internal, super power of any great individual with or without a disability. Can be encouraged and explained, but not forced upon anyone (Williams, 2016)
4. **Accommodations**
 - School or on-the-job adjustment or adaptation
5. **Disclosure**
 - Full or partial disability disclosure
6. **Soft Skills**
 - How you relate to and interact with other people, aka Social Skills
7. **Hard Skills**
 - Teachable abilities or skill sets that are easy to quantify, i.e. Degrees, WPM, Tech Skill

6

Accommodations and Disclosure (College and the Workplace)

Modification vs Accommodation

- Modification is a reduction, change or limitation; a fundamental change in form or content of something. (Not required in schools or workplaces)
- Accommodation is to adjust or adapt (Required by federal law in both school and the workplace)

Full Disclosure vs Partial Disclosure

- Full-I have _____ and this is how it affects me.
- Partial-I have a disability and need this reasonable accommodation to complete my job or the application process.
- Usually partial is enough, but each situation is different.

7

Thoughts on Success

- Simply put, motivation is the biggest key that unlocks the potentially enormous success of a individual with a disability, however it is an internal trait that requires the individual to want to grow.
- What has enabled me to be successful?
 - MOTIVATION
 - AMBITIOUS GOALS
 - RESILANCE
 - CONFIDENCE
 - DIRECTION (The reason I do what I do!)
- My parents transitioned from advocates to advisors!



8

James' Study

- This correlational study investigated the relationship between parental factors and the successful employment of adults, age 26 and older, diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the United States.
 - The researcher studied three different types of independent variables, specifically, the demographic, behavioral, and psychological factors of a parent with an adult child diagnosed with ASD.
 - 92 Parents from across 48 states, including Hawaii and Alaska.
- Parental Characteristics
 - No Meaningful Relationship
- Parental Expectations
 - In this study, parental expectations did have a meaningful relationship with successful employment. A parent's positive expectations may increase the likelihood of their adult child achieving a successful employment outcome.
- Parental Behaviors
 - No Meaningful Relationship

9

What About Functioning Level?

- The student's level of functioning doesn't dictate their right to a FAPE that prepares them for post-secondary education, employment, and independent living.
- This means decisions regarding a student's transition/vocational services should not be based upon their level of functioning alone, but rather upon what is appropriate for their needs and post-secondary goals given where they are at.
- In example, an academically high functioning student in AP classes may have deficits in independent living, social, or vocational skills which may impede their ability to work and live independently. This means those services should be offered because, particularly with students with ASD, we are seeing more and more students excelling in the classroom, but failing at life and work because the sole focus in school is on academics alone.

10

Post-Secondary Education



A Gym, Not a Spa!

11

Action steps for the 8th grade student:

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ■ Obtain a copy of HS course catalogue | ■ Start saving money |
| ■ Develop HS course of study | ■ Include transition plan in IEP |
| ■ Review Websites of possible postsecondary colleges | ■ Use a Transition Planning Worksheet to keep a record of the plan |
| ■ Develop study skills | (Simpson and Spencer, 2009) |
| ■ Get tutoring or remediation if necessary | |

12

Action steps for the 9th grade student:

- Visit the HS career center
- Develop skills for academic independence – time management, study skills, note-taking, etc.
- Explore assistive technology
- Update Transition Plan at IEP meeting
- Review 4-year course of study with counselor
- Discuss college entrance exams with counselor
- Explore & choose extracurricular activities
- Explore options for completing community service projects
- Continue to remediate/compensate for basic skills deficits
- Take advantage of tutorials

(Simpson and Spencer, 2009)

13

Action steps for the 10th grade student:

- Visit nearby college & talk with someone in the Disability Services Office
- Signup & take practice college entrance exams & preparatory courses
- Update Transition Plan at IEP meeting
- Review 4-year course of study with counselor
- Continue involvement in extracurricular activities and community service
- Continue academic preparation & remediation
- Continue developing good work habits

(Simpson and Spencer, 2009)

14

Action steps for the 11th grade student:

