

Matt How are college professors being prepared to teach students with autism whom sometimes learn differently meaning they need something different from the auditory lecture style commonly used in the college classroom?

We are frequently connecting with colleges and universities around the state of GA (sometimes we reach out to them, sometimes they reach out to us) to provide training and support to faculty and staff as it relates to working with students with autism. As a part of these trainings, we do spend time talking about Universal Design for Learning in hopes that they will be able to develop classes that connect with multiple learning styles.

As elementary school teachers for students who are moderately to severely impacted by autism, do you have advice for us as to how we can better help our students move towards this transition phase?

At the risk of sounding trite, thinking about transition can never start too early. Opportunities to increase social skills, daily living skills, executive functioning skills, and self-awareness should be included in daily instruction. An important resource for elementary students with ASD are their neurotypical peers. We have had great success with implementing peer programs at the elementary level. Also, students of all ages and support levels can be involved to some extent in their IEP. For example, a student could bring work samples to their IEP to show the team, or set out name cards for each member.

Q&A: Can you speak to the policy needs around transition planning affected by FERPA in terms of moving valuable information gained over time to non-educational systems?

The most significant struggle we see is the transfer of information from high schools to the university/college environment. Similarly (though this is not a FERPA issue, rather an ADA issue), the requirements for a "recent" (e.g., within three years) evaluation in order to be found eligible for academic accommodations at the university can create challenges for students who do not have such a recent evaluation. There are policies in place to require school systems to conduct these evaluations, but such policies are not always adhered to. In regards to the FERPA matter, I think the policy conversation needs to focus on the intention of restricting access to educational records balanced with the value of having families involved in the education and young adult development of their child with ASD. There are very practical common sense work-arounds with this matter, but from a policy and legal standpoint, indeed the restrictions imposed by FERPA can create challenges.

Hi Dr. Segall! My question for you is how do we facilitate the peer component in developing social skills? I'm asking this because many skills that come naturally for NTs were learned from their friends, and people on the spectrum are at a distinct disadvantage in learning these skills because of the frequent lack of a friend group. How do we address this gap in social skills, because having these skills allows us to effectively function in a peer group, yet it also requires these same skills to have these opportunities in the first place?

The *PEERS® Curriculum for School-Based Professionals* by Laugeson referenced in the presentation is a great way to build social skills. In general, social skills are best taught intentionally and with same-age neurotypical peers. It's helpful to provide direct instruction of these social skills along with opportunities to practice in a safe environment with both autistic and typical peers. This should occur in a space where those learning new skills can receive feedback and opportunities for repetitive practice. There are also great implementations of after-school clubs and organizations which intentionally include students with and without disabilities (including ASD) and facilitate leadership and service projects – that's a great way to foster social engagement and create peer-to-peer learning.

Dr Segall, how could we allow adults with autism to get into the military or make it more inclusive?

Unfortunately, this is not a question we've been asked to ponder before, and we would have a great deal of research to do to fully understand this important question. Thank you for the stumper!

What happen to level 1 ASD student when they finish high school? what resources they and their families have?

I would encourage any recent graduate to reach out to their local GVRA office if they are interested in job training or would like assistance in finding a job. If the individual is interested in pursuing college or technical school, they should contact the office of disability services of the particular school they are interested attending to seek assistance and support. Lastly, the Education and Transition team at Emory Autism Center offers Goal Planning Meetings to work one on one with individuals to formulate a comprehensive transition plan and access resources. Please reach out to us at 404-727-8350. Other resources from the presentation – such as the Transition Toolkit from Autism Speaks, and the College Guide from OAR are wonderful resources for families and students.

Q&A Question: How can you help a teen whose goal is highly unrealistic (e.g. major league baseball player... without the skills)? I want to be a supportive parent, but I'm realistic and want him to think about other careers in baseball.

