



Living, Learning, Linking: The 3LPlace Transition Curriculum

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PROLOGUE

The shift from adolescence to young adulthood represents one of the most critical evolutionary phases of life. We sift through and draw upon our accumulated experiences, we solidify our ethics and belief systems, and we envision the life we wish to lead. It is a pivotal time of identity formation and self-discovery that we expect will lead us to the clarity of vision and surge of internal motivation we need to embark on the next leg of our journey. We take inventory of the tools for life we have gathered, identify the ones we need moving forward, look to others for guidance, and surge ahead with a mix of capability, naiveté, and optimism. We actively seek intimacy and more meaningful relationships. We expect that as we grow our options will expand, the world will rise to greet us, and the possibilities will be endless.

For young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or other developmental disabilities the transition to adulthood is just as critical, but it is significantly more challenging. Their disorder is characterized by challenges in communication and social interactions, restricted interests and activities, and difficulty in engaging in symbolic thinking. Instead of taking successful steps forward along a healthy developmental path in early childhood, most individuals with ASD accumulate stresses and traumas that overshadow the positive experiences from which they have to draw and a lack of experience narrows their menus of possible choices. Their ability to generate, conceptualize, internalize, and apply their own ethics and beliefs can be compromised by inefficient processing systems: biological, sensory, and emotional systems that derail and distress them and a motor system that prevents them from following through on intent in meaningful ways.

We believe that individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities, when provided appropriate tools and supports, can lead productive, connected, and meaningful adult lives. Individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities have enormous potential that is consistently under recognized and cultivated. They have much to share with their families and friends, and contribute to their communities and the rest of the world.

This is what the Transition Curriculum is about: Recognizing the potential within each individual, providing rich and rewarding experiences, and strengthening an individual's capacity to learn and make meaning of the world. With the right tools, well-designed supports and guidance, and the proper environment to develop their passions, these young adults with ASD and other developmental disabilities *can* envision a fulfilling and successful future like their typically developing peers. And they *can* lead meaningful lives.

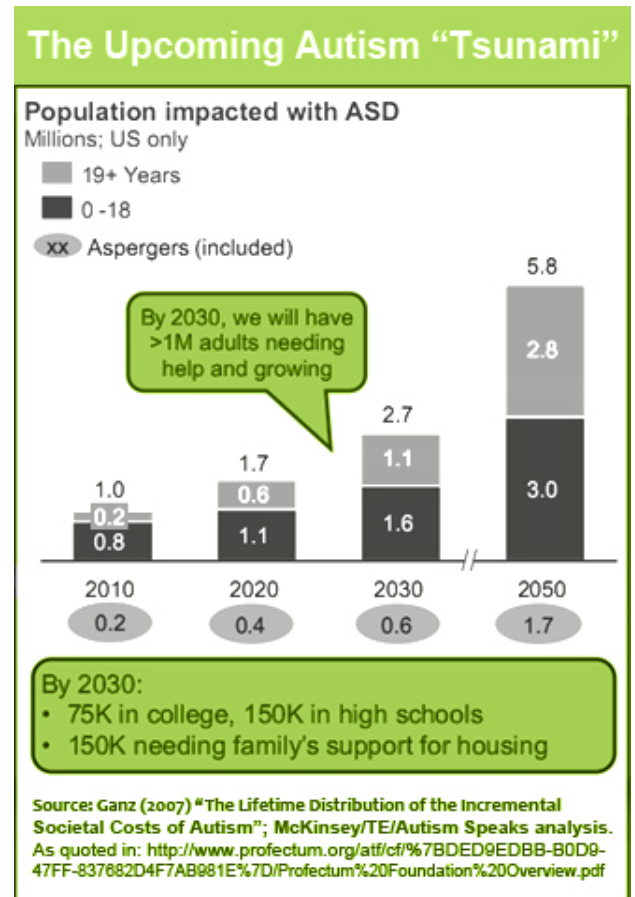
Growth Rate of Population in Special Education

The extraordinary increase in the number of children with autism passing through the U.S. educational system has been frequently characterized as a tsunami, and for very good reason.

In Massachusetts between 2002 and 2007, the number of students with autism who participated in special education programs in the Massachusetts public schools *more than doubled*, from 4,080 to 8,699 (Budney and Warfield, 2009).

In California between 2002 to 2010, the number of students with autism who participated in special education programs in the California public schools *more than tripled*, from 17,508 to 59,690 (Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health, 2011).

Nationally, nearly one million children diagnosed with ASD will be transitioning into adulthood in the next decade. Although the statistics are difficult to find, it is clear enough that the number of young adults with autism between the ages of 18 and 21 enrolled in special education programs is also beginning to surge.



Current Situation in Transition Education

Beginning at age 16, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) requires the development of a transition plan for individuals with ASD. The goal of the transition plan is to facilitate an individual moving from school to adult living and includes continuing education, work, housing, and community participation. This is both an official process and one of personal discovery. The transition plan is an integral part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and carries the same legal authority.

Recent research published in *Pediatrics* indicates that in the first two years after high school more than 50% of those individuals with ASD did not work or attend school, 79% lived with their parents, 60% received some type of supplemental services (such as speech therapy, mental health counseling, and case management), and nearly 40% received no services whatsoever (Shattuck, 2012, pp. 1042-1049).

One of the most urgent matters facing families today is finding suitable transition programs for individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities once they reach adulthood and having options for lifelong housing, recreation, and employment. The availability of these services is exceedingly limited, and more constrained today given current government budget shortfalls. Without well-designed transition

programming and appropriate supports over the lifespan, these individuals have limited prospects for living fulfilling, meaningful lives.

Currently there are very few entities in existence that offer integrated continuing education and independent living support for these maturing children. Some social service agencies do provide services, but the services they provide, such as day services, residential services, transportation services, and vocational services, are rarely presented in an integrated fashion. Also, these social service agencies are primarily funded by state and federal dollars, which are limited, and priority is given to those individuals who are the most challenged and in need. These services often focus on remediating skill deficits and maximizing functionality. In too many cases, they are oriented towards placing individuals in small group homes and employment opportunities that are segregated from the larger world and feature simple jobs with repetitive tasks. Very few are oriented to explore the individual’s strengths, interests, aspirations, and potentials for living and working as a member of the general society.

The Curriculum Gap

At present, there are no comprehensive, integrated curricula in existence to support individuals with ASD who are transitioning to adulthood.

What is currently available focuses on job and life skills but uniformly omits teaching students how to explore their own interests, form lasting and meaningful relationships, build reflective skills and coping strategies, and contribute to their community. These are critical skills for individuals with ASD to learn so they can maintain a functional level of independence and appropriate interdependence.

Another omitted factor is the matter of student preferences and goals. A student with an IEP might have additional transition goals outlined, but schools often look to parents to address them through specialists and supplemented activities

The term “transition services,” according to IDEA publications, means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that:

- Is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment); continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;
- Is based on the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child’s strengths, preferences, and interests; and
- Includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

(U.S. Department of Education, 2007, p. 1)

because they lack the curriculum needed. Teachers may lack the training to address this educational challenge. Too often young adults with special needs in transition are guided to make choices that society deems realistic; an approach that is likely to marginalize rather than capitalize on their passions, interests, and potentiality.

By filling in these missing pieces, we will better comply with the letter and spirit of federal IDEA regulations, truly providing young adults with ASD and other developmental disabilities an education that "... meets their unique needs and prepares them for further education, employment and independent living." [34 CFR 300.1(a)] [20 U.S.C. 1400(d)(1)(A)]

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Section 1.0

INTRODUCTION

This Transition Curriculum represents a first step in changing the paradigm of how transition from adolescence to adulthood is approached in education and society for individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities. This is the collaborative work of a multi-disciplinary team of committed educators, researchers, clinicians, and therapists who have expertise working with individuals with ASD and related disorders. It is an evolving work designed to close the “curriculum gap” described in the prologue. We are following a rigorous development and review process to create this comprehensive work, incorporating continuous feedback, data, and results learned from pilot projects, and new material from users, collaborators, and stakeholders. Through this process, we will shape it into an easy-to-use, best practices curriculum.

We feel it is *absolutely essential* to rise to this challenge. To that end, we offer this work as our first contribution.

1.01 Integrating Many Disciplines

In recent years, individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities have had a wide assortment of different therapeutic approaches and instructional milieus from which to choose (e.g., ABA, TEACCH, Verbal Behavior, Pivotal Response Training, Positive Behavior Support, PECS, Floortime/DIR, SCERTS, RDI, Enhanced Milieu Teaching, Hanen – More Than Words, Son-Rise Program, etc.).

No matter what an individual’s therapeutic or educational background has been, this Transition Curriculum can work for any individual with ASD or other developmental disabilities. This curriculum offers the kinds of elements that must be taken into consideration if we want individuals to move into adulthood and lead successful, fulfilling, and meaningful lives.

To achieve the curriculum’s goals and objectives, we have drawn from a variety of educational and therapeutic disciplines. Each adds its own depth, quality, and breadth to transitional support. When woven together they create a comprehensive web of approaches capable of meeting the complex transitional needs of young adults with ASD.

1.02 Transition Curriculum Goals

For transition programs to be effective, we must devise ways to comprehensively build individual strengths up from wherever they are developmentally and functionally so our students can

- Become more effective thinkers and problem-solvers who can operate within the context of typically-developing society, to the greatest extent possible;
- Achieve more healthy interdependence for better support, enjoyment, and personal growth; and
- Attain greater independence, to the extent possible, given their inherent challenges.

1.03 Transition Curriculum Objectives

The Transition Curriculum will enable clinicians, educators, and students to reach the following objectives:

- Make it possible for clinicians and educators to view every student through a holistic lens wide enough to acknowledge the full spectrum of an individual's developmental, physical, sensory, emotional, social, and cognitive needs.
- Provide a rich and rewarding educational experience that is intentional, explicit, and individualized so that the student's program experience results in measurable positive outcomes in all domains of their adult lives: career development, life skills, community involvement, social relationships, self-care, and recreational choices.
- Provide the support needed in the design, planning, implementation, and refinement of individual student goals.
- Incorporate humor, creativity, and joy throughout because these are the energizers and social connectors that enliven and deepen relationships and experiences.
- Make it easy for staff to individualize approaches and expectations concerning independence skills, goal setting and achievement, and the acquisition of knowledge based on individual strengths and challenges. In this way, ensure the student's lifelong selection of career, educational, recreational, therapeutic, and social opportunities are in alignment with his capabilities, goals, and desires.
- Enlist the power of a student's personal preferences and interests to increase internal motivation, infuse enthusiasm, increase social engagement, and design short- and long-term social, recreational, and career goals.
- Bridge transitional program work to applicable, meaningful, ongoing, supported community experiences.

- Strengthen the foundational capacities of regulation, engagement, reciprocity, and social problem solving that lead to increased resiliency, adaptability, self-care, effective communication, and social connection.
- Nurture the evolution of healthy social cognition and development through the accumulation of ongoing, connected, meaningful, and supportive experiences in one-on-one, group, and community settings.
- Emphasize and foster self-awareness as an integral part of equipping students with the best chance of finding their own unique, fulfilling way to participate in their lives, form lasting and meaningful relationships, and contribute to their communities. This person-centered approach (focusing on building self-esteem, close personal relationships and greater openness to experience) ensures the selection of the activities and experiences in their adult life are in alignment with who they are and who they are becoming.
- Allow students and their loved ones a chance to dream big and embrace optimism while still addressing the real world demands and challenges they face on a daily basis.

1.04 Who Does This Transition Curriculum Serve?

The curriculum is appropriate for a broad range of students on the autism spectrum or with other developmental disabilities. It takes into account a wide range of individual variability and can be customized to meet the needs of each student. There is much in this curriculum for every student, although all the components may not be needed or appropriate for every student. Use this content judiciously based on the individual profile of each student you are serving.

1.05 Who Can Use This Transition Curriculum?

The Transition Curriculum is designed to be used by teachers, administrators, and other special education professionals who are already working with individuals on the autism spectrum or with other developmental disabilities across a variety of educational and therapeutic milieus. The curriculum requires a skilled educator or clinician to implement.

In the public and private service sector, service agencies can draw from it to provide a wider range of transition and independence interventions and services. Medical, therapeutic, and social work professionals, as well as speech/language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and other clinicians can draw upon it to supplement their interventions. Public schools and agencies that already have transition programs can utilize it to enhance and expand service offerings and orient staff. Private programs currently in development can incorporate the methodology and approaches into their curriculum design. Private practitioners, parents, homeschool instructors, mentors, and other professionals can use its content, activities, information, and multi-faceted approach in their work with those individuals who are eligible for transition services.

In public and private education sectors there will be applications for a well-conceived, well-executed transition curriculum. Schools, colleges, and universities can use it to meet the educational and social-emotional needs more comprehensively of individuals with ASD in both mainstream and inclusionary programs and classrooms. Educators in the fields of psychology and education could use it as a teaching tool and practicum guide for both graduate and undergraduate work.

1.06 Phase One

1.06.1 Transition Guidance

With the completion of Phase One, we present what we believe to be the most essential teacher guidance, processes, tools, and approaches required for implementing a fully integrated transition program.

These materials include clear guidelines and a structured approach that allows teachers and other professionals to individualize content, use creativity, try innovative approaches, and establish relationships with their students.

The Phase One guidance release includes the following four sections:

Core Teaching Principles. Describes the six core teaching principles woven through the curriculum that focus on the process of how to learn.

The Student's Individual Profile (SIP). Provides an overview of essential information needed to individualize the transition program and explains how it can be collected over time.

Intake and Individualizing the Transition Curriculum. Guides users through the intake process and "Discovery Phase", which together allow staff to gather information from students and their families, gain insight through observation, and establish rapport. The Discovery Phase is a period of up to three months during which the student is under minimal stress, giving him time to adjust to the new environment and form new relationships, and give staff the time to gather more information so they can tailor the program to the student's needs.

Teaching Approaches, Methods, Processes, Assessments, and Tools. This section provides explicit processes and supports for individualizing the curriculum so students can identify their unique, fulfilling ways to participate in their lives, form lasting and meaningful relationships, and contribute to their communities. It is planned that the material provided in this section will be the subject of detailed user training in later phases of work.

1.06.2 Transition Curriculum

We are also releasing the first content module, which lays the foundation for all those that follow in subsequent phases.

Awareness Development and Executive Functioning (ADEF) module is designed to increase potential and capacity for individuals on the autism spectrum or with other developmental disabilities to improve self-awareness and open avenues of understanding and insight. By building reflective skills and coping strategies, the capacity for interdependence and independence in adulthood is greatly increased. By engaging in self-examination, students are exposed to opportunities that will expand self-awareness, identify personal needs, form opinions, receive feedback, practice communication skills, increase their ability to make meaningful connections, and engage in collaborative relationships.

In addition to improving self-awareness, heavy emphasis is placed on developing executive function skills in natural or real-life context; assuring students will experience consistent, ongoing practice strengthening fundamental life skills that determine quality and outcome of choices and actions.

1.07 Phase Two and Beyond

In phase two we will present eight more curriculum modules. These modules will be completed by September 2013 and published online as they become available. They will be released in the sequence most students should participate in and will cover:

Social Awareness. This module goes beyond what is learned in the ADEF module. Once *social awareness and understanding* are achieved, social skill development is begun on a well-established foundation. This assures social skills taught can become meaningful, flexible, and understood in context so individuals are able to manage the social experience they are having rather than reverting to a rote list of fixed social behaviors and scripted social communication. Executive function is incorporated into the module to build strategic thinking, problem-solving, self-monitoring, planning, and previewing as applied to the social context; prompting more effective social interactions and communication.

Higher Order Thinking. This module combines higher-order thinking skills (such as critical thinking and problem solving) with executive function to teach students how to use critical thinking in the real world. Students learn to coordinate clear reasoning with real-world action and in this way gain access to vast new areas of life opportunities.

Understanding and Developing Self and Life Skills. Includes nutrition and meal preparation, sleep, health and sexuality, money management, personal organization, personal geography, housekeeping, shopping, and use of technology.

Understanding and Developing Relationships. Includes self-care relationships (with health care professionals, therapists, and support staff), parental and sibling relationships (including aging, death, etc.), community relationships and community participation, friendships (creation and loss), romantic relationships, and employer relationships.

Creative Expression. This module seeks to develop the student’s passions and interests, in the form of spontaneous creativity and many other forms of artistic expression.

Understanding and Participating in Community. Includes orientation to the local community, services, and opportunities available; community service exploration; personal safety (e.g., avoiding victimization by others, dealing with emergencies); community collaboration; and using groups and committees as learning tools.

Education and Career. Includes career exploration, job readiness, job skill development, the use of technology as it applies to education and career, resume writing and interviewing, internships, job support, supportive employment, and workplace advocacy.

Understanding and Participating in Society. Includes human rights; justice and the law; developing a worldview (current events); social norms and social discussions; understanding structures and rules (governmental, educational, and medical systems; voting and civic responsibility).

We recognize that successful implementation of this Transition Guidance and Curriculum will require teacher training. With appropriate funding, we plan to release additional support materials and training in subsequent phases. However, before doing so we must first establish fidelity through several pilot programs and assess the efficacy of this curriculum taught by a wide range of teachers to a wide range of individuals with ASD or with other developmental disabilities



We welcome you to join us in this collaboration through our Wiki at www.3LPlace.org to provide ongoing feedback and to help this become “best practice” through application, assessment, and refinement by schools and other social service programs.

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Section 2.0

CORE TEACHING PRINCIPLES

There is an endless source of educational “content” available in the world around us. We are bombarded daily with things we can learn about ourselves and our environment: facts about an issue, procedures to accomplish tasks, information about how our minds and bodies work, and so on. So much of what we “know” in order to navigate the world successfully we have learned without really considering the process of learning.

However, content is just the tip of the iceberg. In order for an individual to master and fully integrate content – which leads to functioning independently and adaptively – she must have already mastered a large number of basic functional skills. She must be able to:

- Access her memory to recall the content when needed
- Mentally organize the information in proper order to make sense of the content
- Use the information in its proper context
- Discern when a piece of information doesn’t fit or needs to be adjusted

Students must be flexible with the organization and application of information. Ideally, they should be able to use information in a specific situation, as well as be able to generalize or draw larger conclusions about the world from a specific situation and gradually become adept at managing a wider range of situations.

Students who must approach every task as if it is unrelated to others will have a more limited capacity for mastery of new content. We benefit from having a meaningful place to “put” new information relative to the old information we have already stored. When summiting Everest, climbers use intermediate camps to organize and refuel. Our use of knowledge works similarly. We don’t climb the entire mountain every single time we learn something new. Instead, we use the intermediate camps along the way, where the trails are well-worn and familiar to us, so we can extend our reach into new territory.

Within the curriculum we define specific areas of functioning, from hygiene and transportation to social communication and banking. But more important than the content is the focus on the process of

“meaning-making.” For the staff teaching this curriculum, the essential questions they must ask themselves *for each student* are:

- How do I help her make sense of content within the context of her life?
- How do I apply what I have learned from the Student’s Individual Profile (SIP) to make content personally relevant to her?
- How can I help her to learn to make sensible decisions with or without all the necessary information?
- How can I create emotional experiences with the content so she will be an active, adaptive learner who becomes an independent seeker and user of knowledge?

Understanding the *process of how to learn* is more important than the teaching of any particular content.

2.01 Core Principle #1:

Effective Learning Occurs When Learners are Calm and Regulated.

A student should be in the best possible mental and physical condition; one in which she can pay attention, communicate, organize information, and function as independently as possible during the learning process. By helping her become more calm and regulated, she is better able to remain undistracted emotionally and physically.

Regulation refers to how a person’s response to her environment can be adjusted. For example, an individual prone to distraction and agitation may be calmed by being exposed to gentle background music. Or she might take steps to reduce her own agitation (*self-regulate*) by squeezing a stress ball or doodling in her notebook.

Regulation also works the other way around: sometimes a student needs to have her attention heightened by increasing stimulation. A teacher might get the entire class up out of their chairs and have them play a short social game involving physical contact and movement. Or in an effort to self-regulate, a student might raise her attention level simply by squirming in her chair.

Everyone has individual preferences. Some of us favor noise and movement; some of us don’t. Some of us like to be touched; some of us don’t. Some take in auditory information easily; some need visual support for better understanding.

The better we understand how an individual receives and processes information, and prefers to experience the world, the more easily we can create learning conditions tailored to her preferred style.

Equipped with this knowledge, we can adjust the individual's interaction with the environment in ways that help the student to be physically and emotionally calm but alert and ready to learn.

Thoroughly understanding the student's regulatory needs and tailoring the learning environment and curriculum accordingly can result in greater student persistence in mastering complex subjects or tasks.

2.02 Core Principle #2:

Communication is the Foundation for all Learning and Making Meaning of the World.

Communication is the bridge between our own internal experience and the outside world. Through it, we expand our capacity exponentially for self-expression, connection, understanding, and shared experiences. Whether it comes in the form of a glance, a gesture, a word, or an art form, communication ignites relationships and provides us with a way to make meaning of our own thoughts and ideas.

In our complex society, the ability to communicate has become synonymous with the ability to succeed. Educational institutions firmly hold the expectation that students are to be skilled at receiving and originating communication. Oral and written expression has become the basis for assessment of a student's intelligence, and thus one's ability to communicate has become the measure of success in learning. The learning style movement that emerged in the 1970's ushered in more acknowledgement and acceptance of variability in individual communication styles, but supports for individuals who struggle with receptive and expressive communication still often remain narrowly focused on increasing their skills in the two traditional forms of communication – oral and written.

Due to individual differences in the language regions of the brain and in particular those with ASD and other developmental disabilities, the means of communication that prove most effective can vary greatly from person to person. To fully support struggling communicators we must encourage a wider range of avenues for expression, in addition to helping them acquire skills with traditional forms of communication.

In fact there are many forms of communication, all of which can entice engagement, deepen reciprocity, enhance learning, express emotional meaning, and offer endless pathways for connection to others:

- Non-verbal (touch, gestures, eye contact, pantomime, appearance, etc.)
- Internal (self-talk, thoughts, etc.)
- Verbal (spoken sounds or words and written language)
- Creative expression (art, photography, dance, etc.)
- Limbic resonance (non-verbal, shared emotional states)
- Assistive or facilitated technology

By expanding what we consider acceptable forms of communication for learning, social, and work environments we offer individuals with ASD far more opportunities to thrive, learn, and evolve.

A fact that can be very challenging for individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities is that use of communication varies tremendously depending on context:

- Formal (authority, work, school, many community interactions. *Example: a job interview*)
- Informal (peers, conversation, many community interactions. *Example: asking for help in a store*)
- Spontaneous (chatting, initiating connection, navigating community interactions. *Example: a stranger asks you for directions*)
- Relational (communication used to build rapport and relationships with others. *Example: discussing common interests with a friend*)

These contextual differences can result in considerable difficulties in social situations as well as accomplishing simple tasks requiring interactions with others. For that reason, in addition to expanding and strengthening the student's use of various communication methods, it is also important to:

- Build an understanding of how personal expression and the exchange of ideas relates to interpersonal and social contexts
- Strengthen the ability to strategize and make choices about timing and approach when communicating
- Increase flexibility of expression

! To be able to express our individuality as well as be contributive and successful in work and social groups, we must be able to initiate and sustain connections to others.

2.03 Core Principle #3:

Learning Occurs Most Easily When Topics are Approached Using the Student's Preferences and Interests.

Educators rediscover time and again that learning most effectively supports personal growth when it aligns with or draws upon the student's own natural interests. Math can be a dull subject to the student who loves the theater ... until it is needed to figure out how much material is required to build the sets for her new play.

Affinities are beloved subjects and activities that have great meaning to the individual and are a pleasure to participate in. Entering curriculum content through an affinity can be highly motivating. They are magical doorways into a person's education. Conversely, unfamiliar topics or topics that hold little to no interest to the student can produce greater anxiety or boredom. An individual's ability to communicate, relate, and think is more constricted when she perceives the subject to be less relevant or less interesting.

Of course, as with any tool, learning by using just a person's interests or affinities can be misused. If unpleasant topics are avoided during a student's education, she may come to believe that the world should (and will) always accommodate and engage her. This can have devastating results, especially as she seeks employment or transitions into group living where the needs of others become as important as her own.

But even in that case, a skilled use of affinities can be a way to engage a student effectively. Even difficult topics become easier to learn when they are approached using pleasant associations. More than a few people who hated sports have picked up a baseball bat for the first time after watching a moving or heart-warming film of a child overcoming a terrible handicap disability because they wanted to play.

A college student will learn more effectively in classes of her own choosing, and will get more out of classes that relate to her chosen field. However, it is also true that she has to get through core requirements that may not be to her liking. It requires a great deal of internal focus and strength to persist in a course of study.

Though unquestionably challenging to achieve, students should be taught in the most personal and meaningful ways by using examples, metaphors, analogies, and strategies that speak to personal interests and experiences. Balanced against this, however, is the very real need to teach students how to deal with activities they feel are boring, or require considerable patience or compromise. They will need this knowledge and skill to continue functioning and move on when life refuses to meet them on their terms.

For all of us, but especially for those whose challenges are relatively pervasive and profound, affinities-based learning is an excellent means to advance growth. Starting in a place where a learner feels most confident, calm, or passionate can build trust and excitement for the process of learning.

2.04 Core Principle #4:

Meaningful Learning Arises More Easily from Emotionally-Based Experiences.

If we think about the knowledge that has been most important to us and has shaped our lives or guided our thinking, chances are that knowledge was gained through emotional experience. As infants, we learn cause and effect through the emotional experience of crying, which in turn prompts a caregiver to offer warmth and caring. As adults, we learn more deeply about issues directly affected by them. For example, many of us have learned a great deal about a particular health condition when that condition affects someone for whom we care. In both cases, the learning lasts longer and is richer in meaning because the content was tied to a personal, emotional state of being.

Our emotions engage us in our lives, alerting us to danger and increasing our continued efforts towards joy. Emotions in the process of learning increase our attention and alertness, provide greater motivation and

drive, and offer opportunities for more robust exploration. Without an emotional connection to content, learning can become rote and tedious – “I have to...” instead of “I want to...”

In designing and implementing transition curriculum, we should make every effort to infuse educationally helpful emotions into the experience of learning. This can be accomplished by creating an environment open to affective experiences, where emotions are shown more demonstratively so that they become both a vehicle for, as well as a subject of, learning.

The emotions of a scary short story could be acted out and exaggerated to convey the plot more accurately. The following discussion could be about how the story elicits emotions in the reader.

Another way to create emotional experiences for learners is to present content in emotionally meaningful ways. Fractions can be presented by cutting a cake; budgeting can be taught using an example of a desired purchase.

Emotionally-based experiences can be created (or capitalized on in real time when they occur) in the dynamic of learning. Disagreements, negotiations, collaboration, and competition all create emotion that can strengthen learning.

! No matter how it is accomplished, learning that engages the emotionality of the learner leads to greater understanding, perspective, and retention. It serves as the basis for higher-level thinking, social development, and self-sufficient learning.

2.05 Core Principle #5:

Effective Learning Happens in the Context of a Warm, Empathetic Relationship.

When we think back upon our own education, many of us will remember vividly the positive influence a specific teacher had upon us. So much learning occurs in the context of trusting, warm, supportive relationships.

Individuals with challenges in relating and communicating are often seen to have “unsolvable” learning problems – difficulties with emotional regulation, behavioral control, information processing, comprehension, and so on. These challenges can be frequent and persistent, and very overwhelming for the individual and those trying to support her. The trusting, warm relationship is always a starting point and establishing that relationship is a major learning achievement in its own right and should not be undervalued. The capacity to engage and relate, to know another person, and to communicate reciprocally are all fundamental to higher-level thinking and problem-solving. Thus, the easier the flow between the teacher and student, the greater the value of the education for the learner, and the more growth occurs.

When all else fails, returning to this basic starting point is an effective strategy, because at its core, learning is a dynamic flow of information and emotion.

A student with underdeveloped communication skills may have an exceedingly difficult time during a class exercise on speaking with “new people.” She knows what she is supposed to be doing but there she sits, intimidated. You might go over to her, look her directly in the face with a warm smile and say; “Hilary, I know how incredibly difficult it is for you to even *think* about talking with others in this class. I do see how hard you are trying inside to just accept the idea of it. You should not be hard on yourself; I know you are really trying.”

! This curriculum is built on the idea that all individuals want to learn, and their learning will be optimal within the context of a warm, trusting, supportive relationship.

2.06 Core Principle #6:

Effective Teaching Encourages Students to Become Independent Seekers and Users of Knowledge

By using the foregoing Core Principles, a student should be well on her way to becoming more than a vessel for the receipt of information. Increased self-awareness and bolstered self-determination will likely motivate her to take charge of her own education.

To support this end, she will need to learn how to identify where she is lacking knowledge or skill so she can then seek it. She will need the ability to ask and get questions answered such as:

- How do I work?
- How do I take in and make meaning out of information?
- Why is this task easy for me?
- Why is this task hard for me?
- What don't I know about this subject?

The ability to pose these sorts of questions and the level of self-awareness required to do so are important foundational elements for any vocational or avocational exploration. Indeed, they are important elements for any healthy concept of oneself.

Self-determination appears as a thread in most transition programming as a way of saying, “we respect the individual’s right to choose”, and it is certainly hard to argue with this kind of assertion. However, just because an individual says she wants to do something, or doesn’t want to do something, doesn’t mean it is a wise course of action, nor one that we can necessarily support. But what is essential is respecting and supporting the student’s fundamental right to direct the course of her life and aiming for greater self-reliance.

No matter how much the parent, teacher, or employer might want a certain skill to be learned, without the student fully committed to the goal, learning just isn’t going to happen.

Throughout this curriculum, both implicitly and explicitly, including the individual in the decision-making process is evident for two reasons:

- Individual buy-in leads to better motivation, which leads to higher engagement, and engagement is one of the cornerstones of optimal thinking and problem solving.
- It's respectful.

Although it is true this curriculum is intended to support individuals who actually need support and don't always make good decisions independently, it is also true that, in the end, the goal is to support someone in choosing the direction of her own life to whatever extent possible.

! An important part of the transition to adulthood is becoming a self-determined seeker of knowledge and skills.

Note to the reader: These Core Teaching Principles are discussed in greater detail and with an eye toward application in **Section 4.0 Intake and Individualizing the Curriculum**. Additional citations supporting the claims made in these principles will be found in that section as well.

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Section 2.0

THE STUDENT'S INDIVIDUAL PROFILE

The Student's Individual Profile (also known as "the SIP") is a multi-purpose hard copy or electronic portfolio created during the individual's intake process and used throughout the student's participation in the transition program. The SIP is a tool for *individualizing* the curriculum that also allows you to store sample work and information about the student, as well as track ongoing changes in patterns, gains, goals, strategies, accommodations, difficulties, achievements, and personal experiences.

While the SIP is designed to store a vast amount of information, there is no requirement that all the data be acquired at once. We have purposely provided an exhaustive list of questions – *far more* than anyone could ask or answer at one time. A subset of these questions are highlighted in Section 4.0 Intake and Individualizing the Transition Curriculum. It is this information you should obtain during the intake process. The remaining information can be gathered over time.

Schools may want to limit the time required for parents to fill out forms to 45 minutes, and the total time required for intake interviews to 90 minutes. However, it is up to the school to develop its own intake guidelines, forms, and interview processes. Additionally, the SIP is *not* intended to be used as a screener for enrolling applicants to a transition program. Each school or agency will have to create its own screening and acceptance process.

(A detailed description of the SIP content and its use can be found in Section 4.0 Intake and Individualizing the Transition Curriculum.)

3.01 Purposes and Uses of the SIP

- To provide staff and other members of the student's transition team easy access to clinical information as needed
- To assist staff in identifying patterns, trends, and progress by providing easy access to records of past and current functioning
- To track a student's skill development and mastery
- To provide a big picture view of the student's overall progress
- To support the ongoing process of short-term and long-term goal setting, refinement, implementation, and follow-through for each student

- To assist staff in refining a student's daily program schedule, provide updates as needed, and address other concerns and needs as they arise
- To assist in assessing the student's readiness to take on new responsibilities
- To identify strategies or interventions that have worked in the past that may help resolve a current problem
- To identify difficulties and needs that have emerged since initial planning
- To store information that might be needed by the student or teachers for self-awareness, self-reflection, and goal-setting activities.
- To inform and support long-range life planning such as continuing education, career development, living environment needs, health care, and financial support.

3.02 The Three-Step Information Gathering Process for the SIP

Step 1: Intake Information Gathering

During intake, the transition team seeks to collect the information listed below from the individual and family. For some individuals you may not be able to obtain this information. We urge you to get what you can and move on, then try to collect the missing information over time. *See Section 4.0 Intake and Individualizing the Transition Curriculum for a detailed description.*

- | | |
|---|--|
| A. Diagnoses and treatments | I. Current level of functioning in meaningful roles; independent living skills |
| B. Educational histories | J. Significant behavioral issues and concerns |
| C. Most recent assessments, IEPs, and reports for OT, PT, speech, and other therapeutic interventions | K. Cognitive capability |
| D. Family and caregiver profiles | L. Communication style |
| E. Student's connection to friends and the community | M. Emotional style, issues, and concerns |
| F. Chronic problem areas | N. Sensory processing |
| G. Self-regulation | O. Visual-spatial and temporal-sequential processing |
| H. Social engagement and reciprocity | P. Strengths and weaknesses |
| | Q. Initial family and student goals |

Step 2: Discovery Phase and Building the SIP

Based upon the information gathered during the intake process, staff constructs a preliminary daily schedule for students to begin their transition experience. Guidelines covering how to do this are detailed in the Intake section. This period is called the "Discovery Phase," which typically would take up to three months. Beyond just allowing the student to adjust to his new environment, it also provides staff with time to:

- Get to know the student better
- Gather more information from the parents and other members of the student's clinical team

- Gather important information by offering a wide range of experiences in which the individual can participate and be observed
- Identify gaps of information about the individual not apparent during the intake or interview process
- Begin to tailor a schedule to fit the student's specific needs, challenges, and goals.

Student and staff insights, reflections, conclusions, observations, and other important information are added to the SIP as the student engages with staff and peers in a wide variety of activities, experiences, and discussions.

The SIP is continuously updated to include any changes in strategies, accommodations, and approaches used; how successfully the student is able to process new information and adjust to the new milieu; how the student interacts with staff and peers; and how the student manages self-regulation.

Staff meet as a team on a regular basis during the Discovery Phase to identify problems, address any changes to the student's schedule or groupings, and to begin forming more individualized goals (*details in Section 4.0 Intake and Individualizing the Transition Curriculum*).

During the Discovery Phase the SIP will grow in depth and breadth as staff get to know the student through observation and interaction, as well as supporting the student as he acclimates, adjusts, and forms relationships.

The benefits of the Discovery Phase are:

- It takes pressure off any one person (student, family, individual staff members) to provide or discover all the information needed about the student up front.
- It respects the student's need to acclimate and work on issues at his own pace.
- Staff can focus on supporting and orienting the student as he transitions and acclimates to a new environment, new rules and expectations, and new relationships.
- It helps establish a **process** with students and their families rather than focus on the **end result**— emphasizing that transition is a process, not a checklist.
- Each student will have a shared experience of starting transition work in a similar fashion, providing a common thread for topics in group discussions and reflections.

The Discovery Phase provides students, families, and staff with an entrance ramp onto the transition highway rather than expecting them to merge into a new phase of life at high speed from zero.

Step 3: Ongoing Program Participation and Maintaining the SIP

With the student now somewhat adjusted to the new environment, the team (educators and clinicians) meet periodically to:

- Review emerging patterns, trends, challenges, and needs
- Revise and add goals based on the team's assessment
- Adjust the individual's program to address any revised goals and newly identified needs
- Determine if there is key information missing that can be
 - gathered directly (*examples: by asking the family, obtaining any missing documentation, calling for formal assessments*)
 - gathered indirectly through discussions, activities, and experiences (*example: If the student has few peer interactions during the Discovery Phase and is spending most of his time with staff, a small group may provide greater opportunities to observe his strengths and challenges relating to peers*).
- Discuss any significant information that has been revealed in the Discovery Process that needs to be pursued in more depth (*example: there was no mention of reading problems in the interview process but during the discovery phase it was noted by staff in the SIP that there were signs of a possible difficulty with reading. Evaluation may be required to assess ability level and any contributing factors.*)
- Select an advisor who is a good match. The advisor will take the lead in managing the student's SIP, monitoring progress, assuring that the goals stated in the SIP are being supported by the individual's program schedule, meeting with the individual on a regular basis, raising awareness regarding concerns and underserved needs that arise, and coordinating the flow of communication with the rest of the support team. *For more information about selecting an advisor see [Section 5.0 Teaching Approaches, Methods, Processes, Assessments, and Tools](#).*
- Students and their families are encouraged to be active contributors to their own SIP. They should have supported access as well as help as needed to understand the information it contains and how it's meaningful for understanding themselves, planning, and goal setting.

The SIP will continue to follow the student throughout his participation in the transition program. It continues to act as a source of information, a valuable reference during meetings, a means to track progress, and a way to maintain a holistic lens so each student's needs can be met and goals approached in a dynamic, comprehensive manner.

Section 4.0

INTAKE AND INDIVIDUALIZING THE TRANSITION CURRICULUM

“A work of art is the unique result of a unique temperament.” Oscar Wilde

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4.01 Introduction

Young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) possess a unique physical, sensory, emotional, social, and cognitive developmental profile. Their perceptions, sensations, feelings, and thoughts are influenced by their own personal set of factors (genetics, neurology, family dynamics, medical issues, exposure to environments, etc.). These factors become further affected by all they have experienced in their lifetimes.

The intake and discovery processes are designed to gather this information over time. An individual plan is then developed for each student based on individual strengths, challenges, goals, concerns, and difficulties.

Sources of information include the student, his family, the entire Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, and any other professionals who may be working with the individual.

An understanding of what motivates and regulates the student is invaluable for:

- Increasing and sustaining engagement
- Igniting curiosity
- Strengthening mental stamina
- Monitoring attention
- Opening additional venues for communication and expression of thoughts and feelings
- Establishing and building rapport
- Uncovering shared peer interests and activities
- Designing opportunities for creative expression
- Increasing learning
- Identifying possible community outings, internships, and career paths
- Infusing laughter and joy into the participant experience

By nurturing all dimensions of the individual we can provide our students with the strongest chance to reach their highest level of independence, awareness, and social connection. In doing so, we make it possible for them to find fulfilling ways to participate in life, form lasting and meaningful relationships, and contribute to their communities.

4.02 Transition Curriculum Intake Process

4.02.1 Purpose and Use

The intake process is a collaborative, interactive exploration designed to help you tailor the Transition Curriculum to the student. As stated in the introduction, this is intended to be used by teachers, administrators, and other special education professionals who are already working with individuals on the autism spectrum or with other developmental disabilities across a variety of educational and therapeutic milieus. This process requires a skilled educator or clinician to implement.

The family is asked to provide essential documentation (IEPs, diagnostic evaluations, etc.), fill out an extensive intake form, and participate in an interview process. The student is asked to write an essay, provide any works of art or other items to share, and participate in an interview, both with the family and 1:1. As the process unfolds there are continual opportunities for all parties involved to ask questions, clarify expectations, express concerns, and seek the information they need to make an informed decision.