- Review 4-year course of study & Transition Plan with IEP team & counselor
- Take college entrance exams
- Attend college night at the HS
- Schedule college visits for spring/summer
- Check out <http://www.commonapp.org> to see which colleges accept the Common Application
- Apply for scholarships
- Identify references: 2 teachers, 2 other individuals
- Begin visiting colleges
- Prepare transition packets for disability documentation that include:
 - Evaluation reports
 - Transcripts
 - Test scores, current IEP
 - Medical records
- Continue academic preparation & remediation, extracurricular activities, & community service

(Simpson and Spencer, 2009)

15

Action steps for the 12th grade student:

- Complete course of study
- Schedule college visits in early fall
- Work with English teacher to complete college essay
- Check out <http://www.commonapp.org> to see which colleges accept the Common Application
- Apply for scholarships
- Complete Free Application for Federal Individual Aid (FAFSA)
- Request letters of reference
- Re-take college entrance exams (if needed)
- Submit applications
- Prepare transition packets for disability documentation that include:
 - Evaluation reports
 - Transcripts
 - Test scores, current IEP
 - Medical records
- Continue academic preparation & remediation, extracurricular activities, & community service

(Simpson and Spencer, 2009)

16

Rights and Responsibilities

Secondary Education

- IDEA, ADA, Section 504
- **School district:** identification & evaluation
- Service delivery: Driven by **IEP team**
- Advocacy: **Parents or guardians** are the primary advocate.

Postsecondary Education

- ADA, Section 504
- **Student:** self-identify & provide documentation
- Service delivery: **Student** notifies DSS to set up services
- Advocacy: **Student** must advocate for their own academic needs & services.

(Simpson and Spencer, 2009)

17

What kind of documentation do colleges need?

- A **specific diagnostic statement** identifying the disability including severity and date of current diagnostic evaluation.
- **Specific findings which support this diagnosis** including relevant history, tests administered, test results, and interpretation of those test results.
- **Information concerning the impact of the disability on the educational setting** including a description of the functional limitations due to the disability.
- The documentation must be on letterhead, typed, dated, signed, and include the evaluator's name, address, telephone number, and professional credentials.
- The aforementioned points are general requirements for all documentation packets, however, additional information for different disabilities may be required. (See the documentation requirements below for specific disabilities.) Individual Educational Plans (IEP) are valuable resources of information but cannot be used as documentation of a disability.
- An FIE from a school district is usually the most widely accepted.

18

What accommodations or services do colleges offer?

- Personal and Crisis Counseling Services (SHSU)
- Specialized Group Programs (SHSU)
- Group Counseling Services (SHSU)
- Career Counseling & Testing
- Academic Content Tutoring and Study Skills Courses
- extended testing time,
- Interpreters
- note-taking,
- reader services
- scribe services
- audio books and other adaptive technology services

19

Consider the idea of another individual or friend serving as a liaison or mentor?

- They can help advocate for their needs.
- They can serve as a social, academic, and organizational role-model.
- They can help them with registration, navigation of the campus, and communication with parents and professors.



20

Employment



“It’s hard work!”

21

Requirements of Competitive Work

- Socially appropriate work behaviors
- Ability to perform the essential functions of a job
- Able to operate independently; a parent's role should transition from that of an advocate to an advisor.
- Able to manage their own time, including breaks, arriving and leaving on time.
- Able to perform activities of daily living

22

Limitations in Adult Vocational Services

- School and State-funded services do not offer unlimited resources and support
 - School-based services are usually limited by age, funding, staffing, and location.
 - State-funded services, such as those funded by Medicaid Waiver and State VR, are usually limited by eligibility, funding, lack of providers, provider quality issues, and, in VR most of all, the short-term nature of services.
- Most adult services are eligibility, not entitlement-based, programs.
- Job Carving is great idea, however the reality is it rarely happens and, when it does, it is usually temporary.
- Specialized Programs like Specialistern, Nonpareil Institute, ASTEP, Microsoft's Autism Program, SAP-Autism at Work
- Brilliant ideas, but with a few big problems...
 - Serving 100-200 People a Year out of the 2.6 Million Needing to be Served (Carley, 2016)
 - Location Specific and Concentrated Mostly in Northwest and Northeast
 - Limited industries
 - Usually just for the highest functioning portion of the spectrum

23

What is the Job Market Like?