With any dream, there is an interest you can tap into and support. We strongly feel that it isn't our job to crush a dream, even though we may know that it is a long shot. In this case specifically, I would ask my teen, what do they love about baseball? Is it the stadium? The players? Often these probing questions get at the heart of what intrigues a student about a certain career path. Also, spend some time with your teen researching how to become a major league baseball player. They may determine all on their own that the dedication and hard work is not of interest. I would also reach out to the high school coach or a local club and see if your teen could participate with the baseball team in some capacity as a volunteer. A volunteer position is a great way to learn more about a field of interest and in the case of a high school student, provides a great way to meet other students outside of the classroom. All in all, use the dream as motivation to work on all of the important things your student needs to learn and master.

how would you encourage or talk to parent to not limit their children in their studies or goals, dreams

I think there needs to be a realistic conversation between parents and their kids to think through what are feasible and unfeasible dreams for each person (this can often be mediated by a third party like a counselor). It may be useful to dig deeper into what a child with autism is interested in so that they can learn about all the school/career/other opportunities available to them related to a particular goal. It can also help to have parents speak to other young adults with autism who have had the opportunity to pursue their dreams and what their story/journey has looked like for them. They may also benefit from engaging with other parents and parent mentors who have helped to support their young adults pursue their goals. Person Centered Planning is another great tool for having these conversations.

Dr Segall, how do we work with parents who want to be overly protective?

This is a difficult question as parents are the main support for students and will continue to be the main support for their students long after high school ends. We must also be sensitive to different cultural expectations regarding disability. I like to talk to parents about thinking about their child as an adult and what they would like them to be able to do for themselves. For example, if you want your child to be able to shop for and cook a meal at 25, you can have them learn to make a sandwich at 10. The educator would then support the parent and student to make that happen. (e.g. practice at school, provide visual task analysis). It's also helpful for parents to value the "dignity of risk" and know that their child will make mistakes but there are many things to be learned from making mistakes. And sometimes, frankly, one can perceive a parent being "overly protective", but when you uncover the full "history", you see that such behaviors were born out of specific moments and experiences. In this case, the best way to work with parents is to build rapport, build trust, go very slowly, and demonstrate success by using best practices.

Matt When will the Autism Oaks program start?

We hope to have it up and running in Fall 2021, although this timeline may be affected by the coronavirus and funding opportunities. Indeed, we are already informally piloting much of our model and are excited to keep moving things forward.

How do you prepare the peer in college to be sensitive to the specific needs of a classmate? Is there a module that one can refer to?

Ideally, peers get opportunities in high school to interact with students with autism and get training and support when they are younger so that by the time they get to college, they are in the best position to be a good and supportive friend. Unfortunately, this is not always the case and the EAC does do trainings on college campuses on how to create a more inclusive and accepting atmosphere. Sometimes

it also just takes exposure and time to know to and be comfortable interacting with individuals who are different and so getting to spend time with peers with autism can be helpful too.

Q&A joint question for Segall and Magana: the point raised by the Facebook post related cultural variation in caretaker roles. most of our frameworks are highly individualistic and tend to focus less in familial culture. Can you both speak to the intersection of caretaker roles in relation to culture and transition?

This is a great question, and one that we have not fully explored in our work just yet. But in our work that is focused on parent and family engagement, in the rapport building process, we know that it is essential to uncover the parent's values as it relates to independence, goal setting and the process of transition to adulthood. One's culture of course plays a strong role in the formation of these values. Indeed, however, to the point of the question, we are aware that our "person-centered" approach to transition planning may be at odds with the culture of a student and/or their family, and this tension is not to be ignored or dismissed but heard and treated with respect.

Q&A Question: How can parents of adults with Autism get in touch with help for transitioning. The only option we were given for my daughter was through Social Security and Vocational Rehab; yet, these services were never offered through them. is your group working with Vocational Rehab in Georgia.

The Education and Transition team at Emory Autism Center offers Goal Planning Meetings to work one on one with individuals to formulate a comprehensive transition plan and access resources. Please reach out to us at 404-727-8350; we would be happy to discuss your daughter.

How can a person on the AS, get their employer to understand more about AS so that the person can stay gamefully employed?

Ideally, we would like for as many employers as possible to have some sort of training in how to best support their employees with autism. These trainings can be offered through the Emory Autism Center. The employer may also wish to get a more in-depth consultation from someone that is expert in working with employees with autism and may seek assistance for specific cases and situations. Unfortunately, no one can force an employer to do these things so the EAC (and other agencies) try to make these resources available to employers in hopes that we can build capacity across the workforce to make it a more inclusive and diverse place for folks on the spectrum to work. Also, there are more and more examples of employers who have intentionally hired individuals with ASD. If a supervisor or employer was open to it, it would be great to connect the employer to another manager/supervisor/leader who has already had success in hiring and managing individuals with ASD. Finally, Autism Speaks (and other organizations) has developed terrific toolkits around this issue.