As mentioned elsewhere, these are suggested general guidelines. It is up to the school to develop their own specific intake guidelines, forms, and interview processes. Schools may want to:

- Design their questionnaire forms to use rating scales (1-5, 1-10, etc.) and check boxes (yes/no, etc.) wherever possible to simplify the process
- Limit the time required for parents to fill out forms to 45 minutes, and the total time required for intake interviews to 90 minutes

In subsequent phases we hope to include many checklists, forms, and other methods to help you gather, organize, and utilize this information.

4.02.2 The General Process

1. Have the family complete their section of the Transition Curriculum Student Intake Form.
2. If possible, have the student complete the student essay and submit work samples, art, writing, etc. If the student has difficulty writing, even a few sentences or dictated thoughts would be helpful.
3. Interview family and student together, then family and student separately to obtain the data needed for the clinical portion of the intake form/Student's Individual Profile (SIP). Again, schools may want to limit the time required for intake interviews to 90 minutes. At this time, obtain most recent IEPs and reports from neuropsychological, occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), speech-language pathology (SLP), and other evaluations.
4. The Transition Coordinator reviews all the assembled information.
5. After the student has begun the program, have the family write a letter of introduction to the staff about their son/daughter, sharing whatever information they feel they need to know.

Once the student enters a program, often the family relaxes and a lot more information is shared. This is a chance to reveal very honest hopes, dreams, expectations, fears, and limitations that might not be revealed during the interview process. Letters can be very insightful.

6. Using the Individualize the Curriculum Process, create an initial lesson schedule for the student.

This should be a pretty standard schedule but with flexibility (a mix of physical, cognitive, and emotional work). Many students will be dealing with anxiety and adjustment issues. This will affect the student but to what extent you won't know until he begins the program. Typically as the student becomes more comfortable the initial behaviors, emotions, and fears settle and you can begin to get a baseline understanding the student without it being colored by adjustment issues. If you set a schedule too fast it can be too difficult for the individual, may not align well with his needs, and can become frustrating for staff. But if transitioning into the program is defined as an explicit stage it takes the pressure off everyone so the real individual emerges.

7. Student meets with transition coordinator or adviser to review proposed schedule, get feedback, see if there are any major revisions needed, and preview what to expect. Student is assured this is a "getting to know you phase" and the schedule will change as you get to know him, his needs, and goals better.
8. After the first week the team assesses how the student did, how well he is establishing new relationships with peers and staff, the nature of participation, and what additional changes, if any, need to be made.
9. Student gives feedback on how the week went.
10. Feedback loop is established and continues with all parties. A lot of important information will reveal itself during this step.
11. After a period of initial assessment, the student settles into a core schedule and begins to form relationships. During this time – perhaps one to three months – the team continues to gather information and feedback from the student and family. A longer range plan for the student is gradually developed.
12. The family, student, and team have a meeting to roll out the transition plan-identified goals and a schedule that supports them.
13. Plan is monitored and refined as needed.

4.03 Information to Collect from the Family for the Student Intake Form

Together with whatever information your school or program may require for administrative purposes, it is imperative that the family provide to intake personnel a comprehensive profile of the student in written form. It is up to the school to develop its own intake forms. The questions below are suggested topics that will help you when preparing these forms. They are not necessarily the exact questions to be asked, as they should be worded according to the ability and understanding of the individuals and families you serve.

As mentioned in the introduction, we have purposely provided below an exhaustive list of questions – *far more* than anyone could ask or answer at one time. **A subset of these questions has been highlighted in bold and marked “Essential.” It is this information you should obtain during the intake process.** The remainder of the questions, marked “Useful,” can be gathered over time.

The intake forms should be mailed to parents / caregivers in advance so they have ample time to complete and return to you prior to the student and family intake interviews.

4.03.1 Diagnoses and Interventions Physical/ Medical/ Behavioral/ Emotional/ Biological/ Nutritional/ Sleep/Educational

Diagnoses and interventions within last four years, or beyond if relevant (include OT, PT, SLP, social skills groups, complementary therapies, and mental health therapies)

Essential

- **To what degree is the student aware of his various diagnoses and knowingly participating in his interventions?**

Useful

- Please describe your interactions with your son surrounding his diagnosis. If you have not discussed it with him, please explain your reasons.
- Describe how successful or unsuccessful interventions were and how they impacted rate of progress in different areas.
- Describe continuing challenges.
- Need for further exploration?

For Nutritional

Essential

- **Tell us about current programs and interventions. Include interventions to address food sensitivities, difficulties, and issues (e.g., supplements, routines, strategies).**
- **Dietary preferences and food sensitivities (items and textures), including description of range/restriction of foods in diet**

Useful

- Are the interventions for food and texture sensitivities effective or is there a need for further exploration?
- To what extent do nutritional issues cause dysregulation (e.g., dyes, additives, etc.). Describe and indicate frequency and duration.

4.03.2 Educational History

Essential

- **List day and residential schools/programs student attended in past four years.**
- **Describe how successful or unsuccessful they were for the student.**
- **Were the interventions for learning issues effective or is there a need for further exploration?**
- **Were the accommodations and strategies to support effective or is there a need for further exploration?**
- **Provide copy of most recent IEP.**
- **What are the short-term and long-term academic goals?**

Useful

- Describe how these programs impacted the student's ability to progress educationally and continuing challenges.
- Describe learning style and other educationally significant issues and trends
- Mention if anxiety, rigid thinking, psychological, sleep, and/or medical issues impact learning.

4.03.3 Family / Caregiver Profile

Essential

- **Describe the nature, quality, and frequency of each relationship.**
- **Tell us about the contribution of family activities, patterns, stresses, and conflicts to current condition.**

Useful

- Describe the extent to which family members participate in and share in the student's interests.
- How has the above impacted the student's ability to progress in all areas and continuing challenges?
- Are interventions for family issues, stressors, dynamics, and conflicts effective or is there a need for further exploration?

4.03.4 Extended Support Network

Essential

- **List individuals outside the home who are actively involved in the student's life (relatives, members of community and/or church, tutors, instructors of extracurricular activities or interests, therapists, teachers, etc.).**
- **Describe frequency of contact for each relationship.**

Useful

- Describe the nature of each relationship.
- Is the level of these individuals' involvement optimal or underutilized?

4.03.5 Community and Public Areas

Community and public areas include: classes, camps, teams, religious organizations, youth groups, recreational, entertainment, restaurants, shopping, events, transportation, and neighborhood activities.

Essential

- **How often and in what ways does the student get out into the community and public areas?**
- **Describe how the student functions and interacts in these environments.**

Useful

- Contribution of community or public patterns, stresses, and conflicts to current condition
- Who, if anyone, provides support to the student while in the community or public areas?

4.03.6 Emotional Aspects

Regulation

Essential

- **What does the individual require to attain and maintain emotional regulation?**
- **To what extent does the individual provide for his own needs vs. require the assistance of others? Describe.**

Useful

- Describe the individual's level of flexibility or rigidity surrounding the experience, interpretation, and expression of emotions.
- Describe the individual's coping mechanisms for attaining and maintaining emotional regulation. To what extent are these coping mechanisms disruptive or maladaptive in public or social settings?

Engagement

Essential

- **To what extent can the individual participate in a shared emotional experience?**

Use of Affect

Essential

- **Describe intensity of emotional expression, perception, and interaction.**

Useful

- Describe range of affect and emotional expression, interaction, and perception, including ability to read affect.

Perceptions of Emotional States of Others

Essential

- **Describe student's ability to identify or interpret accurately the emotions of others.**

Useful

- Describe the extent to which the student can respond to the emotions of others, including the level of intensity and appropriateness.

Emotional Self-Awareness

Essential

- **To what extent is the student aware of his emotions?**
- **How successful is he at verbally and non-verbally communicating emotional states and needs in a socially appropriate manner?**

Useful

- To what extent is the student able to use an understanding of his emotions to problem solve, engage in self-care, and make choices consistent with emotional needs?
- Can this individual predict how he will feel in a projected scenario? If so, can he use this ability to select activities, experiences, and environments that are a good match for his emotional needs? (*Example: "I don't want to go to the amusement park because big crowds make me anxious."*)

4.03.7 Sensory Processing

Essential

Describe the student's sensory processing in the following domains:

- Visual
- Auditory
- Tactile
- Taste
- Olfactory (smell)
- Proprioceptive (awareness of posture, movement, position, weight, and resistance of objects as they relate to the body)
- Vestibular (provides orientation in space using motion, gravity, and balance senses in the inner ear)

Please include:

- Does the student constantly seek or avoid certain sensory situations?
- Give examples.
- What helps the individual to stay sensorially regulated?

Useful

- How well does the student use, understand, and learn by what he hears, sees, tastes, smells, feels, etc.?
- Are there any difficulties related to balance?
- How well does the student navigate in and around spaces such as hallways, crowded rooms, and wide open areas?

4.03.8 Visual-Spatial and Temporal-Sequential Processing

Describe the student's current level of spatial and temporal functioning.

Essential

- Does your son have any difficulties locating objects in space? (Examples: 1-dimensionally, locating things on paper; 2-dimensionally, locating things on a board; and 3-dimensionally, locating objects in physical space, such as a room or inside a drawer or closet)
- Do you often have to show the student where things belong, even if they are kept in the same or a predictable location over time?
- Does the student struggle to visualize a scene described in verbal conversation or as written in a book?
- Does the student bump into people and objects, drop things frequently, or have difficulty sensing whether an object will fit in a given space? (Examples: Will the couch fit in the room? Can the soup go in this size container? Are my hands big enough to carry given objects?)

- **Does the student have difficulty learning how to tell time? Does he continue to struggle with telling time, especially on an analog clock?**
- **Are multi-step directions that require a specific sequence and/or time limit difficult?** *(Examples: cooking, science experiments, etc.)*
- **Does the student have a sense of passage of time or does he become anxious, complain about how long something takes, or constantly ask what time it is/how much time is left?**
- **Does the student struggle with putting and keeping things in order?** *(Examples: objects, ideas, joke telling, recalling/retelling of events, steps)*
- **Does the student have trouble with combination locks or activities that require serial movement?** *(Examples: martial arts, dance, yoga, etc.)* **With other physical movements that require timing and sequence?** *(Examples: driving, hitting a buzzer during a game, etc.)*

Useful

- Does your son get confused understanding or applying spatial language? *(Examples: “the cat is under the couch,” “please put the bread next to the basket of apples,” giving directions or instructions to others relating to space and location of objects, etc.)*
- Does your son forget where he places objects and often lose items, even if the object is in plain sight?
- Does your son have difficulty in math, particularly lining up numbers correctly for computation, carrying numbers, geometry, and long division?
- Is the student heavily dependent on visuals made for him vs. creating them on his own? *(Examples: charts, graphs, and other visual organizers to locate and draw meaning from information)*
- Does the student have difficulty recognizing faces?
- Does the student have trouble drawing things in approximate and realistic proportions?
- Does the student struggle with visual puzzles and games?
- Do drawings, stories, creative works, or verbal explanations lack spatial logic and become confusing or convoluted, requiring you to ask for clarification, especially where things are in proximity to each other?
- Can the student estimate how long a given task or activity will take (given that he has the information he needs at his disposal)?
- Can the student apply an understanding of time to planning, executing, or evaluating an event or experience?
- Does the student struggle with learning multiplication, order of operations, order of syntax, grammar, science labs, long-term projects, meeting deadlines, understanding historical events?

4.03.9 Auditory and Language Processing

Describe the student's current level of hearing and speaking.

Essential

- **How well does he comprehend spoken language?** (*Examples: vocabulary; following directions; understanding stories, jokes, slogans, movies, lectures, explanations, etc.*)
- **How is his memory? Does he remember rules, procedures, multi-step processes, sequences, etc.?**
- **How wide a range of interests does he have in various subjects? Within a given subject, does he have a wide or narrow range of ideas?**

Useful

- Does your son have any difficulties associating sounds with their proper symbols? If so, does this show up in speaking and/or writing? (*Example: has trouble discerning vowel sounds, chronic spelling difficulties*) *If there are such difficulties, has he been evaluated and/or is there a diagnosis?*
- When you ask a question, does he pause or stall?
- How many times do you need to repeat the question?
- Does he only understand a portion of what you say?
- Does he understand the meaning of what you are saying?
- How easily does he use expressive or spontaneous language in social, academic, or incidental situations?

4.03.10 Communication

Discuss the student's:

Essential

- **Ability to stay engaged surrounding a shared topic** (*Examples: changes subject, jumps around, refuses to discuss, doesn't over elaborate*)
- **Ability to read non-verbal communication** (*Examples: gestures, tone, body language, eye contact, meaningful looks*)
- **Ability to access and use words to communicate needs, thoughts, and emotions accurately, appropriately, and clearly so others can understand**
- **Describe communication use to meet needs/get help, to engage, to share ideas, creativity, accomplish a task, to fill space, etc.**

Useful

- Ability to stay sensorily and environmentally regulated (*Examples: calm, stimming, agitated, etc.*)
- Ability to stay regulated emotionally (*Examples: excited, giddy, anxious, angry, frustrated*)
- Ability to stay engaged physically and verbally with other members of conversation/interaction

- Ability to follow reciprocity and flow of communication (*Examples: tangential, confused, reciprocal, talks over others, interrupts*)
- Describe common themes within communication (*Examples: restricted, only talks about proscribed topics/wide range, etc.*)
- Ability to use language to negotiate and problem solve successfully with others
- Ability to understand abstract language (*Examples: metaphor, irony, wordplay, puns, colloquialisms, idioms, etc.*)
- Level of fatigue/need for communication breaks

4.03.11 Motor Skills, Planning, and Sequencing

How are the student's motor skills? (*Examples: riding a bike, walking a balance beam, juggling, running obstacle courses, learning new physical games and activities, etc.*)

Describe these abilities as strong or weak. Include:

Essential

- **Gross motor skills** (*Examples: sitting upright, walking, lifting, kicking, etc.*)
- **Fine motor skills** (*Examples: writing, typing, eating with utensils, fastening clothing, grasping and manipulating small objects, etc.*)

Useful

- Planning out a sequence of physical actions in order to obtain a physical result

4.03.12 Higher Order Thinking

Useful

Review the four environments listed below. Describe and elaborate on the student's level of functioning and success with higher order thinking in each environment. In addition to describing the quality of each, indicate frequency and quality.

- Classroom
- Social settings
- Out in the community
- At home

Strategic thinking: can the individual design or apply strategies to approach tasks in an organized, sequenced, and successful manner?

Causal relationships: to what extent can the individual see how ideas connect and how something or an event occurs as a result of or in reaction to another?

Concept formation: to what extent can the individual understand both concrete concepts? (*Example: "a frog"*) and abstract concepts (*example: "democracy"*)?

Critical thinking: describe the individual's ability to evaluate information, draw connections, make conclusions, and apply logic.

Creativity and brainstorming: to what extent are these applied to thinking?

Problem solving: describe the individual's ability to approach problems and seek solutions independently and collaboratively. (*Examples: idea generation, brainstorming, step wisdom, trial and error, seek help, etc.*)

- Make choices
- Initiate ideas
- Sequence ideas
- Use ideas to problem solve
- Identify problems
- Attempt to solve problems independently
- Ask for help with problems when needed
- Reflect on problem solving solutions (*Example: Did it work?*)
- Try again if first solution doesn't work
- Problem solve in isolation
- Problem solve in groups

Range, flexibility, and stability of adaptive and coping strategies

- Describe the student's range, flexibility, and stability of adaptive and coping strategies.

4.03.13 Attention

Essential

Describe the student's ability to maintain focus and regulate attention in the following environments:

- **During tasks**
- **During conversations**
- **During group activities**
- **In learning environments, such as a classroom**
- **In public places where there is a lot of ambient noise and activity**
- **In quiet environments with few external distractions**
- **During physical activities**
- **While watching TV shows, movies, etc.**
- **During favorite recreational activities**

Describe the student's:

- **Sleep/arousal balance** (*Examples: difficulty falling asleep, difficulty waking, etc.*)
- **Alertness** (*Examples: consistent, inconsistent, task specific*)
- **Mental energy** (*Examples: fuel to stay mentally alert and responsive to requests, lectures, discussions, and trains of thought*)

Useful

Describe the student's distraction tendencies and reactions to the following external elements:

- Sensory external factors (*Examples: sounds, smells, sights, touch*)
- Physical external factors (*Examples: managing self in space such as staying seated in a chair, walking down a hallway, etc.*)
- Emotional external factors (*Examples: other people's expressions and emotional reactions*)
- Cognitive external factors (*Examples: what others are saying, requests, lectures, and expectation of verbal response*)

Describe the student's distraction tendencies and reactions to the following internal elements:

- Sensory internal factors (*Examples: reactivity and lack of resiliency/ability to bounce back when exposed to sensory sensitivity*)
- Physical internal factors (*Examples: physical discomfort, pain, medication side effects, gastrointestinal difficulty, resiliency/ability to bounce back after experiencing physical discomfort, etc.*)
- Emotional internal factors (*Examples: reactivity, emotional overload and escalation, sticky feelings, low emotional resiliency/ability to bounce back*)
- Cognitive internal factors (*sticky thoughts, negative mindset, distorted beliefs, fantasy/daydreaming*)

4.03.14 Behavior

Essential

Review the following list. Describe the intensity, frequency, duration, and triggers for each behavior the student engages in:

- **Attention-seeking**
- **Avoidance**
- **Non-compliant/resistive**
- **Escapist** (*physical, cognitive, etc.*)
- **Disruptive**
- **Controlling, rigid, inflexible, or overly rule-bound**
- **Anxious, fearful**
- **Withdrawn, sad, depressed**
- **Self-absorbed**
- **Non-reactive to stimuli or attempts at engagement**
- **Impulsive**
- **Aggressive**
- **Self-criticizing, negative self-thoughts**
- **Perseverative**
- **Self-stimulatory**
- **Intensely emotional**
- **Paranoid**
- **Unrealistic**
- **Other**

Useful

- How do the student's regulatory and sensory systems affect positive and negative behavior?
- What approach(es) do teachers use to address behavior(s)? What are the outcomes?
- Do the teachers understand the cause of the student's behavior and what that means?
- Do the teachers understand why, when, and how the student's body needs to be energized or calmed?

4.03.15 Social Cognition in Unstructured and Spontaneous Contexts

Essential

Describe the quality of the student's ability to navigate unplanned and spontaneous social interactions and situations:

Initiating, maintaining, and ending a conversation:

- **With a peer**
- **Within a group of peers**
- **With familiar adults**
- **With unknown adults** (*Examples: ordering in restaurant, being introduced to a new teacher, etc.*)
- **Able to generate topics and questions for conversation**
- **Able to respond to the topics and questions of others**
- **Knows when to be quiet and conversely, respond**
- **Ability to recognize who to ask for help from in public places** (*Examples: grabs first person he sees vs. looks for uniform, goes to customer service desk vs. wanders aimlessly*)

Shared interests

- **Shares high level of interest when...** (*Example: likes same sports team, Pokémon, etc.*)
- **Does not share interest when...** (*Example: able to ask questions and listen to low interest or unfamiliar topics*)
- **Ability to regulate humor/read the audience**

Useful

Social problem solving, collaboration, and negotiation

- Ability to engage in shared problem solving
- Ability to collaborate on a shared goal (*Examples: topic of interest, group project, or task*)
- Ability to take the perspective of others
- Ability to recognize and accept differences
- Ability to negotiate and compromise

4.03.16 Formal Group Social Behaviors and Skills

Essential

Tell us about the student's abilities to:

Abide by explicit, spoken rules:

- **Follows directions, rules, and procedures** (*verbal and written*)
- **If assigned a specific role in the group, manages one's role and respects the boundaries of the roles of others** (*Examples: level of self-control, bossiness/micro-managing, etc.*)
- **Shows care for materials and property**
- **When directed, works independently**
- **Works towards the stated, shared goal of the activity**
- **Accepts authority, feedback, and instruction from whomever has been placed in charge of the given activity** (*Examples: teacher, fellow peer*)
- **Uses the resources given** (*Examples: tools, methods, etc.*)
- **Works within established time parameters**

Abide by covert, unspoken social rules:

- **Shows respectful attitude** (*Examples: displays manners appropriate to the people and context, respects the property of others*)
- **Gets along with others** (*Examples: collaborative, empathic, considerate of others, disruptive, aggressive, defensive, distracting, etc.*)
- **Assumes responsibility for own actions**
- **Resolves differences of opinion and other peer conflicts appropriately**
- **Shows self-control** (*Examples: behavioral, verbal, emotional*)

4.03.17 Quality of Peer Interactions

Essential

Review the following categories and assess the student's current quality and depth of peer social interactions. During:

- **One-on-one situations**
- **Small groups**
- **Group games situations**
 - **Does he isolate himself in parallel activities with low engagement or is he interactive and collaborative?**
 - **Is he functional and constructive?**
 - **Can he engage imaginatively, dramatically, and symbolically – that is, substitute one object for another?** (*Example: using a hairbrush to represent a microphone*)
 - **Can he sustain attention?**
 - **Can he follow the ideas, lead, or direction of others?**
 - **Does he imitate or use peers as models?**

- What is his level of assertiveness?
- What is his level of flexibility?

4.03.18 Independence

Essential

Review the following list of personal care and independent life skills. Describe and elaborate on the student's level of functioning and success. In addition to describing the quality of each, indicate frequency and quality.

- Nutrition, cooking, eating
- Dressing, outfit selection, clothes shopping
- Toileting
- Personal hygiene (*bathing, brushing teeth, deodorant, etc.*)
- Health and fitness
- Family relationships
- Sexuality
- Other instrumental skills of daily living
- Use of public transportation or driving
- Voting
- Management of money
- Awareness and management of personal safety
- Seeking out news and what's happening in community, world
- Computer and technology
- Phone and cell phone
- Managing medication
- Organization (*self and belongings*)
- Independence in the classroom

4.03.19 Executive Functioning and Self-Advocacy

Useful

Review the following list of executive functioning skills. Describe and elaborate on the student's level of functioning and success. In addition to describing the quality of each, indicate frequency and quality.

- Paying attention to and remembering details
- Previewing (*being able to project and anticipate what comes next, visualizing consequences*)
- Strategizing
- Planning
- Self-monitoring (*being able to watch, analyze, and evaluate self as one is doing a task. Example: How am I doing? What/who do I need to accomplish this task?)*
- Organization (*self, belongings, materials, thoughts, emotions*)

- Managing time and space
 - Also discuss his sense of pacing: ability to adjust speed of approach to fit work (*can speed up or slow down depending on difficulty, etc.*)
- Managing tasks
 - Facilitation/inhibition: ability to know when to start and when to stop (*Example: being able to perceive multiple options and pick the best one before starting*)
 - Tracking multiple events simultaneously (*Example: coordinating bus schedules with arrival and departure events*)
- Reinforceability: ability to use previous experience to guide correct behavior and work output – learning from experience (*Example: “Well, last time I rushed through my math test and failed it. I should slow down on this math test”; “Last time I teased her she broke into tears. I should take a softer approach next time and know she is not a good person to tease.”*)

4.03.20 Additional Aspects of Student’s World

Address the following questions to help illuminate the student’s expressed hopes, dreams, and desires.

Essential

- **In what ways does the individual express himself creatively?** (*Examples: art, written stories, music, homemade videos, pictures of models made, etc.*)
- **Has the student expressed short-term and long-term goals?**
 - **hobbies and passions to pursue**
 - **accomplishments** (*Examples: finish college, build a boat, etc.*)
 - **independence and maturation skills** (*Examples: live in own apartment, drive, travel, go on a date, etc.*)
 - **bucket list** (*realistic and unrealistic*)
- **List the problems or issues the student has expressed he wants to change or resolve in his life**
 - **social** (*Example: make friends, etc.*)
 - **emotional** (*Example: feel less scared trying new things, etc.*)
 - **behavioral**
 - **quality of life issues** (*Example: stop having nightmares, etc.*)
 - **other**

Useful

- Has the individual expressed a vision of himself for the future? (*Examples: career, where he wants to live, get married, etc.*) Elaborate.

4.03.21 Student's Own World

Essential

- **Work samples, writings, works of art, or other forms of creative expression that should be included so you can better understand the individual?** (*Examples: written stories, homemade videos, pictures of models made, etc.*)
- **Preferences, affinities, hobbies, sports**
- **Activities that have been successful** (*Examples: church youth group, bowling, etc.*)
- **Activities that have not been successful and why** (*Examples: parties, movies, shopping*)
- **Favorite shows, characters, books**
- **Phobias and fears**
- **Passions and obsessions**

Useful

- Student's vision of himself for the future
- Student's goals (*short, long term, bucket list*) [**Note:** student may need help with this]
- Student's concerns (*issues he would like to resolve*)
- Diet/food issues and preferences

4.03.22 Anything Else?

Essential

- **Is there anything else about the student that would be meaningful to share?**

4.04 Preparing Staff for the Student / Family Intake Interviews

On the day of the interview, the student and the family are faced with managing their own personal thoughts and feelings as they approach an interaction that might dictate the direction of the next phase of their lives. Particularly for those families seeking a residential program the process is filled with a mix of excitement, anticipation, hope, and anxiety. They come prepared to answer questions, but very often also come seeking many answers. Staff should recognize these dynamics and be prepared to set their interviewee at ease and build rapport while affirming the interview is an opportunity to see if the student might be interested in becoming a new member of their community.

The Transition Curriculum intake process should be designed for staff to lead the student and the family through a collaborative experience designed to elicit the information needed in a relaxed, clear, supportive manner.

The following should be viewed as guidelines or suggestions rather than exact questions. Questions should be tailored according to the individual's developmental level and style of communication. Again, not all of these questions need be asked during this process. The questions in bold are considered to be the most important for intake purposes. Intake interviews should be limited to a total of 90 minutes.

4.04.1 Part 1: Interviewing the Family and Prospective Student Together

Introducing what the interview is all about.

For the steps that follow, the warm-up conversation and current interventions must come first but the rest can be done in any order that makes sense and best follows the flow of the conversation. In the absence of a conversational flow it is fine to do these in order.

Ideally have two people present during the interview — the same two to split off so there is continuity in the discussion both with the family and when the team reviews the student intake form as a group. The questions in bold and marked “Essential” should be obtained during the interview. The remainder of the questions, marked “Useful,” can be gathered over time.



The following sample is one way to approach this.

“The goal of us getting together today is to talk and get to know you better. Your parents provided us with a lot of information on our intake form, you gave us an essay, and I see you brought _____ (*name whatever portfolio or creative work they may have shared*) to share with us.

During this time:

- We'd like to ask each of you a variety of questions, some related to the intake form you filled out and some new questions.
- We'd like to give you a chance to ask questions
- Then we will split up so each of you has a chance to speak with us more privately. We will have a chance for you to show me the _____ you brought, tell me more about the things that interest you, and answer any private questions you may have.”

Essential

1. Begin with warm-up conversation to help everyone settle in – light chat.

Watch for clinical significance:

- **Overall interactions with those present**
- **Communication styles**
- **Level of affect, intimacy, conflict, anxiety, etc.**

Shift to information gathering with open-ended question. This will lead to many places so note responses as you may want to return to a comment to pursue further.

(Example for a student with a high communication level: “Tell us why you are interested in attending [name of school] and what you are hoping we can offer you.”)

(Example for an individual with a lower communication level: “Can you tell me why you like [name of school]?” “What would you like to do if you came here?”)

(Example if the student is non-verbal and has no communication device to assist him: Enlist the help of the parents to translate the answer, have him point to pictures in the school’s brochure if it shows pictures of various activities, etc.)

Get a sense of the family’s level of awareness surrounding diagnosis and presenting problems.

Ask both parent and prospective student:

- **What do you see as the biggest stressors right now?**

2. Current interventions *(ask both parent and prospective student)*

- **What are you currently trying/doing to improve health, sleep, behavior, and school/work problems?**
- **How well are they working?**
- **Anything you tried in the past that you may want to try again now to help with _____**

3. Family culture

Ask both parents and student:

- **How would you describe family relationships at home?**
- **If you had to pick one word to describe life at home what would you say? (Give examples: chaotic, stressful, calm, conflict, funny, peaceful, etc.)**

Ask student:

- **What are your responsibilities/duties/chores at home?**
- **How well do you think you manage your responsibilities/ duties/chores?**
- **Do you think you should have more responsibilities? Like what?**

Useful

Ask parents:

- How successfully do you think he is managing his responsibilities?
- How independent is he with his responsibilities and duties?
- Do you think he should have more responsibilities? What?
- Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your life at home?

4. Friends and social interactions

Essential

Ask student:

- **Do you have any friends?**
- **What is the most important quality in a friend?**

If yes (to “Do you have any friends?”) then ask:

- **What do you usually do when you get together with your friends?**
- **How often do you hang out?**
- **How close are you?**
- **Do you ever have conflicts with your friends? How do you resolve those conflicts?**
- **Would you like to make more/new friends or are you happy with the ones you have?**

Useful

If no (to “Do you have any friends?”) then ask:

- Do you want friends?
- Do you feel lonely?
- Tell me a little about why you think you don’t have any friends in your life right now.

Essential

Ask parents:

- **Do you have anything to add about what you just heard?**
- **Do you have any concerns or hopes when it comes to your son/daughter and having friends?**

Useful

Ask student:

- Have you ever had a boy/girl friend?
- Had a crush or been on a date? Tell me about it.
- Do you want to have a romantic relationship with someone or get married, have kids at some point in your life?

Ask parents:

- Anything to add?
- Any concerns or hopes when it comes to romance and dating?

5. Extended network

Essential

If student is currently in school:

- **Do you have friends in school?**
- **How do you get along with adults at school (teachers, support people, principal)?**

If student has an extended network:

- **Ask student: I see on your intake form there are a few/quite a few people in your life. Do any of those relationships stand out as more helpful or more important to you? Explain.**
- **Ask parents: Do you agree or are there other people you feel are very helpful or supportive that your son/daughter did not mention?**

Useful

If student does not have an extended network:

- **Ask student: Have you ever thought about expanding your relationships outside of your family and friends (if they have any)? What kinds of people would be helpful or would you like to add?**
- **Ask parents: In an ideal world, if you could extend the network of people in your son's life, who would they be and how would they be of help?**

6. Out and about

Essential

If the student is currently out and about in the community:

- **Ask student: I see on your intake form you are doing _____. Tell me about it. Of all the community activities you are involved in, which do you like best? Dislike?**
- **Ask parents: Of all the community activities your son is involved in, which do you see him enjoy or benefit from the most (not necessarily the same thing)?**

If not out and about in the community:

- **Ask student: Apart from structured activities in the community, how often are you out and about doing other things such as errands, shopping, eating out, taking public transportation, going to church, etc. How do those experiences go?**
- **Ask parents: Would you agree?**

Useful

- **Ask student: I noticed on your intake form you stay home a lot and you are not very involved in your community. Is that correct? Why do you think that is? What would you like to be doing outside the house?**
- **Ask parents: What do you see as the reason why your son is not involved in your community? Would you like that to change? What would you like to see him do that he is not doing now?**

7. Sensory reactivity

Essential

One issue that many individuals can have difficulty with relates to the senses. I'd like to ask you some questions about how your body processes senses so I can understand you better and whether it is sometimes a problem for you.

Ask the individual about sensitivity to the following senses, including when sensitivities arise, and get parent feedback.

- Smell
- Taste
- Touch
- Sight
- Hearing

Based upon the sensitivities and situations identified in A above, ask questions about each, first with the student, then with parents:

- How much does it bother you and how often is it a problem?
- Does it cause you to have an emotional reaction (*Example: anxious, angry, fearful etc.*)?
- Physical reaction (*Example: scream, run away, hit, etc.*)?
- Have difficult thoughts?
- Does it make things more intense if the sensation is a surprise or when you know it is coming?
- Do any of these sensitivities bother you so much that you melt down or shut down? Need support? Cause you to avoid certain places, people, or things?
- When one of these sensations upsets you, how long does it take you to relax again? What do you do, if anything, to calm yourself?
- How often does this happen in public vs. at home?

8. Emotions

Ask the student:

Essential

- How would you describe your emotions?
- How well do you feel you handle your emotions?
- How do you communicate to other people when you are feeling _____ (use emotions student gave you)?
- Give me examples. Do you have any concerns about your emotional experiences or how you express your emotions?

Useful

- What types of feelings do you usually have?
- Describe how intense these feelings are and how long they last.
- Which feelings are difficult to manage? Why?
- Do you feel you get stuck in certain feelings?
- When you do, what do you or someone else do to help you get unstuck?

Ask parents:

Useful

- How would you describe your son's emotions?
- What types of feelings does he most commonly have?
- Describe how intense they are and how long they last.
- How well do you feel he handles his emotions? Do you see him get stuck in certain feelings?
- When he does, what do you do?
- Does anything help him get unstuck?
- Do you have any concerns about your son's emotional experiences or expression of emotions?

9. Processing information and applying skills

"While we still have you together we want to ask some questions about how you process information and communicate. This will help us understand how you think and learn, which is important to us in knowing how best to support you. Some of these questions may seem random but they give us a lot of information about you."

(Direct questions first to the student, then parents to add and give feedback)

Essential

- **How well do you follow directions? Elaborate.**
- **How good are you keeping track of your things? Do you lose them often?**
- **How are you at putting together models, puzzles, and other hands-on projects?**
- **What is the hardest thing about being in a conversation?**
- **Do you like to learn? What and how (Examples: lectures, videos, hands-on, etc.)?**
- **How good is your memory?**
- **How good are you at paying attention?**
- **What makes you anxious? Frustrated? Tired?**

Useful

- Do you get lost or confused in the middle of conversations, lectures, or classes?
- Do you get lost in public places? Do directions confuse you?
- Describe your sense of humor. What types of thing do you find funny? Does anyone share your sense of humor?
- Do you often wonder why other people are laughing, as if you missed the joke and they all heard it?
- Do you tend to be super loud and people shush you or are you too quiet and people ask you to speak up?
- Are you good at art?
- Do you consider yourself creative? How? Is it easy or hard to come up with new ideas?
- Do you have any special talents?
- How often do you get bored?
- Do you consider yourself a perfectionist?
- How fast or slow do you typically do things? How fast/slow are your thoughts?

10. Additional aspects of student's world

Follow up on this section from the intake form:

Essential

- **What short-term and long-term goals has the student expressed?**
 - **hobbies and passions to pursue**
 - **accomplishments** (*Examples: finish college, build a boat, etc.*)
 - **independence and maturation skills** (*Examples: live in own apartment, drive, travel, go on a date, etc.*)
 - **bucket list (realistic and unrealistic)**
- **List problems or issues student has expressed that he wants to change or resolve in his life**
 - **social** (*Example: make friends*)
 - **emotional** (*Example: feel less scared trying new things*)
 - **behavior** (*Example: not get angry so often*)
 - **quality of life** (*Example: stop having nightmares*)
 - **other**

Useful

- Has the student expressed a vision of himself for the future? (*Examples: career, where he wants to live, get married, etc.*) Elaborate.
- In what ways does the individual express himself creatively? (***Examples: art, written stories, music, homemade videos, pictures of models made, etc.***)

11. Open floor for questions before taking a break and splitting parents and student.

4.04.2 Part 2: Preparing Staff for Student Observations

The preceding section gives questions to ask directly of the family and student when they are together during the interview. During this discussion, the interviewer will want to take note of characteristics the student demonstrates per the lists below.

The following exhaustive lists provide insight and suggest possible lines of observation, questioning, and areas to explore. While all this information might be significant, the interviewer must work out how to gather what seems most important and trust that the follow-on Discovery Phase process will pick up on much of what cannot be obtained during the interview.

It is also important to remember that the student is likely undergoing anxiety and other stressors related to the intake process, being evaluated, the prospect of change, and interacting with unfamiliar people. Although it is helpful to know how the student manages under duress, it is also important not to assume his performance during the interview process is an accurate indication of how he will manage his experience and himself once enrolled in the program.

The observations made during this time and any conclusions regarding his current level of functioning will need to be revisited in the Discovery Phase and revised as the student acclimates and settles into a routine.

1. Awareness of and involvement in own diagnosis and interventions

- Degree to which student is a decision maker in own interventions (including medications)
- Degree of active involvement in interventions
- Ability to self-advocate

2. Sensory regulation and reactivity

- Emotional regulation and reactivity
- Social awareness, sensitivity, appropriateness, and interaction
- Are there concerns about the appropriateness and social adaptability of the individual's regulating, calming, and soothing activities in public? Explain.
- How is the individual's self-care and independence under these circumstances?

- Reaction to novelty (*Examples: wants to try new things, curious, needs encouragement, shies away, negative reactions*)
- Need for facilitation and support
- Adaptability with the unexpected
- Predictable triggers and difficulties
- Routines and rituals that help
- Are the strategies for regulation, calming, and soothing in public the same as those applied at home? Explain.
- Stamina
- Initiation and responsiveness to interactions with others (*Examples: chatty, curious, friendly, shy, aggressive, demanding, etc.*)
- Level of participation in planning (*Examples: selecting outing, planning outing*)
- Level of participation during activity
- Positive outcomes, level of success

3. Auditory and language processing

- Describe the current level of functioning surrounding auditory processing.
- When you ask a question, does the student pause or stall?
- How many times do you need to repeat the question?
- Does the student only understand a portion of what you say?
- Does he understand the meaning of what you are saying?
- Describe the current level of functioning surrounding language processing
- Speech/articulation
- Receptive language and comprehension (*Examples: vocabulary, following directions; understanding stories, jokes, slogans, movies, lectures, explanations, etc.*)
- Memory (*Examples: rules, procedures, multi-step processes, sequences, etc.*)
- Ideational range (*has a wide range of ideas about a given subject and interested in a wide range of subjects*)
- Expressive language/spontaneous language (*Examples: social, academic, incidental, etc.*)
- Fluidity in social language/conversation skills

Contribution to group discussions (*Examples: pacing, track topic, timing*)

4. Communication

- Ability to stay sensorily and environmentally regulated (*Examples: calm, stimming, agitated, etc.*)

- Ability to stay emotionally regulated (*Examples: excited, giddy, anxious, angry, frustrated*)
- Ability to stay engaged surrounding a shared topic (*Examples: changes subject, jumps around, refuses to discuss, doesn't over elaborate*)
- Ability to stay engaged physically and verbally with other members of conversation/interaction
- Ability to read non-verbal communication (*Examples: gestures, tone, body language, eye contact, meaningful looks*)
- Ability to access and use words that accurately, appropriately, and clearly communicate needs, thoughts and emotions so others can understand
- Ability to follow reciprocity and flow of communication (*Examples: tangential, confused, reciprocal, talks over others, interrupts*)
- Describe communication to get needs met, engage with others, share ideas, fill space, creativity, accomplish a task, etc.
- Describe common themes within communication (*Examples: restricted, only talks about proscribed topics/wide range*)
- Ability to use language to negotiate and problem solve successfully with others
- Ability to understand abstract language (*Examples: metaphor, irony, wordplay, puns, colloquialisms, idioms, etc.*)
- Level of fatigue/need for communication breaks

5. Cognitive

Regulation

- Describe pace of the student's cognition (*Examples: mind races, measured, slow and deliberate, very slow and labored, jumbled, out of sequence, etc.*)
- What is the level of awareness regarding the student's internal thoughts and his ability to control and manage them?
- Are there any techniques used to help with cognitive regulation (*Examples: mindfulness, meditation, writing down, talking them over, etc.*)?
- How easily does the student learn?
 - new ideas
 - new tasks
 - new routines, rules, and procedures
 - names of peers
- How does the student approach problems?
 - use logic
 - use creativity
 - brainstorm/generate multiple ideas
 - ask for assistance

- Does the student think only in concrete terms or does he also generate abstract ideas?
- To what extent does the student use creativity or innovation in thinking?
- To what extent can the student understand and expand upon the ideas of others?
- Does the student have flexibility or rigidity in his thinking?

