



Wehman, Paul, et al. "Transition from School to Adulthood for Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder: What we Know and what we Need to Know." *Journal of Disability Policy Studies* 25.1 (2014): 30-40. Web. Doi:10.1177/1044207313518071

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Annotated by Sarah Weitzel – Edited by Pei Hu – 01/2016

**ABSTRACT** Youth with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) experience poor outcomes in the areas of independence, employment, and postsecondary education. This article provides a critical review of the key aspects of the transition process and identifies recommendations for policy and practice. The review highlights the literature and explores recommendations across the manifold elements of this transition, including social and psychological development, high school curriculum, work, and college. Five policy recommendations are outlined in the areas of school curriculum, employment development, postsecondary education, inclusion with nondisabled peers, and systematic instruction. Finally, the authors offer recommendations for further research in the areas of social interaction, increased academic and vocational rigor, employment, technology, independence, and postsecondary education.

## SUMMARY

### Purpose of Study

"The review highlights the literature and explores recommendations across the manifold elements of transition from school to adulthood and identifies recommendations to help guide our policies and practices.

### Research questions

- i. What is the transition process and recommendations for policy and practice found in previous literature?
- ii. What are the impeding behaviors, high school curriculum, supported and competitive work, and the participation in postsecondary education for students with ASD?

### Framework

- i. Impact of Social and Psychological Factors on Postsecondary Outcomes
- ii. High School Curriculum and Its Impact on Postsecondary Outcomes
- iii. Transition Planning
- iv. Transition to Employment and Postsecondary Education



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- v. Future Directions for Policy and Practices
- vi. Transition as an Ongoing Research Priority

### **Population and Sample**

Various other studies with a particular focus on NLTS-2 922 individuals aged 13 to 26 with ASD from 2001 to 2009

### **Overview of Methods**

Lit review

### **Variables or Broad Topics**

- i. Keywords/Broad topics: autism spectrum disorder, transition, educational policy, adolescent, high school, employment, postsecondary education
- ii. type/amount of transition program
- iii. severity of ASD
- iv. involvement of student
- v. type of curriculum

### **Findings/Results**

- i. High school practices – students with ASD most education from special education settings, low rates of participation in own transition planning, coursework is very different of peers, more credits are earned than any other disability group surveyed in the NLTS-2.
  - ii. Postsecondary education/employment– low participation connected to competitive employment, temporary low wage, low skill positions, laid off/fired high rate, live with parents, highest rate of “no engagement since high school” of all disability categories
  - iii. Postsecondary/employment success – paid work experience, training in self-care/independent living, and student support; career awareness, community experiences, exit exam requirements, high school diploma status, inclusion in general education, interagency collaboration, occupational courses, parental involvement, program of study, vocational study, work study etc.
  - iv. Employment success - identification of the most appropriate work settings and placements, effective on-the-job supports, long-term support services for the
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- employer and the employee with ASD, analysis of costs for support, recognition of the positive effects of employment
- v. NLTS-2 indicated youth with ASD have transition goals for PSE, more likely to enroll than youth in several other disability categories
- vi. Students with ASD complete PSE and training programs rates below students with other disabilities

### **Recommendations**

- 1) ASD-Specific Best Practices Related to Preparing Students for PSE
    - a. Instructing students with ASD in natural environments from Grades K through 12.
    - b. Using Person-Centered Planning models in transition planning.
    - c. Developing local, regional, and/or state-level cross agency coordinating teams.
    - d. Incorporating universal design principles in developing postsecondary courses and materials.
    - e. Providing peer mentoring for students with ASD.
    - f. Providing educational coaching.
    - g. Providing concurrent engagement in employment.
    - h. Enhancing social pragmatics and communication skills.
      - i. Enhancing self-determination and self-advocacy skills.
  - 2) Improve High School Curriculum and Services- to include more social skills training and direction form the student as well as to challenge the student
  - 3) Transition planning with input and involvement from the student
  - 4) Increase Access to Internships and Employment During High School- provides valuable experience and helps build autonomy
  - 5) Promote Postsecondary Education- students with ASD have lots of untapped potential
  - 6) Dual Enrollment- integrate students into PSE while still under an IEP
  - 7) Promote Inclusion and Provide Social Skill Instruction
  - 8) Provide Systematic Instruction to Increase Functional Literacy, Independence, and Self Determination
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## **Implications**

- i. Many of the recommendations can be directly applied
- ii. Research recommendations: more research on how to inform practice and improve postschool outcomes for youth with ASD are needed.

## **CRITIQUES & LIMITATIONS**

### **Conceptual Data**

We had no direct data to examine.

### **Analysis**

Which part of the clinical research did they do.

### **Interpretation**

ASD is such a wide spectrum, and it is examined as a whole.

### **Application**

A lot of recommendations are given, but there was no real analysis of what was needed to apply these recommendations.

## **FOLLOW-UP**

### **Little Questions**

- i. Which part of this study is their specific clinical research?
- ii. Limitations immutable or are they really lost opportunities for these young people with ASD to show their potential?

### **Big Questions**

- i. Are the recommendations for research currently being pursued?
- ii. Who if anyone is implementing the recommendations for transitions, and what resources do they need?

### **Next Steps**

- All recommendations



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### Summary/Utility

- i. This article examined the transition of students with ASD to college and then to the workforce. Several recommendations are made for transition planning and social skills training in high school. One factor of particular importance is student participation in transition planning. Based on the article it is clear that more students with ASD should be challenged in high school and have the opportunity to continue their education in college. The theme of the general research deficit on ASD is revisited.

### Tweets

- i. Our current knowledge pales in comparison with the research questions that await exploration.
- ii. these young people have tremendous potential that is waiting to be unleashed.
- iii. We see the potential for students with ASD to be successful members of their communities, colleges, and workplaces, but there needs to be a greater understanding of the best way to unlock these skills by educators, parents, and other professionals.
- iv. "...youth with ASD have significant untapped potential that has been underappreciated."

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