- Where do people really work in the US?
 - Elementary/Secondary Schools
 - Food Service Industry
 - Hospitals
 - Employment Services
 - Grocery Stores
- Apprenticeships are expected to be the fastest growing requirement!
- Important to understand job market trends and local factors



24

Job Development Options

- Options
 - Jobs Requiring High School Diploma Only
 - College-Based Training (Degree)
 - Technical School Training (Certificate)
 - Registered Apprenticeship
 - Self Employment (Service/Product)
 - Volunteering
- Identify Interests and Strengths
 - Research Organizations Involved



25

Our Transition-Focused Vocational Services & Evaluations

- On The Right Track Career/College Exploration Program:
 - *A Fun, Intensive Career Exploration & Skills Experience*
 - Offered Year-Round
- Career Connections Program:
 - *A Short-Term, Intensive Work Experience & Skills Program*
 - Offered Year-Round
- Career Assess & Learn College-Bound Program:
 - *A Vocational Evaluation & Guided Interpretation Program*
 - Offered Year-Round

26

- What is Pre-ETS?
 - They are VR funded services designed to prepare students ages 14-22 years old with disabilities for employment.
 - They cover areas such as Job Exploration Counseling Work-Based Learning Experiences, Counseling on Post-Secondary Opportunities, Workplace Readiness Training, Self-Advocacy
 - To qualify students must be, Ages 14 and 22, Enrolled in secondary or post-secondary education, Receiving Special Education or 504 Services due to a diagnosed disability

Here is our list of upcoming camps below...

June 3rd-June 14th:
San Antonio, St. Paul Presbyterian Church
Fort Worth, Fort Worth School of Fort Worth
Tomball, Tomball Memorial High School
Aldine, Aldine Education Center

June 19th-June 21st:
Corpus Christi, Mary Grieb Transition Center

June 17th-June 28th:
Humble, Midland JTB Transition Center
Lago Vista, Lago Vista Middle School
Marble Falls, Marble Falls Middle School
Taylor, Taylor ISD Event Center
Karni, Karni High School



ON THE RIGHT TRACK CAREER/COLLEGE EXPLORATION PRE-ETS PROGRAM

CAREER/COLLEGE EXPLORATION & SOFT SKILLS
TRAINING FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AGES 14-22

Announcing Our
Summer 2019
Camp Schedule!

July 8th-July 19th:
Leander, Summer School Campus
Wichita Falls, Wichita Falls ISD Career Center
Southwest Austin, Westlake High School
Weatherford, Weatherford College
Baytown, Sterling High School

July 22nd-August 2nd:
Arlington, St Paul United Methodist Church
Southwest Austin, Austin High School
Southwest Texas COOP-South, Liberty High School

July 29th-August 8th:
Southeast Texas COOP-North, Cleveland High School

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL TWC-VR COUNSELOR OR VISIT BLOOMCONSULTINGCO.COM/OTET FOR MORE INFORMATION!

27

Questions/Comments

- Dr. James Williams, CRC, ACAS
- Phone: 832-452-3155
- Email: jwilliams@bloomconsultingco.com



OUR COMPANY WEBSITE: <https://www.bloomconsultingco.com>

28

RESOURCES:



29

Common Questions about Post-Secondary Transition

- Can a school deny my child admission based on their disability, do they have to disclose it?
 - No, a school CANNOT deny your child admission based on a disability and you ALWAYS have the right to choose whether to tell the school at all. However, if you want services from them, you will have to disclose.
- Do high school accommodations/modifications affect college services?
 - No, they are two INDEPENDENT processes. A individual can and probably will receive different services in college than in high school. An IEP can be helpful to colleges, but keep in mind they carry NO LEGAL WEIGHT because IDEA does not apply.
- If the college requests an evaluation before they will provide services, who pays?
 - Neither the high school or college are responsible to pay for an evaluation, so it may be at your expense.
- Will my child's HS transcript be marked as "disabled" or modified?
 - Probably not, in fact, the state is changing some of the course titles and codes to make it less obvious that the individual took special education classes. In truth, it's based on the individual entrance requirements for each school.