6. Attention: regulation and self-awareness of regulation

- **Overall attention control:** How well does the student regulate/control his attention? Can he remain focused when asked to fully receive incoming information? Does his alertness fluctuate depending on topic or task?
- **Saliency determination:** Deciding what incoming stimuli is important to attend to. When exposed to information, is the student able to identify what is important and what is a small detail? Does he get distracted by or over-focused on less important information? (*Examples: focusing on small details and missing the big picture, not knowing what to take notes on in class, not getting what the key parts of the directions are important to remember.*)
- **Depth and detail of processing:** Extent to which the student is allocating his attention to stimuli intensely enough so that it can be processed and encoded into memory. Indicated by superficial understanding rather than a comprehensive detailed level of understanding, can give back the overall topic discussed but no supporting details, often memory recall problems are linked to weak depth and detail of processing (*Example: “in one ear and out the other” processing*).
- **Focal maintenance:** Extent to which a student can sustain concentration for the appropriate amount of time needed given the task, lecture, etc. (*Examples: drifts off into internal thoughts and daydreaming, not completing tasks, only gets partial information/holes in understanding or recall, susceptible to external distracters – window, peers, etc.*)
- **Distractibility levels and triggers:** Internal (such as thoughts, feelings, sensory) and external (such as environment, sensory input). (*Example: pays attention to itchy tag vs. lecture*)
- **Satisfaction threshold:** Allocating the appropriate amount of attention to a task that is of moderate to low interest. Can the student rally the needed attention for information, tasks, and activities of moderate- to low-interest level or only pay attention when stimuli are of high-interest level? Does the student describe a wide range of tasks, responsibilities, experiences, or topics as “boring” and consequently avoid or disengage? Do behavioral or emotional issues surface when satisfaction threshold is too high (*Examples: self-stim, become disruptive, sideline with antics or behavior, become emotionally distressed*)?

Note: When individuals are confused, overwhelmed, anxious, or do not understand, their reactions can look similar to someone with a high threshold for satisfaction (only able to sustain focus when highly interested). If low-interest information, tasks, etc. are linked to an affinity, passion, or interest, it will be easier to keep the individual engaged.

- **Mental energy:** Initiating and maintaining the mental effort needed for optimal learning and behavior in a given context
 - Alertness: Maintaining effective level of targeted listening and watching. Can the student target and sustain listening and watching skills long enough to absorb meaningful information?
 - Mental effort: The fuel one brings to a task or experience. Being able to keep up the flow of energy output needed for cognitive, physical, and emotional work.
 - Does the student often complain of being tired, bored, or not feeling well when presented with tasks? Does he appear fatigued (zoned out, stalled, head on desk, won't run to meet the ball on the soccer field, etc)? Does he lose steam mid-task or never rev his engines at the onset? Does he perk up when exposed to high-interest level or novelty and then wilt once the stimuli have been removed? (*Example: Head on desk in class but leaps up and races to get lunch, chatty during lunch, then sleepy again once back at desk*)
 - Sleep/arousal balance: Getting enough quality sleep at night to be able to wake in the morning and stay awake during the day. Does the student appear sleepy, complain of exhaustion, or yawn a lot? Does he report difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, waking early, difficulty waking?
 - Performance consistency: Being able to keep up a reliable and predictable flow of mental energy to function dependably over time (able to do something competently one day and not the next, unreliable, inconsistent task performance)
- **Strategies and techniques implemented**
 - To what extent can the student self-regulate?
 - To what extent is he dependent on others to regulate? To attend? (*Examples: needs reminders, verbal and non-verbal cueing*)
 - Are there any strategies and approaches that seem effective or that the student identifies as effective?

7. Developmental levels with adults and peers

- **Shared attention/regulation and interest in the world**

The student's ability to regulate his or her attention and behavior while being interested in the full range of sensations (sights, sounds, smells, own movement patterns, etc.). The student's ability to enter into a state of shared attention with another person. This is a student's ability to process his environment, filter out distractions, and engage with others, attend to games, activities, or tasks (pay attention in the classroom).
- **Engagement/forming relationships**

The student's ability to engage in relationships, including the depth and range of pleasure and warmth, related feelings, such as assertiveness or sadness, that can be incorporated into the quality of engagement and stability of the student's engagement (withdraw, become aimless when under stress).

- Two-way, purposeful interactions with gestures - intentional two-way communication and language**

The student's ability to enter into two-way purposeful communication. At its most basic level, this involves helping a student to open and close circles of communication. This is a student's ability to be intentional in interactions and activities (*Example: student is able to initiate with another person to keep activities going, for desired objects or activities, etc.*).
- Two-way, purposeful problem-solving interactions / development of complex sense of self**

The ability to string together many circles of communication/ problem solving into a larger pattern (ten or twenty). This is necessary for negotiating many of the most important emotional needs in life (*Examples: being close to others, exploring and being assertive, limiting aggression, negotiation safety, etc.*). This is the stage where the student begins to develop a sense of self/self-esteem/independence ("I did it!" or "Look what I did!" using affect, gestures, and words if verbal)
- Elaborating ideas/representational capacity and elaboration of symbolic thinking**

The student's ability to create mental representations. The ability to do imaginary games or activities or use words, phrases, or sentences to convey some emotional intention ("I'm really angry!"). The student begins to have his own ideas and share them with people around them. This is the ability to share ideas with others and represent ideas and real life through games or activities.
- Building bridges between ideas/emotional thinking**

The student's ability to make connections between different internal representations or emotional ideas ("I'm mad because you're mean."). This capacity is a foundation for higher level thinking, problem-solving, and such capacities as separating fantasy from reality, modulating impulses and mood, and learning to concentrate and plan.
- Multi-cause, comparative, and triangular thinking**

The student is able to explore multiple reasons for a feeling, comparing feelings, and understanding triadic interactions among feeling states ("I feel left out when Susie likes Janet better than me.")
- Finding an indirect road to problem solve.** *Example: John wants to be Sarah's friend. He sees that Tom is Sarah's friend, so John becomes Tom's friend.* This type of thinking is more expansive and even a little manipulative. He learns to "work the crowd" to satisfy his social needs.
- Emotionally differentiated gray-area thinking**

Shades and gradations among differentiated feeling states (*Example: ability to describe degrees of feelings about anger, love, excitement, disappointment, such as "I feel a little annoyed"*). The student begins to know where he falls on the social ladder. He begins to define himself by how accepted he is by his peer group. He begins to see "shades of gray" and becomes a better

problem solver. He can also see consequences of his behavior. The student is able to express a range of emotions. (Examples: “I’m a little mad, very mad, etc.” or “I’m the best, Jo is the second best, and John is the worst.”)

- **Intermittent reflective thinking, a stable sense of self, and an internal standard**

Reflecting on feelings in a relationship to an internalized sense of self (Examples: “It’s not like me to feel so angry” or “I shouldn’t feel this jealous”). The student begins to internalize values and develops a greater sense of self that can’t be broken down by lack of acceptance by peer group (Example: *Sally was mean to me because she was having a bad day, but I’m still a good person*).

8. Theory of mind

- Identifies emotions in self
- Identifies emotions of others
- Expressions of emotions that match the context appropriately
- Response to others’ emotions that match the context appropriately
- Expresses emotions appropriately
- Responds to others’ emotions appropriately
- Predicts emotions given a situation
- Understands situation-based emotions (Example: *the girl is scared because she thinks the dog is going to bite her*)
- Understands desire-based emotions (Example: *the boy is jealous because he wants what the other student has*)
- Understands belief-based emotions (Example: *the girl is sad because she thought it was her turn*)
- Understands simple visual perspective taking (*identifies that people in different places see different things*)
- Understands complex visual perspective taking (*identifies that two people can see the same thing differently*)
- Understands that “seeing leads to knowing” (*people only know things they have experienced, directly or indirectly*)
- Predicts actions based on another person’s knowledge (*making action predictions on the basis of where another person believes an object to be*)
- Recognizes false beliefs

9. Social cognition in unstructured and spontaneous contexts

Describe the student’s awareness of the following. Provide examples.

- **Verbal**
 - Understands and uses social and age-appropriate language

- Code-switching: understands that social communication varies depending on context and the people involved (*Example: understanding one addresses a teacher differently than a peer and can apply that understanding in relationships – goes from PE to a group discussion and brings the bravado and trash talk with him instead of leaving it on the playing field*)
- Topic selection: ability to select topics of conversation that are of interest to others. Does the student seem to have awareness of and attempt to select shared interests? Does he alienate peers and staff by solely focusing on his own interests? Can the individual sense when others are not interested (verbal and non-verbal cueing)?
- Humor regulation: matching one's expression of humor to a given audience, including level of appropriateness. Describe the student's style of humor. Can he match the appropriate humor to the right audience? Does he crack jokes, puns, or other intended humorous comments in an inappropriate manner or at inappropriate or insensitive times? If asked to do so, can he adjust his humor to make appropriate to a different situation? Can he detect and respond appropriately to other people's jokes and humorous statements?
- Reciprocity: ability to understand the give and take and timing of social conversation. Does the student interrupt, talk over, or otherwise skew the flow of conversation with a lack of reciprocity? Do his responses match the asker's question? Does he incorporate the other participants into the conversational flow (*Example: talk "at" as opposed to talk "with"?*) Does he dominate conversations, tend to go off on rants or monologues that hijack the conversation? Do his reciprocity skills vary depending on the number of people in the conversation?
- **Behavior**
 - Self-marketing: building and displaying an image that is appealing to others. Does the student appear to possess a sense of how he is coming across to others? Does he shape and change his social persona in various contexts according to who he is interacting with? Can he change his persona or approach midway if the other members of the interaction show dislike or displeasure? (*Example: Comes barreling in with jokes but after nobody laughs stops the jokes or keeps going regardless of the lack of response, is very loud, notices the other person shrinking away, or tones down voice and behavior accordingly?*)
 - Social information processing: understanding the underlying meaning and agenda to a social interaction (*between the lines, subtitles, big picture*). Does he understand the underlying meaning to small talk, chatting, niceties, compliments, etc.? Does he get a sense of the socially influential peers in a group and use that knowledge to navigate the situation?
 - Initiation: How successfully does the student initiate social interaction and join a pre-existing group? How does the student attempt to build rapport with strangers? How does the student re-establish rapport with someone he knows? How does he enter a group? How does he initiate conversation?
 - Extent to which student can exhibit self-control within social interactions: Does the student know when he is being given overt and covert clues to stop or tone down a particular behavior, expression of emotion, or topic? Does he know when to be quiet?

- Timing and staging: How aware is the individual of when it is okay to do what in the context of different relationships (*Examples: overly touchy, too intimate, when to bring up what topics and personal information*)?
- Conflict resolution and negotiation: How skilled is the student in navigating conflict?

4.04.3 Part 3: Interviewing the Family Privately

This section of the interview process is designed to expand on issues that come up during the interview with the student or as a result of responses from the intake form, plus issues and concerns parents or caregivers may have felt hesitant to share in front of their son/daughter or on paper. It is also an opportunity for the family to ask additional questions that may have surfaced during the interview process.

The following are a list of questions to guide this discussion; however, note that the interviewer should supplement, revise the wording to fit the student or parent, skip those questions that do not apply, and decide the best order in which to discuss each domain. These are just guidelines.

The most important topics to be covered are highlighted in bold and marked “Essential.” It is suggested that a time limit of approximately 45 minutes be placed on this interview. The remainder of the questions, marked “Useful,” can be gathered over time.

Executive Functioning and Self-Advocacy

Review the following list of executive functioning skills. Describe and elaborate on the student’s level of functioning and success. In addition to describing the quality of each, indicate frequency and quality.

Essential

- **Paying attention to and remembering details**
- **Previewing: being able to project and anticipate what comes next, visualizing consequences**
- **Organization** (*self, belongings, materials, thoughts, emotions*)
- **Managing time and space**
- **Pacing: Ability to adjust speed of approach to fit work - can speed up or slow down depending on difficulty, etc.**
- **Managing tasks**
- **Facilitation/inhibition: ability to know when to start and when to stop – being able to perceive multiple options and pick the best one before starting.**
- **Tracking multiple events simultaneously** (*Example: coordinating bus schedules with arrival and departure events*)
- **Reinforceability: ability to use previous experience to guide correct behavior and work output – learning from experience** (*Example: “Last time I rushed through my math test and failed it. I should slow down on this math test.” “Last time I teased her and she broke into tears. I should take a softer approach with her this time and know she is not a good person to tease.”*)

Useful

- Strategizing
- Planning
- Self-monitoring: being able to watch, analyze, and evaluate self as one is doing a task.
(Example: “How am I doing?” “What/who do I need to accomplish this task?”)

4.04.4 Part 4: Interviewing the Prospective Student Privately

This interview seeks to provide the student with an opportunity to share his thoughts and feelings in a more relaxed setting. The following questions are suggestions or prompts to guide the interviewer into discussions of the student's interests, concerns, and goals. They should be reshaped by the interviewer as she sees fit into a relaxed series of guided questions to be used in an informal, conversational manner.

Some questions will seek to expand on issues that arise in the discussion with the parents, whereas others open up opportunities to learn more about the individual. If the student brought things to show, the objects and ideas can provide a springboard for discussion or may dictate the entire theme of the interview. The interviewer should encourage spontaneous sharing and attempt to assuage any anxiety.

It is suggested that a time limit of approximately 45 minutes be placed on this interview. The most important topics to be covered are highlighted in bold and marked “Essential.” It is suggested that a time limit of approximately 45 minutes be placed on this interview. The remainder of the questions, marked “Useful,” can be gathered over time.

Cover the following topics concerning the student's own world:

Essential

- **Student’s vision of himself for the future**
- **Work samples, writings, works of art, or other forms of creative expression that should be included so we can better understand the individual** (Examples: written stories, homemade videos, pictures of models made, etc.)
- **Preferences, affinities, passions, hobbies, sports**
- **Activities that have been successful** (Examples: church youth group, bowling, etc.)
- **Activities that traditionally break down** (Examples: parties, movies, shopping)
- **Student’s goals (short, long term, bucket list) [Note: student may need help getting to this]**
- **Student’s concerns (issues he would like to resolve)**
- **Diet/food issues and preferences**
- **Favorite shows, characters, books**

Useful

- Phobias and fears
- Obsessions

4.05 Sample Request for Parent Letter of Introduction

“We are excited that _____ is joining our community. We look forward to getting to know your son/daughter so that we are best able to support him/her in his/her transition into independence and adulthood.

During the intake process you provided a lot of information about your son/daughter's educational history, medical issues, social and behavior concerns, strengths and weaknesses, and areas of challenge. This information is very important but as you know does not fully capture who your son/daughter is – his/her passions, goals, dreams, hopes, personality, sense of humor, and more.

Thus, we request you draft a letter of introduction to us of a more personal and narrative nature so as we begin the initial Discovery Phase we can benefit from the richness of your perspective and see your son/daughter through your eyes as parent/caregiver. Feel free to share whatever you think is important for us to know about _____.”

4.06 Sample Student Intake Essay Prompts

“As part of getting to know you we would like to hear about you in your own words. Here are some ideas to help you get started. You are not expected to answer all the questions below. They are simply suggestions from which you can choose if you do not want to come up with your own topic. Do not worry about spelling, grammar, or how long the essay should be. If it is easier you can use a computer (or any other means of communication or facilitated communication is acceptable). It is also fine to dictate your thoughts to someone who can type or write your thoughts down for you. We just want you to share what you are comfortable telling us about yourself.”

- My hopes and dreams for the future are...
- If I were to have a career or job I would like to...
- Things I love are...
- Things I don't like are...
- If I were in charge of the world, I would...
- I am good at...
- The things I find hard are...
- I think this program can help me with...
- Topic of your choosing

4.07 Using the Core Teaching Principles: the Scientific Basis and the Art of Implementation

In an earlier section, we introduced five teaching principles important in all educational efforts but most particularly in transition curricula. Here we shall examine them more closely within the context of applying them to individualize the curriculum.

4.07.1 Core Principle #1: Effective Learning Occurs When Learners are Calm and Regulated.

The Science

In order to be present, engaged, responsive, reciprocal, functional, and emotionally available in any environment an individual must first be calm and regulated. The regulatory functions that dictate the quality and extent to which one can engage with and respond to ideas, other people, and the world around them are:

Physical regulation, which depends upon the healthy functioning of the:

- **Endocrine system**, which dictates hormonal balances, imbalances, surges, and deficits that affect emotions, behavior, motivation
- **Sympathetic nervous system**, which up-regulates (fight/flight/freeze/submit)
- **Parasympathetic nervous system** down-regulates (calming and soothing)
- **Somatic nervous system**, which regulates the voluntary systems of senses and movement. This includes **sensory regulation**, which involves both the physical ability for the brain to detect through the senses and how that input is processed in the brain.
- **Autonomic nervous system**, which regulates involuntary systems such as gastrointestinal, heartbeat, blood pressure, etc.
- **Sleep/arousal** regulates sleep and awake cycles

Emotional regulation, which involves how an individual experiences emotions, attempts to influence them, and the contexts and triggers that dictate when the emotions surface (Gross, 1998b).

Cognitive regulation, which involves ability to control the rate, volume, patterning, and complexity of thoughts. Because of the effect biochemistry and the endocrine system has on cognition, cognitive regulation is strongly tied to emotion, attention, motivation, and memory.

The Art

Once the above science is understood, the skillful use of planning tools begins:

- **The SIP:** By this point, there should be a considerable amount of information on the individual's regulatory issues in the Student's Individual Profile.

- **Lesson plan development:** Understanding the individual's regulatory issues will make it possible to devise lessons the student can absorb, make meaning of, and retain. Well-designed lesson plans select environments, peer groupings, teaching modalities, and supportive materials that are compatible with the individual's regulatory needs.

For example, consider how you would plan a science experiment lesson plan for a student who is very anxious (emotion regulation), tactile sensitive (sensory regulation), easily slips into fantasy (cognitive regulation), and is chronically sleepy due to sleep difficulty (sleep/arousal regulation). The following *strategies and accommodations* might be valuable:

- **To promote emotion regulation:** Have all steps and procedures written down with visual examples to anchor, be available to model, and/or co-conduct the experiment if anxiety spikes. Build in lots of check-ins and reassurance, catch mistakes early so the student doesn't have to undo a lot of work, and get further hindered by anxiety.
 - **To promote sensory regulation:** Since the individual is tactile sensitive, measure out all the ingredients before the lab starts so he does not have to handle a lot of materials. Allow enough space between him and other students so he has the space to work and does not feel like he is going to brush up against another individual easily. Wear cloth gloves to soften/muffle the tactile input. If extremely sensitive, the student can be in charge of the experiment and dictate to the teacher what to do every step so he is intricately involved but does not have to manipulate the materials.
 - **To promote cognitive regulation:** Build in as much hands-on work as possible to keep the student alert, engaged with the work, and present. Arrange for frequent check-ins. Have him repeat back instructions to make sure he didn't lose focus during listening. Keep affect, gestures, and humor up so animation is high and it is compelling to stay present for the task at hand.
 - **To promote sleep/arousal regulation:** Schedule movement and physical activity before science class to help with alertness and arousal. Do not place class first thing in the morning. Arrange for a snack, have water before or during a break. Stretch during breaks. Have the student stand during lab instead of sitting.
- **Goal setting and expectations:** In order to form realistic goals and expectations, it is essential to reference an individual's regulatory styles. To ignore this data is to run the risk of selecting internships, jobs, careers, peer groups, activities, and community outings that are not compatible with regulatory needs.
 - **Self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-care building:** Since regulatory systems have such a tremendous impact on an individual in all domains of experience and functioning, it is vital that individualized work be incorporated into every student's program experience that focuses on raising awareness and identifying strategies for self-regulation and self-care/self-soothing. The ability to manage one's own regulatory systems opens up tremendous opportunities for personal growth, self-determination, independence, and more. Without an awareness of one's

own regulatory needs and challenges, an individual will become dependent on others, limited in the experiences he can benefit from, and restricted in potential to establish and maintain friendships and other meaningful relationships.

- **Relationship building – peers and staff:** Placing such high value within the program culture on the importance of maintaining regulation and a sense of calm enables staff to infuse not only classes and activities with this value but also invites the topic to be raised naturally within the milieu and for staff to take advantage of teachable moments.

4.07.2 Core Principle #2: Communication Provides the Foundation for Effective Learning and Making Meaning of the World.

The Science

Communication is the basic skill that makes it meaningful for us to live in the company of others. It is what makes it possible for us to exchange information, ask for help, seek assurance, help others, solve problems, and stay connected. Beyond just basic survival, it allows us to thrive by sharing and debating ideas, conveying desire and preference, exerting will, displaying personality, sharing joys and heartbreaks, and expressing artistic thought.

Individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities often possess communication barriers that limit their ability to survive and thrive. It is the responsibility of educators, clinicians, and caregivers to establish and support the expansion of communication methods for these individuals so they can access opportunities the world has to offer. By matching communication methods to strengths and challenges, we can potentially offer these individuals greater independence, social connectedness, and success for the future.

The Art

Opening channels of communication for individuals with inherent language and social challenges requires:

- Matching communication options to a student's strengths and challenges
- Understanding of variation in language processing and brain functioning for individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities
- Understanding current cultural communication trends; discovering ones the individual might want to make use of
- Identifying individual communication preferences
- Trial and error, resiliency, persistence, optimism, and patience on the part of the teacher
- Flexibility in making accommodations and shifting strategies as needed
- Understanding of the role communication plays in societal expectations (*Example: making RSVPs for a party*), independent living (*Example: renewing a prescription with a pharmacist*), social navigation (*Example: trying to initiate a friendship*), educational pursuits (*Example: asking questions in class*), and career choices (*Example: interviewing, interacting with supervisors*)

When designing and individualizing communication-based interventions for a student with ASD or other developmental disabilities, a balance should be struck between the contexts and needs that apply to the individual's life:

- What forms of communication would work well for the individual in meeting basic needs? *(Example: ask for help, express needs)*
- What forms of communication would work well for the individual in seeking meaning? *(Example: exchange information, ask questions, get clarification, etc.)*
- What forms of communication would work well for the individual to engage socially? *(Example: establish rapport; grow, maintain and repair friendships; negotiate, engage in shared experiences, join in group activities, etc.)*
- What forms of communication would work well for the individual to express individuality? *(Example: creative expression, exchange of ideas, indicating preferences and desires, dream in personal goals, etc.)*
- What forms of communication work well for the individual in pursuit of enjoyable, meaningful experiences? *(Example: express and increase capacity for joy, activate and sustain motivation, ignite creativity and passion, etc.)*
- What forms of communication work well for the individual in meeting independence goals? *(Example: community navigation, interaction with businesses, managing self-care, transportation, shopping, etc.)*
- What forms of communication work well for the individual in meeting short- and long-term goals? *(Example: educational, career, job readiness, etc.)*

Providing individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities with communication tools appropriately matched to their language and communication skills significantly improves their chances of living connected, meaningful, self-driven, and joyful lives.

4.07.4 Core Principle #3: Learning Occurs Most Easily When Topics are Approached Using the Student's Preferences and Natural Affinities.

The Science

Affinity-based learning is the process of harnessing the interests and passions of students and incorporating them into curriculum and lesson planning. Studies show that learning capacity increases when information is presented in a high interest area. Other systems that support learning such as attention, visualization, motivation, and mental stamina also increase, creating an optimal environment for learning to take place.

The Art

Embedding affinities and subject matter of high interest to students in lessons, classes, field trips, and other program experiences requires staff to be:

- Knowledgeable about the individual preferences of each student

- Creative in their thinking and planning
- Flexible in their approach to teaching and the topics they cover
- Enthusiastic about sharing interests and learning about the interests of others
- Actively engaging students in the learning process and planning
- Open to allowing students to take the lead, assume classroom responsibilities, and co-teach or teach
- Enthusiastic and encourage students to share interests with one another

The opportunities affinity-based learning offers are endless. Whether it be planning a potato chip flavor taste test; teaching a scientific method with a gardening project; or practice following directions, working as a team, and learning about art in a scavenger hunt at an art museum; affinity-based learning packages information in a manner that is exciting, fun, and compelling. In addition, this approach engages emotions to help bolster learning and often creates momentum and energy not present in typical classroom settings.

4.07.4 Core Principle #4: Meaningful Learning Arises More Easily from Emotionally-Based Experiences.

The Science

Emotionally-based memories are some of the strongest memories one can experience. Since memory is inextricably tied with learning, it follows that weaving the emotions and emotionally-based experiences of students into the learning process bears significant positive results:

- Energizes learning
- Infuses enthusiasm
- Increases student participation through the sharing of experiences and emotions
- Bolsters memory
- Increases attention
- Provides a personal context for unfamiliar or abstract information
- Increases opportunities to practice empathy, perspective taking, and causal relationships

The Art

Incorporating emotions and emotionally-based experiences into learning invites a level of creativity, interaction, and expression that is not present in traditional learning environments. Students who are having difficulty connecting to material can begin to draw upon their own experiences and feelings as a way to reach understanding. They are able to use their own emotions and experiences as reference points for connecting with the material in an energized, highly personal way.

Abstract ideas can be concretized through the use of personal experience and emotions. Creative teaching methods can be expanded to include emotionally-based activities such as art, improvisation, role playing, debates, acting, creative writing, and more. The flow of classroom communication becomes more

fluid and reciprocal as students have a well of emotional experiences from which to draw, contribute, and compare to their peers. *(Example: I want a boyfriend. You have a boyfriend. I feel anger, but underneath the anger is the dynamic of “I want what you have.” I may actually feel very sad about this underneath the anger as well. Anger is a more linear cause and effect dynamic, thus much easier to identify than “you hit me and that made me mad.” In order to understand more circuitous and contextual emotions such as jealousy, one has to examine more deeply both the underlying social dynamics of the situation and the underlying feelings involved.)*

It should be noted that students who struggle with emotional regulation will need additional support, guidance, and boundaries to help them navigate the emotional components and maintain a sense of emotional balance. In the case of highly reactive emotional students, accommodations and modifications will need to be in place.

For some, emotionally-based learning may need to be limited to positive emotions until the individual is capable of sourcing from his own negative emotional experiences without becoming emotionally overloaded. *(For example, if discussing fear that a character in a book faced, there may be students in the class who are unable to draw from their own fear experiences without going to a place of fear and activating fear responses that will distract, distress, or shut them down.)*

4.07.5 Core Principle #5: Effective Learning Happens in the Context of a Warm, Empathetic Relationship

The Science

Alliance building exercises are intended to build and strengthen rapport and trust. They are easy, team-building fun games and activities that permit participants to get to know one another.

An example is a group sharing exercise such as "Never Have I Ever". Everyone sits in a circle and one person sits in the middle. The person in the middle says "never have I ever bungee jumped". Everyone who has bungee jumped has to leap up and switch chairs. The person left standing is now in the middle and the game continues. Often the facilitator will have a basket of examples for the person in the middle to pick from in case anyone has difficulty generating ideas. It is a fun way to get to know people and find commonalities.

“When the teacher has the ability to understand the student’s reactions from the inside, has a sensitive awareness of the way the process of education and learning seems to the student, the likelihood of significant learning is increased. This type of understanding is sharply different from the usual evaluative understanding that follows the pattern of, ‘I understand what is wrong with you.’ ”

“When there is a sensitive empathy, however, the reaction in the learner follows something of this pattern: ‘At last someone understands how it feels and seems to be me without wanting to analyze or judge me. Now I can blossom, and grow and learn.’ ” (Rogers, 1969)

The Art

Empathy and relationship building can be established in the classroom and in therapeutic activities in a multitude of ways. Approaches can be tailored to fit the style and needs of the individual students, the group dynamics, and the comfort level of the teachers and facilitators. Some methods for using empathy to strengthen therapeutic relationships include:

- Sharing and self-disclosure
- Using alliance building exercises
- Encouraging and modeling expressions of warmth, encouragement, and acceptance
- Building a climate and expectation of non-judgment and mutual respect within the culture of the classroom or group
- Building in opportunities for positive exchanges among students in a relaxed format (*Examples: joke telling, sharing accomplishments, show and tell, etc.*)
- Conducting empathy and relationship building exercises (*Examples: case study scenarios, stories, role playing, games, self-questionnaires, and other activities aimed to generate discussion and reflection on empathy. An example of a case study scenario is: The facilitator gives a real or made-up case and has the students discuss, express opinions, make conclusions, act as judge and jury, etc.*)
- Incorporating check-ins for students to share with one another what is currently going on with them
- Designing clear classroom rules that incorporate empathy and are posted on the wall for reference and reminder
- Maintaining availability to students who might need 1:1 support or emotional assistance
- Incorporating empathy into content instruction (connecting deeper to historical events, current events, and characters in novels)
- Use of media, movies, and TV shows to observe scenarios and discuss empathy

4.07.6 Core Principle #6: Effective Teaching Encourages Students to Become Independent Seekers and Users of Knowledge

The Science

“Self-initiated learning which involves the whole person of the learner – feelings as well as intellect – is the most lasting and pervasive.” (Rogers, 1969)

A comprehensive review of literature on independent learning reveals that the following defining elements need to be present to foster students’ ability to participate actively in their own learning process:

- **Collaboration:** Students understand their learning goals and work with teachers to modify their environment so it best fits their learning needs. The student is explicitly supported in understanding the ways in which the student-teacher relationship involves mutual responsibility (each responsible for aspects of learning, clear boundaries regarding expectations).

- Personal responsibility: The student understands and is supported in being accountable for his learning and has explicit responsibilities that encourage the development of accountability and ownership of the learning process.
- Motivation: In addition to external motivational techniques the teacher applies, students are encouraged and supported in finding their own internal sources of motivation.
- Strong empathic relationship: Students feel positively emotionally connected to their teachers and feel a sense of safety and support in the learning environment
- Cognitive and meta-cognitive support: The teacher explicitly and implicitly supports the building and strengthening of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills that are needed for independent learning to take place (*memory, attention, analysis, problem-solving, etc.*)
- Affective skills: Students are exposed to and get practice on how to use their emotions and feelings to enhance understanding, motivation, and learning.
- Clear feedback loop: In the context of a supportive, trusting relationship, the student is exposed to explicit feedback and ways to incorporate that feedback into their learning process.
- Information and technology: Students are guided in learning how to approach information and the process of information seeking through technology that enables them to actively seek the information they need and think critically about its source and content.
- Executive function: Teachers assist students in the key executive functions needed for effective learning to take place (*planning, self-monitoring, controlling and evaluating learning activities, and self-reflection*) (Meyer, et al., 2008)

The Art

Fostering independent learning in students with ASD and developmental delays is a dynamic and emotionally engaging process for both the student and teacher. Teachers of the Transition Curriculum content are encouraged to incorporate and implement the important independent learning ingredients listed above with creativity, flexibility, innovation, and high affect. These elements can be individualized to each student's learning style, regulatory needs, personality, interests and passions, sense of humor, and cognitive capability.

By holding the Transition Curriculum to a high standard of teaching that emphasizes independent learning, we give students a chance to be enriched by learning inside the program as well as the skills to increase their learning capacity outside the classroom.

Whether it is an internet search to find a laser tag venue for a birthday party, the selection of a book to read for pleasure at the library, the quest to find out if Annie Oakley really was a such a sharpshooter that she could split a playing card in half, or settle a bet on how many flavors of Coca-Cola are manufactured, we want students to actively desire and seek out information that is meaningful to them and connects them to the world in which they live.

The goals for independent learning are similar in nature to the Transition Curriculum's big picture goals for fostering empowerment, self-determination, and self-awareness in every student. This compatibility in methodology between big picture goals and teaching philosophy allows for a program-wide, consistent

emphasis on process-oriented, person-centered, and relationship-based approaches across a wide variety of program activities.

4.08 Steps for Individualizing the Curriculum

When the student first arrives, chances are he will be dealing with anxiety and adjustment issues because of entering into a new social milieu. Those factors will affect him but to what extent won't be known until he starts. Typically as the student becomes more comfortable the initial behaviors, emotions, and fears settle and you can begin to get a baseline of how he is without it being distorted by adjustment issues.

If you set a curriculum schedule too quickly, it is often difficult for the student, does not align well with his needs, and becomes frustrating for staff. But if transitioning into the program is itself defined as an explicit stage, then it takes the pressure off everyone so the real person emerges. It works well to individualize the curriculum in two steps:

4.08.1 Step One – The Discovery Phase

Consists of a more or less fixed set of program elements organized to:

- Place minimal stress on the student, allowing him time to acclimate to his environment
- Give staff plenty of opportunity to size up the student under various 1:1 and group circumstances and understand his learning style, emotional tendencies, biases, mindset, sensory sensitivities, preferences, challenges, and strengths, etc.

Ideally, these program elements would include:

- Physical activities in a group setting
- Advising and goal setting (done one-on-one)
- Group discussion-based class (6-8 individuals) on current events, pop culture, sharing, negotiation, planning in a larger group
- Starting the Awareness Development and Executive Functioning (ADEF) module (begin journal) (done one-on-one)
- Exploring the student's interests (affinity exploration) (done one-on-one)
- Any therapies that student is currently engaged in (e.g., OT, PT, speech-language, social skills group, etc.)
- Diagnostic assessment (if needed to fill in gaps of clinical understanding)
- Dyad or triad work – small group to see how the student can negotiate, navigate, and compromise surrounding a project or shared interests
- Community outings - introduce well planned and supported community outings that give staff opportunities to observe how the student regulates and self-manages in a variety of public settings
- Free period (to see how he manages himself and time)
- Lunch (unstructured but staff present to monitor and facilitate)
- Other elements such as a media-based class, art, etc.

4.08.2 Step Two – Adjustment Period

At any point, the student's program can be further adjusted based upon what was learned in step one. Depending upon the school, their resources and policies, this adjustment can be at fixed intervals or when the need is evident.

In this step the program could become more organically adapted to the student, focusing more precisely on issues specific to the individual.

- Awareness Development and Executive Functioning (ADEF) module is continued but now becomes more tailored in one-on-one and dyads or triads, if there are good matches that open doors to sharing and comparing experiences.
- Affinity exploration continues one-on-one, but add in work in dyad and triads, if there are peers who are a good match with similar interests.
- Independence and adulthood topics one-on-one, small group or large depending on individual. Topics cover a wide range such as understanding how to vote, public transportation, shopping, money management, dating and sexuality, managing medication, etc.
- Current events (community, state, country, world)
- Social-emotional development (1:1, small group, large group)
- Goal setting and building self-determination (short- and long-term goal setting, planning, and implementation)
- Career development, job seeking, job coaching and support
- Project-based affinity work – one-on-one or small group (surrounding a project or shared interests) begin to incorporate identifying and planning outings related to topics of interest
- Program-based community projects (*Examples: newsletter, bake sales, field day, Guitar Hero day, making rules and procedures, painting or decorating, etc.*)
- Creative projects – creativity in the shape of ideas, art, media, or otherwise (*Examples: research project, model building, movie making, computer animation, photography, music, mural painting, origami, etc.*)
- Remediation of a disability or learning support if needed (*Example: work on writing, reading, math, etc.*)
- Support if in college or seeking to go to college.
- When/if ready, career exploration and development one-on-one
- When/if ready internship and job readiness
- Out and about – identifying, planning, and executing trips into the community
- Other

4.09 Observations About a Student During the Discovery Phase

The intake and interview process generates a lot of valuable initial information about the student through the eyes of the family, educators, clinicians, and most importantly, the student. This information provides a foundation of knowledge that can then be matched against firsthand interactions and experiences during the initial, relationship-building Discovery Phase.

As the individual begins to acclimate to the new environment and makes gains from the program, some of the information gathered initially will need to be updated to reflect the changes.

The Discovery Phase is also extremely helpful for staff to get a sense of how aware the student is of his own mental processes and how he deals with them.

The following observations would be extremely helpful:

4.09.1 Cognitive Regulation

When regulated:

- Describe the student's thought patterns, themes, and tendencies when regulated.
- Are there patterns, scripted phrases, or rote thoughts that help the student stay regulated?
- To what extent do thoughts affect the student's emotions and behaviors?
- To what extent does the student appear to control his thoughts?
- To what extent is he able to incorporate the thoughts, ideas, or suggestions of others to help him stay regulated?

When dysregulated:

- Describe the student's thought patterns, themes, and tendencies when dysregulated.
- Are there patterns, scripted phrases, or rote thoughts that derail or dysregulate the student?
(*Example: fixed thinking, narrow thinking, emotional themes, etc.*)
- To what extent do dysregulated thoughts affect the student's emotions and behaviors?
- Can the student reign in his thoughts or control them when dysregulated?
- To what extent is he able to incorporate the thoughts, ideas, or suggestions of others when dysregulated?

Notes:

- If the student gets dysregulated frequently across a wide variety of settings and contexts there will be many opportunities to observe.
- If the student gets dysregulated in more specific contexts or environments, staff should be vigilant to those circumstances for observation.
- If the student only gets dysregulated in narrow contexts, staff may need to intentionally build these experiences into the Discovery Phase so dysregulation can be exhibited.
- Observe the student across a variety of contexts: 1:1, with staff, peer to peer, small group, large group, formal vs. unstructured time, transitions, with family, onsite in program, in community, in learning contexts, in physical contexts, etc.

4.09.2 Higher Order Thinking

- Strategic thinking: Can the individual design or apply strategies to approach tasks in an organized, sequenced, and successful manner?
- Causal relationships: To what extent can the student see how ideas connect and how something or an event occurs as a result of or in reaction to another?
- Concept formation: To what extent can the student understand both concrete concepts (“a frog”) and abstract concepts (“democracy”)?
- Ideational range: Does the student have a wide or narrow range of ideas about a given subject/interested in a wide or narrow range of subjects)?
- Critical thinking: Describe the student’s ability to evaluate information, draw connections, make conclusions, and apply logic.
- Creativity and brainstorming: To what extent are these applied to thinking?
- Problem solving: Describe the student’s ability to approach problems and seek solutions both independently and collaboratively (idea generation, brainstorming, step wisdom, trial and error, seek help, etc.).
 - make choices
 - initiate ideas
 - sequence ideas
 - use ideas to problem solve
 - identify problems
 - attempt to solve problems independently
 - apply logic to problem solving
 - apply creativity to problem solving
 - is aware of the need for contingency planning and able to generate multiple possible solutions and outcomes
 - ask for help with problems when needed
 - reflect on problem solving solutions (*Example: Did it work?*)
 - try again if first solution doesn’t work
 - problem solving in isolation
 - problem solving in group

4.09.3 Learning Profile

- Overall, how easy is it for the student to learn?
- Are there teaching modalities that work best (visual, auditory, hands-on, multi-sensory, kinesthetic, etc.)?
- Are there teaching modalities that stand out as challenges?
- Can the student think and solve problems with logic and creativity?

- Does the student think only in concrete terms, or is he able to use abstract ideas and engage in symbolic representation in active learning, creativity, and play?
- How flexible is he as a learner? As a thinker?
- How is the student's big-picture thinking for theories and ideas?
- How is the student's detail-oriented thinking (*Example: does he think about specifics of a subject, understand how the parts fit into the big picture*)?
- Can the student understand and expand on the ideas of others?
- Are there any identified learning challenges? Describe and explain the extent to which they each impact learning.
- Is there anxiety, perfectionism, or other emotional/cognitive interferences to learning?
- How engaged and active of a learner is he?
- How independent is he with assignments, procedures, rules, and details (extent to which needs support, modeling, examples, reminders)
- Are there any strategies that increase learning potential?
- Are there any accommodations that increase learning potential?
- In the context of learning, how well regulated is his attention?
- Overall, does his memory appear to support or undermine learning?
 - rote facts
 - details
 - rules and procedures

4.09.4 Range, Flexibility, and Stability of Adaptive and Coping Strategies

- How wide or narrow of a range of ideas and concepts does the student understand?
- Can the student display flexibility of thinking (ideas, change of plans, paradoxical dilemmas, contradictions, multiple-outcomes) with his own thoughts? Others' thoughts? Describe.
- Does the student possess adaptability, stability, and consistency in his coping strategies? Describe.



Notes: Observe the student across a variety of contexts: 1:1, with staff, peer to peer, small group, large group, formal vs. unstructured time, transitions, with family, onsite in program, in community, in learning contexts, creative endeavors, in physical activity contexts, etc.

In addition to general observation in the milieu, observation can be done formal critical thinking activities aimed to get students to display a targeted critical thinking skill (*brain teasers. aames. debates. etc.*).

4.09.5 Attention

Note whether student is diagnosed with an attentional disorder and on medication.

- Describe the student's ability to sustain attention in the following scenarios:
 - affinity and high interest topics
 - affinity and high interest activities
 - moderate interest topic
 - moderate interest activities
 - low interest topic
 - low interest activities
 - Are there attentional patterns to the time of day?
 - Are there attentional patterns related to blood-sugar, GI, allergies, or other interfering medical issues?
- Are there strategies or accommodations staff has found helpful for student to manage his attention?
- Describe the mental energy the student brings to various tasks. Does his mental energy fluctuate or manifest in predictable ways?
- Are sleep issues affecting mental energy and focus?
- Are nutritional issues affecting mental energy and focus?
- Performance consistency – how consistent is the student within a brief period? Within a day? Within the week? Seasonal?



Notes: Observe the student across a variety of contexts: 1:1, with staff, peer to peer, small group, large group, formal vs. unstructured time, transitions, with family, onsite in program, in community, in learning contexts, creative endeavors, in physical activity contexts, etc.

4.09.6 Memory

Short-term memory


- Is there any evidence of poor short-term memory (up to 7 seconds)? Evidenced by repeated questions, having to reference constantly to copy from the board (rule out weak attention, language difficulty, or anxiety)
- Is the difficulty pervasive, inconsistent, or content/task specific?

Active working memory

- How well can the student retain information needed long enough to complete a task, read a book, perform math problems, write a paper, etc.?
 - Hold the big picture or goal of activity?
 - Retain the necessary rules, guidelines, and procedures?
 - Track the evolution of a plot or character as developed?
- Are these difficulties pervasive, inconsistent, or content/task specific?

Long-term memory

- Consolidation – storing information in long-term memory efficiently
 - Does the student have any strategies for committing information, rules, and procedures to memory (*Examples: repetition, chunking, mnemonic devices, visualizing*)?
- Long-term access – being able to access/recall information in long-term storage when needed (*Examples: home phone number, tying shoes, rote recall on a test*)
- How efficiently can the student recall fact, rules, and procedures from long-term memory?
- Qualify:
 - jumbled
 - key parts missing
 - small details missing
 - slow to recall (rule out slow processing and expressive language difficulty)
 - gets anxious



Notes: Observe the student across a variety of contexts: 1:1, with staff, peer to peer, small group, large group, formal vs. unstructured time, transitions, with family, onsite in program, in community, in learning contexts, creative endeavors, in physical activity contexts, etc.

In addition to general observation in the milieu, observation can be done through formal memory activities aimed to get students to display a targeted memory skill (*verbal and non-verbal exercises. games. etc.*).

4.09.7 Executive Function

Managing oneself and one's responsibilities independently and in 1:1 interactions with staff:

- **Preview:** How well can the student look ahead to gain insight as to what is expected to happen and how it is likely to affect him? (*Example: I should bring my medication on the hike since we will be gone longer than usual and it will wear off*)
- **Plan:** How well can the student plan to make sure his needs are met in an upcoming event? (*Example: allocating resources ahead of time*)
- **Organize:** How organized is the student's approach, thinking, and management of materials on his own (*Examples: losing things, chaotic*)?
- **Manage time:** How well can the student manage his own time? Anticipate how much time something will take?
- **Apply step wisdom:** Does the student have a sense of the proper order and sequence needed to take for success? Can he apply that knowledge in process?
- **Think strategically:** How strategic are the student's thoughts, actions, and responses?
- **Possess reinforceable behavior and thinking:** Does the student notice his mistakes and is he able to use that knowledge to avoid repeating them in a similar future context? (*Example: Last time I set my alarm too late and missed the bus. Next time I need to set it 30 minutes earlier*)
- **Self-pace:** Does the student work, think, and respond at a pace that supports success? Is he rushing, too slow?
- **Use evaluative thinking:** Can the student evaluate an experience and draw meaningful conclusions about his performance, success, challenges, and what to do differently in the future? Is he able to make both detailed and big picture evaluative statements?

Managing oneself and one's approach to tasks and responsibilities when working with peers in a group setting:

- **Preview:** How well can the student participate in group previewing? Is he able to generate his own ideas or are they dependent on others?
- **Plan:** How well can the student engage effectively in group planning? Is he able to generate his own ideas or is he dependent on the ideas of others? Is he disruptive to the planning process?
- **Organize:** How organized is the student's approach, thinking, and management of materials within a group? Is he dependent on others to keep him organized?
- **Manage time:** How well can the student manage time in a group setting? Does he monitor time or is he dependent on others to cue him?
- **Apply step wisdom:** Does the student have a sense of the proper order and sequence he needs to take for success when working with a group? Can he apply that knowledge in process or is he dependent on others to guide him and tell them what to do and when?
- **Think strategically:** How strategic are the student's thoughts, actions, and responses? Do his contributions enrich the group or are the suggestions off base?

- **Possess reinforceable behavior and thinking:** Does the student notice his mistakes and is he able to use that knowledge to avoid repeating them in a future similar context? If someone else points out his mistakes can he internalize the feedback and make changes?
- **Self-pace:** Does the student work, think, and respond at a pace that supports success? Is his pace compatible with the group or does it cause problems? Is he rushing, too slow?
- **Use evaluative thinking:** Can the student evaluate an experience and draw meaningful conclusions about his performance, success, challenges, and what to do differently in the future? Is he able to evaluate the actions, decisions, and contributions of his peers? Is he able to make both detailed and big picture evaluative statements?

4.09.8 Awareness of and Involvement in Own Diagnosis and Interventions

- Is the individual aware of his diagnoses?
- If so, can he define it in his own words? How restricted or expansive is his personal definition?
- What emotions are attached to his awareness of his diagnosis?
- What thoughts are associated with his diagnosis? Are they factually-based, fear-based, lacking essential facts, etc.?
- Does he identify/agree with the diagnosis or resist it? Explain.
- To what extent is the individual involved in intervention decisions (*Examples: adjusting medication, frequency of therapy sessions, goal-oriented with therapy, provides therapists with vital information vs. depending on parents to update/provide information, etc.*)

4.09.9 Social Interactions

Staff

- Describe extent to which individual appears to bond with adults.
- Describe extent to which individual is able to display a respectful attitude towards staff.
- Describe extent to which individual initiates interactions with staff, seeks attention, assurance, etc.
- Describe quality and depth of staff interactions.
- Describe extent to which individual displays consideration and empathy of staff.
- Describe extent to which shyness, anxiety, or other emotional issues affect ability to relate to staff.
- Describe extent to which resistance to authority, rules, or other mindset issues affect interactions with staff.
- Can student display skill with code-switching – ability to recognize difference in relating to staff vs. peers (*Example: overly familiar, inappropriate, etc.*)?
- Describe extent to which individual recognizes the presence of and utilizes staff resources and support.
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- Describe extent to which student seeks help from staff in regulating emotions, behavior, thoughts, sensory or physical issues.
- Describe extent to which student seeks or needs staff to help enter social relationships with peers.
- Describe extent to which student is organized and shows appropriate care for materials and property of staff and the program.
- Describe student's ability to accept responsibility for own actions when interacting with staff.
- Describe student's ability to display self-control (*verbally, behaviorally, and emotionally*).
- Describe extent to which student shows awareness and ability to ascribe to general social behavior rules and group norms (*Examples: covers mouth when coughing, not interrupting, etc.*).
- Describe the student's ability and willingness to follow program and authority rules and procedures.
- Describe extent to which student can work independently when surrounded by others working independently (*Example: distracts self, others*).

Small group and 1:1 peer interactions

- Describe extent to which student isolates self or engages in parallel activities with low engagement vs. interactive and collaborative.
- Describe extent to which peer interactions are reciprocal.
- Describe extent to which student displays consideration and empathy in a small peer group setting.
- Describe extent to which social interactions are functional and constructive.
- Describe extent to which student is able to display a respectful attitude towards peers in a small group setting.
- Describe extent student can engage symbolically, imaginatively, and dramatically with peers during creative or collaborative work, small group activities, and free time.
- Does the student display an ability to sustain shared attention on task or topic at hand?
- Does the student display an ability to follow ideas, lead, or direction of others?
- Does the student imitate or use peers as models?
- Describe student's level of assertiveness and initiation and extent to which it is appropriate and regulated.
- Describe student's level of flexibility and compromise with peers.
- Does the student display an ability to receive and give feedback in a socially appropriate manner?
- Describe extent to which regulatory issues interfere (emotional and sensory dysregulation).
- Does the student display an ability to take turns and perspective taking with peers?
- Describe student's ability to accept responsibility for own actions.
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- Describe student's style of humor and humor regulation (*Examples: timing of telling a joke, reading peoples' reactions, not taking a joke too far, being appropriate in use of humor*), topic selection, timing and appropriateness within a small group of peers.
- Does the student engage in attention seeking behaviors? Describe.
- Describe extent to which student is organized and shows appropriate care for materials and others' property.
- Describe student's ability to display self-control (verbally, behaviorally, and emotionally) in small peer groups.
- Describe extent to which student shows awareness and ability to ascribe to general social behavior rules and group norms (*Examples: covers mouth when cough, not interrupting, etc.*).
- Describe student's ability and willingness to follow program and authority rules and procedures.

Additional individual profile information to note during observation of games and activities:

- Strengths
- Challenges
- Expressions of affect
- Preferences
- Stamina for engaging in large groups (*need for breaks*)
- Small group social goals



Notes: Observe the student across a variety of contexts: formal vs. unstructured time, transitions, with family, onsite in program, in community, in learning contexts, creative endeavors, in physical activity contexts, etc.



In addition to general observation in the milieu, observation can be done through formal social skill-based activities aimed to get students to display a targeted social skill.

Formal group social behaviors and skills (classroom, clubs, etc.)

- Describe extent to student is able to display a respectful attitude towards group leader/staff and peers.
- Does the student display an ability to collaborate, negotiate, and resolve differences and relate within the guidelines of a formal setting without conflict with other peers?
- Describe extent to which student displays courtesy, consideration, and empathy of others.
- Describe extent to which student is organized and shows appropriate care for materials and others' property.
- Describe student's ability to accept responsibility for own actions.

- Does the student display conflict resolution skills? With or without support?
- Describe student's ability to display self-control (verbally, behaviorally, and emotionally).
- Describe extent to which student shows awareness and ability to ascribe to general social behavior rules and group norms (*Examples: covers mouth when coughing, not interrupting, etc.*).
- Describe student's ability and willingness to follow classroom rules and procedures.
- Describe student's ability to cooperate and work well on group tasks.
- To what extent does the student listen to authority and follow directions?
- Describe extent to which student can work independently when surrounded by others working independently (*Example: distracts self, others*).

4.09.10 Body Awareness

- How aware is the student of his own body sensations and movements? Can he make meaning of his awareness? Can he act upon his awareness to self-manage or self-advocate?
- Does the student have sense of where his body is in the general physical environment (*Examples: bumps into people, walls, knocks things over, etc.*)?
- Does the student have sense of where his body is when engaging in interactions with others (*Examples: stand too close, touching, etc.*)?
- Is the student aware of smells and sounds his body makes? Is he able to act accordingly to self-manage hygienic and other strategies for mitigating? (*Examples: body odor/needs to put on deodorant, smells/needs to bathe, breath smells/needs to brush teeth*)

Is he aware of its effect on others from a social cognition standpoint (*Examples: what others find offensive, distasteful, odious, etc.*)? If so, does this awareness act as a social motivator to self-care?

Notes: Observe the student across a variety of contexts: 1:1, with staff, peer to peer, small group, large group, formal vs. unstructured time, transitions, with family, onsite in program, in community, in learning contexts, creative endeavors, in physical activity contexts, etc.

In addition to general observation in the milieu, observation can be done through formal body awareness, PE, and physical activities aimed to get students to display a targeted body awareness skill (*Examples: brain teasers, games, debates, etc.*).

4.09.11 Sensory Regulation and Reactivity

- Describe student's sensitivities, preferences, sensory seeking, and avoidance behaviors
- How well does the student use, understand, and learn through his sensory system?
- Give examples in each realm of the senses in terms of over or under reactivity:
 - visual
 - auditory
 - tactile
 - taste
 - olfactory
 - proprioceptive
 - vestibular

4.09.12 Sensory Regulation / Modulation Needs

- In each of the sensory realms, what does the student appear to need to remain regulated or to regain regulation when distressed?
- Describe extent to which the student is able to initiate, articulate, and act on sensory regulatory needs vs. be dependent on others.
 - visual
 - auditory
 - tactile
 - taste
 - olfactory
 - proprioceptive
 - vestibular

Notes: Observe the student across a variety of contexts: 1:1, with staff, peer to peer, small group, large group, formal vs. unstructured time, transitions, with family, onsite in program, in community, in learning contexts, creative endeavors, in physical activity contexts, etc.

In addition to general observation in the milieu, observation can be done through formal sensory-based activities aimed to get students to display a targeted sensory reaction (*Examples: smell test, games, temporarily take away a sense such as blindfold or sit in dark room and increase input to another sense such as listen to music. etc.*).

4.09.13 Emotional Aspects

Emotional regulation

- What does the student require to attain and maintain emotional regulation?
- To what extent does the student provide for his needs vs. require the assistance of others? Describe.
- Describe student's level of flexibility or rigidity surrounding the experience, interpretation, and expression of emotions.
- Describe student's coping mechanisms for attaining and maintaining emotional regulation. To what extent are these coping mechanisms disruptive or maladaptive in public or social settings?

Emotional engagement

- To what extent can the student participate in a shared emotional experience?

Use of affect

- Describe range of affect and emotional expression, interaction, and perception, including ability to read affect.
- Describe intensity of emotional expression, perception, and interactions.
- Describe intention related to affective states (*Examples: attention seeking, sympathy, avoidance, drive others aware, shock, etc.*).

Perceiving the emotional states of others

- Describe student's ability to identify or interpret accurately the emotions of others.
- Describe extent to which student can respond to the emotions of others, including the level of intensity and appropriateness.
- Does the student respond appropriately? If so in what way (verbal, non-verbal)?
- Does the student respond inappropriately? If so in what way (verbal and non-verbal)?
- Can the student connect the affective expressions of others to cause and effect?
- If the student is the cause or a contributing factor, can he see his role in the affective exchange?
- Does the student tend to adopt or mimic the affective states of others? Describe.
- Is the student emotionally reactive or defensive at the affective expression of others?

Emotional self-awareness

- To what extent is the student aware of his emotions? Does this skill fluctuate or is it relatively predictable?
- How successful is he at verbally and non-verbally communicating emotional states and needs in a socially appropriate manner?
- To what extent is the student able to understand and use his emotions to problem solve, engage in self-care, and make choices consistent with emotional needs?
- Can this student predict how he will feel in a projected scenario? If so, can he use this skill to select activities, experiences, and environments that are a good match for his emotional needs?
(*Example: "I don't want to go to the amusement park because big crowds make me anxious"*)

Notes: Observe the student across a variety of contexts: 1:1, with staff, peer to peer, small group, large group, formal vs. unstructured time, transitions, with family, onsite in program, in community, in learning contexts, creative endeavors, in physical activity contexts, etc.

In addition to general observation in the milieu, observation can be done through formal emotionally-based activities aimed to get students to display a targeted emotional experience or scenario (*Examples: discussions, games, journaling, etc.*).

4.09.14 Auditory and Language Processing

- Describe current level of functioning surrounding language processing:
 - rate
 - efficiency
 - volume
 - level of complexity
- Describe student's receptive language and comprehension:
 - vocabulary
 - following directions, lectures, and explanations
 - understanding stories, jokes, slogans, plays on words
 - movies
 - subtleties, hints, nuance
 - irony, plays on words, puns
- When asked a question, does the student pause or stall?
- Need to have instructions, explanations, rules, or other verbally disseminated information repeated or broken down?
- Does the student only understand a portion of what you say?
- Does he understand the meaning of what you are saying?
- What is the state of his auditory and verbal memory (memory of rules, procedures, multi-step processes, sequences, etc.)?
- Describe student's expressive language skills (verbal and non-verbal) with respect to:
 - Usage: How does student verbally and non-verbally communicate needs; desires; ask for help; respond to a familiar and unfamiliar person; use language to connect; express emotions, thoughts, opposition, discontent, agreement; initiate, maintain, and end an interaction? (*Examples: words, full sentences, written notes, draw pictures, keyboarded notes, gestures, miming, body language, facial expressions, etc.*)
 - Social: word choice, topic, style, emotionality, pace, etc.
 - Academic: word choice, cohesiveness, timing, pace, complexity, etc.
 - Incidental: appropriateness, timing, pace, style, etc.



Notes: Observe the student across a variety of contexts: 1:1, with staff, peer to peer, small group, large group, formal vs. unstructured time, transitions, with family, onsite in program, in community, in learning contexts, creative endeavors, in physical activity contexts, etc.

4.09.15 Communication

- Describe student's communication style (*Examples: persuasive, whiny, assertive, passive, indirect, blunt, etc.*).
- Describe student's articulation and speech style (*Examples: pressured, slow, poor enunciation, mumbles, etc.*).
- Voice modulation control: Can the student recognize the volume of his voice and modulate it according to what is socially acceptable for the context?
- To what extent does student intentionally use body language to communicate?
- If the student is non-verbal, what has been observed to date about his receptive language capabilities? Provide anecdotes to illustrate.
- Does the student use gestures, pantomime, drawings, or other alternative or creative ways to communicate?
- How reciprocal is student's communication with others?
- Does he have a rich internal world? (*Examples: imaginative abilities, intellectual creations*) Is he able to share/communicate it with others? How?



Notes: Observe the student across a variety of contexts: 1:1, with staff, peer to peer, small group, large group, formal vs. unstructured time, transitions, with family, onsite in program, in community, in learning contexts, creative endeavors, in physical activity contexts, etc.

In addition to general observation in the milieu, observation can be done through formal communication-based activities aimed to get students to display a targeted reaction (*Example: verbal and non-verbal games, etc.*).

4.09.16 Visual-Spatial Processing

- Does the student have a conceptual understanding of spatial words (*Examples: up, over, nearby, next to, etc.*)? Can he demonstrate that knowledge on paper 1D? On the board 2D? In 3D?
- Does the student have the ability to locate objects based on a verbal description?
- Can the student visualize a concrete object or scenario based upon a verbal description?
- Can the student visualize an emotionally charged scenario?
- Can the student create visualizations for abstract concepts/think symbolically?
- Are there illogical aspects to his visualizations due to visual-spatial language challenge? (*Example: He says a cat is on the fence and imagines it clinging to the side of the fence*)
- Describe student's non-verbal visual-spatial ability? Is it stronger when language is not in the equation (*Examples: visual logic games, puzzles, physical games, art*)?
-


- Describe the student's ability to use visual-spatial thinking for creating visual imagery?
(*Example: Can he picture someone's face in his mind?*)
- Describe the student's ability to use visual-spatial thinking for constructing a spatial picture.
(*Example: Can he search for hidden objects?*)
- How is student's sense of direction? Does it improve over time or with repetition and exposure?
- Describe student's spatial memory: ability to store and recall shapes, symbols (letters, numbers, punctuation marks) and other imagery.
- Describe student's spatial output: ability to create a drawing, write descriptively, or build a design/model that has accurate spatial characteristics (*Examples: arts and crafts, drawing letters and numbers, describing accurately the spatial components of a scene in words*).
- Describe student's materials management: ability to organize objects needed for tasks (*Examples: organize notebook, puts things in places where he can find them again, take home the right materials needed for an assignment, doesn't lose things*)
- Higher spatial thinking: To what extent can the individual reason and conceptualize without language, using mental imagery for thought?

Notes: Observe the student across a variety of contexts: 1:1, with staff, peer to peer, small group, large group, formal vs. unstructured time, transitions, with family, onsite in program, in community, in learning contexts, creative endeavors, in physical activity contexts, etc.

In addition to general observation in the milieu, observation can be done through formal visual-spatial activities aimed to get students to display a targeted reaction (*Examples: verbal and non-verbal games, creative activities, etc.*).

4.09.17 Representational Thought

- To what extent does student engage in imaginary thoughts, fantasies, and the creation of imaginary events?
- To what extent does student share this experience with others versus isolate himself?
- If this process is present, how does student use it – personal entertainment, entertaining others, recreational games and activities, or inspiration for art, writing, or other creative endeavors?
- To what extent is student generating his own ideas vs. adopting them from books, stories, video games, movies, or other pre-existing works?
- Describe and highlight themes and recurring images.
- Does this process contribute to either regulating or dysregulating the student?



Notes: Observe the student across a variety of contexts: 1:1, with staff, peer to peer, small group, large group, formal vs. unstructured time, transitions, with family, onsite in program, in community, in learning contexts, creative endeavors, in physical activity contexts, etc.

In addition to general observation in the milieu, observation can be done through formal imagination-based activities aimed to get students to display a targeted reaction (*Examples: discussions, games, creative activities, etc.*).

4.09.18 Developmental Levels During Adult and Peer Interactions

Shared attention/regulation and interest in the world

Describe student's ability to:

- Regulate his attention and behavior while being interested in the full range of sensations (sights, sounds, smells, their own movement patterns, etc.)
- Enter into a state of shared attention with another person
- Process his environment
- Filter out distractions
- Engage with others
- Attend to games, activities, or tasks

Engagement/forming relationships

Describe student's ability to:

- Engage in relationships
- Exhibit depth and range of affect (such as assertiveness, enthusiasm, or sadness), as it is incorporated into his engagement (*Examples: does he withdraw, self-stim, become scripted when under stress?*).

Two-way, purposeful interactions with gestures/intentional two-way communication/language

Describe student's ability to:

- Enter into two-way purposeful communication (able to open and close circles of communication, be intentional in interactions and activities)
- Engage in two-way, purposeful problem-solving interactions
- Develop sense of self in relation to others
- Negotiate emotional needs in life (being close to others, exploring and being assertive, limiting aggression, negotiating safety, etc.)
- Does the individual display a sense of self/self-esteem/independence? (*Example: "I did it!" or "Look what I did!" using affect, gestures, and words if verbal*)

Elaborating ideas/representational capacity and elaboration of symbolic thinking

Describe student's ability to:

- Create mental representations (*imaginary games or activities*)
- Use words, phrases, or sentences to convey emotional intention (*Example: "I'm really angry!"*)
- Have own ideas and share them with other individuals around
- Represent ideas and real life through games or activities

Building bridges between ideas/emotional thinking

Describe student's ability to:

- Make connections between different internal representations or emotional ideas (*Example: "I'm mad because you're mean."*)
- Separate fantasy from reality
- Modulate impulses and mood
- Concentrate and plan

Multi-cause, comparative, and triangular thinking

Describe student's ability to:

- Explore multiple reasons for a feeling
- Compare feelings
- Understand triadic interactions among feeling states (*Example: "I feel left out when Susie likes Janet better than me."*)
- Find an indirect road to problem solve (*Example: John wants to be Sarah's friend. He sees that Tom is Sarah's friend, so John becomes Tom's friend.*)
- Use understanding of people and feelings to "work the crowd" and satisfy social needs

Emotionally differentiated gray-area thinking/ shades and gradations among differentiated feeling states

Describe student's ability to:

- Describe degrees of feelings about anger, love, excitement, disappointment (*Example: "I feel a little annoyed"*)
- Know where he is on the social ladder
- Define oneself based on peer dynamics or peer group
- See "shades of gray"
- See consequences of his behavior
- Able to see gradations, variations, and ranges of emotions, social situations, and thinking (*Examples: "I'm a little mad, very mad, etc." "I'm the best, Jo is the second best, and John is the worst."*)

Intermittent reflective thinking, a stable sense of self, and an internal standard

Describe student's ability to:

- Reflect on feelings in a relationship to an internalized sense of self (*Example: "It's not like me to feel so angry" or "I shouldn't feel this jealous"*)
- Internalize values
- Display a greater sense of self that can't be broken down by lack of acceptance by peer group (*Example: Sally was mean to me because she was having a bad day, but I'm still a good person.*)



Notes: Observe the student across a variety of contexts: 1:1, with staff, peer to peer, small group, large group, formal vs. unstructured time, transitions, with family, onsite in program, in community, in learning contexts, creative endeavors, in physical activity contexts, etc.

4.09.19 Theory of Mind

Describe student's ability to:

- Identify emotions in self
- Identify emotions of others
- Express emotions appropriately
- Respond to other's emotions appropriately
- Predict emotions given a situation
- Understand situation-based emotions (*Example: The girl is scared because she thinks the dog is going to bite her.*)
- Understand desire-based emotions (*Example: The boy is jealous because he wants what the other student has.*)
- Understand belief-based emotions (*Example: The girl is sad because she thought it was her turn.*)
- Understand simple visual perspective taking (identifies that people in different places see different things)
- Understand complex visual perspective taking (identifies that two people can see the same thing differently)
- Understand that "seeing leads to knowing" (people only know things they have experienced – directly or indirectly)
- Predict actions based on another person's knowledge (making action predictions on the basis of where another person believes an object is)
- Recognizes false beliefs



Notes: Observe the student across a variety of contexts: 1:1, with staff, peer to peer, small group, large group, formal vs. unstructured time, transitions, with family, on site in program, in community, in learning contexts, creative endeavors, in physical activity contexts, etc.

In addition to general observation in the milieu, observation can be done through formal theory of mind-based activities aimed to get students to display a targeted reaction (*Examples: discussions, debates, scenarios, role playing, games, reflective writing, etc.*)

4.09.20 Social Cognition in Unstructured and Spontaneous Contexts

Verbal

- How well does the student understand and use social and age-appropriate language?
- Code-switching: How well does the student understand social contexts – that social communication varies depending on context and the people involved?
- Topic selection: Is the student able to select topics of conversation that are of interest to others? Can he sense when others are not interested?
- Humor regulation: Can the student make use of tasteful, appropriate humor and can he detect and respond appropriately to other people's jokes and humorous statements?
- Reciprocity: Can he understand the give and take and timing of social conversation?

Behavior

- Self-marketing: Does the student understand what a social persona is and understand it is something he can control? Can he intentionally build and display an image that is appealing to others?
- Social information processing: understanding the underlying meaning and agenda to a social interaction (between the lines, subtitles, big picture)
- Initiation: How successfully does the student initiate social interaction and join a pre-existing group?
- Extent to which student can exhibit self-control within social interactions?
- Timing and staging: How aware is the student of when it is okay to do what in the context of different relationships (overly touchy, too intimate, when to bring up what topics and personal information)?
- How skilled is the student in navigating conflict resolution and negotiation?

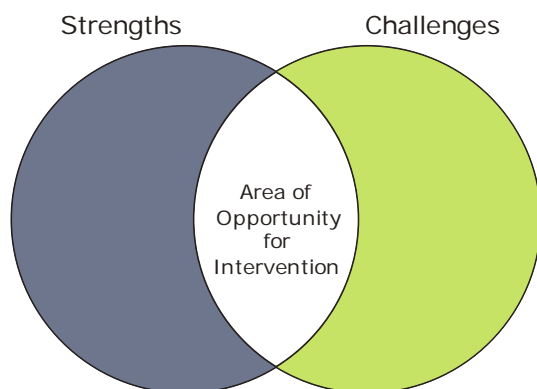
Notes: Observe the student across a variety of contexts: 1:1, with staff, peer to peer, small group, large group, formal vs. unstructured time, transitions, with family, onsite in program, in community, in learning contexts, creative endeavors, in physical activity contexts, etc.

Focus on unstructured times such as transitions, free periods, teacher illness, change in schedule, late start lunch, breaks, etc. Can also construct intentionally unstructured situations for the purpose of observation (*Examples: start class late, build in down time before or during an activity. etc.*).

4.10 Individualizing the Curriculum Process

The steps below summarize how individualizing the curriculum is managed as a continuous process. By adjusting the student's program over time the curriculum is gradually refined, increasingly meeting the needs of the student.

1. Using the student data collected during the **Transition Curriculum Intake Process**, identify the priorities: the most critical areas of difficulty, challenges, and concerns. The working priorities should be known during the intake process but much better understood during Discovery Phase.
2. Identify the student's areas of strength and affinities/interests
 - To help design activities, experiences, and goals that speak to the student's strengths and supports pursuit of his interests
 - To help design internships and job skill training
 - To guide career development and independence goals
 - To identify possible social opportunities (clubs, classes, groups)
 - To energize learning of academic or lower interest content by weaving interests into subject curriculum
 - To identify analogies that may be useful in solidifying understanding (*Example: use baseball metaphors to explain math*)
 - To identify possible motivators
 - To select research topics and projects
 - To inspire field trips and other outings
 - To create program clubs, classes, and affinity groups
3. Identify challenges
 - To guide short- and long-term goal setting
 - To design strategies and accommodations
 - To anticipate what might cause anxiety or dysregulation
 - To normalize and discuss during 1:1 and peer counseling sessions
 - To recognize roadblocks to or limitations in the pursuit of careers and jobs



Points where strengths and challenges overlap become the opportunity for intervention

4. Identify the student's own goals and family/caregiver goals
 - Personal (*Examples: self-care, emotions, sleep, basic needs, etc.*)
 - Relationships and social life (current and future)
 - Academic/learning
 - Independence (*Examples: driving, voting, taking on more responsibility, money management, getting around town, managing medication, etc.*)
 - Career (*Examples: job, career development, skill development, training/certifications, research*)
 - Recreational
 - Big ideas, dreams, and hopes (realistic and unrealistic)
5. Prioritize goals and achieve a consensus on what the program goals should be for this student at this time
6. Determine the general "track" student will be guided along
 - Basic living skills track: overcoming developmental issues, seeking mastery of basic living skills, no academic content
 - Basic academic track: overcoming developmental issues, seeking mastery of basic living skills with some academic content
 - Career/technical training track: overcoming cognitive and academic challenges to achieve career or technical goals – no foreign language, less math, pursuing topics for which student has affinity
 - College prep track: seeking college admissions
 - Custom track: some combination of the above
7. Work out what the student's day or week should look like. From the following list below, identify those that support student's intervention goals:
 - Physical and/or movement-based activities (individualized and/or with group)
 - Social skills (individualized and/or with group)
 - Independence and transition skills development (individualized and/or with group), such as ordering at a restaurant, calculating tip, reading a bus route chart, establish a system for organizing medication, etc.
 - Academic learning and/or remediation (*Example: Is there an academic skill or learning challenge that needs to be worked on, such as writing, using a calculator, helping understand time, or learning how to read?*)
 - Self-discovery – process-oriented and awareness development work (emotional, cognitive, sensory, and executive functioning problem-solving; one-on-one and/or with group). Understanding one's learning style, emotional tendencies, biases and mindset, sensory sensitivities, preferences, challenges, and strengths, etc.

During the Discovery Phase, this would be accomplished using a prescribed curriculum. After that period, the student's individual program can be refocused on to issues specific to his circumstances.

- Recommended interventions

During the Discovery Phase, the student would not start these unless already part of his current routine or specifically recommended by a member of his outside team.

- physical therapy
 - occupational therapy
 - speech and language therapy
 - sensory regulation
 - emotional counseling
 - art
 - yoga
 - dance
 - music
 - creative expression
 - multimedia (*Examples: movies, collages, PowerPoint presentations, etc.*)
 - dance/movement
 - photography
 - creative writing
 - computer (graphics, animation, game development)
 - music (*Examples: band, chorus, drumming, attending performances*)
- Unstructured social time (*Examples: lunch, free social time, transitions in between classes, waiting time, van ride to outing, etc.*)
These events provide staff with opportunities to observe how the student:
 - copes in unstructured situations
 - manages his time
 - interacts with peers
 - depends on staff to direct, facilitate, and meet his needs
 - is affected by unstructured down time (*Example: is agitated, anxious, and needs down time to re-regulate or relax, etc.*)
 - would benefit from structure, facilitated social opportunities, and additional supports.
 - Community awareness learning experiences
Community-based activities would typically begin later on in the program. However, it might be valuable for staff to observe students in a few well-supported community activities during the Discovery Phase.
 - outings
 - activities
 - scavenger hunts
 - site visits and facility tours (*Examples: police station, robotics lab at a university, factory*)
 - forums, rallies, lectures, and speaking events
 - concerts, fairs, events
 - community-based volunteer projects (*Examples: clean-ups, Habitat for Humanity, tree planting, handing water to runners at a race, etc.*)

- competitions and races
 - project-based (*Examples: shopping for materials, looking for ideas, research, fact-finding and interviews, bake sale*)
 - occupational or professional education
 - site visits and facility tours (*Examples: police station, robotics lab at a university, factory*)
 - shadow a professional for a day
 - interview a professional
 - work experience on site
 - trainings and other experiential learning related to careers and skill building
 - guest speakers
 - resume building
 - career research and exploration
 - internships and job coaching
8. Juggle the daily/weekly elements into a well-ordered sequence based upon the priorities, pulling on information in the SIP as needed. Applies to Adjustment Period and refined as needed
9. Adjustment Period only: For each module selected, develop the student’s lesson plan using the Lesson Plan Development Process and the SIP. Use the following questions as guidelines:
- How does the student learn best (visual, auditory, experientially, multi-sensory, etc.)?
 - Which strategies, supports, and teaching tools will support the student in gaining maximum benefit from the module?
 - What constraints exist due to individual capacities and limitations? What accommodations need to be put in place to accommodate to constraints?
 - What environmental controls are needed for this student to be most available to learn?
 - Assess resources available to the school and the student.
10. Implement the student's plan
11. Throughout Discovery Phase and Adjustment Period, provide feedback to transition team members with observations, successes, problems, and suggestions while implementing the student’s program.
- In cases of difficulties, determine areas of complication for the student within each module using the appropriate Skill Difficulties Analysis Checklists (to be completed in a later phase).
Example: Student is having trouble with language skills. Does his challenge relate to receptive language issues such as phonemic discrimination or vocabulary? Does his challenge relate to expressive language challenges such as oral motor (controlling muscles in the mouth to articulate sounds), graphomotor (controlling the muscles in the hand and arm to handwrite or keyboard), thought organization, or ideation?)
 - Determine which team member(s) have the best rapport with the student (vital for all awareness development work).

12. Reiterate the steps above as many times as required to optimize program for the student, refining the strategies, methods, use of tools, supports, and accommodations.

4.11 Individual vs. Group Work

There is tremendous benefit for students in a transition program to engage in both individual and group work. In designing a comprehensive transition plan ideally both approaches should be incorporated, however the decision will ultimately be dictated by each student's SIP.

Individual work is the starting point for most transitional plans – staff needs to assess how much 1:1 interaction with staff an individual needs to

- Manage regulatory needs
- Express, process, and understand emotions and emotional reactions
- Manage behavior
- Organize and make sense of thoughts

A student's readiness to function productively and successfully in a group is based on several factors:

- Emotional, regulatory, and developmental levels of interaction
 - ability to self-regulate or be regulated by others
 - ability to engage with others and sustain engagement
 - ability to be reciprocal
 - ability to engage in two-way communication
 - ability to engage in social problem solving (collaboration, negotiation, perspective taking, compromise)
- Social appropriateness
 - ability to display socially-acceptable behaviors
 - ability to engage in socially-appropriate dialogue (tone, word choice)
 - ability to inhibit maladaptive or inappropriate behaviors and verbalizations
- Level and manner of reactivity and dysregulation and student's ability to control it
 - emotional
 - behavior
 - verbal

For students who struggle with the above group criteria, exhibit aggressive or explosive behavior, or for other reasons are not currently a candidate for group work it is suggested that the program be designed to start with individual work. When signs of self-control, self-awareness, maturation, and readiness begin to emerge activities should be designed to include one other peer who is on a similar functional, emotional

developmental level. Once those activities have resulted in some success, small group work (triads and quads) should be added to continue stretching the student's ability to tolerate and navigate group situations.

Ideally, the student can slowly graduate to participating in moderately-sized peer groups. Individual work should continue throughout this process, as the goal is not to replace individual work with group work but to reach a balance of the two formats as much as possible.

For students with moderate difficulty with the above group criteria but do not have interfering concerns such as aggressiveness or severe reactivity, small group work should be built into the program from the onset.

Individual sessions should be planned to follow the same day as a group experience so the student has a chance to evaluate the experience, process difficult emotions, problem solve, and work on peer relationships and self-management challenges with immediacy and individualized support.

Depending on the student's progress, he may be able to eventually address his needs, concerns, feelings, and thoughts in a group context.

Students who come to the program with a history of positive group experiences and struggle with mild difficulties in the above criteria, group work should be built into the program so there are multiple opportunities to navigate group experiences over a wide variety of activities (*Examples: projects, activities, outings, process/therapy, learning, affinity exploration, discussions, etc.*). Any difficulties that arise can be addressed in both individual and group contexts.

4.12 Case Example: Individualizing the Curriculum for a Student

Below we present “Alex,” a young adult who has completed the intake process and is a member of the transition program.

- Information gathered through documentation and the interview process has been consolidated into a single case document that can be presented to the support team.
- Support team reviews information, identifies vital gaps in information and questions that need to be addressed during the Discovery Phase of the student’s program.
- Preliminary individualized daily program is designed to familiarize student with his new environment, establish rapport with peers and staff, introduce program rules and expectations, and begin the process of experimenting with activities and groupings.