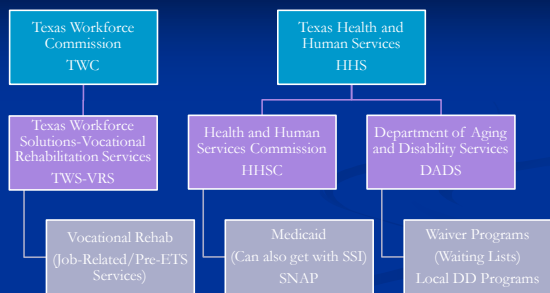
30

Common Questions about Disability and Employment

- Do employers have to give a person with a disability preference in the application process?
 - No, all they are required to do is provide “reasonable” accommodations in the application process and in their completion of essential job functions. If the person cannot perform the basic job functions, even with accommodations, the employer is not required to hire or retain them.
- Are the accommodations automatic?
 - No, the person with a disability must identify themselves and request the needed accommodations, usually in writing.
- Why can't VR, the school, or the job coach just get them a job and why does it take so long?
 - Because the only person that can offer to hire is the employer and it is completely their choice regardless of the feelings, persuasion, or communication with parents, educators, or job coaches. In short, the person with a disability and any professionals working with them, like everyone else, are at the mercy of decisions of the hiring manager.

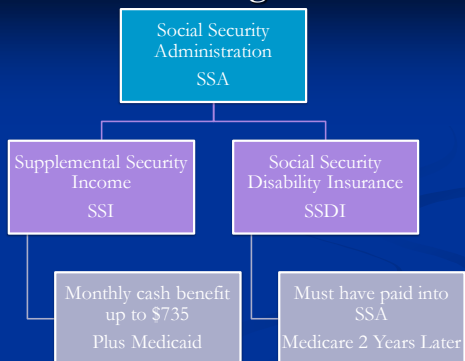
31

Organization of State Services



32

SSA Programs



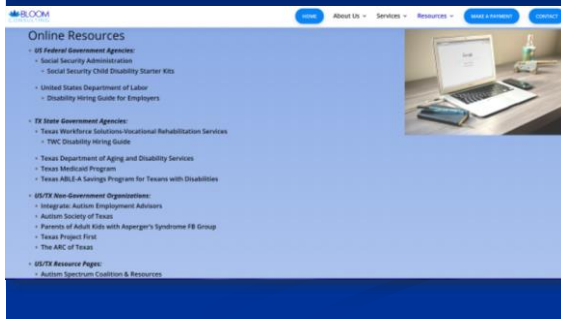
33

SSA Work Incentives/Exclusions

- Plan to Achieve Self Support (PASS)
 - You put money in a separate bank account for a work-related need. Doesn't count against SSI
 - Must be approved by SSA Area Work Incentive Coordinator (AWIC).
 - Can use WIPA Coordinators to get help with applying
- Student Earned Income Exclusion
 - Under age 22 can get \$1780 per month forgiven from check, up to \$7180/year
 - Not automatic, you must request in writing to SSA.
- 1619(b) Medicaid
 - Even with no check, keep Medicaid until "Texas" threshold of \$34821/year.
- Medicaid Buy-In
 - Those over the threshold can pay to keep it if they make less than \$2435/month
- Websites to Know
 - <http://www.chooseworktexas.net/>
 - <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityresearch/workincentives.htm>

34

Our Website Resource Page: bloomconsultingco.com/weblinks



The screenshot shows the website for bloomconsultingco.com. The header includes the company name and navigation links: Home, About Us, Services, Resources, and a dropdown menu for Social Security. The main content area is titled "Online Resources" and lists various links categorized by government agency and organization. A photo of a laptop on a desk is also visible.

Online Resources

- **US Federal Government Agencies:**
 - Social Security Administration
 - Social Security Child Disability Starter Kits
- **United States Department of Labor**
 - Disability Hiring Guide for Employers
- **TX State Government Agencies:**
 - Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation Services
 - TWC Disability Hiring Guide
 - Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services
 - Texas Medicaid Program
 - Texas MESA Savings Program for Texans with Disabilities
- **IS/TA Non-Government Organizations:**
 - Integrative Autism Employment Advisors
 - Autism Society of Texas
 - Parents of Adult Kids with Asperger's Syndrome PE Group
 - Texas Project First
 - The ABC of Texas
- **IS/TA Resource Pages:**
 - Autism Spectrum Coalition & Resources

35