1. Build/review/expand student's individual profile (SIP)

Completed

- Gather reports and assessments of the student's functional capacities, current IEP, and notes from professionals.
 - speech and language therapist, yoga instructor, drum instructor, psychiatrist (medication), summer camp program director
- Administer or get administered any additional assessments or tests if needed
 - none needed at this time
- Obtain and include copies of the student's work and representative behavior: essays, videos, artwork, etc.
 - portfolio of artwork
 - video of ballroom dancing
 - short storybook about parent’s divorce (with illustrations)

2. Identify priorities: most critical areas of difficulty, weaknesses, and concerns.

- **Social cognition:** build and strengthen awareness, understanding, emotions, behaviors, communication, and skills.
- **Critical thinking:** build and strengthen all needed help but in particular abstract thinking, making connections, logical/sequential analysis, and drawing conclusions
- **Executive function:** build and strengthen all domains of executive function regulation, increase awareness and adaptive coping strategies for managing difficult emotions and uncomfortable physical and sensory experiences, reduce self-injurious and maladaptive reactions to dysregulation

3. Identify student’s areas of strength, affinities, and interests

- **Strengths:** highly motivated to become more independent, large vocabulary base, responds well to calming and soothing, capable of creating strong bonds with adults, personal hygiene, creativity, working memory, sight reading, visualization

- **Affinities and interests:** word games such as Scrabble, pen and ink drawing, performing in musicals, attending theater and other outings and performances, ballroom dancing, drum kit playing, travel, ice cream
- **Newly emerging skills (require support):** developing a sense of humor, increasing awareness of peers and a desire to form friendships

4. Identify student's own goals and family/caregiver goals

Parent goals:

- Increased independence (cooking, organization, navigating public places independently, participating in management of medication, etc.)
- Increased exposure to and within community (lot of parental anxiety about rejection and social isolation)
- Increased social interaction overall and exposure to typically-developing peers
- Regulation (enormous amount of parental anxiety surrounding self stimulating, head hitting, alienating people/making scene in public place, inability to participate in groups)
- Increased participation in peer groups (has long history of 1:1 work because needs so great has had to have individualized attention)

Alex's goals:

- Have a girlfriend
- Have more friends
- Do art (drawing) and theater (musicals) for a living
- Be in a Broadway musical
- Live in California
- Go to college
- Drive
- Be more independent

5. Prioritize goals and achieve a consensus on what program goals should be for this student at this time

Parent and transition team are in consensus that Alex's program should focus on: regulation, social cognition, executive function support, expressive language and critical thinking. Independence skills are a secondary priority and exposure to independence building experiences should be incorporated when possible.

Alex's goals should be incorporated into direct service work through discussions, activities, etc. as they serve as significant motivators for him and offer opportunities to work on his intervention goals with high interest content.

6. Determine general "track" student will be guided along

Alex requires a custom program combining basic living skills track with career and technical training exposure.

7. Work out what student's day or week should look like.

- **Physical and/or movement-based activities (individualized and/or with group).** Needed, to raise body awareness and support regulation.
- **Social skills (individualized and/or with group).** Needed to build social awareness, socially appropriate behaviors, reciprocal peer communication
- **Independence and transition skills development (individualized and/or with group).** Alex needs specific help in this domain with planning and executing realistic and developmentally-appropriate community experiences.
- **Academic learning and/or remediation.** None needed
- **Self-discovery – process-oriented and awareness development work (emotional, cognitive, sensory, and executive functioning problem-solving; individualized and/or with group)**
Alex does not currently possess self-awareness, self-reflection, or expressive language skills to engage in this module with depth and breadth, so a formal course in this domain would be too abstract, overwhelming, and confusing. It is more effective to incorporate observations of the self into activities and provide ongoing opportunities to build self-reflection and self-awareness skills as they apply to real-life experiences.
- **Recommended therapies and interventions**
 - physical therapy - not recommended
 - occupational therapy - recommended but family has decided to take a break and pursue other interventions.
 - speech and language - not needed in day program - sees SLP 2x per week in a private clinic after school
 - sensory regulation - recommended as key aspect of program
 - emotional counseling - not needed
 - art - not needed as a stand-alone class but helpful strategy for communication when Alex is having difficulty articulating his thoughts and feelings
 - yoga - speak to instructor about ways to incorporate calming and soothing yoga techniques into program
 - dance - incorporate into regulatory and movement module
 - music - not recommended

- **Creative expression**
 - **art** - recommended both as a stand-alone class and incorporated into other classes
 - **multimedia** - excellent teaching tool for Alex as he is a visual learner
 - **dance/movement** - not recommended as artistic expression (see above for application to body awareness and regulation)
 - **photography** - no
 - **creative writing** - yes
 - **computer** - no
 - **music** - no

- **Unstructured social time**

Alex needs facilitation during unstructured time both to generate ideas of what to do and relating to peers. He tends to isolate himself, wander looking for someone to make a request of, or force a conversation, which typically gets him in an awkward peer situation.

- **Community awareness learning experiences**

All outings must be broken down and reviewed with Alex many times prior to the experience. Alex will need his own facilitator to support regulation, reduce confusion, and redirect.

 - **outings** - yes
 - **activities** - yes
 - **scavenger hunts** – no, too developmentally advanced
 - **site visits and facility tours** - yes
 - **forums, rallies, lectures, and speaking events** – no, unable to self-manage/dysregulated when exposed to too much spoken language, multiple stimuli, and high chance of the unexpected.
 - **concerts, fairs, events** - select carefully and only with 1:1 assistance in the event Alex becomes overwhelmed.
 - **community-based volunteer projects** - yes
 - **competitions and races** - no
 - **project-based (shopping for materials, looking for ideas, research, fact-finding and interviews, bake sale)** - yes

- **Occupational or professional education**

Alex is not ready for advanced career development. However, to expand his general knowledge, he should be exposed to different fields and the kinds of work people do.

8. Juggle the daily/weekly elements into a well-ordered sequence based upon priorities, drawing from the SIP as needed.

(See Alex' daily program below)

9. Using the SIP, determine how this student learns best (visual, auditory, experientially, multi-sensory, etc.)

Strong visual learner. Auditory information should be paired with a visual (handout, written on whiteboard). Alex also learns better by experience than observation. He responds well to high affect, animated presentations, and exaggerated gestures.

10. Determine which strategies, supports, tools, and accommodations are appropriate and/or necessary for what needs to be done

- Determine what constraints exist due to student's capacities and limitations (accommodations, what to avoid, what to permit). Alex will need a facilitator and lots of time for review and reflection.
- Determine what environmental controls are needed for this student to have the best chances of success. Alex needs access to a dark, quiet room with a blanket to lie down when lethargic, sleepy, or dysregulated.

At this point, a sample daily program can be written for Alex (see 4.13 Sample Daily Program – Case Study #1).

4.13 Sample Student's Daily Program – Case Study #1

Student: Alex, age 17

Diagnosis: autism spectrum disorder; rule out possible psychosis

Transition Priorities

- **Social cognition:** build and strengthen awareness, understanding, emotions, behaviors, and communication skills
- **Critical thinking:** build and strengthen all, but in particular abstract thinking, making connections, logical/sequential analysis, and drawing conclusions
- **Executive function:** build and strengthen all domains of executive function
- **Regulation:** increase awareness and adaptive coping strategies for managing difficult emotions and uncomfortable physical and sensory experiences. Reduce self-injurious and maladaptive reactions to dysregulation.

Affinities and Interests

- Word games such as Scrabble
- Pen and ink drawing
- Performing
- Attending theater and other outings and performances
- Ballroom dancing
- Drum playing
- Travel
- Ice cream
- Internet research
- Working with his hands

Strengths

- Highly motivated to become more independent
- Large vocabulary base
- Responds well to calming and soothing
- Capable of creating strong bonds with adults
- Personal hygiene
- Creativity
- Procedural memory
- Sight reading
- Visualization
- Basic navigation of internet (locating information, emailing)

Challenges

- Significant regulatory issues lead to high variability in mood, energy level, concentration, and ability to verbalize, problem solve, and connect
- Perseverative thoughts and feelings
- Perspective taking
- Managing the unexpected
- Having someone tell him “no” or otherwise create roadblocks to his desires
- Extremely low social awareness

Newly Emerging Skills (require support and need to be worked on)

- Developing a sense of humor
- Increasing awareness of peers and a desire to form friendships
- Awareness of preferences
- Awareness of social behavior appropriateness

Individual vs. Group Work

Alex needs the bulk of his program to be 1:1 at this time because of extreme difficulty staying regulated, significantly low awareness of others, and weak reciprocity and engagement skills. The following 1:1 sessions are recommended:

- Art
- Understanding adulthood
- Community outings with a focus on social interaction, spatial navigation, self-organization, regulation, and independence
- Independent living skill building (*Examples: cooking, shopping, short- and long-term goal setting and planning, understanding street signs, etc.*)
- Computer-based interest exploration and expansion – facilitated use of the internet to pose questions and search for answers. Focus should also be on expanding ideas as Alex tends to switch topics once a singular question has been answered.
- Projects – use Alex’s affinity for working with his hands and his strong visualization and creativity skills to do projects that will enable him to work on building executive function skills (planning and executing a plan, organization, step wisdom, sequencing) and critical-thinking skills.
- Facilitated internship at a theater – expanding on strengths and interests to learn organizational, social, self-regulation, and independence skills. Format for exposing Alex to controlled stressful situations and facilitating him remaining regulated, receiving help, and seeking solutions.
- Reflection – a daily session designed to help Alex reflect upon the events of his day, make sense of his experiences, make connections, address emotions, identify and resolve difficulties, answer questions, etc.

Alex wants to have relationships with peers and needs facilitated practice. He should have 3 small group experiences per day to continue working on group skills but without overwhelming him.

- Group physical activity so Alex can work on physical group navigation: taking turns, playing a position, being assigned a role, coordinating with peers, spatial awareness
- Dyad or triad activities where Alex can work on taking turns, negotiation, collaboration, and social discourse
- Discussion-based small group class where Alex can be exposed to perspective taking, sharing of self and others, reciprocity, conversational flow, topic selection, and expanding social communication skills.

Internship

When ready, Alex should engage in short-term, highly structured internship to work on

- Following directions
- Sustaining and completing tasks
- Increasing task-specific and overall stamina
- Executive functioning
- Receiving and incorporating feedback

Here are some further examples showing how daily programs might turn out very differently for students elsewhere on the spectrum and with other strengths and challenges.

4.14 Sample Student's Daily Program – Case Study #2

Student: Tom, age 21

Diagnosis: autism spectrum disorder; language-based learning disability

Transition Priorities

- **Language support:** build and strengthen language capabilities (remediation, strategies, and accommodations) given restrictions due to severe dyslexia and poor phonemic awareness. Build awareness and understanding of how to use language to express emotions, self-advocate, and navigate social interactions appropriately. Build vocabulary base to reduce scripted language, quoting movie lines, and telling scripted jokes and puns.
- **Higher order thinking:** build and strengthen all aspects of comprehension and critical thinking – needs help in particular with making connections, abstract thinking, logical/sequential analysis, drawing conclusions, and problem solving
- **Executive function:** build and strengthen all domains of executive function, in particular address extreme challenges with time
- **Independence skills:** increase awareness of the areas in which Tom can begin to manage his own needs. Develop adaptive coping strategies for managing difficult emotions, confusion, and uncomfortable physical and sensory experiences. Reduce self-injurious and maladaptive reactions to dysregulation. Anxiety management/reduction of chronic overwhelm (when dysregulated tends to overreact, - become hyper verbal, make inappropriate jokes, and engage in other distracting forms of attention seeking behavior).

Affinities and Interests

- Movies
- Running 5ks
- Attending concerts, theater, and other outings and performances
- Gay rights
- Travel
- Christianity (mother is pastor of church)

Strengths

- Highly motivated to become more independent
- Comfortable with adults, good with adult casual social language
- Capable of creating strong bonds with adults
- Creativity
- Sense of humor
- Visual memory
- Empathic and sensitive to the emotions of others

Challenges

- Low self-esteem, especially surrounding intelligence and weight
- Perseverative thoughts and feelings
- Higher order thinking – due to significant challenge Tom is often confused and anxious.
- Managing the unexpected (gets dependent, confused, anxious)
- Extremely low social awareness
- Extreme self-consciousness and anxiety around peers – tends to try too hard and drive others away.
- Topic selection for peer conversation
- Over-dependence on staff to help navigate social difficulties
- Low fund of knowledge about systems and how the world works

Newly Emerging Skills (require support and need to be worked on):

- Developing a sense of humor
- Increasing willingness to take on new independence and responsibility
- Awareness of his preferences and needs
- Self-advocacy
- Awareness of social nuances and undercurrents

Individual vs. Group work

- Because of significant learning disabilities and extreme self-consciousness, it is currently best to do the cognitive support in a 1:1 to reduce embarrassment.
- 1:1 needs
 - Remediation of language-based learning disabilities. Session designed to identify areas of difficulty due to learning disabilities, remediate/build skills when applicable, and design adaptive strategies (use of iPad and voice-activated software)
 - Understanding adulthood and the world around me – a safe 1:1 place to ask questions about becoming an adult, filling in gaps of understanding, and making personal goals
 - 1:1 goal-oriented community outings with a focus on self organization, planning, strategic thinking, independence with transportation, and navigating commerce, etc. (*Examples: riding public transportation, ordering in a restaurant, shopping trip, etc.*)
 - Independent living skill building (*Examples: cooking, shopping, short and long-term goal setting and planning, understanding street signs, etc.*)
 - Computer-based interest exploration and expansion – facilitated use of the internet to pose questions and search for answers. Focus should also be on higher order thinking and executive functioning
 - Projects – that will enable Tom to work on building executive function skills (planning and executing a plan, organization, step wisdom, sequencing), and critical thinking skills
 - Facilitated internship – expanding on strengths and interests to learn organizational, social, self-advocacy, and independence skills. Format for exposing Tom to controlled stressful situations and facilitating him remaining regulated and seeking solutions.

- Reflection – a daily session designed to help Tom reflect upon the events of his day, make sense of his experiences, make connections, address emotions, identify and resolve difficulties, answer questions, reduce confusion and overwhelming feelings, and problem solve surrounding peer relationships, etc.
- Tom wants to have relationships with peers and needs facilitated practice. Therefore, Tom should have small group experiences each day that aren't overwhelming so he can continue working on group skills.
 - Group physical activity for Tom to work on physical endurance and fitness as well as social navigation in the context of games
 - Small-group counseling - negotiation, collaboration, and social discourse
 - Discussion-based small group where Tom can be exposed to current events, politics, controversial issues, and pop culture to increase fund of knowledge and practice social skills and awareness/perspective taking, sharing of self and others, articulating emotions, reciprocity, conversational flow, topic selection, and expanding social communication skills.
 - As much as possible, pair Tom with other students with similar learning and social issues, as he can get lost quickly or overloaded if the language skills of his peers is beyond his skills.

Internship

Tom should be engaged in the selection of an ongoing internship to work on:

- Building independence
- Strengthening job skills
- Receiving feedback without getting apologetic or anxious
- Increasing responsibilities
- Executive functioning
- Increasing self-esteem
- Increasing stamina

4.15 Sample Student's Daily Program – Case Study #3

Student: Ben, age 18

Diagnosis: autism spectrum disorder, apraxia (disorder of motor planning), expressive language disorder

Transition Priorities

- **Expressive language:** Build and strengthen ability to use expressive language to communicate emotions, thoughts, needs, and preferences in all domains: 1:1, small group, large group, in community, with peers, and with adults. Due to lack of current expressive language, in addition to work on oral expression, build in strengthening skills with written expression, keyboarding, and use of communication-based technological devices. Support should also include a focus on gestures, facial expressions, and other non-verbal modes and strategies of communication.
- **Motor planning:** Build and strengthen body awareness, descriptive language surrounding body movements, coordination, balance, spatial awareness in relation to the body, and sequencing of motor skills.
- **Parts-to-whole thinking:** Build and strengthen ability to identify key details, make connections between details, and understand how they fit together into a big picture. Incorporate work aimed at solidifying and strengthening other critical thinking skills associated with parts/whole thinking such as visualization, analysis, abstract conceptualization, cause and effect, evaluative thinking, and visual-spatial thinking.
- **Executive function:** Build and strengthen all domains of executive functioning in particular sequencing, prioritization, and planning.

Affinities and Interests

- Pokémon
- Computer-based drawing and design
- Attending sporting events
- Travel
- Pizza
- Animals
- Digital photography
- Being read stories with lots of affect and flair

Strengths

- Strong receptive language, including large receptive vocabulary base
- Comfortable being out in community, public places
- Responds well to calming and soothing
- Capable of creating strong bonds both with adults and younger peers
- Creativity
- Attention regulation
- Motor planning and coordination
- Quick to catch on to computer programs and how to use them (art- and photo-based)
- Empathy
- Supportive family system

Challenges

- Profound expressive language challenge – does not speak and has few non-verbal strategies at his disposal (gesturing, drawing, showing with physical movement) . Those who know him well often anticipate needs and consequently he does not have enough opportunities to practice expression (verbal and non-verbal)
- Passivity, lack of self-advocacy, and infrequent expression of preferences and needs unless in distress
- Restricted diet – will only eat a few specific foods
- Weak motor planning (graphomotor/handwriting, fine and gross motor)

Newly Emerging Skills (require support and need to be worked on):

- Expressing a sense of humor
- Increasing awareness of peers and a desire to form friendships
- Beginning to use more gesturing to indicate thoughts, preferences, and needs

Individual vs. Group work

- Ben needs the bulk of his program to be 1:1 and small group at this time to allow him to work on expressive language and forming peer relationships without the threat of feeling overwhelmed or getting lost in the group. Ben needs equal parts 1:1 and small group.

1:1 Sessions Recommended

- Computer art – see if Ben can begin using animation programs to add movement and later context and character development to his drawings
- Photography – both in program and out in the community. This will allow Ben to explore another modality of expression in a more abstract and creative manner. Photography excursions and projects capitalize on his strength in photography and his ability to stay regulated when in public. This allows him to work on his difficulties expressing his preference, planning, and intention. Work on reinforcing parts-to-whole thinking can be incorporated by having Ben take photos of the parts of objects and then the whole object.
- Community outings with a focus on social interaction, spatial navigation, planning, and engagement
- Independent living skill building (*Examples: cooking, shopping, short- and long-term goal setting and planning, understanding street signs, etc.*). Cooking may help Ben expand his willingness to try other types of food.
- Computer skills – use Ben’s comfort with art and photo computer programs to widen his ability to utilize the computer for non-artistic endeavors such as keyboarding, writing, email communication, finding information, and planning outings.
- Projects – use Ben’s artistic skills to do projects that will enable him to work on building executive function (planning and executing a plan, organization, step wisdom, sequencing) and critical thinking skills.

- Movement and mindfulness – a daily session where Ben works specifically on activities aimed at raising body awareness, intentionality in movement, sequencing and movement, coordination and balance. Activities can include games, yoga, dance, mime/improvisation, etc.
- Reflection – a daily session designed to help Ben reflect upon the events of his day, make sense of his experiences, make connections, address emotions, identify and resolve difficulties, answer questions, etc. Strategies such as storyboarding, movement, and art can be incorporated as modalities of communication to help reflect on the day. This will also be an excellent time to work on parts-to-whole thinking – reflecting on and delineating the parts of the day and also evaluating how the day was as a whole (fun, bad, boring, etc.).

Small group sessions recommended

- Small group physical activity so Ben can work on both peer interactions and motor planning in a context that would not be anxiety producing or overwhelming. The class should not introduce competition or the stress of timed activities such as races as a dynamic. The focus should be on fun, collaborative games and exercises that focus on motor sequencing, movement awareness, coordination, spatial awareness, and balance.
- Dyad or triad peer discussion group where Ben can work on building rapport, similarities and differences, circles of communication, perspective taking, sharing of self and others, reciprocity, conversational flow, topic selection, and expanding social communication skills with developmentally appropriate peer matches.
- Project-based small group where Ben can be exposed to collaboration, negotiation, and peer interaction while also practicing executive function components of selecting, planning, and executing a project. In the beginning the projects should be within his interests and skills, such as art so he has a strength to fall back on. As he becomes more comfortable with the peer and communication components, projects that introduce new tasks and experiences should be incorporated to help expand his interests.
- Newsletter – Ben should be the resident photographer for the program newsletter, enabling him to contribute to a group project through his strengths. If interested, he can also submit drawings and cartoons.

4.16 Sample Student's Daily Program – Case Study #4

Student: George, age 23

Diagnosis: autism spectrum disorder

Transition Priorities

- **Executive function support:** Build and strengthen ability to preview, plan, manage time. strategize, sequence, and execute managing his college experience and obligations. Raise awareness to services on campus and how to utilize support services best. Expand ability to juggle responsibilities (tends to only focus on one thing to the exclusion of other responsibilities).
- **Social cognition:** Build and strengthen awareness and ability to: perspective taking, negotiate, enter into and maintain social discourse, social reciprocity, self-marketing (how one comes across to others), topic selection (discuss things of interest to others)
- **Independence skills:** Increase awareness of the areas in which George can begin to manage his own needs and responsibilities more independently (currently extremely dependent on Mom).
- **Emotion and anxiety management:** Develop coping strategies for managing difficult emotions, in particular anxiety and boredom. (Tends to leave abruptly, or conversely, dominate). Expand emotional experiences and increase emotional language.
- **Physical exercise and stamina**

Affinities and Interests

- Military history
- Russian history
- Role-playing computer games
- World politics
- *My Little Pony*
- Non-fiction reading

Strengths

- Highly motivated to learn
- Highly intelligent
- Higher order thinking
- Comfortable with adults
- Creativity
- Sense of humor
- Big picture thinking

Challenges

- Chronic disorganization, especially losing track of details and poor time management
- Perseverative thoughts and feelings – if he gets stuck on thoughts he is unable to put aside until resolved
- Pervasive sense of impatience and urgency, rushing through tasks and responsibilities
- Low social awareness
- Topic selection for peer conversation
- Over-dependence on adults to organize, remind, and manage his responsibilities

- Fatigues quickly, reacts poorly to “boredom”
- Social/conversational reciprocity - tends to talk “at” rather than “with” others – alienates peers by coming across as elitist, rude, and dominating
- Face blindness (inability to recognize faces)

Newly Emerging Skills (require support and need to be worked on)

- Creating and maintaining strong bonds with peers and adults
- Expressing warmth and affection towards others
- Increasing willingness to take on new independence and responsibility
- Awareness of his preferences and needs
- Perspective taking
- Awareness of social subtleties
- Reflecting on his thoughts and feelings and those of others
- Receiving and drawing meaning from peer feedback

Individual vs. Group work

- Most of the issues George struggles with emerge during executive function or social interactions.
- It is recommended that George receive 1:1 support for:
 - Executive function needs (goal setting, organization, time management, strategic planning)
 - Career development
 - Managing college and academic responsibilities
- George is beginning to express an interest in having relationships with peers and needs a lot of facilitated practice. Therefore, George should have small group experiences throughout the day that do not overwhelm him to continue working on group skills.
 - Group physical activity so George can work on physical endurance and fitness as well as social navigation in the context of games
 - Small-group counseling - negotiation, collaboration, social discourse, emotional intelligence, and awareness building
 - Discussion-based small group where George can discuss current events, politics, controversial issues, and pop culture; practice social skills and awareness in perspective taking, sharing of self and others, articulating emotions, reciprocity, conversational flow, topic selection, and expanding social communication skills.
 - Project-based group work where George can work on executive function challenge through goal setting, planning, etc. in a context where he has to negotiate and compromise without being in charge

Internship

It is recommended that George participate in an affinity-based internship at a museum, history archives, university research, etc. where he can work on:

- Attending to details
- Executive functioning
- Managing responsibilities

Since George traditionally avoids doing anything he sees as “extra work” above and beyond school and basic self-care, the internship must be clearly linked to George’s career development and personal goals to add validity and meaning and to reduce resistance to taking on a new role.

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Section 5.0

TEACHING APPROACHES, METHODS, PROCESSES, ASSESSMENTS, AND TOOLS

"For the mind is not a vessel that needs filling, but wood that needs igniting."

~ Plutarch, c. 100 A.D.

"Human beings have a natural potentiality for learning....Significant learning takes place when the subject matter is perceived by the student as having relevance for his own purposes."

~ Dr. Carl Rogers, 1969

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5.01 Introduction

As the title suggests, this section is a collection of teaching approaches, methods, processes, assessments, and miscellaneous tools essential to the delivery of our curriculum modules. The overall purpose of this toolbox is to make it possible for users to customize the transition curriculum for each student more easily and accurately.

Many of these “tools” are lists of prompts – points to remember or consider when preparing lessons or student programs. Some provide guidance on how to adjust material for students with differing abilities; some provide critical processes upon which the success of the curriculum depends.

Not all lists or processes will fit every circumstance or every student. Feel free to add or amend any of these lists, and we shall modify or expand them from time to time as we get feedback from teachers and other professionals using these materials.

5.02 Discovery and Examination Process

502.1 Purpose and Use

All Transition Curriculum modules are designed with the same goals in mind:

- To create for individuals on the autism spectrum or with other developmental disabilities a rich and meaningful context in which to learn and grow
- To build individual personalized concept of self, others, and the world
- To provide the tools and strategies needed to lead a more independent, self-advocating, and self-determined life

To help individuals with developmental challenges build self-awareness and awareness of others, we offer a process of discovery, examination, experience, and reflection. The process:

- Raises awareness and deepens understanding of the physical, cognitive, sensory, emotional, and social layers of the self
- Explores preferences, needs, affinities, strengths, difficulties, hopes, dreams, and goals as means to increase personal awareness
- Uses new personal awareness and emerging sense of self to improve decision-making, flexibility, adaptability, and self-advocacy skills
- Capitalizes on all preceding personal growth to strengthen the individual's ability to establish and maintain meaningful social relationships
- Capitalizes on social relationships to expand the individual's world into the community through field trips, internships, projects, local events, and individualized independence skill building
- helps staff build a comprehensive understanding of the individual's needs, preferences, interests, skills, strengths, difficulties, desires, and personal goals, which is necessary to individualize long-term transition and independence planning

The ultimate goal of this learning process is to equip young adults with awareness, relationships, and skills they need to manage their own needs, perceptions, and experiences successfully, internally, and in relation to others in a variety of environments.

The process includes a wide range of methods, techniques, and activities: experiential, multi-sensory, non-verbal, verbal, individual, group, explicit (through direct instruction) and incidental (capitalizing on a teaching moment because the topic just happened to come up).

502.2 The Process

These are the general steps to apply to each topic addressed in every module:

1. Raise awareness and build understanding of one's
 - Sensory, cognitive, emotional, physical, and social needs; preferences, behaviors, habits, and tendencies in relation to
 - internal experience

- associated physical sensations
 - associated feelings
 - associated thoughts
 - associated reactions and behaviors
 - coping strategies (*Examples: helpful, not helpful, disruptive to others*)
 - Sensory, cognitive, emotional, physical, and social make-up in relation to
 - other people
 - a wide variety of environments
 - performing tasks and engaging in a wide variety of activities
2. Evaluate and strengthen awareness and understanding by means of
- Experimentation and supported trial and error experiences
 - Improvisation and role-playing scenarios
 - Creative expression (*Examples: art, film, photography, music, etc.*)
 - Outings and community events
 - Physical, multi-sensory, and experiential activities, games, and exercises
 - 1:1 discussion
 - Group discussion
 - Individual and peer feedback
 - Social relationship-building activities
 - Emotional awareness and emotional intelligence activities
 - Individual and group projects
 - Internships, jobs, shadowing professionals, visiting workplaces, and other career-building experiences
 - Affinity exploration
 - Clubs (*Examples: newsletter, photography, sports, shared interest theme, etc.*)
 - Independence skill building activities and outings (*Examples: cooking, laundry, money management, public transportation*)
3. Evaluate and draw conclusions
- “Given my emerging self-awareness and deepening understanding of myself, others, and the world around me:
- Am I meeting my needs? Are others meeting my needs? Are the environments and situations I am in meeting my needs?
 - What are ways I can take better care of myself? How can others help me? How can I, and others around me, take better care of my needs when I am out and about in my community?
 - What are ways I can improve my relationship with others?
 - What are ways I can have more positive experiences out in the community?
 - What are ways I can improve my home life? Work?

- What changes would I like to make in myself, in my relationships with others, and my experiences in my surroundings to improve my experiences and my life?
 - What changes can I make so my goals, plans, and dreams fit me better?
 - What situations and people are supportive of me and my needs? Which are not? What needs to change to improve those situations that are not working well? What changes can I take on myself? Who can I enlist to help?
 - What are ways I can start taking on more responsibility and become more independent?"
4. Experimenting with applying new knowledge and awareness with respect to
- Self
 - Home
 - School
 - Social relationships
 - Recreational activities
 - Job
 - Community
 - World
5. Assess application of new knowledge and awareness and revise accordingly
- Use visuals to help compare experiences. (*Examples: concept maps, charts, split page, draw pictures, movement, go over pictures or video footage taken, etc.*)
 - Use techniques to support sequencing and capturing important details. (Examples: storyboarding, timeline, visuals, movement/act out replay)
 - Provide a systematic way to organize thinking and evaluate the experience according to language and cognitive capabilities. (*Examples: scale 1-10, happy faces/sad faces, good/bad, color coding, etc.*)
 - Use visuals and other techniques for big picture thinking—evaluating and comparing outcomes.
 - Make concrete and realistic goals.

5.03 Dimensions of Self-Awareness List

The word "**dimension**" is used here to mean a **fundamental quality or property of the self**.

When studying physics, it is useful to break it down to fundamental dimensions of mass, distance, and time. One can study these elements individually and then re-integrate them to see how they function together.

In a similar way, an individual can understand herself better by examining his fundamental components individually and how they interact to create the personality he knows as "me".

Being able to name and understand the elements or dimensions that comprise self-awareness is important because:

- It gives us words to describe our experiences to ourselves and to others.
- It helps support parts-to-whole thinking, causal relationships, drawing conclusions, and making connections. (*Example: "I get cranky when I do not have enough sleep. I did not sleep last night. Maybe that is why I got so angry when we were out of my favorite cereal."*) This can then lead to executive functions such as problem solving, planning, and strategic thinking. (*Example: "I do not want to be cranky when I go to the baseball game tomorrow so I need to get some sleep tonight."*)
- It enables one to ask for what is needed with the appropriate specificity to get those needs met. (*Example: "My body hurts" versus "My stomach feels tight and full and I am having sharp pains."*)
- It provides the knowledge and meaning to know what one needs, increasing the likelihood of being more active in the pursuit of those needs.
- It reduces the anxiety and reactivity that comes from discomfort, and enables one to begin anticipating needs to reduce distress from the unexpected and lack of preparedness.

"Today you are You,
that is truer than true.
There is no one alive
who is Youer than
You." ~ Suess, 1959

"Although men are accused of not knowing their own weakness, yet perhaps few know their own strength. It is in men as in soils, where sometimes there is a vein of gold which the owner knows not of."

~ Swift, 1706

The following questions can help prompt a student to examine the fundamental dimensions of self. Use these questions as a guide – not all questions need be asked and they should be framed in a way the student can easily understand and answer.

5.03.1 Physical, Sensory, Emotional, and Cognitive Characteristics

Four of the most basic dimensions of self-awareness are the physical, sensory, emotional, and cognitive characteristics. The following list offers some questions designed to guide an individual to become aware of each characteristic. The value of having the individual explore and become aware of each cannot be over-estimated since it is awareness that enables one to move into the fundamental processes of forming opinions, identifying needs and preferences, articulating needs and preferences, and making choices that are in alignment with oneself.

Physical: my anatomy, systems, nervous system medical issues, immunity, heredity, limitations, sensations (itch, pain), sleep, nutrition, weight

- How does my brain affect my body?
- How would I describe my physical experiences?
- How are my physical experiences affected by my disorder?
- What are the themes and patterns to my body?
- What happens to my body when I am dysregulated? (*Examples: feel tired, get angry, low blood sugar, etc.*)
- In what ways do things work better when my body is regulated?
- What basic physical needs make me feel comfortable? What feels physically uncomfortable?
- How do my physical sensations and needs affect my brain, behaviors, senses, social experiences, and physical body?
- What environments feel supportive of my physical needs and which feel in conflict and how?
- In what ways do I feel in control and not in control when it comes to how my body feels?
- What impact do different people, environments, and activities have on my body and physical experiences?
- What impact does my body have on my relationships with others?
- How do my physical experiences affect my ability to make good decisions and solve problems effectively?
- What ways can I manage my physical needs and experiences better internally, among others, and in a wide variety of environments?

Sensory: visual, auditory, tactile, taste, olfactory, vestibular (sense of balance), proprioceptive (internal perceptions especially connected with body position and movement)

- How does my brain and body process sensory information?
- How would I describe my sensory experiences?
- How is my sensory processing style affected by my disorder?

- What are the themes and patterns to my sensory processing?
- What happens when my sensory system is dysregulated?
- In what ways do things work better when my sensory system is regulated?
- What effect does my sensory processing style have on my brain functions, emotions, thoughts, social experiences, and behaviors?
- What environments feel supportive of my sensory system and which feel in conflict and how?
- In what ways do I feel in control and not in control when it comes to managing my sensory experiences?
- What impact do different people, environments, and activities have on my senses?
- How do my sensory experiences affect my ability to make good decisions and solve problems effectively?
- What ways can I manage my sensory experiences better internally, among others, and in a wide variety of environments?

Emotional: biochemistry, psychological diagnosis, emotional language, emotional intelligence, verbal and non-verbal expressions of emotions, emotional dynamics

- How does my brain process my emotions?
- How would I describe my emotional experiences?
- How is my emotional style affected by my disorder?
- What are the themes and patterns to my emotions?
- What happens when my emotions are dysregulated?
- In what ways do things work better when my emotions are regulated?
- How do my emotions affect my brain, behaviors, senses, social experiences, and physical body?
- What environments feel supportive of my emotional style and which feel in conflict and how?
- In what ways do I feel in control and not in control when it comes to managing my emotions?
- What impact do different people, environments, and activities have on my emotions?
- What impact do my emotions have on my relationships with others?
- How do my emotions affect my ability to make good decisions and solve problems effectively?
- What ways can I manage my emotions better internally, among others, and in a wide variety of environments?

Cognitive: learning, thoughts, mindset, beliefs, assumptions, biases, judgments

- How does my brain process information?
- How would I describe myself as a thinker and a learner?
- How is my thinking style affected by my disorder?
- What are the themes and patterns to my thoughts?
- What happens when my thinking is dysregulated?
- In what ways do things work better when my thinking is regulated?
- How do my thoughts affect my brain, emotions, behaviors, senses, social experiences, and physical body?

- What environments feel supportive of my thinking style and which feel in conflict and how?
- In what ways do I feel in control and not in control when it comes to managing my thoughts?
- What impact do different people, environments, and activities have on my thoughts?
- What impact do my thoughts have on my relationships with others?
- How do my thoughts affect my ability to make good decisions and solve problems effectively?
- What ways can I manage my thoughts better internally, among others, and in a wide variety of environments?

5.03.2 Affinities, Interests, and Passions

A key component of the Discovery and Examination Process is engaging participants in activities, experiences, and discussions that highlight or uncover one's affinities, interests, and passions. An awareness and understanding of these characteristics have tremendous impact in guiding one's choices around recreation and leisure, socializing, career development, intellectual and academic pursuits, pleasure reading, creative expression, and more.

Interacting with an individual over affinities, interests, and passions allows staff to use these as motivators to learn, share, discuss, explore, and try new activities and consider new ideas. They open up vibrant avenues of engagement, enthusiasm, and motivation that help individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or other developmental disabilities to build social relationships, remain regulated, and sustain their attention.

Affinities: what do I like?

- Foods and favorite restaurants
- Television shows and movies
- Music
- Types of recreational activities
- Internet (*Examples: YouTube, websites, etc.*)
- Other

Interests: what am I interested in and would like to know more about?

- Topics to talk about in conversation
- Academic interests
- Things I collect
- Time periods I am fascinated by
- Things I like to research on the internet
- Things I am curious about
- Things I know a lot about
- Other

Passions: what excites and energizes me?

- Topics
- Activities
- Hobbies
- Jobs
- People
- Other

5.03.3 Preferences, Habits, Tendencies, and Behaviors

One of the most effective ways for an individual to gain insight into her behavior is to examine the preferences, habits, and tendencies that motivate her to act a certain way. The Discovery and Examination Process incorporates a wide range of methods designed to explore these dimensions of the individual's personality and how they play a role in behavior choices. Through the use of 1:1 discussions, group discussions, experiential learning, activities, and games participants are guided towards addressing the following areas:

Preferences

- What are my preferences? (*Examples: food, clothing, environmental, personality, entertainment, humor, etc.*)
- How are my preferences affected by my disorder?
- How are the themes and patterns to my preferences affected by my disorder?
- In what ways do I feel in control and not in control when it comes to managing my preferences?
- What impact do different people, environments, and activities have on my preferences?
- What impact do my preferences have on my relationships with others?
- How do my preferences affect my ability to make good decisions and solve problems effectively?

Habits

- How would I describe my habits?
- How are my habits affected by my disorder?
- How are the themes and patterns to my habits affected by my disorder?
- What impact do different people, environments, and activities have on my habits?
- What impact do my habits have on my relationships with others?
- How do my habits affect my ability to make good decisions and solve problems effectively?

Tendencies

- How would I describe my tendencies?
- How are my tendencies affected by my disorder?
- How are the themes and patterns to my tendencies affected by my disorder?

- What impact do different people, environments, and activities have on my tendencies?
- What impact do my tendencies have on my relationships with others?
- How do my tendencies affect my ability to make good decisions and solve problems effectively?

Behaviors

- How would I describe the way I behave around others I know?
- How would I describe my behavior around people I do not know?
- How would I describe my behavior in environments where I feel regulated?
- How would I describe my behavior when I am dysregulated?
- What impact do my behaviors have on my relationships with others?
- How do my behaviors affect my ability to make good decisions and solve problems effectively?

Strengths and Challenges: Skills

- How would I describe what I am good at?
- Are there themes and patterns to the skills I am drawn to?
- What are my skill strengths?
- How would I describe my skills?
- What are my challenges?
- How are my skills affected by my disorder?
- How is my ability to accomplish skills affected when I feel regulated?
- How is it harder to complete tasks when I am dysregulated?
- What environments feel supportive of my skills?
- Which environments seem to be in conflict with my skills and how?
- In what ways do I feel in control and not in control when it comes to managing my ability to accomplish a task?
- What impact do different people, environments, and activities have on my skills?
- What impact do my skills have on my relationships with others?
- How do my skills affect my ability to make good decisions and solve problems effectively?

Strengths and Challenges: Social Interactions

- How would I describe my social personality?
- What parts of social interactions am I good at?
- What parts of social interaction are hard for me?
- How would I describe my social life and the quality of my interactions?
- How is my ability to relate well to others affected when I feel regulated?
- How is it harder to relate to others when I am dysregulated?
- How are my social interactions affected by my disorder?
- What environments feel supportive of my social interactions?
- Which environments seem to be in conflict with my social interactions and how?

- In what ways do I feel in control and not in control when it comes to managing my social interactions?
- What impact do different people, environments, and activities have on my social interactions?
- What impact does my social personality have on my relationships with others?
- How does my social personality affect my ability to make good decisions and solve problems effectively?

Strengths and Challenges: Organization

- How would I describe my organizational style?
- How would I describe my ability to be and stay organized?
- What am I good at organizing in my life?
- In what ways am I disorganized?
- What are the themes and patterns to my organization/disorganization?
- How is my organization affected by my disorder?
- How is my ability to be organized affected when I feel regulated?
- How is it harder to stay organized when I am dysregulated?
- What environments feel supportive of my organizational skills?
- Which environments seem to be in conflict with my organizational skills and how?
- In what ways do I feel in control and not in control when it comes to my ability to organize?
- What impact do different people, environments, and activities have on my ability to stay organized?
- What impact does my sense of organization have on my relationships with others?
- How does my sense of organization affect my ability to make good decisions and solve problems effectively?

5.04 Self-Determination, Internal Motivation, Independence, and Interdependence

These are four driving forces that permit a person to lead a healthy, active, engaged, and successful life.

Teachers should note that parents of students may need support as their sons and daughters go through the Awareness Development module. As a student reaches to more for herself, some parents may experience anxiety as they learn to back off from doing everything for their child; as they learn to let their child try and fail; as they learn to not micro-manage their child's life.

Years of experience working with developmentally challenged young adults and their families has led us to the following conclusion:

- Self-determination starts with becoming aware of and valuing one's needs.
- Internal (basic, personal) motivation occurs when one is passionate, fully engaged, and invested in herself and her future.
- Independence arises from the ability to reflect and strategize, and the confidence that builds through independence-building experiences.
- Interdependence results when one can communicate effectively and relate to others in a rich and meaningful manner.
- A healthy balance of independence and interdependence supports one being a successful adult.

All transition curriculum work should be designed to maximize for each student senses of self-determination, internal motivation, independence, and interdependence.

5.05 Goals: Design, Approach, and Achievement

The transition curriculum should engage each student in the design and achievement of her own goals, utilizing tools and approaches that support her considering current limitations.

For example:

- Individuals who have undeveloped interests, affinities, and passions need to engage in goal-setting through creative exploration, activation of curiosity, and exposure to new experiences so they are able to begin developing a sense of their own preferences, inclinations, and skills.
- Individuals with language, processing, and critical thinking challenges need to be encouraged to develop their goals and concepts in a concrete, explicit, and active manner.
- Individuals with ASD who possess strong language and engagement skills may need executive function and critical thinking supports to help reign in their ideas and anchor them in practicality with logic, strategy, sequence, and step wisdom (the ability to visualize what one is trying to accomplish and the steps or sequences of actions needed to arrive at that objective).

The development of goals takes place not only in explicit goal-themed sessions but is also woven into advising, discussions, activities, instruction, activities, and the individual's overall program design. It is this continuous and comprehensive addressing of personal goals that fuels their dreams and subsequently their motivation:

- A sense of self-determination (*Example: I can be in control of my own decisions and my own life*)
- Motivation from within (*Example: I can motivate myself to act, my own intent and desire motivate me to act*)
- Independence (*Example: I want to do things for myself, I want to and can take care of some/many of my needs, doing things for myself is enjoyable*)
- Interdependence (*Example: It is okay to need people, it is okay to ask for help, people care about me and want to help me, I can ask for the help I need and still feel strong and independent*)

Examples of Goals

- Personal care goals (*Examples: self-care, emotions, sleep, basic needs, etc.*)
- Relationships and social life goals (current and future)
- Academic/learning goals
- Independence goals (*Examples: driving, voting, taking on more responsibility, money management, getting around town, managing meds, etc.*)
- Career goals (*Examples: job, career development, skill development, training/certifications, research*)
- Recreational and leisure goals (*Examples: going to baseball games, watching movies with friends, bowling*)
- Big ideas, hopes, dreams, bucket list items (realistic and unrealistic)

5.06 Assessment and Teaching Methods

5.06.1 Purpose and Use

In addition to specific strategies, accommodations, and approaches that can be applied at a specific time to address an identified issue or difficulty, it is also important to recognize there are many support tools that can be used on an ongoing basis regardless of the lesson plan, activity, or targeted goal. The following is a list of the most commonly and continuously used.

5.06.2 Basic Task Analysis

The following questions are designed to help break down any activity or task to determine what demands are being made on the individual's cognitive, sensory, emotional, and physical systems. They can be used by the instructor in the selection/planning process, as a diagnostic tool when observing an individual engaged in a task or activity or post-activity or task to evaluate whether the demands made on the individual were appropriate or need to be adjusted. These questions can also be posed to participants and used in discussion or reflection before, during, or after an activity.

- From the teacher's viewpoint, what is the end result of this task? (What would the successful completion of this task look like?)
- What is my goal in asking the individual to perform this task? (*Examples: assess ability, introduce new skills or experiences, practice recently acquired skills to strengthen, in support of a treatment goal*)
- What is the frame used to introduce it? (The frame is the context; *why* this task is being introduced; what need it fulfills or why it is required or needed. *Example: I am asking you to take out the garbage because everyone on campus has a school job and this is the task you picked out of the basket.*)
- What is the *student's* understanding of the end result of this task? (Ensure any gap between teacher's understanding and student's understanding of the task is resolved. The student should be able to demonstrate he fully understands the scope of the task.)
- What skills (*Examples: following directions, manual dexterity, attention to detail*) and meta-skills (*Examples: attention regulation, active-working memory, strategic thinking, etc.*) will this task require for successful completion?
- Based on what I know of the individual, how do I think she will do?
- Where will the individual excel and conversely where might she get stuck?
- Have I provided the individual with all the necessary tools and environmental considerations for successful completion?

A meta-skill is a skill used to acquire or make use of other skills. For example a person who is good at teaching herself new skills has the meta-skill of being able to learn things. A great teacher is someone who has the meta-skill of being able to learn any subject and then teach that subject back to others.

5.06.3 Knowns and Unknowns Analysis

When selecting activities and tasks for an individual or group, it is useful to begin by assessing what is known and what is not known. This can provide a lot of insight as to where the “knowledge holes” are and predict what might be a challenge for the individual in the context of a specific task. It is a great framework for creating hypotheses and then designing activities and tasks designed to test them.

In some cases it works very well to have an individual engage in a task that is new and observe how she manages herself in a novel situation. In other cases it can be very dysregulating and the individual needs appropriate previewing and discussion before being introduced to novelty. Therefore, it is important to refer to the Student Individual Profile (SIP) for information on regulatory systems and reaction to novelty, and incorporate that knowledge into the planning process. The basic questions for a “Knowns and Unknowns Analysis” are:

- What components of this task will be new to the individual versus something she was exposed to before?
- What known information do I hope to confirm or reassess based on how the student does in this task?
- What am I hoping will be revealed about this individual through asking her to do this task?

Example: Assembling a Model Car

Known: Student loves cars and has put together models before. Parts-to-whole thinking is weak so individual tends to get lost mid-project or distracted by non-essentials that will not help get car finished (lost track of end goal). As a result, there are a lot of half-built, abandoned models at home.

Unknowns: Is fatigue or poor stamina playing a role? Is anxiety or perfectionism an underlying factor in difficulty finishing the models? What supports and how long will it take for the student to complete the whole car (never finished one)?

5.06.4 Strengths and Challenges Analysis

Encouraging individuals with ASD or other developmental disabilities to think about themselves in terms of relative strengths and challenges supports them positively when building self-awareness and self-understanding; not only because it bypasses a need for labels that can be upsetting and unproductive (*Examples: “stupid”, “bad at”, etc.*), but also because it reinforces the idea skills are on a continuum for everyone and the continuum is not fixed. Individuals with ASD struggle with the concepts of gradation (severity, intensity), contingencies (relational and conditional), and rigid thinking/compartmentalization. For this reason, presenting their abilities in a strength/challenge framework that is dynamic rather than static offers valuable opportunities to work on critical thinking skills.

To plan an activity, lesson, or task that has the appropriate balance of ease and challenge for the student, a teacher will need to know the student's strengths and challenges. Ideally, the activity or task would enable the student to capitalize on her strengths and limit the degree of challenge to prevent interference from reactive negative thoughts or emotions. The basic questions for a Strength and Challenges Analysis are:

- What is the breakdown of strengths and challenges specific to the task I am asking the student to do?
- Is this task overall playing to strengths, challenges, or a combination?
- Is the task designed with the appropriate amount of challenge to weak areas and ways for the individual to call upon her strengths?
- Does this breakdown need to be explicitly communicated to the individual (task selected to work on skill building or self-awareness) or is this an assessment exercise to identify strengths and challenges (in which case it is better for the individual to do the task blindly and discuss what emerged as strengths and challenges post-exercise)?

Example: Assembling a Model Car

Strengths: Affinity-based (loves cars), strong manual dexterity for snapping small parts together; wants a career as a car mechanic so energized and able to sustain focus by learning part names and functions while working on the model; strong procedural memory, so able to read directions and hold instructions well.

Challenges: Emotional dysregulation tends to shut down individual before task can be completed (gets stuck, does and redoes parts assembly obsessively); visual-spatial ordering is a challenge, so has hard time visualizing where parts fit in 3D model based on a picture on the box; poor self-monitoring, so not able to assess self while performing or know to ask for help.

5.06.5 Strategies and Accommodations Assessment

Strategies are used when an individual needs support to approach, navigate, and complete a task successfully. They are methods for approaching learning that increase an individual's ability to absorb information successfully, make experience or study meaningful, and generally become productive based on exposure to learning.

Strategies come in the form of cognitive procedures (structured ways of thinking), physical tools, and other aids and materials. Strategies are applied when an individual possesses either an emerging ability or exhibits the basic foundational skills required to perform the task. They are also used when an individual needs to increase efficiency, speed, and accuracy. Strategies are selected on a highly individualized basis.

Example: Individual uses her finger to track as she reads so she does not lose her place. In addition, she needs to have auditory information given in a visual format to improve retention and increase understanding.

Strategies can be transient, used only until the individual's skills in the target area are strengthened; or they may be permanent methods, tools, and techniques that are applied regularly.

Strategies can be very useful when working to:

- Foster independent learning (gives them tools, especially valuable for homework when teacher is not available)
- Strengthen strategic thinking and other higher order thinking dimensions
- Reduce anxiety
- Support self-monitoring (*Example: How am I doing? What do I need? What do I know and don't know? When do I need help and in what areas?*)
- Bolster awareness of individual's learning style (*Example: This is what I need to learn best, etc.*)
- Introduce creativity, trial and error, and brainstorming into classroom learning
- De-emphasize and break cycle of feeling stupid if help is needed
- Slow down learners who tend to rush

Accommodations are methods put in place to either bypass or externally support an area of need or challenge. They are used when the individual has a challenge, deficit, or disability that prevents her from accomplishing a task successfully but she has the capability to do part of it. Specific methods are put into place to bypass, eliminate, or reduce the challenge so she can devote energy to a more limited area to reach success or mastery.

Accommodations level the playing field or otherwise adjust the demands of a given task so it is possible for the individual to attempt it. They tend to be applied to more fixed and permanent difficulties and typically stay once put into place.

Accommodations are typically put in place:

- While remediation of a disability or challenge occurs (if skill strengthens may be able to segue to strategies)
- If there is a fixed disability (*Examples: hearing loss, severe dyslexia, communication challenges, etc.*)
- If you want the student to focus on one challenging area at a time – lessens the load
- When the process of applying many strategies have failed
- To reduce shutdown of emotional state for emotionally fragile or severely anxious learners

Example: Student struggles with multiplication. *Strategies* are put in place to help navigate each step methodically (*Examples: charts, examples, worksheets, teacher prompts, etc.*). The *accommodation* of providing a times table chart or calculator is provided to alleviate the stress of computation while the student works on higher order thinking and sequencing skills. Once she understands the scope and sequence of multiplication, the accommodation might be removed and strategies put in place to work on bolstering rote memory and pattern recognition.

[**Note:** Also see Appendices – Use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) in Transition Curriculum.]

5.06.6 Level of Mastery Assessment

Level of mastery is a big picture assessment of the extent to which an individual is able to complete a specific task or activity. This process includes a Strengths and Challenges Assessment, an analysis of what she is able to do well versus not do well throughout her execution of the task. An understanding of the student's level of mastery for given task assists staff in both assessing current level of functioning and formulating academic, personal, and career goals.

This is the process for assessing level of mastery once an individual has completed a given task:

1. Do a Strengths and Challenges Assessment – this identifies what was easy or required little support and what was challenging or required assistance. The analysis should include hard skills (computation, manual dexterity, reading ability, etc.) and meta-skills (skills used to acquire or make use of other skills, such as attention, memory, language, rate, etc.)
2. Assess the quality of the end result – including the quality of task outcome; and the emotional, physical, and cognitive effects the effort of doing the task had on the individual.
3. Do a Strategies and Accommodations Assessment – this analyzes the measures put in place to enable the individual to accomplish the task (*Example: strategies such as reminders to slow down, accommodations such as presorting parts*)
4. Assess the student's degree of independence – how independently was the student able to perform the task (*Example: worked efficiently without asking for/needing assistance; once provided with strategies and accommodations was able to apply them on her own; even with strategies and accommodations in place student still needed reminders, reassurance, motivational support, etc.*)
5. Assess the student's ability to execute the task (this is executive functioning: planning, organization, self-monitoring, strategic thinking, etc.)
6. Assess the student's degree of regulation during the task (the extent to which individual attained and maintained self-regulation during task all key areas – emotional, sensory, cognitive, physical)
7. Debrief the student (Ask her to evaluate what the experience was like for her, how she feels she did, what was easy, what was difficult, how she might do better, etc.)
8. Provide meaningful and specific feedback to the student
9. Examine how accomplishing this task fits into her current educational, personal, and/or career goals. Is the task something she needs to have a general proficiency in for emergencies (*Example: change a tire, change the battery in a fire alarm*), need to be adept enough to do occasionally (*Examples: refill prescriptions, check a book out at a library*), need to reach a level of skill to apply in daily use (*Examples: using the internet, cooking, doing laundry*)?
10. Are new goals needed to improve the results moving forward? (*Examples: remediation, intervention, addressing new issues that came to staff's attention when the student performed the task*)

What to look for

In large part, being successful in helping the student reach her stated goals involves designing the appropriate scope, sequences, and levels of support – in other words, determining what strategies and accommodations are needed.

The following is a case example that highlights what to observe and questions to ask while watching and/or supporting a student who is engaged in a task.

Example: A student is given all the materials needed to complete a model car. The following can be assessed as the student works:

- **Executive function and strategic thinking:** Did the student take time to look at the instructions to make sure she understood what to do? Did she ask specific questions regarding the task to help navigate the exercise? Did she look at the picture on the box to see what the end result should look like? Did the student look through materials to make sure she had what she needed?
- **Sequencing:** Did the student follow directions in the proper sequence, referring to the instructions as needed? Did she skip any steps?
- **Organization:** Did the student keep track of all parts of the model? Could she find what was needed amongst the materials? Did she get confused or lost?
- **Self-monitoring:** If asked mid-activity, could the student tell you what was completed and what was left to complete? Could the student assess the level of difficulty experienced, both big picture (whole model) and parts (“It was easy to snap things together but really hard to keep my hands steady to paint the small parts.”) Did she know when she needed to ask for help or did she struggle until someone offered assistance? Could she analyze afterward how well she performed and the extent to which she would like to do a similar activity again?
- **Anxiety:** Did anxiety, perfectionism, or overwhelming feelings interfere with the student’s performance and/or the task’s outcome?
- **Regulation:** Was the student able to manage any sensory experiences that interfered with ability to put the model together? Was she able to manage frustration, anxiety, impulsivity, impatience, or any other emotional reactions that surfaced during the activity?

Drawing conclusions

The following are observations and conclusions that can be drawn from the above sample case study:

- Overall the car model-building task went well. Explore other model-type building activities: capitalize on student’s love for theater by putting together a model of Shakespeare’s Theater in the Round, student loves transportation so introduce a more complex train model and track set to assemble.

- Student needs to strengthen her ability to manage anxiety and navigate a task without getting overwhelmed. When she does another multi-step project, begin by giving small tasks with few steps and a concrete measurable end goal with significant amounts of support and assurance built in. Slowly expand the number of steps, increase the complexity of the end product, and reduce the level of support and assurance as she becomes more confident, organized, and able to manage anxiety that she will “mess up.”
- It was very calming and organizing for the student to work with a model set where all parts and directions are organized for her and she has a picture to follow. What are ways we can use this fact in other tasks she is doing so she has the structure needed to stay regulated?
- The student did well until she lost the box top to the kit, which had the picture of the completed car on it. Even though she still had the paper instructions, she was not able to continue working without a visual model of the end result to which she could refer. Does she need similar visual graphics to help her perform better at her internship so she has a visual format of her end goals?

Establishing feedback loop

Giving and receiving feedback is an integral part of learning, refining, and meeting goals. Feedback comes in many forms, all of which can be valuable. The means of feedback should vary so students can learn to be flexible and comfortable discussing their performance and being evaluated. Here are some different types of feedback:

- Prescribed and explicit
 - written formal feedback (*Examples: checklist, summary or formal review*)
 - formal oral feedback session with planned protocol and sequence
 - written self-assessment with pre-established prompts or sentence starters to guide the student
 - formal assessment tools (*Examples: quizzes, tests, competitions*)
 - performance and results measured against a concrete outcome (*Examples: examine outcome/object made, look at pictures or videos of performance to assess, etc.*)
 - ask an expert who has mastery in the area to assess in a detailed, formal format
- Spontaneous and anecdotal
 - individual’s verbal self-assessment (*Example: “how do you think you did?”*)
 - informal verbal feedback session (student can play a larger role in guiding the direction and topics of the discussion)
 - solicit feedback from observers (peers, staff, parents)
 - ask an expert who has mastery in the area to assess informally

**Regardless of the format, feedback
is most effective when it is:**

- Expressed respectfully
- Offers specific details
- Delivered with the right timing and context
- Given privately unless context is established for group feedback
- Framed with positive language
- Encouraging the receiver to respond, rebut, or otherwise contribute
- Implied in language familiar to the individual
- Revisited if needed for further discussion
- Stated in context rather than absolutes
- Clear how the feedback connects to the big picture – why the feedback is important to the student’s life, goals, etc.
- Accompanied by suggestions for how to incorporate feedback into actions moving forward
- Ended with an expression of support and a collaborative feel

Examples of feedback:

“Based on what I saw, it looked like it was really challenging for you to keep all the model parts in separate piles so you could find what you were looking for. I also noticed it seemed really easy for you to decorate the car once the frustrating part of putting it together was done. Is it usually easier for you to decorate things than it is to assemble them? Why do you think that is?”

I noticed that it was very helpful to you when we moved to a quiet room because you were getting pretty frustrated with the distractions of other people coming in and out and talking to you. Do you think you concentrate better when it is quiet?”

5.07 Rate, Volume, Complexity, and Prioritization Guidelines

Purpose and Use

Even when a student’s program has been designed with goals and interests in mind, the teacher may still find the transition student struggling with a task. The teacher will want to examine these four factors immediately and determine if they need adjustment to be in alignment with the individual’s cognitive, social, emotional, and functional developmental levels.

The following guidelines apply to:

- Dissemination of information, homework, assignments, written and oral work
- Analysis of how somebody approaches, navigates, and completes a task
- How tasks, activities, and exercises should be individualized depending on the individual’s capabilities
- Describing an individual’s processing systems
- Analyzing tasks and assessing level of demand on the individual

Definitions:

Rate

- Speed at which the flow of information is disseminated and absorbed (receptive, cognitive)
- Speed of the flow of a task or activity (experiential, physical)
- Speed at which an individual speaks, writes, or performs a task (expressive)

Volume

- Amount of information being disseminated
- Size and scope of task or activity
- Amount of oral or written information and end result individual can produce

Complexity

- Depth, detail, and breadth of information being disseminated
- Details, components, and nuances inherent in a task or activity
- Depth, detail, and breadth of written or oral output and end result individual can produce

Prioritization

- Extent to which individual can identify key information within what is being disseminated and can prioritize it
- Ability to recognize, emphasize, and act upon key components inherent in a task or activity
- Ability to prioritize what is important and key when communicating oral or written information and producing an end result

Examples of Adjusting Rate, Volume, Complexity, and Prioritization (RVCP)

The teacher can ask herself these questions:

Rate: Is the activity or demands coming too fast/slow? (*Examples: slow down the lecture, extend due dates, etc.*)

Volume: Am I giving too much information, causing her to be overwhelmed? Does she have the information she needs to understand the activity/information? (*Examples: break multi-step projects into smaller chunks, do fewer math problems, etc.*)

Complexity: Am I using language or concepts that are too complex? Do I need to frame information with more simple language or reduce complexity? (*Examples: vocabulary too high, topic too complex or overloaded with detail?*)

Prioritization: Am I asking the student to do too much simultaneously? Is there something I can remove or reduce that will still achieve the result I am working toward? (*Example: I need to assess reading comprehension but because she is a slow reader I cannot tell whether she is unable to answer the questions due to a reading or comprehension problem. If considering comprehension as the*

problem, try reading a book out loud to eliminate the stress of her having to read and answer questions concurrently.)

Adjusting RVCP for teaching group can be somewhat different from adjusting it for a one-on-one situation. Below are some guidelines that may help for adjusting both one-on-one and group:

One-On-One Guidelines

1. RVCP needs to be adjusted in all tasks receptive or expressive depending on the individual's
 - Processing speed (*Examples: verbal, non-verbal, auditory, etc.*)
 - Efficiency of processing
 - Attention controls
 - Depth and detail of processing
 - Presence of a learning disability
 - Environmental distractions
 - Comprehension/higher order thinking
 - Executive function skills
 - Language/vocabulary (receptive)
 - Regulatory systems
 - Strengths and challenges
2. Adjustment of these factors is highly individualized, and often each factor must be adjusted separately.
3. Each person is different in terms of RVCP needs for optimal absorption, meaning, and output to take place. Even within each individual, the need to adjust these can vary greatly depending on range of capability in each domain (*Examples: verbal reasoning, non-verbal reasoning, motor memory*).
4. RVCP levels for an individual can also vary greatly across subject areas (*Examples: student may have strong nonverbal reasoning and procedural memory skills and excels at math taught at a fast pace, whereas due to weak auditory discrimination, auditory processing, and language functioning foreign language RVCP will need to be decelerated*).
5. RVCP should be reduced for many learners initially and as understanding and movement towards mastery occurs, RVCP can be increased.
6. Break things down into manageable chunks, build in ways to check in, and adjust accordingly. If RVCP is too accelerated and you have gone deeply into the material, it is harder to back up because you are not only dealing with a lack of comprehension and poor retention but also with frustration, anxiety, confusion, learned helplessness, and negative mindset (*Example: "I can't do this, I don't get it"*). This dynamic can further disenfranchise slower or weaker learners.
7. The stronger the skill and capability in a given area, the more one can increase RVCP; the weaker the skill the more those controls will need to be decelerated.
8. For those individuals with a slow processing speed, the RVCP may always have to be reduced, despite frequency of exposure.

9. Individuals with a fast processing speed can handle more intensity. However, if the processing speed is fast but inefficient then the rate, complexity, and volume should be decreased even if it is uncomfortable for the individual.

Example: An individual knows a lot about foreign governments and is very opinionated. She is in a current events group discussion and the group is discussing a decision Russia made regarding their military. The student talks over the group leader and begins spouting random facts about Russian military history that are not salient to the article. She jumps to false conclusions before staff is able to get through reading the article to the whole group. She is not really processing what the group is talking about or absorbing the news information, and instead of activating critical thinking her brain has activated a memory dump of facts. The student needs to be slowed down and work on listening to the information first and THEN adding to it what she knows as it is relevant. She is bright but her own capacity to really learn is impinged by her racing mind.

10. It is important to make it clear that RVCP are not associated with intelligence. Faster does not mean smarter or more skillful.

Application Example: Making a Model Car

Situation: Student cannot manage a rapid pace (rate) for instruction delivery because of weak language processing but non-verbal reasoning is strong.

Analysis: Higher order thinking is strong and prioritization is not an issue so student does not need support.

Remedy: Decelerate RVCP during the language-laden part of the activity. (*Examples: looking at the box, reading directions, receiving oral directions, and discussing making of the model car*)

Once that is established, the RVCP can increase as the student moves to an area of strength (assembling the model). RVCP may need to be decelerated again at times when the student needs to reference the written directions or receive oral directions to accommodate to slow language processing.

Group Guidelines

With a group of learners with varying capabilities (both in general and subject or domain specific) it can be tricky to determine the RVCP. All of the above guidelines apply to members of a study group with the following additions:

1. Goal is to keep attention and interest of both slow and fast processors. Aim for the middle and be ready to group individuals who need more or less through accommodations, strategies, small group, and 1:1 work.
2. Optimally, present the given topic, task, or activity in a supported and clear manner at beginning. Then build in a way for individuals to express or otherwise demonstrate what they understand. From that you can evaluate quickly who is keeping up, who is ready for more, and who is lagging behind.
3. Accelerated learners can be either separated out and given a venue to move at their preferred pace with a small group or additional solo work, or put in a mentorship role to support slower moving or struggling peers. When it comes to splitting large groups into smaller work groups, slow to middle learners can be grouped together and middle to fast learners can be grouped together. It can prove very challenging to meet the needs simultaneously of both challenged and accelerated learners in the same grouping.
4. The small groups should reconvene intermittently throughout the project as a whole group despite variations in their pacing. By doing so, all participants have the same big picture of the project reinforced, small groups can share their progress with each other and seek feedback. Any details that need changing mid-project can be done by whole group consensus.

Application Example: Group Gardening Project

There are a wide variety of learning styles among group members. The RVCP are slowed down for the whole group as the project is laid out and planned so all members are able to grasp the scope and sequence of it. Once these are understood, there is a discussion of how to divide the labor, tasks, and responsibilities.

Staff folds into the discussion individual strengths and challenges so assignments are made based on individual strengths. Detail oriented, slower workers could do the weeding and picking because of the ongoing need, methodical nature, and repetitive qualities of these tasks. If these students work slowly, it does not hold up others.

Faster, more independent individuals could spearhead the planting and watering as these are more finely tuned, time-sensitive, and detailed tasks.

Artistic individuals will make the signs telling what the various plants are.

Intermittently the group gets together as a whole, at which time the RVCP will need to be slowed down to not lose the slower processors.

5.08 Lesson Plan Development Process

The goal of individualized lesson planning is:

- To draw upon a student's interests, goals, and strengths while at the same time accommodating challenges and limitations. In this way, instruction becomes compatible with and capitalizes on how the student processes, retains, and makes meaning of information.

The scope and sequence of information contained in a lesson plan and the activities should be designed to create understanding and apply the information, and should be dictated by the type of learners for which the lesson is intended.

By using the process and lists cross-referenced within it as guidelines, an instructor can create lesson plans students will find dynamic, energizing, and meaningful.

The Process

1. For each topic or subtopic in a module, determine based upon the SIP and resources available whether to deliver it in an INDIVIDUAL or GROUP context, or using a combination of the two.
2. For GROUP contexts, use the Group Context Learning Experiences List to help decide which types of experiences might best apply for the topic or subtopic.
3. For INDIVIDUAL contexts, use the One-On-One Context Learning Experiences List to help decide which types of experiences might best apply to the topic or subtopic.
4. For each experience, explore where opportunities may exist for teaching executive functions using the Identifying Opportunities to Practice Executive Functions Skills List.
5. Select activities appropriate for each executive function you plan to teach using the Executive Functions Activities List. **[Note:** This list will be released in a later phase.]
6. When preparing the lesson plan, implement *each lesson* using the Core Teaching Principles.
7. When preparing the lesson plan, implement the Whole Brain Learning Ideas and Suggestions List as applicable and wherever possible.

5.09 Group Context Learning Experiences List

Group work offers rich opportunities to build reciprocity, engagement, social cognition, and expressive and receptive language in addition to the pursuit of a specific goal or lesson plan.

Unstructured group time enables staff to observe:

- The quality and depth of peer interactions
- Each participant's regulatory experiences when in a group
- Self-management, engagement, and initiative of participants in a group context
- The extent to which participants engage in purposeful, attention-seeking, or other significant social behaviors

- How well each student can stay organized (*Examples: cognitively, emotionally, sensorially, physically, and socially*) in an unstructured setting
- Pairings and triads that may be good for future small group work or projects and conversely those students who are not appropriate for collaborative work

Structured group time enables staff to observe:

- Each participant's ability to follow explicit expectations, rules, and guidelines
- Social cognition skills
- Participant's self-management skills when having to wait, listen, take a turn, provide feedback, etc.

To assist in developing lessons in the context of a group experience consider the following options:

In-classroom structured exercises

- Group dynamics exercises that introduce experiential components
- Teamwork and required collaboration activities
- Discussions, debates, lectures, presentations
- Games
- Team competitions
- Timed activities
- Logistical (*Example: plan and execute a trip – not important where – key is planning and execution*)

Non-verbal games and activities

- Assist in developing lessons in the context of a group
- Movement (*Examples: mirroring, pantomime, dance*)
- Art and creative expression (*Examples: drawing, painting, taking photographs, etc.*)
- Group collaboration activities (*Example: build a tower with a stack of index cards, a box of paperclips, and a roll of tape but cannot talk*)
- Communication games (*Examples: pantomime, gestures and facial expressions*)

Supervised mentorships

Supervised mentorships are when peers are matched to another peer who can act as a mentor, guide, friend, etc. This enables the mentor to learn important social skills, an opportunity to be a leader, and take on more responsibilities. It enables the mentee to work on social relationships, receive feedback from peers, and trust building. The relationship needs to be supervised by staff to make sure the relationship is healthy and productive and there are good boundaries. Staff also provides mentorship to the mentors as they learn to take on a leadership role and perform with grace.

Example: Charles has a lot of experience going to job fairs. He has learned how to navigate the crowds, decide what lines to stand in and what conversation starters he can use with the people at the booths. Jack has never been to a job fair. The two are paired together throughout the entire process.

Pre job fair: planning, discussing what to expect, role playing interviews, etc.

During: Charles is Jack's "buddy" at the job fair; all during it Charles can be giving Jack "pointers"

After: Charles gives Jack feedback on what went well, what he saw him struggle with, etc.

External experiences

- Non-human community or environment, observing and/or participating (*Examples: ecology, geology, weather, etc.*)
- Human community or environment, observing and/or participating (*Examples: events, field trips to workplaces and museums, community service*)

Cooperative projects

- *Examples: art, construction, film-making, cooking, operating a commissary*

Task analysis

- Participate in an activity and then investigate with them what happened internally during the activity

Media experiences

- *Examples: films, plays*

Guest speakers

(See 5.16 Innovative Learning Approaches List)

5.10 One-On-One Context Learning Experiences List

Interacting in the context of a one-on-one relationship provides abundant opportunities for staff to work with students with ASD on multiple needs simultaneously.

One-on-one work provides staff with the freedom to:

- Follow the student's lead to maximize participation and engagement
- To be more responsive to a fuller range of emotional and relational needs and thereby reduce emotional dysregulation and increase emotional safety
- Accommodate a student's sense of humor, increase opportunities to have a positive shared experience, and create moments of shared joy and enthusiasm
- Tailor the process to a student's interests and passions and thus increase mental stamina, enthusiasm, and curiosity for the task at hand
- Accommodate to physical, sensory, and environmental needs
- Manage distractions better
- Build rapport and strengthen interpersonal relationships
- Adjust the language, rate, volume, complexity, and priority according to the student's processing systems
- Employ strategies and accommodations that suit a student's profile without impacting learning by others

For students who struggle with basic engagement, regulation, and reciprocity, one-on-one work provides the milieu in which staff can best assess their readiness to join a group context. For those who are able to join peer groups but the experience is rife with significant social and emotional issues, one-on-one time offers a refuge for and a place to process difficulties with peers and group experiences in a safe, confidential context. For those with learning disabilities or in need of significant learning accommodations, one-on-one work might be helpful to make it easier to individualize approaches and enable participants to learn in an emotionally supportive, distraction-free environment.

The benefits to one-on-one activities, particularly if done in a natural setting, are abundant and regardless of the student's level of functioning should be considered an important component of the program experience.

Examples of One-On-One Experiences

- Internal reflection
- Self-portraits
 - journal of self
 - quizzes, tests, worksheets
 - mindfulness exercises (students should be taught techniques by a trained professional)

- External experiences
 - non-human community or environment (*Example: studying the behavior of insects in a natural setting*)
 - human community or environment (*Example: watching how passersby respond to someone doing a street performance*)
- Career development activities
 - personal projects that manifest personal goals (*Example: taking apart and rebuilding a computer, etc. and then investigating what happened internally during that activity*)
 - task analysis
 - media experiences (*Examples: films, plays, interactive media, online tutorials, etc.*)
- Cognitive activities
 - creating empathies with a historical or fictional character or circumstance using literature or historical material
 - questionnaires that provoke thought and insight
 - structured exercises
- Innovative learning methods
(see 5.16 Innovative Learning Approaches List for more complete list of ideas)
 - storyboarding
 - improvisation/drama/role play
 - art/creative expression
 - games and simulations
 - physical activity/movement games
 - guided imagery
- One-on-one dialogues

Example: A student with one staff member having a discussion with no interference. This is a very important component of rapport building and establishing a safe environment to discuss private/difficult things.

5.11 Community Learning Process

5.11.1 Purpose and Use

Community learning provides participants, when ready, with opportunities to try out their newfound insights, opinions, preferences, curiosity, and interests in the context of the outside world. In addition to deepening self-exploration through experience and trial and error, community-based experiences introduce an element of the unexpected often not found within the program building but is an element of the life each student will inevitably face.

Many individuals with ASD experience dysregulation, emotional hijacking (**getting emotionally triggered and overwhelmed by sensitivity to something, such as a noise in the environment**), confusion, panic, withdrawal, and other distressing sensations when exposed to the unexpected. Since an ability to manage the unexpected is tied directly to one's level of adaptability and flexibility, it's important that students have many opportunities to build this skill to the extent they are able. It is helpful when planning a community outing to have clear goals in mind, to have realistic expectations, and contingency planning if any participant or the entire group needs to retreat to the familiarity of the program building.

Example: Three students are taken to a mall. They are given four goals:

- Physical goal ("Be aware of and manage your body as you navigate amongst people, isles, and store displays")
- Sensory goal ("Stay regulated in the large open food court")
- Emotional goal ("Be tolerant and patient")
- Cognitive goal ("Find XYZ store on the mall map and go to it").

This approach:

- Helps keep boundaries around the outing
- Reduces any sense of chaos or feeling overwhelmed
- Gives students concrete goals to hold onto
- Provides a basis for pre/during/post analysis with the students
- Offers a method for tracking progress

5.11.2 The Process

1. Make a comprehensive list of the student's community-based goals and affinities using her input, family's input, and the SIP.
2. Assess strengths and challenges of skills needed for community experiences using the Transition from Classroom to Community Learning Assessment List.

3. Build community skills on-campus.
 - Use the One-on-One Context Learning Experiences List and/or the Group Context Learning Experiences List
 - Use the Community-Based Learning Suggestions List to help choose an activity that is appropriate for the group or individual
 - Recommended on-campus activities include:
 - group discussions
 - role playing
 - improvisation
 - analyzing scenarios
 - watching media clips
 - movement-based activities (*Examples: yoga, dance, Wii, movement therapy*)
 - Determine when a student is ready to bridge from classroom experiences to being out in the community using Transition from Classroom to Community Learning Guidelines.
4. Conduct well-planned and supported community experiences by previewing.
5. Use the Executive Functions List as prompters of planning actions to take.
6. Use the Community-Based Learning Support List as a comprehensive list of support actions. [**Note:** This will be completed in Phase 2.]
7. For groups, create compatible groupings (*Examples: based on size, personality, ratio of support staff to clients, logistics*)
8. Use the Community-Based Activity Evaluation and Follow-up List as a guide for follow-up on the outing. [**Note:** This will be completed in Phase 2.]
9. Use the outcome of the *post-activity evaluation* to create a *follow-up plan* for how to expose the participant to increasingly more natural and unscripted community opportunities, repeating this process as needed. (A post-activity evaluation is done with a teacher about how the activity went for the student. The follow-up plan results from the post-activity evaluation and takes advantage of what was learned or experienced; it may include planning follow-on activities.)

Previewing: The act of anticipating what to expect, what you may need, and how you might feel before entering a task, environment, activity, or situation. Most individuals on the autism spectrum do not preview so they tend to get taken off guard, anxious, and

5.12 Community-Based Learning Suggestions List

Much self-understanding arises when we are in relationships with others. Reactions, feelings, thoughts, and actions resulting from interactions provide rich data that can be used to increase self-awareness. Social and community interactions allow for a perspective that is not possible when one stays in isolation or in predictable, limited relationships and environments.

At minimum, an individualized community-based learning approach should incorporate Navigation of Systems, Pursuit of Interests, Social Networking, and Career Development.

Continuing community exposure in manageable bites avoids the trap of placing a high-stakes mentality on a single outing or experience, reduces anxiety over time, and is invaluable for building and strengthening independent living – one of the highest priorities in transition work.

Navigation of Systems

Teaches the student how to utilize various complex social systems such as:

- Medical/dental: doctor's offices, clinics, hospitals
- Services: filling prescriptions, making and navigating doctor appointments, getting haircuts, dining out, dealing with utility company, arranging for car repairs
- Public transportation: bus, train
- Money and banking: checking and savings accounts, debit and credit cards
- Commerce and merchant exchanges: returning items, comparative shopping, grocery shopping, clothes shopping
- Public safety: tour police/fire station, do mock traffic court improvisation, sit in police car, attend a public trial
- Education: schools, training, apprenticeships, volunteer, classes

Pursuit of Interests, Practical Knowledge, General Awareness

Teaches how to find and involve oneself with aspects of the community having to do with:

- Outings to get acclimated to being in public: destination not as important as process
- Comparing places: style, environment, feel, etc.
- Events: a dedication, scavenger hunt, celebration, art opening, rally or protest, community clean-up, concert, hand out water at a bike race or walk-a-thon
- Volunteer opportunities: hand out fliers, distribute food, work at community garden, cheer up sick children
- Internship opportunities: art school, newspaper, landscaping company, hospital
- Shopping: items for a project, ingredients for a recipe, school supplies
- Groups: church/temple services or groups, clubs, playing music with group, choir, going on a tour, paintball group
- Arts, artisan, and entertainment: glassblowing, making doughnuts, outdoor performances

- Recreation: exercise at a gym or park; go hiking; attend theater, improvisation, concert performance
- Hobbies and creative outlets: history, photography, art, music, dance, crafts, culture, etc.
- Classes / lectures / demonstrations: audit a class; attend a public lecture, demonstration of how to change a tire, firemen showing how to check batteries in a smoke detector, how to build a tool shed
- Meet a professor/someone with expertise in an area of interest: tour robotics lab at local university

Social Exposure and Networking

Teaches about:

- Establishing ongoing relationships with merchants, tellers, etc.
- Initiating and maintaining purposeful social interactions (meeting a specific need, social maneuvering with intent, seeking a mentor, finding information, networking)
- Initiating and expanding on spontaneous social interactions
- Finding socially focused places to hang out: coffee shops, parks
- Finding people with shared interests and hobbies
- Community service

Career Development

Teaches about:

- Information seeking/education: go to army recruitment center to ask about being in military, tour a chemistry lab, watch an assembly line at a manufacturing plant
- Exposure to various possible career environments: what does it feel like being in a factory during peak and down times
- Job seeking: how to navigate online, over the phone, and in person; social expectations of dress, behavior, language – how to present self, resume building
- Interviewing: mock interviews, actual interviews, reporter-type interviews with a local celebrity for the school newsletter
- Shadowing: following an emergency medical tech or carpenter through his day
- Task building: activities designed to build concrete skills associated with an interest or potential career; take online tutorial on how to use an animation program to see if one has the skills to do that kind of work, take cooking class to build skills and then make dinner for family at home

5.13 Reasons to Use Community-Based Learning

Many positive outcomes result from using well-timed, well-planned, and well-supported community experiences. Even difficult experiences provide opportunities for reflection, raising self-awareness, and change. These positive outcomes include:

- Increased adaptability
- Greater flexibility and wider range of problem solving
- Opportunities to flex creativity
- Reduced anxiety around strangers and unfamiliar places
- Strengthened ability to manage the unknown and unexpected
- Refinement of social, environmental, and self-management coping skills
- Increased opportunities to strengthen resiliency
- Practice with verbal and behavior improvisation needed during spontaneous social interactions
- Meaningful application of knowledge about how systems work
- Increased social interaction
- Opportunities to re-frame distortions or negative biases about places and people through positive experiences
- Practice with trial and error
- Affinity exploration
- Career development
- A wider range of milieus to practice self-reflection
- Strengthened ability to acquire lasting insight from experiences and interactions
- Ongoing exposure to self-advocacy scenarios
- Increased opportunities to build self-confidence
- Practice with expressive language (*Example: spontaneous and planned social exchanges*)
- Increased willingness to try and risk new relationships and experiences
- Increased possibilities to gain motivation and momentum
- Increased sense of continuity between program and “real life”
- Increased opportunities to do big picture thinking
- Increased success with decision-making
- Increased success with social experiences and in life
- Better matched internship, job, and educational experiences

5.14 Transition from Classroom to Community Learning Assessment List

The transition from classroom to community learning is an exciting yet anxiety-producing time for both staff and students. Through a marriage of realism and optimism, we design community experiences that progress in challenge at a rate that matches the student's emerging capabilities. We prepare our students as best we can as we move them gently from scenarios where we have a lot of logistical and environmental control to those in which we do not.

Preparedness and coping skills become very important as students attempt to self-manage in the face of change and variability. In the classroom environment, teachers provide support to students in the areas of regulation, communication, appropriateness, readiness, resiliency, independence, etc. When the student begins to operate in the outside world, providing supports will require some re-thinking.

Ideally we want each student to step into the community feeling equipped with the needed self-care and self-management tools. We want each person to possess the skills to engage in meaningful social interactions. We want them to have the resiliency to endure the unexpected and the uncomfortable. We want them to draw meaning and have fun. To work towards these ends, we must help them find their own means to enter community life at a pace and style that works for them.

The following points should be assessed carefully when determining if a student is ready to transition from classroom or one-one-one learning to community-based experiences:

1. Self-regulation

- Sensory self-regulation
 - Degree of self-care and self-soothing (*Examples: How well can the individual manage her sensory sensitivities when they arise? Is she able to self-soothe?*)
 - Degree of intensity (*Examples: How intense is the individual's reactions to unpleasant sensory stimuli? Is she available to receive help or is she inconsolable?*)
 - Degree of resiliency (*Example: How able is the individual to rebound after being exposed to a sensory sensitivity?*)
 - Degree of social acceptability (*Examples: Are the methods of self-care, reactions, behaviors, and expressions in the face of sensory sensitivities socially appropriate? Will they draw unwanted/unhelpful attention to the individual?*)
 - Degree of functionality (*Example: How well is the individual able to function while under sensory duress?*)
- Emotional self-regulation
 - Degree of self-care and self-soothing (*Examples: How well can the individual take care of her emotional needs when they arise? Is she able to self-soothe?*)
 - Degree of intensity (*Examples: How intense are the individual's emotional reactions? Is she available to receive help or is she inconsolable?*)

- Degree of resiliency (*Example: How able is the individual to rebound after being emotionally dysregulated?*)
- Degree of social acceptability (*Examples: Are the methods of self-care, reactions, behaviors, and expressions in the face of emotional reactivity socially appropriate? Will they draw unwanted/unhelpful attention to the individual?*)
- Degree of functionality (*Example: How well is the individual able to function while under emotional duress?*)
- Cognitive self-regulation
 - Degree of self-care and self-soothing (*Examples: How well can the individual take care of her own distressing thoughts when they arise? Is she able to self-soothe?*)
 - Degree of intensity (*Examples: How intense are the individual's thoughts? Is she available to receive help?*)
 - Degree of resiliency (*Example: How able is the individual to rebound after becoming cognitively derailed or dysregulated?*)
 - Degree of social acceptability (*Examples: Are the methods of self-care, reactions, behaviors, and expressions in the face of cognitive distress socially appropriate? Will they draw unwanted/unhelpful attention to the individual?*)
 - Degree of functionality (*Example: How well is the individual able to function while under cognitive duress?*)

2. Social engagement skills

Successful social interaction requires both engagement and reciprocity. Connection and compromise are important for successful social and community experiences. Some community experiences can be shaped to control the range of social interactions, which makes previewing and preparing an individual more straightforward. Most community experiences, however, have inherently unexpected aspects that require a more adaptive and sophisticated level of engagement and reciprocity (*Examples: waiting in line, riding a bus, ordering food*). Selection of community experiences needs to factor the individual's level of development with engagement and reciprocity to identify those that offer an appropriate level of challenge.

- Engagement
Observe the frequency, depth, length, affect, and non-verbal cueing present in the individual's attempts to engage and reactions to those attempting to engage her (staff, peers, public).
- Reciprocity
Observe the extent to which an individual can be reciprocal both initiated by her and in response to another individual. Note how long the individual is able to extend the back-and-forth flow of communication.

- Connection

Observe the extent to which the individual appears and expresses a sense of connection to those around her, to the environment, and to the activity.

Examples: Some students simply co-exist in the room and do not engage others around them (off in their own world, shut down, etc.). Some will engage initially but then disengage as the interactions build in complexity. Some only engage to get what they want or exert their will. Some will only engage with staff and talk to peers through them. Some will only respond to a single peer. Some are over engaged, dominate, etc.)

- Compromise

Observe the extent to which the individual can negotiate, socially problem solve with others, coordinate, take turns, delay gratification, show interest in the choices of others, etc.

3. Social problem solving

Social problem solving is the ability to engage others in a shared dialogue to address a problem or concern collaboratively. It takes critical thinking skills to solve a problem independently, but when a problem is approached collaboratively the dynamic changes significantly and the demands on the individual increase because the additional challenge of social relating and all it entails is added to the mix. Successful social problem solving includes:

- Sustained engagement;
- Reciprocity;
- Negotiation and compromise;
- Perspective-taking;
- Understanding competing needs and an ability to prioritize one's needs in relation to the needs of others;
- Expressive language;
- Emotional regulation;
- Social appropriateness;
- Timing;
- Social awareness (*Examples: etiquette, protocol, overt and covert rules of social interactions*); and
- Understanding social cues (verbal and non-verbal).

Navigating public places and being out and about in the community are linked to two overarching goals of the transition process: building independence and strengthening social cognition. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that social problem-solving skills be worked on in conjunction with community-based learning experiences. By reinforcing independence and social cognition simultaneously an

individual with ASD is more likely to understand that social navigation is a necessary part of being an independent person.

Community-based learning experiences incorporate both planned and spontaneous opportunities to practice social/shared problem solving. It is wise to select community-based learning experiences that acknowledge the individual's level of skill in this area so the problems presented are appropriately challenging but not passing a threshold at which the situation is overwhelming.

- Getting needs met, seeking information, and locating resources is a good place to start since the social interactions are limited in nature and goal-driven, which reduces a demand on more sophisticated social relating. In order for the experience to be meaningful, ideally the individual should:
 - show some basic skills in engagement and reciprocity;
 - be able to self-regulate (at least moderately), and when unable to do so independently can receive the help of staff to become regulated;
 - have moderate awareness of social appropriateness;
 - demonstrate moderate ability to control behavior and when unable to do so independently is receptive to staff intervention; and
 - understand purposeful actions and goals (*Example: “the purpose of this trip is to pick up supplies for the school party”*).
- Activities focusing on social engagement with a specific goal or purpose:
 - comparison shopping
 - scavenger hunts
 - finding items for a project or plan
 - public transportation practice
 - other goal-directed outings where the focus is a specific purpose but to fulfill it requires basic interaction with others (*Example: goal is to take train to airport and back but it will require asking someone for directions, buying the ticket, etc.*)
- Practicing social engagement regulation, self-marketing (being able to control the persona one projects to others), social rules, and niceties. In order for the experience to be meaningful to the student, ideally the individual should:
 - display an interest or desire to connect with others;
 - have an emerging sense of self and a sense of self in the context of another person;
 - have some reciprocity skills during social dialogues;
 - find some meaning and enjoyment in social interactions;
 - show moderate level of social awareness;
 - possess some self-regulation skills; and
 - demonstrate moderate impulse control (verbal and behavioral)

- Opportunities to meet new people, practice engaging in small talk and social niceties, etc.
 - scavenger hunts
 - shopping
 - restaurants
 - parks and community events
 - rallies and protests
 - volunteering for a cause, getting signatures
 - posting or distributing flyers for an event
 - other scenarios involving light social interactions
- Meaningful social relationships, relationship building, depth and quality to social relating. In order for the experience to be meaningful, ideally the individual should:
 - have intrinsic motivation to fulfill personal and social goals;
 - have some developed affinities, passions, and interests;
 - possess a level of self-control and independence;
 - have moderately to well-developed communication skills;
 - experience a sense of pleasure from social interactions or, at minimum, see the meaning in having them even if they are challenging;
 - have a working ability to engage in perspective-taking negotiating, collaborating, and compromising;
 - be able to self-regulate with socially acceptable coping strategies;
 - be able to ask for help, receive feedback, and receive guidance and input from others without getting defensive, resistant, angry, or emotionally dysregulated; and
 - have developed a level of resiliency to rebound and regroup while out and about.
- Practice going beyond superficial social relating, adding depth and meaning to interactions and relationship building via:
 - interviewing
 - planned peer outings to create shared experiences with known peers that include solving a problem together
 - entering into a mentor relationship with someone in the community
 - internships
 - other opportunities to capitalize on relationship building with members of the community

4. Executive Functioning

Participating in community-based learning opportunities requires varying degrees of executive functioning skills such as researching, previewing, planning, predicting, evaluating, problem solving, strategic thinking, self-monitoring, time-management, and organization. At the point where the

instructor considers transitioning an individual from one-on-one or classroom activities to community environments, the individual's executive functioning competencies should be re-assessed.

- What tools, aids, and staff supports are needed to help enable the individual to accomplish the goal successfully?
- What degree of specificity is needed in activity and contingency planning to anticipate the needs of the individual for a successful outcome?
- How much and to what level of detail does the individual need to preview upcoming events to reduce anxiety and disorganization and increase preparedness?
- How much staff support will the individual need throughout tasks? Some need a lot of support at the beginning and then can become more independent once oriented, whereas others need support throughout.
- What needs to be anticipated regarding the environment where activities will take place to ensure organization and support, and to reduce logistical and environmental interference?

5.15 Whole Brain Learning Ideas and Suggestions List

5.15.1 Purpose and Use

Whole Brain Learning theory takes advantage of modern science's recent advancements in brain research to design teaching methods compatible with how the brain functions and transmits information naturally between the right and left hemispheres. The most important qualities of Whole Brain Learning approaches are that they incorporate:

- Active learning
- Multi-sensory learning
- Visualization
- Emotion regulation
- Experiential learning
- Movement
- Creativity

There are many resources and websites available to teachers that outline the connection between brain research and correlated educational practices, as well as a tremendous volume of strategies and activities. Below are some prompts to consider when incorporating whole brain learning techniques into lesson planning, teaching style, content delivery, and curriculum development.

5.15.2 The Process

1. Identify an individual's natural learning cycles.

Work with the individual to identify and understand her natural learning cycles and ways to capitalize on this knowledge to design optimal learning environment:

- Physical environment
 - sound and noise level needed for ideal concentration
 - lighting
 - visual stimulation supportive or distracting
 - seating comfort, seating arrangements
 - visual stimulation (supportive or distracting)
 - physical distractions
- Emotional factors
 - emotional triggers
 - reducing, preventing, and managing emotional hijacking/meltdowns
 - awareness of how emotions impact learning positively and negatively

- Cognitive factors
 - optimal times of day when mind is sharpest and how to capitalize on these opportunities
 - ideal concentration duration
 - awareness of indicators (cues) that concentration is failing
 - what to do when the mind wanders or gets stuck
 - keep a journal of what times of day certain tasks feel easier or harder
- Physical factors
 - times when she needs to fidget with hands
 - times when she needs to get away from desk and move body
 - recess and other physical break timed to support learning
 - how medical conditions and physical sensations affect learning and attention

2. Create a classroom culture that includes the use of emotional language and stresses the importance of emotional regulation.

- Establish shared language and definitions for emotions through group discussion.
- Present material with high affect (*Example: enthusiasm, etc.*), gestures, and movement (*Example: move around the room*).
- Post emotional words, prompts, or emotional self-care visuals on classroom walls.
- Embed discussions of emotions into academic work (*Examples: literature/character development; history/emotional toll of war; social issues/current events, emotional toll*).
- Set up scaffolded discussions about controversial issues or current events that allow students to display a wide range of emotions and viewpoints and learn to tolerate the emotions and viewpoints of others.
- Discuss the role anxiety plays in learning (*Examples: forgetting something, test taking, public speaking*) and brainstorm strategies for managing and self-soothing.
- When appropriate, engage class in group discussions to resolve emotional conflict or interpersonal disputes among class members.

3. Incorporate physical activity to stimulate both sides of the brain, activate visualization, and energize thinking.

- Build in stretch breaks during lectures and tests.
- During brainstorming sessions (group or individual) let student pace, sit outside, move around, etc. to improve creativity.
- Build movement into sedentary classroom activities (*Example: stations around the room so after each task student or group has to get up and move*).
- Allow students to incorporate movement, improvisation, role-playing, pantomime, and other movement into class discussions.
- Build in movement during review sessions to bolster memory.
- Incorporate energizers every 20 minutes or so that activate the senses, emotions, and/or body.

- Provide manipulatives and 3D objects students can hold that support the content (*Examples: pass around a 3D model of the brain, use balls to have students demonstrate Newton's Laws of Physics*).

4. Capitalize on variety, creativity, affect, and novelty to bolster learning.

- Vary the timing during the day for presentations, lectures, and other activities.
- Change the modality of presentation of ideas (*Examples: tactile, kinesthetic, visual, auditory, etc.*).
- Be sensitive to individual and group attention waning and accommodate duration of lectures accordingly.
- Explore different times of day to place activities that require high concentration, such as tests or lectures, to take advantage of individual's best times to focus.
- Use activities and physical movement as energizers to support more sedentary learning. Alternatively, use activities during lower energy times of day such as post lunch.
- Break up sedentary learning by building in related activities that engage emotions and body.
- Engage students in post-activity discussions about timing and duration of a given activity and how it impacted their learning.
- Make lesson content more memorable and interesting by using objects, pictures, graphs, charts, graphics, slides, video clips, and colorful bulletin board displays. Change media types frequently, alternating between videos, posters, mind maps, drawings, and symbols.
- Change teaching locations (*Examples: field trips, going outside for a discussion, visiting a new room in the building, etc.*) to refresh and foster new perspectives.
- Use colorful handouts and other images. Include colors in classroom and allow students to use color while creating mind maps, paintings, projects, time lines, and posters.
- Create a more multi-sensory environment by adding visuals, music, aromas.
- Encourage students to express themselves and their knowledge through art, dance, poetry, singing, sharing, journal writing, sports, debate, and group activities.
- Act as a role model to show enthusiasm about learning.

5. Encourage students to create learning goals and ideas.

- Include drafting of goals and ideas in the student's initial activities and acclimation to the school/program/class.
- Enlist students in creative brainstorming, executive functioning, and implementing steps towards goals (see Executive Functioning List).
- Utilize a system for enabling both student and instructor in tracking progress that includes a visual component. (*Examples: chart, ladder, path with visual pictures or checkpoints along the way, graph, etc.*)
- Build discussion of goals and ideas, integrating them into class discussions and activities on a regular basis.

- Allow students throughout the year to stop and assess goals intermittently and make any changes they wish to make.
- Provide opportunities to evaluate and celebrate progress. (*Example: 1:1 and whole group*)
- Sort goals into categories to encourage being more specific and addressing multiple needs. (*Examples: personal, social, physical, academic, career*)
- Encourage and model a mindset of non-judgment.
- The importance of this is linked to resiliency. In learning how to put boundaries around the mistake instead of beating himself up, he is less likely to fall apart and disengage from doing whatever is causing him difficulty. It is also easier for the student to ask for help if he thinks he is not good at a specific thing, rather than being generally stupid. There is no roadmap for stupid.

Example: When Michael makes a mistake he cries out "I'm so stupid", hits his head, becomes inconsolable, and won't continue. The teacher works with Michael to understand that his inability to do well is connected with some particular task, not his overall intelligence. Michael finally arrives at a state where he can say "Yikes! I made a mistake again. Boy, math sure is hard for me!"

- Focus on process over end result.
- Encourage use of creativity, humor, flexibility, and optimism in goal setting.

6. Incorporate stress management into class discussions, planning, and approaches to work.

- Define and examine in extensive and useful detail the subject of stress and the wide variety of ways it manifests. (*Examples: physical, emotional, cognitive*)
- Individual and group generate list of stressors and coping techniques
- Practice a variety of stress management and relaxation exercises so the student may discover first hand which of the many techniques available are effective for specific stressors and needs.

Sensory and physical

- breath work
- yoga
- sensory breaks
- touch (*Examples: hug, pat on shoulder, massage*)
- walk break to talk and process through stress or to simply down-regulate (*Examples: fresh air, nature, change of scenery*)
- physical exercise
- fidget toys and stress balls

Emotional

- process feelings surrounding stress
- laughter/humor break
- venting – creative ways to express emotions (*Examples: yelling, laughing, over-emoting*)
- seek comfort in something associated with a positive emotion (*Examples: hug teddy bear, wear favorite shirt during a test, have an item from a favorite person*)

Cognitive

- visualization/meditation/guided imagery
- affinity break (*Example: spend a designated period of time engaging in a favorite activity that helps to sooth, redirect, or re-energize*)
- verbally process stress experience and what to do
- cognitive shift to engage mind in something different
- Increase students' sense of safety (hence decreasing potential stressors) by encouraging discussions about fears, worries, and causes of stress.
- Teach students about the importance of sleep and its relation to stress—help students to explore appropriate amounts of sleep for their bodies.
- Reduce stress associated with learning by activating known information prior to presenting new information.
- Always begin a new task by setting the scene: What are we about to do? Why are we doing it? What do we already know/understand?

Examples:

Teaching long division: Show student the parts of the process they already know (subtraction, carrying numbers, etc.).

Putting a model car together when they have never done it before: Have them preview what they know will help them start (put parts into piles by type or color, read directions, look at the picture on the box, remind them of something they have followed directions and put together, such as a puzzle).

7. Encourage and model a respectful, positive learning environment.

- Incorporate bonding activities into curriculum.
(*Examples: Rituals in class like check-ins to start the day sharing thoughts, feelings, etc.; finding shared interests to bond over; show and tell; games that align like to like such as “never have I ever” where one person says “zip-lining” and everyone who has done it stands up; fun activities; positive sharing; giving compliments to peers.*)

- Provide students the opportunity to participate in creating rules, values, and standards for the classroom environments in which they spend the most time. Use peer mentoring.
[Examples: Have students show other students how to do something/share their expertise (play a video game, find a website, solve a math problem, be their editor if they are bad at spelling), group games that require group collaboration.]
- Help students pick groups or teams based on common interests or compatible learning styles.
- Have explicit protocol for peer conflict resolution.
[Examples: Establish classroom rules of conduct with whole group. Post on wall for reference. Establish a class court system and protocol to resolve conflicts (rotating offices, filing charges, jury of peers, etc.). Incorporate conflict resolution techniques into classroom culture.]
- Create classroom climate that welcomes a wide variety of learners and personalities and encourages productive group problem solving and decision-making (*Examples: perspective taking, reciprocity*).
 - team building games (verbal and non-verbal/physical)
 - small and whole group projects
 - case studies (small and whole group discussions)
 - debates
 - outings
 - scavenger hunts
 - mock trials
 - low stakes group competitions
 - Discuss learning styles in group and have students identify which type of learner they are.
 - Discuss personality types and engage in personality-based exercises and quizzes.
 - experiential activities aimed at highlighting preferences: taste tests, music sharing, exploring different forms of humor, engage in an activity, then have students rate their experience on a scale and share as a group.
 - conduct activities that highlight individual differences and perspectives, follow up with discussion and reflection: games (verbal and non-verbal), debates, experiential activities that handicap or highlight a particular skill or style (*Example: build a tower with a group without using words*)
 - encourage diversity in all its forms through discussion and activities
 - group check-ins where each person gets to share her thoughts, opinions, or feelings without anyone responding or challenging
- Offer roles within classroom to students that capitalize on their strengths.

Examples:

- An individual who has difficulty staying focused in lecture and loves computers can be the fact checker during current event discussions
 - An individual who needs to move around a lot can be teacher's assistant
 - An artistic individual can be the resident artist and do the drawings on a classroom timeline (history, literature)
 - An individual who has trouble speaking up in class and generating ideas on the spot can be the note taker during a group discussion and then read back what was said so she doesn't have to generate spontaneous language
 - A highly emotional individual can be designated the expert on character emotions (have her describe them, act them out, or otherwise profile the emotions of characters)
-
- Incorporate reflection and feedback as a follow-up to all activities and outings, as it supports the ongoing development of executive functioning and self-awareness.
 - brief check-in
 - facilitated discussion
 - facilitated exercise
 - 1:1
 - small group
 - whole group
 - Increase the amount of social interaction and group activities.
 - Allow students and learners to celebrate each other's accomplishments.
 - Build rotating leadership roles into classroom environment.

5.16 Innovative Learning Approaches List

In partnership with more traditional approaches, innovative teaching methods can be very effective in reaching a wide variety of learners – in particular those who historically have not responded well to traditional education or who have significant anxiety associated with traditional approaches to learning.

Reaching beyond expected approaches enables practitioners to capitalize on elements that energize struggling or non-traditional learners: creativity, variety, novelty, enthusiasm, affinities, high affect, passions, and more.

Reluctant learners will often become more receptive to traditional teaching methods if they are first exposed to and engaged by approaches that ignite interests, spark enthusiasm and motivation, increase opportunities to build relationships through sharing and collaboration, and reduce anxiety.

Additionally, innovative learning approaches are a good fit for struggling learners and those with disabilities because they tend to be more flexible, individualized, and easily tailored to accommodate to the individual's strengths and challenges.

These may include:

- **Games, activities, and simulations**
 - experiential
 - verbal
 - nonverbal
 - in classroom
 - in community
 - computer-based
- **Movement-based**
 - sensory breaks
 - dance
 - yoga
 - improvisation
 - role playing (*Example: to learn about social interactions*)
- **Creativity-based**
 - art (*Example: to learn about history*)
 - music (*Example: to learn mathematics*)
 - computer graphics, animation
 - models, building projects
 - visual representations of ideas
 - acting
 - concept maps, timelines, charts, graphs (crossover with cognitive)
 - writing (*Examples: journals, poetry, plays*)

- costumes (*Example: to learn about historical gender roles*)
- photography
- **Emotionally-based**
 - discussions (*Example: characters in literature*)
 - acting, role playing, improvisation
 - morals, values
 - characters in literature
 - current events, controversial topics
- **Sensory-based**
 - multi-sensory
 - sensory breaks
 - enlisting the senses in learning (*Example: food choices and preferences*)
 - explicit discussions, lectures, and exercises to deepen understanding of each sense
 - experiential learning through the senses
- **Cognitive-based**
 - concept maps, timelines, charts, graphs
 - research
 - debates
 - writing (*Example: papers, articles, interviews, research*)
 - reading
 - discussions
 - negotiations
 - morals and values
 - classroom court system
 - analysis
- **Peer-based**
 - group activities and discussions
 - peer-facilitated learning
 - group projects involving planning, decision making, and negotiation
 - feedback exercises
 - peer editing
 - show and tell
 - student presentations
 - murals
 - collaborative ventures

Examples of collaborative ventures

Class project, class fund raising, group volunteer project, building, court system, class theme and name, voting to help make class decisions, enter contest as a group)

- **Media-based**
 - current events
 - research
 - online tutorials
 - sharing (*Examples: YouTube clips, videos, cool sites, etc.*)
 - PowerPoint presentations
 - movie, short film
 - film or audiotape interviews
 - student newsletter
 - student radio show/TV show
 - photography

5.17 Executive Functions List

Executive functions is a general term for cognitive processes that permit us to manage both our thinking and physical activities in our lives. In many ways executive function skills dictate the quality of our experiences. They inform and guide us on how we think about and approach a task at hand.

- Without the ability to **preview**, each experience and the demands it makes on us will feel surprising and unsettling.
- Without the ability to **think strategically** we would think and act randomly, our intentions would not be incorporated well into our decisions, we would be reactive instead of proactive, and the demands placed upon us would feel overwhelming and unmanageable.
- Without an ability to **plan** we would constantly feel unprepared, both literally and emotionally.
- Without **step wisdom** we would not know the wisest order in which to do things and the list of demands will feel unending and insurmountable.
- Without **time management** skills we would feel lost, and tasks would feel exhausting and unbearable.
- Without **internal organization** our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors would be as jumbled as the external experience in which we are involved. Anxiety, embarrassment, and confusion would derail us from our focus.
- Without **plan implementation and execution** skills we would never see our goals come to fruition and feel utterly dependent on others to make the things we need and want to happen.
- Without **self-monitoring** skills we would have no mechanism for reflection, refinement, improvement, and ownership of our choices, feelings, and behaviors.
- Without **reinforceability** we would not learn from our mistakes or the mistakes of others and fall prey to a constant cycle of failure, frustration, and powerlessness to effect change.

Improving executive function skills is critical for students to become more independent, self-determined, and self-advocating. They are of such importance we have embedded executive function support across all curriculum modules.

Previewing

- Thinking about and visualizing upcoming events
- Previewing is required to plan appropriately, therefore linked to preparedness.

Strategic thinking

- Parts-to-whole thinking
- Brainstorming
- Problem solving
- Anticipation and prediction
- Generating multiple possible outcomes
- Prioritization
- Step wisdom
- Evaluative thinking

Planning

- Identifying known and unknown
- Research to fill in unknown
- Variables to consider to reduce the unexpected
- Financial requirements and constraints
- Personnel requirements and constraints
- Material and financial logistics
- Clarifying goals for activity
- Prioritizing
- Scheduling and sequencing big picture and details ("when and in what order?")

Step wisdom

- Sequencing (ability to order steps, tasks, and priorities in a logical sequence to complete a task successfully)
- Visualization (ability to visualize the sequence in which one is to perform a task. To be able to source information from visualization to increase one's ability to anticipate potential problems and generate possible solutions.)
- Prioritization (ability to itemize all the demands, expectations, and parameters of a task and detect priorities. Links with time management, as time often sets parameters, and decisions will often need to be made that change the plan midway based on amount of time remaining.)

Time management

- Predicting amount of time needed to complete task successfully
- Am I under any time constraints that will make this difficult?
- Incorporating time needs and parameters into planning

Organization

- Materials
- Self
- Approach to tasks

Plan implementation/execution

- **Pacing**
Ability to adjust and control the rate at which one approaches, engages, and performs a task.
(*Examples: not rushing, not moving too slow, not running out of time*)
- **Step wisdom**
Ability to adhere to the steps and sequences established in the planning phase during the implementation of the plan
- **Organization**
Ability to manage and organize materials, actions, decisions, and oneself during the implementation of a plan

- **Strategic thinking**

Ability to access strategic thinking skills (see above list) while implementing a plan and to accommodate to any unexpected changes

- **Time management**

Ability to be aware of, and comply to, time passage and limitations while implementing a task

Self-monitoring

- Planning phase

Am I keeping track of everything I need to plan this activity? Am I prepared? Do I need to seek assistance to make this go well, on what and from whom? Have I taken advantage of the resources available to me? Have I communicated my plan to the necessary players?

- During (execution)

- Self-evaluation: How am I doing? Am I on track to meet my goal? In what ways am I doing well? In what ways am I struggling?
- Self-assessment: Based on how I think I am doing, do I need help?
- Identify needs: What kind of help do I need – materials, assistance, guidance or feedback from others? Who?

- After (evaluating)

Big picture:

- How did the activity go overall?
- How did I do?
- Did I stay calm?
- Was I organized
- Did I feel prepared?
- Did I manage my time well?
- Did I have the support from others that I needed? If not, did I ask for the help I needed?
- From a scale of 1-10, how successful was I?
- Did I enjoy myself?
- Would I do this again? If so, what would I do differently? If not, why?

Details:

- Specifically, what went well?
- Specifically what broke down?
- What specifically should I have done differently?

Reinforcibility

- Ability to draw information and meaning from past mistakes
- Ability to use insight to change one's behavior moving forward to avoid the same mistake occurring

5.18 Identifying Opportunities to Practice Executive Functions Skills

As discussed in the Executive Functions List, all opportunities, experiences, and interactions make demands on our executive function. The information below guides teachers through how to examine any task, request, or activity using an executive function lens. By doing so, teachers can better assess the extent to which executive function demands will add challenges for which the student may need support. Through both explicit support and taking advantage of teachable moments as they arise, we can help our students to improve their executive functioning in connection with their other program goals.

Definition of previewing: The act of anticipating what to expect, what you may need, how you might feel, etc. before entering a task, environment, activity, or situation. Most individuals on the autism spectrum do not preview so they tend to get taken off guard, derailed, anxious, and confused. The unexpected is not easy for them, so the more they can preview, the better they can prepare and self-care. Helps with preparedness, organization, and strategic thinking (contingency plans and possible outcomes).

Previewing

- Skills
 - What skills does this activity draw upon?
 - What demands will this activity make on the individual’s planning, previewing, time management, self-monitoring, and organization skills?
 - What strengths does the individual possess that will be an asset in navigating this activity?
 - What weaknesses does the individual possess that might pose challenges and barriers to successful completion of this activity?
- Environmental factors
 - What demands will the environment make on the individual’s sensory, physical, cognitive, and emotional systems?
 - Based on the SIP, what potential difficulties might the individual face that could interfere with successful completion of the activity?
 - Do the activity and the environment have the support, organization, or explicit sequences in place for the individual to navigate the activity successfully?
- Attention, memory, and energy levels
 - What demands will this activity make on the individual’s attentional systems (duration, level of concentration, volume of details to keep track of)?
 - What demands will this activity make on the individual’s memory systems?
 - What amount of energy does the activity require (sedentary, moving around, at own pace, speed is a factor)?
 - Based on the SIP, what potential difficulties might the individual face from an attention, memory, and energy level standpoint that could interfere with successful completion of the activity?

- Language and higher order thinking
 - What demands will this activity make on the individual’s language systems (receptive and expressive – understanding directions, expression)?
 - What demands will this activity make on the individual’s higher order thinking (analysis, drawing conclusions, strategizing, brainstorming, creativity, problem solving)?
 - Based on the SIP, what potential difficulties with receptive or expressive language might the individual face that could interfere with successful completion of the activity?
 - Based on the SIP, what potential difficulties might the individual face with higher order thinking demands that could interfere with successful completion of the activity?
- Social cognition
 - What demands will this activity make on the individual’s social cognition (social understanding, social communication, social behaviors)?
 - Based on the SIP, what potential difficulties might the individual face with social understanding, communication, or behavior that could interfere with successful completion of the activity?
- Emotional reactivity and stress
 - What demands will this activity make on the individual’s emotions?
 - What triggers are inherent in the environment or the specific tasks that might result in emotional dysregulation or distress?

Strategic thinking

- What strategies are key to successful completion of this activity?
- Do the strategic needs associated with this activity line up with the individual’s strengths, challenges, or both?
- What strategic support needs to be in place? What form does it need to come in based upon the SIP and how information is processed?
- Are there areas in the individual’s life that demonstrate strategic thinking? Can analogies be made that help this individual see what skills are transferable? (*Example: I noticed you paused and waited until it was your turn to go up to bat. That is a lot like waiting for the right time to talk in a conversation.*)

Planning

- Support
 - Given the individual’s SIP, what systems, strategies and accommodations need to be in place to capitalize on strengths and minimize the negative effect of challenges?
- Environmental needs
 - Given the individual’s SIP, what systems, strategies, and accommodations need to be in place to accommodate for and minimize the negative effect of environmental interference?
 - Is there a way to capitalize on a sensory sensitivity to make it an asset during activity?

- Attention, memory, and energy levels
 - Given the individual’s SIP, what systems, strategies, and accommodations need to be in place to accommodate for and minimize the negative effect of attention demands (breaks, steps broken down)?
 - Given the individual’s SIP, what systems, strategies, and accommodations need to be in place to accommodate for and minimize the negative effect of memory demands? If attention, memory, and/or sustaining energy level are strengths, what are ways to capitalize on them during the activity?
- Language and higher order thinking
 - Given the individual’s SIP, what systems, strategies, and accommodations need to be in place to accommodate for and minimize the negative effect of language demands?
 - Given the individual’s SIP, what systems, strategies, and accommodations need to be in place to accommodate for and minimize the negative effect of higher order thinking demands?
 - If receptive and/or expressive language are strengths, what are ways to capitalize on them during the activity?
 - If higher order thinking is a strength, what are ways to capitalize on it during the activity?
- Social cognition
 - Given the individual’s SIP, what systems, strategies, and accommodations need to be in place to accommodate for and minimize the negative effect of social cognition (understanding, communication, behavior) demands?
- Emotional reactivity and stress
 - Given the individual’s SIP, what systems, strategies, and accommodations need to be in place to accommodate for and minimize the negative effect of dysregulating emotional demands?
 - Given the individual’s SIP, what systems, strategies, and accommodations need to be in place to accommodate for and minimize the negative effect of stress related to the environment or task?

Step wisdom

- Sequencing
 - What is the individual’s sequencing capability?
 - Given an understanding of sequencing capability and learning style, what supports need to be in place (*Examples: visual, auditory, etc.*)
- Visualizing
 - What are the individual’s visualization capabilities?
 - What is the best way to co-create visualization with this individual in the absence of one that corrects distortions in thinking or fills in gaps?

- Prioritizing
 - How well can the individual identify priorities? Can she rate and sequence them according to importance?
 - How can the individual most effectively be reminded of these priorities while the task is going on to keep pacing and momentum smooth?
 - How will time parameters affect the need to prioritize during this activity?

Time management

- How long is this activity expected to take? Are there limitations due to the environment, logistics, or the student's schedule that need to be addressed?
- Given the SIP, how much time does the individual need to accomplish the activity successfully?
- Given the individual's SIP, is there an optimal time of the day for this activity (*Example: more alert in morning*)?
- Given the SIP and the environment where the activity will take place is there an optimal time of the day best suited for the individual (*Examples: less crowded, not during lunch rush, etc.*)?
- Given the individual's SIP, what time-based accommodations and strategies need to be put in place to adjust for the activity (*Examples: broken down into phases, shortened, interspersed breaks, or elongated*)?

Organization

- Environment
 - What steps need to be taken to organize the environment to support an optimal experience during this activity (*Examples: space, logistics, ambiance*)?
- Materials
 - Are all the materials needed for the successful execution of this activity attained?
- Instructions
 - Are the sequence and steps for the activity organized in a way that is optimal given the individual's SIP?
 - Has the individual been shown what the end result of the activity should look like (*Examples: charts, manipulatives, models, examples, pictures*)?
- Support
 - Have the appropriate systems and support been organized ahead of time so the individual is able to engage in the activity and experience flow and momentum?

Execution - pacing

- What is the student's pattern for pacing?
- In what ways can feedback be tailored with the frequency and immediacy needed?

- Am I missing anything that might be affecting the individual's pace?
 - anxiety
 - a sense of competition
 - not wanting to be last
 - perfectionism
 - poor concept of the passage of time
 - thinks faster is better
 - fear or anxiety about what is coming next

Self-monitoring

- Based on the SIP, how aware is the individual of her strengths, challenges, needs, and preferences?
- Is the individual able to assess how she is doing during a task?
- How successful is the individual at evaluating performance after a task?
- How successful is the individual at receiving feedback and incorporating it into her work?
- Given the individual's SIP and answers to the above questions, what self-monitoring-based accommodations and strategies need to be put in place (*Examples: check-ins, level of supervision, style and frequency of feedback*)?

Reinforcibility

- According to the SIP, what is the individual's history of reinforcibility?
- With what method does the individual learn best? Am I capitalizing on this modality in building support for reinforcibility? (*Example: If the individual is a visual learner, she can see her mistakes by watching a video of herself. If the individual is an auditory learner she may need to hear back what she or others said.*)
- Does the feedback given during or immediately after an activity bolster the individual's ability to pair the feedback with the activity?
- Embarrassment and anxiety can spike when someone is aware of making errors, especially in front of peers. Does the approach help reinforce wise choices and actions, and take embarrassment and anxiety into account? (*Example: develop a hand signal or code for giving feedback in peer groups*)

Evaluative thinking

- What systems need to be put in place to discuss and analyze the experience afterward (*Examples: thoughts, emotions, difficulties, successes, problem solving, level of support, what worked/what didn't, points of stress*)?
- Does the post-analysis approach include: rating the experience on an external scale (1-10, etc.), deciding if individual wants to do it again and if any changes ought to be made first, where to go from here to build on the experience, etc.?
- Use movement and emotion to bolster memory of the experience through role-playing.

- Use visuals such as a chart, concept map, story board, or other visual representations of event details, reactions, and outcomes.
- Brainstorm and visualize how the individual would like things to play out and conclude differently than the present outcome.

5.19 Advising

Students entering into the transition program should be assigned an advisor from the outset. This advisor will serve many roles throughout the student's program experience, most importantly providing ongoing mentoring in an authentic relationship that acknowledges the whole individual and her needs, goals, hopes, and dreams.

This relationship will evolve over time as the student's needs change but it will also provide a consistency, organization, predictability, and security to the student's program experience that reduces anxiety, confusion, and lack of direction. The advisor provides great value to the student's transition experience by:

- Guiding the student's experiences and progress as she makes her way through the curriculum modules, activities, and community experiences
- Collaborating with and facilitating communication amongst the program team, instructors, family, internship/job sites, and the student
- Tracking her evolution
- Identifying and prioritizing individualized goals; coordinating timing, planning, design, and implementation of these goals
- Monitoring and collaborating with staff to assure the student's program reflects and addresses her changing needs over time
- Engaging with her in collaborative problem solving and decision-making
- Sharing in her successes
- Mediating her difficulties
- Modeling emotional regulation and social engagement skills
- Advocating on behalf of the student while collaborating with her as possible to reinforce her self-advocacy skills
- Providing her with increasing opportunities to be self-directed and independent as her readiness to step into her own strengths

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Section 6.0

AWARENESS DEVELOPMENT AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS (ADEF) MODULE

“The most socially useful learning in the modern world is the learning of the process of learning, a continuing openness to experience and incorporation into oneself of the process of change.” ~ Rogers, 1969

“Study the heart and the mind of man, and begin with your own. Meditation and reflection must lay the foundation of that knowledge, but experience and practice must, and alone can, complete it.” ~ Dormer & Carey, 1872

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6.01 Introduction

The ability to lead a purposeful, meaningful, self-determined, satisfying life depends greatly upon one's level of self-awareness and executive function capability. Self-awareness is the process through which we reflect on ourselves and identify our needs, difficulties, and desires. Executive function capability enables us to use this knowledge to make good decisions, solve problems, evaluate ourselves in a wide variety of contexts, and act in our own self-interest in a socially appropriate manner.

The Awareness Development and Executive Functions (ADEF) Module is designed to build self-awareness and strengthen executive functioning. Through an individualized process, students are exposed to experiences, concepts, activities, and interactions designed to strengthen the skills needed to become as independent as possible. The sequence, scope, depth, detail, and instruction methods used in delivery of the ADEF module should be adjusted according to the Student Individual Profile (SIP) to ensure that content is delivered at a rate, volume, and complexity that suits individual learning and emotional needs.

Self-discovery is a journey some find exciting, while others experience anxiety and trepidation. Staff must be sensitive to the individual's cognitive, emotional, sensory, and physical states.

When taking students through the ADEF module, keep in mind the Core Principles:

Effective Learning Occurs When Learners are Calm and Regulated.

When a student is dysregulated, his ability to access insight is restricted and examination of oneself might be too difficult or emotionally threatening. In this case, the focus should shift to activities and interactions that support regulation until the student is cognitively, emotionally, sensorially, and physically receptive to resume work with the ADEF module.

Communication Provides the Foundation for Effective Learning and Making meaning of the World.

In order to take a student through the ADEF module successfully, it is necessary to create an environment where healthy self-evaluation and meaningful reflection can take place. Only in that way will he be able to process experiences, share feelings and reactions, self-regulate, and try out new ideas. Therefore, for each topic within the ADEF it will be necessary to assess how best to get the student to do this. There may be several approaches that will work, including self-talk, interactions with intimates and friends, exchanges with teachers and supervisors, acts of creative expression, social relating, and casual interplay with others.

Having selected one or more approaches, it will then be necessary to determine which means of communication would work for the student – for example using speech, written language, a technological device, artistic expression, movement, or some other form of non-verbal communication.

Learning Occurs Most Easily When Topics are Approached Using the Student's Preferences and Natural Affinities.

Preferences, affinities, and interests are excellent routes to self-exploration and provide motivators for executive function work. Analogies, metaphors, and comparisons can help concretize abstract concepts (examples: present the executive functioning part of the brain as the conductor or traffic cop for the rest of the brain; use an affinity for circuses as an example for how to breakdown all the sensory input one can experience in a given environment – smells of the animals, sights, circus music, crunch of peanut shells underfoot, etc.). Furthermore, since executive functioning is action-oriented (planning, decision making, etc.), affinities and interests can be used to design high interest projects with which to practice executive function skills.

Meaningful Learning Arises More Easily from Emotionally-Based Experiences.

An examination of the self is unavoidably an emotional experience. The trick in working with individuals in this realm is to anticipate difficult feelings and associated negative thinking might arise (“I struggle with balance, negative thought; I am a clumsy oaf.”). This dynamic muddies the process, weighing down the insights with self-criticism, self-judgment, or negative thinking. Staff should be prepared to do a lot of neutralizing, normalizing, and reframing to ensure the self-awareness process is approached in a productive, positive, healthy manner.

As much as possible, the work should also be infused with optimism and humor. Self-disclosure on the part of staff can also mediate any negative thinking and model positive ways to frame personal challenges (“I struggle with math too!; My friends won't go skiing with me; they are afraid I will get hurt because my balance is not good. So I just have fun hanging out at the lodge and drinking hot chocolate while they ski.)

Executive function work tends to elicit fewer self-negative thoughts but is prone to ushering in anxiety or fear of failure because of its action-oriented nature and link to performance. In this case staff must be prepared to model, coach, and co-navigate executive function exercises until the individual displays readiness to try some of the techniques on his own.

Effective Learning Happens in the Context of a Warm, Empathetic Relationship.

Because the ADEF module addresses highly personal topics, it is an ideal vehicle for staff to use as a springboard for building and solidifying relationships as well as introducing and reinforcing empathy. When done in the context of an empathic relationship, the process of sharing and personal reflection is more likely to feel safe and compelling to the individual. There will still be pockets of difficulty, intimidation, hesitancy, and in some cases denial and refusal to explore certain aspects of self. These reactions are part of who the individual is and must be met with compassion, patience, flexibility, and non-judgment. Staff should remember that all reactions are simply more data through which they can better understand the complex individuals they are serving.

Effective Teaching Encourages Students to Become Independent Seekers and Users of Knowledge.

By placing a priority on motivation, personal responsibility, self-awareness, and active engagement the Transition Curriculum creates a learning climate that

- Is fueled by high energy, enthusiasm, and momentum
- Energizes students to interact with information and ideas rather than receive them passively
- Pairs fun and creative expression with learning rather than associating it with anxiety and confusion
- Is safe enough to risk trying new ways of expressing ideas and thinking critically because of the underlying support and strength of a consistently empathic and authentic teacher-student relationship
- Celebrates learning differences, alternative perspectives, and individual passions and interests and sees them as opportunities to enliven, expand, and enrich learning
- Encourages diversions into unexpected ideas, enthusiastic debates on unusual topics, and slowed down discussions to fully establish meaning because they are seen as valuable essential additions to learning rather than distractions from a fixed plan
- Student and teacher are free to pursue process and meaning at a pace and depth compatible with individual cognitive abilities
- Understands the emotional, sensory, physical, and cognitive regulatory issues of students with ASD or other developmental disabilities dictate their ability to process information meaningfully; and places great value on regulation, engagement, and reciprocity as indicators of one's availability to learn in a given moment

The positive effects of using teaching methods that support independent learning extend well beyond the students' program experience. They also encourage the student to seek information on his own at home and out in the world. Examples of this could include activities such as:

- Seeking continuing education for job skills or career development
- Navigating public transportation
- Engaging in comparative shopping
- Understanding one's acting part in a community theater play
- Researching the side effects of a new medication
- Getting ideas for a creative writing story
- Understanding how the caterpillar in the backyard became a butterfly
- Identifying topics for conversation
- Learning how to use a new animation program

Whether it is in pursuit of a specific goal, an attempt to widen one's life opportunities, a means to satisfy curiosity, or a way to share interests with others, the positive effects of having a level of independence in seeking information are immense.

Module Goals

- Define self-awareness and establish the process of achieving it as a discrete activity
- Establish an understanding that increased self-awareness results in self-knowledge, which is a tool for empowerment and independence
- Establish the vast variety of ways in which self-knowledge can be applied to improve one's functioning, regulation, decision-making, and overall well-being
- Identify, model, and practice methods for raising self-awareness and gathering self-knowledge in a wide variety of environments, situations, and relationships for positive results
- Assist individuals to internalize the process of developing of self-awareness so they are able to use it as a tool as independently as possible given their limitations
- Define executive function (big picture and parts)
- Establish understanding of how improved executive functioning results in increased success in achieving tasks, empowerment, and independence
- Establish the vast variety of ways in which executive functioning can be applied to improve one's overall functioning, task completion, goal setting, reduced stress, and overall well-being
- Identify, model, and practice methods for using executive function tools and strategies in a wide variety of environments, situations, and relationships for positive results
- Assist individuals to internalize the process of developing executive functioning strategies so they are able to use them as a tool as independently as possible given their challenges
- Continuously provide individuals with meaningful experiences and opportunities that will lead them to be more independent, resilient, and engaged with people and surroundings

Note regarding ADEF Students with Low or No Verbal Ability: Please see Appendix: "Communication Strategies and Accommodations for Students with Low or No Verbal Ability."

6.02 "This Is Me" Journal

The process of building self-awareness incorporates information gathering, discussion, reflection, experiential learning, and observation in a dynamic and non-linear fashion. Information gathering and research provide the individual with concepts to reflect on and discuss, providing opportunities to build language and higher order thinking skills. Experiential learning (examples: activities, experiments, physical and sensory exposure, etc.) offers the individual chances to try out new knowledge and draw conclusions and insights from real experiences. The experiential learning dimension takes information gathered off the page/computer screen and from discussions, and places it into the real world context so it can be applied, tested, reconfigured, and evaluated for its merit and direct application to the self.

This process offers many opportunities to strengthen the connection between thoughts, sensations, and feelings. It also supports the expansion of expressive language as the individual is challenged to articulate

his internal experience so it can be evaluated and discussed. Experiential learning is followed by more reflection and discussion, and sometimes more information gathering, in order to identify what knowledge, meaning, and conclusions can be drawn.

Language, abstract thinking, and critical analysis skills are further reinforced as experiences, concepts, and ideas are assessed for their merit and application in managing real life experiences. As this process unfolds and deepens over time, the individual begins to establish an emerging understanding of self—preferences, habits, styles, needs, desires, strengths, weaknesses, etc., he previously did not have. These pieces of meaning and insight are woven together into a *gestalt* (an organized whole that is perceived as more than the sum of its parts) – *This Is Me*.

The rich process of self-discovery described above results not only in raising overall awareness and building vital processing, language, and higher order thinking skills but also addresses other core transition goals and concerns. Key knowledge and insights that emerge from this process enable the individual to have important information about the self that has significant practical application.

The individual builds self-knowledge to draw upon that enables him to strengthen executive function skills and...

- Make good decisions
- Manage regulatory needs
- Self-advocate
- Select environments and people who support one's functioning
- Construct realistic goals
- Problem solve effectively
- Better manage and organize

All lead to the ultimate goals of a transition program: **increased independence and success.**

Having the individual develop his personal ADEF journal

Since the process of building self-awareness includes such a vast array of information, experiences, emotions, ideas, insights, and conclusions it is important to have a way to organize and catalog the information. Providing the individual with a method for capturing the process and placing it somewhere accessible for future review and reference serves several purposes:

- Supports executive functioning
- Lessens anxiety to remember everything
- Imposes structure for individuals who routinely jumble information, making it difficult to draw meaning and access it when needed
- Enables more opportunities for review, reflection, connection, and changing perspectives as new information is layered over previous information
- Supports parts-to-whole thinking (the notion that understanding the parts of a subject is important to understanding the subject as a whole)

- Supports the idea that sometimes conclusions cannot be drawn until there is enough information, as many of the individuals we work with jump to conclusions impulsively with inadequate information that becomes fixed and difficult to reconcile when faced with change

An organizing, cohesive, and engaging method for capturing and cataloguing the self-discovery process is through a journal format. The journal can include:

- Questionnaires that reveal insight
- Reflections on the thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and overall impressions of activities, experiments, trial and error, and other experiential-based learning tools
- Drawings, collages, photographs, and other creative modalities
- Book titles, quotes, web pages, etc. that contain information or insight the individual may want to reference at a later date
- Creative writing
- Personal thoughts or stories
- Notes from discussions, lectures, videos, etc.

This journal should be used actively throughout the ADEF module. Some individuals may choose to continue to add to their This Is Me Journal as a continuing self-awareness building tool. The journal should be kept active throughout the student's time in the transition program for the following purposes:

- for the individual to reference
- for staff to reference
- as inspiration for activities and outings
- as an informational tool to help students anticipate how they will react to an upcoming situation
- as a guide for selecting appropriate internships and career matches

6.03 Executive Functions

Executive functions (EF) are *meta-cognitive skills* – the skills we use to maintain awareness of and regulate our own thinking and knowingness. It is these functions that help us determine how to approach, navigate, and evaluate our experiences. In turn, this affects our present and future choices and behavior. Executive functions are what enable us to change, evolve, set, and accomplish goals; make good decisions; adapt successfully to changes; make higher level connections; think expansively and understand the big picture; accept personal responsibility; become independent; and most importantly, find a sense of meaning and joy in our lives. The presence of well-developed executive functions increases our potential to lead successful, independent, and fulfilling lives.

The executive functions could also be considered those cognitive processes involved in handling *novel situations* – that is, situations that require the person to think things out rather than just automatically respond using learned behaviors or otherwise set patterns.

For example, if you have walked down the street to your neighborhood park several times per week for most of your life, little or no executive functions would be used on your part to do this. However, if you suddenly decide to go somewhere several hundred miles away that you've never been to before, you will almost certainly do some thinking about how to execute the idea. This **thinking about how to do it** is the basic notion of executive functions.

Executive functions permit us to:

- Problem solve
- Make decisions that factor in our needs, desires, limitations, and strengths
- Self-monitor and self-correct
- Evaluate experiences to be able to draw meaning and learning that can be applied moving forward
- Shape behavior according to rules, expectations, guidelines, and goals
- Maintain an appropriate level of organization and functionality given the context of a situation
- apply an understanding of cause and effect to adjust thinking, behavior, and emotions
- Navigate situations, difficulties, and obstacles strategically
- Anticipate potential outcomes and shape plans and approaches to target a desired outcome
- Manage time appropriately according to context, parameters, and goals
- Implement and execute according to a plan, vision, or goal
- Regulate the pace and quality of our performance, adjusting accordingly
- Manage the unexpected
- Learn from past experiences
- Feel a sense of control over our experiences

Biologically, the seat of executive function lies in the prefrontal cortex of the brain. Even in typically developing brains it is the last area to develop, usually in late adolescence and early adulthood; and the

reason many teens and young adults are plagued by impulsive decisions that lead to unwanted consequences and difficulty setting and accomplishing their goals. Since it is not just individuals with ASD who struggle through the growing pains of developing executive functions, it is important that all educational approaches, curriculums, and lesson plans include executive function development and strengthening.

These functions include the following:

Previewing – anticipating what to expect, what you may need, how you might feel, etc. before entering a task, environment, activity, or any situation. Most individuals on the autism spectrum do not preview so they tend to feel caught off guard, get anxious, and confused. Dealing with the unexpected is not easy for individuals on the spectrum so the more they can preview, the better they can prepare and engage in self-care.

Planning – being able to come up with an approach to solving a problem

Strategic thinking – being able to think in a manner that best exploits existing or emerging resources or possibilities

Step wisdom – the ability to visualize what one is trying to accomplish and the steps or sequences of actions needed to arrive at that objective

Organization – to arrange resources and events in such a way as to obtain a desired result efficiently

Time management – the ability to use time in a way that makes work more efficient, easier to complete, etc.

Self-monitoring – being able to watch, analyze, and evaluate self as one is doing a task

Plan implementation/execution – the carrying out of a plan

Pacing – ability to adjust the speed of work to make it appropriate for the circumstance

Causal relationships – ability to understand events in terms of cause and effect; because X happened, Y was able to begin.

Evaluative thinking – ability to reflect upon or judge the value (positive or negative) of some event or experience

Reinforcibility – ability to use previous experience to guide or correct behavior and work output; learning from experience.

Since meta-cognition is essentially *thinking about thinking*, it can be difficult to teach these non-obvious skills to individuals who lack self-awareness, have difficulty thinking abstractly, have low levels of self-reflection, and struggle with making higher order connections.

A certain level of self-awareness and critical thinking is needed to conceptually understand executive functioning and those skills are often slow to evolve in individuals with ASD. For this reason, *it is very important to adjust expectations and approach the building of these meta-cognitive skills as a process rather than an end goal.*

For example, one can make the goal of moving an individual from spelling single syllable words to multi-syllable words. That goal has a concrete pathway for measuring mastery through practice, exercises, spelling drills, and testing. But if the goal is increasing one's ability to manage time and pacing, it becomes abstract, contextual, and more difficult to measure and assess mastery. It is through ongoing support, reinforcement, trial and error, and the passage of time that staff is able to assess the extent to which the student's relationship to time and ability to self-pace has improved.

Therefore, an approach to executive function building must include a wide range of approaches:

- Explicit executive function building activities
- Frequent exposure to and practice with executive function strategies, tools, and accommodations
- Ongoing executive function exposure embedded into all lesson planning and activities

Explicit executive function building activities include:

- Exercises and activities aimed at raising self-awareness and self-evaluation
- Time-management activities
- Rubrics (standards of performance), outlines, charts, journals, and other tools and strategies to support organization, step wisdom, and strategic thinking
- Formal, facilitated meta-cognitive discussions (evaluating, identifying causal relationships)
- Goal-setting exercises
- Planning exercises
- Previewing before an event and conducting post-analysis discussions after an event
- Brain teasers, scenarios, and other strategic thinking exercises

Executive function strategies, tools, and accommodations include:

- Planners, schedules
- Charts, reminders, lists, and other vital information visually represented on the classroom walls for reference
- Reminders and prompts
- Breaking down tasks and projects into manageable chunks
- Vocalizing the goal and steps in one's own words after having received instruction receptively
- Check-ins and reflection pauses built into a project to have a chance to stop and evaluate how it is going
- Procedures written out to reinforce step wisdom
- Strategic planning guidelines and checklists

Executive functions could be embedded into all lesson plans and activities in the form of:

- Feedback during an activity to raise awareness for the need to self-monitor
- Guidance and suggestions for strategies and approaches before, during, and after
- Vocalizing previewing skills (*Example: "I wonder if we ought to take an umbrella in case it rains." "Will we be gone long enough that we need to take snacks with us?"*)
- Modeling approaches and vocalizing strategic thinking (*Example: "Let's try sorting all the parts by color before we begin assembling the model so we have a chance to see what we have and can find parts easier."*)
- Naming the executive functions as their need surfaces (*Example: "I wonder if it would be a good time for us to stop and look at our pacing – are we going at the right speed or do we need to slow down/speed up?"*)
- Naming and reinforcing when a student exhibits executive function skills (*Example: "I loved your strategy of writing down the things you were afraid you would forget to do. That really helped you keep your stress level down and make fewer mistakes."*)
- Including students in planning activities and approaches

Although in theory all of the executive function domains are applied continuously in all stages of an experience, some functions fall into a natural *before-during-after* flow that helps to highlight the importance and contribution of each. The following list may assist you in developing executive function-building activities.

Keep in mind, executive functioning are abstract skills, so the approach, presentation, vocabulary, and level of complexity should be adjusted according to the individual's cognitive and language processing abilities.

BEFORE Skills

These skills should be used *before* executing a novel or complex activity.

- **Planning:** The ability to combine visualization, brainstorming, creativity, parts-to-whole thinking, sequencing, and logic together to mentally map out a process aimed at accomplishing a specific goal and/or approach to a task or event.
- **Previewing:** The ability to project into the near future to estimate, evaluate, anticipate, and predict comprehensively:
 - how an upcoming event, plan, task, or activity will play out
 - what reactions, feelings, thoughts will result from engaging in the activity, goal, task, or event
 - multiple possible outcomes
 - what is needed to navigate the experience successfully
 - what could potentially derail or negatively impact the experience

Successful **planning** and **previewing** are linked to one's ability to

- Assess one's needs accurately
- Slow down, attend to, and incorporate the salient details related to the upcoming event
- Visualize/conceptualize
- Regulate excitement, anxiety, overwhelming feeling, and other emotions that could potentially interfere or skew perspective
- Think abstractly
- Understand the concept of contingency (*Example: if this happens it will change the plan/experience in this way*)
- Understand and apply cause and effect
- Sequence
- Prioritize
- Understand and undertake a goal directed approach (*Example: The goal of me going to the car show is to evaluate whether I want to work in the car industry. So given that goal, I need to make sure I don't get so distracted by the free stuff and cool displays that I forget to look at the cars and talk to people in the car industry to ask them questions.*)
- Become independent and self-sufficient

An individual lacking **planning** and **previewing** skills will likely experience:

- Chronic disorganization
- Lack of preparedness
- Confusion and distress by the unexpected
- Poor reinforceability (learning from previous mistakes and changing accordingly)
- Anticipatory anxiety related to upcoming tasks, events, activities, and responsibilities
- Anxiety, overwhelming feeling, and frustration
- Lowered success with task completion, personal satisfaction, producing results, making changes in behavior and approaches
- Delineating the boundaries of personal responsibility when a situation goes poorly (what was in my control and what were environmental circumstances beyond my control)
- Inability to meet personal and life goals
- Dependency on others
- Avoidance

DURING Skills

- **Self-monitoring:** The ability to step outside of one's self to observe neutrally how one is performing a task or navigating an experience. Self-monitoring gives clues to how successful one is being in a given context and whether any modifications are needed to improve the experience or increase chances of a successful outcome.

Successful self-monitoring is linked to one's ability to:

- receive feedback and incorporate it into one's approach
- understand what changes can be made to improve a situation
- draw conclusions that support future choices positively
- be realistic with ideas, approaches, choices, and goals
- make decisions successfully
- problem solve effectively

An individual **with limited** self-monitoring will likely experience:

- lack of insight (self-and others)
 - poor decision-making
 - difficulty making changes in approach or style
 - ongoing anger, frustration, anxiety, discouragement, and other dysregulating emotions (directed inward or externalized)
 - weak understanding and estimation of one's skills, strengths, and weaknesses
 - difficulty drawing meaning from an experience
 - difficulty understanding what is and is not in one's own control
 - underdeveloped sense of personal responsibility
- **Step wisdom:** Using a logical, sequenced approach to a task, activity, or experience that increases the likelihood of a successful outcome. Step wisdom combines visualization, sequencing, and higher order thinking skills.
 - **Strategic thinking:** The ability to access and apply strategy, logic, and problem solving to one's approach, performance, and decisions to increase the likelihood of a successful experience and outcome. Strategic thinking includes the ability to incorporate the unexpected and contingencies that might arise in a situation. Directly linked to flexibility and adaptability.
 - **Organization:** Ability to organize, manage, and maintain all the necessary components of an experience to ensure its success including:
 - materials – having the right materials accessible when you need them
 - sequencing – ordering the steps of one's approach to a task
 - thoughts – having clear thinking
 - emotions – emotion regulation
 - **Time management:** Ability to manage one's own time successfully incorporating:

- an overall awareness of the passage of time
- specific awareness of how much time is needed to complete a specific task
- ability to predict how much time something will take
- ability to monitor the passage of time while engaged in an activity
- ability to adjust one’s rate or adjust the plan according to time restrictions
- **Plan implementation and execution:** Ability to apply a pre-established plan successfully, incorporating the important steps, details, materials, and other components inherent in the plan.
- **Pacing:** Ability to adjust and control the rate at which one approaches, engages, and performs a task.

Successful step wisdom, strategic thinking, organization, time management, plan implementation and execution, and pacing result in:

- reduced anxiety
- increased overall success
- increased willingness to take on more complex plans and goals
- increased optimism about one’s capabilities and future possibilities
- increased self-esteem related to accomplishments
- increased value and depth of learning from direct experiences and outcomes
- increased independence
- increased motivation
- increased knowledge about strengths, weaknesses, and preferences
- improved job and school performance
- improved ability to engage in projects, individual and group

An individual lacking skills in step wisdom, strategic thinking, organization, time management, plan implementation and execution, and pacing will likely experience:

- repeated
- failures
- low self-esteem
- dependency on others
- low motivation
- increased anxiety, frustration, or overwhelming feeling
- avoidance of projects, tasks, and activities because they seem insurmountable or “too hard”
- skewed sense of one’s capability due to chronic failure - feeling stupid and incapable of accomplishing things, over-generalizing failures because you do not see them as related to executive functioning (*Example: student makes a cake that tastes awful or caves in. Instead of realizing he forgot a key ingredient, he comes to the conclusion “I am bad at cooking.”*)
- struggles with job performance and school work

- reduced exposure to the satisfaction and learning experiences related to completion – pattern of quitting midway, leaving a trail of half-finished projects
- confused or jumbled thinking
- poor memory of the experience
- difficulty summarizing the experience
- difficulty drawing meaning from the experience

AFTER Skills

1. **Causal relationships:** The ability to recognize and understand the relational aspects of an experience in terms of cause and effect. As a result of X, Y happened.
2. **Evaluative thinking:** The ability to evaluate all aspects of an experience, form opinions and perspectives based on those observations, and then draw conclusions. Operates on a small detail to big picture level. Includes an ability to remove oneself from a situation to get perspective needed to self-evaluate, to apply parts-to-whole thinking, ability to delineate and separate out parts to examine them singularly, compare and contrast, source from past experiences, good episodic and detailed memory recall.
3. **Reinforceability:** The ability to draw information and meaning from past mistakes and use that insight to change one's behavior moving forward to avoid the same mistake occurring.

Successful causal relationships, evaluative thinking, and reinforceability lead to:

- increased overall success at task completion
- increased ability to receive feedback and incorporate it into future actions
- strengthened self-esteem and confidence
- strengthened higher order thinking skills
- strengthened big picture analysis skills
- increased self-awareness

Individuals lacking skills in causal relationships, evaluative thinking, and reinforceability will likely experience:

- chronic feelings of failure
- low insight (self, experiences)
- reduced meaning gained through experience
- pattern of making the same mistakes repeatedly
- increased frustration, anxiety, and overwhelming feelings
- sense of loss of control or personal responsibility over events, situations, feelings, and results; an increased sense that one's successes and failures are a result of the actions of others or due to "uncontrollable circumstances"
- inability to make valuable connections leading to insight.

An important part of strengthening **evaluative thinking** (both detail and big picture) is supporting individuals to reassess other areas of executive functioning to see how well they performed:

- Did I **preview** all of the important factors? How did this affect my experience? How did this affect my success?
- Did I **plan** well? What aspects of the experience did I feel prepared for? What aspects of the experience did I feel unprepared for? Did my planning help guide me to a successful experience or outcome? What would I like to do better when planning the next time?
- Was I able to **self-monitor**? If so, was it helpful in changing what I was doing during the experience to improve the experience? Was I distracted from being able to observe how I was doing in real time? If so, what got in my way (examples: emotions, thoughts, forgot, overwhelmed, sensory, etc.)? Could I have improved the experience or my performance if I had been more observant of myself?
- Did I apply **step wisdom** and approach the task, experience, or activity in an order/sequence that was successful? Did I miss important steps or do things in an order that did not work well? How did those missed or out-of-order steps affect the end result?
- Did I use **strategic thinking** in how I approached the task? Were there times I had to adjust my plan? How did that go? Looking back, were there strategies I should have used/want to use next time? How would that improve things?
- , or interfere with my focus? What would I do differently or the same next time to be more organized?
- How accurately did I predict ahead of **time** how long this experience would last? Did I allow enough time in my planning? Did I feel rushed or pressured for time? How did that affect my experience? Knowing what I know now, how much time should I set aside if I do this activity again?
- How well did my plan go? Did I forget, skip, cut out, or change anything? How well did I manage myself and my materials? What would I do the same because it worked well and what would I do differently the next time? (**plan implementation and execution**)
- Did I move at the right **pace** to complete the task or have a full experience? Was I rushing? Was I dragging? Looking back, should I speed up or slow down next time and if so, during what parts? How **organized** was I with my materials? How did that affect my experience? How organized was my thinking? Did I get disorganized or confused? Was I clear headed? How did my thought organization affect the experience? Did my emotions derail me, throw me off my plan

6.04 Executive Function Strategies and Accommodations

Here are some examples of how to support executive function activities:

Context: One-on-One

When working on executive function support in a one-on-one context, the teacher has the luxury of tailoring the support, strategies, and accommodations to the individual. Refer to the SIP if additional data is needed on the individual's executive functioning strengths, weaknesses, and goals. This should be a highly individualized process.

Example: Exploring Sleep Difficulty

Chris does not understand why he is so tired all the time. He will need executive function and higher order thinking support to:

- Understand what impacts sleep (nutrition, exercise, medication, etc.)
- Generate a list of the things that might be impacting his sleep (examples: drinking a lot of soda, staying up late playing video games, lack of exercise, bad mattress, anxiety, etc.)
- Discuss each and narrow down the most likely contributors

Context: In-Program Group Discussions and Activities

One of the greatest challenges in designing group executive function support is accommodating to the wide variation in executive function strengths and weaknesses among the participants. The most efficient way to approach group executive function design is to identify the executive function weaknesses in the most challenged individual and use his needs as a starting point.

Since all young adults need executive function support, the entire group can benefit from exposure to the strategies available, which opens up an opportunity for them to pick and choose (with support) those that suit their needs and bypass those that do not.

In addition, the group leader should also identify individuals with specific executive functioning strengths and use them to either mentor and support their peers or to help balance out the weaknesses of others.

In a discussion-based group, executive function support will largely be in the verbal realm with some non-verbal cueing as needed. In activity-based groups there may be an even more clearly defined division of labor according to strengths and weaknesses and a larger variety of strategies and accommodations so each participant is able to contribute as successfully as possible.

Example: Group Field Day Planning

Session 1:

- Setting the climate and expectations by **previewing** the goal of the discussion: selecting the games and activities that will occur on Field Day.
- **Strategic thinking:** Ask group members for ideas on the best, most efficient way to decide. The leader also lets them know how much time they have to make the decision (**time management and organization**). Today they are responsible for getting the list of ideas generated. Next time they will discuss the list and see if they can shorten it. Third session they will vote. The leader will keep track of time so participants can relax and not clock watch.
- **Step wisdom:** The facilitator provides the structure and sequence for how to generate a brainstorming list – go around the room and everyone says an activity they want to do. Go around three times so each person gets a chance to give three ideas. If someone takes your idea or you run out of ideas you can say “pass”. The facilitator establishes the rule that nobody is to make comments about each other’s ideas, as the time to evaluate each idea will be next week. This rule cuts down on negative comments and also helps keep the group on task and on time. The facilitator assigns a group member with strong handwriting and spelling skills to write down the ideas on a white board.
- **Plan implementation and execution** – group brainstorming ensures difficulties that arise are negotiated and facilitated.
- The leader saves some time at the end of the session for reflection and feedback on how the activity went in terms of fairness, efficiency, success, variety, etc. (**evaluative thinking**).
- The leader closes the session by reminding the group that next time they will go through each idea and assess each one for cost, time, feasibility, etc. (**previewing**).

Session 2:

- Setting the climate and expectations by **previewing** the goal of the discussion: to discuss and narrow down the list before voting.
- **Step wisdom:** The facilitator sets the process, expectations, and ground rules for the discussion so individuals feel their ideas and opinions are heard. The group is told there is not enough time to have long discussions on each so the facilitator will lead the discussion and stop anyone if needed to ensure all participants are heard (**strategic thinking, time management**). An individual who has strong handwriting, spelling, and visual spatial skills will stand at the white board writing down each idea that the group decides should be on the ballot.
- **Plan implementation and execution** discussion ensues. If students violate the rules and guidelines established, the group will stop to address it. Safety will be re-established, consequences stated, and the group will re-negotiate needs and problem solve how best to continue with the discussion.
-

- The leader reserves time at the end of the session for reflection and feedback on how the activity went in terms of fairness, efficiency, and success in reducing the list, etc. (**evaluative thinking**).
- The leader closes the session up by reminding the group that next time they will be voting (**previewing**).

Session 3:

- Setting the climate and the expectations by **previewing** the goal of the discussion: to vote on the pre-agreed list.
- **Step wisdom:** The facilitator shows them a sample ballot and walks group through how it works. Facilitator explains the voting process.
- **Plan implementation and execution** – voting ensues. If rules are violated or individuals try to unduly influence others' votes the group will stop to address and problem solve. The facilitator is available to anyone needing help, reminders, or clarification.
- The leader saves time at the end of the session for reflection and feedback on how the voting experience was in terms of difficulty choosing, fairness, efficiency, etc. (**evaluative thinking**).
- The leader closes the session by reminding the group that next time they will learn which top 10 activities will go to the program director for feedback (**previewing**).

The process continues all the way through the final decision, planning the field day, and then conducting it. Again, individual variations should be folded into the planning to make sure significant executive function weaknesses are supported adequately and students with executive functioning strengths can be assigned a group task or a mentorship role.

6.05 Guidelines for Teaching ADEF Content

The depth and detail within each section will depend on the individual's level of comprehension, language, regulation, engagement and reciprocity, and cognitive functioning.

Instructors should anticipate that students have wide variations in their degree of knowledge within each section of the module. Therefore, before layering on new content in each category, time first needs to be spent allowing the individual to share what he knows and understands. This will enable teachers to get a sense of appropriate language level and complexity needed to individualize the learning process, seek out misperceptions, and identify curiosities to capitalize on what should be incorporated into the work.

A **concept or mind map** is a diagram created to help visualize ideas, concepts or words associated with some topic. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind_map_for_examples.

Visual, experiential, and hands-on teaching aids such as charts, concept maps, coloring books, 3D models, small experiments, movement games, interactive media, field trips, etc. are highly recommended to provide information and provide a concrete cognitive framework.

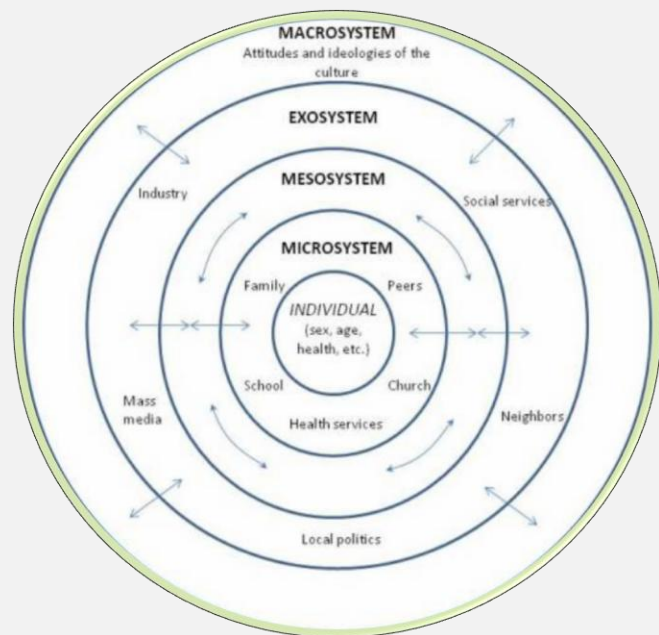
6.06 The Self-Awareness Building Process

The Transition Curriculum approaches self-awareness building by starting with the self and proceeds outward to others, the local and global community.

Ecological systems theory, as it is called in developmental psychology, provides a useful understanding of this pattern of influences. Ecological systems theory holds that human development can be better understood by viewing the various layers of human context and experiences as a set of concentric (nested) circles. These layers start at the center with those factors most obviously influential upon the individual such as age, sex, health, etc., and work outward to encompass influences from:

- The “microsystem”, which is his immediate external environment and includes his family, school, peers, etc.
- The “mesosystem”, which is defined as the relationships amongst the various elements of the microsystem such as between his family members and his teachers, his teachers and his peers, etc.
- The “exosystem”, which includes more remote social structures and influences which affect his life but indirectly, such as his father’s employer making changes which causes the family to have to relocate, etc.
- The “macrosystem”, which includes all the complex cultural influences, such as ethnic beliefs, social heritage and values, etc.

The individual is usually more aware of elements closer to the center of the diagram. For this reason, it is usually best to begin the process of building self-awareness at the center of the diagram and work outward.



Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/a/af/Bronfenbrenner%27s_Ecological_Theory_of_Development.jpg

Every aspect of the curriculum is designed so all content can be individualized to meet specific cognitive, social, emotional, sensory, and physical needs of each individual.

The rate, volume, and complexity of the approach are adjusted accordingly throughout the work to suit the individual's processing capability and readiness.

The process incorporates a variety of approaches such as reflection, supported experiences, discussion, visualization, creative expression, humor, role playing, and more – to keep the process dynamic and ensure a wide range of learners can benefit and draw meaning from it.

By starting with the self, we aim to awaken awareness, enthusiasm, connection, curiosity, and a passion to learn. These qualities are then used to fuel the self-exploration process and establish engagement, reciprocity, and shared language.

As the capacity to understand “the self” strengthens, we expand the scope of exploration to incorporate others – peers, family, support personnel, and members of the community. An examination of the self in relation to an “other” invites opportunities to build social cognition, awareness, and skills. Social problem-solving skills, humor regulation, expression, and friendship can then be catalyzed, strengthened, and expanded.

Once the individual demonstrates an ability to expand and see himself in relation to others, we then explore relationships to his surroundings. The curriculum begins with immediate and familiar surroundings and works its way to familiar surroundings that elicit discomfort or dysregulation.

The incorporation of problem solving, brainstorming and identification of coping strategies supports the individual in strengthening self-care, self-advocacy, and coping skills in surroundings he finds challenging. The emphasis at this time on anticipation of needs and previewing what to expect helps reduce the frequency of dysregulation due to the unexpected when out and about and increases preparedness across a wider range of environments.

As the individual's foundation of self-awareness, awareness of others, and awareness of environments becomes increasingly more solid we begin to branch out into the individual's awareness of his community at large. This step generates increased opportunities for community experiences, *internships*, and practice with social and independence skills.

For those who are able, the curriculum offers the option to reach further to raise curiosity and interest in exploring one's country and the world to the extent it is meaningful.

6.07 The Parts of Self

The process of self-discovery is a complex one for all individuals, but for those on the autism spectrum or with other developmental disabilities it poses additional challenges. Individuals with ASD traditionally lack the skills necessary for successful self-awareness to take place: low self-reflection; difficulty articulating one's experience; inconsistent and distorted experience of others and one's surroundings; weak parts-to-whole thinking; impaired ability to evaluate self and others; and inconsistent engagement. These difficulties limit the ability to connect ideas consistently to create larger concepts and build upon prior knowledge as do interference from dysregulation and increased sensitivity, weak abstract thinking, and more.

In addition, many of these individuals also struggle with learning disabilities, processing difficulties, emotional diagnosis, behavioral problems, and other issues that profoundly impact comprehension, sustained learning, relationship building and engagement.

Great care should be taken to determine the best way to introduce the ADEF process and set expectations. The goal is to set the climate for the endeavor in a manner that will enable the individual to conceptually understand the process, elicit curiosity and interest, and keep anxiety at a manageable level. The SIP will provide valuable information to guide staff in setting the climate for the ADEF and modulating the rate, volume, complexity, and prioritization of the ADEF content. Care should be taken to use language, analogies, and metaphors that are understandable and have meaning in the individual's life.

The first part of the ADEF breaks down into three sections, which enables the teacher to present the information in a categorized and clear manner that starts with the most concrete (physical), moves into more abstraction but is tied to physical sensations (emotions), and then concludes with the most meta-cognitive and abstract part of the self (cognition).

The second part of the ADEF is designed to help individuals begin to make connections amongst the various parts of self, a cognitive leap they are unlikely to do independently. This section may require a slowing down of pace and a lot of visuals to develop the concepts. This part is also more flexible in terms of sequencing. (For example, if the individual shows an affinity or strength in a particular domain it may be wise to change the order of the outline to begin with his strength. If the student has relatively good emotional intelligence, exploring how the emotions affect the mind and the senses is a good place to start).

The third part of the ADEF provides the individual with a bridge from self- knowledge/awareness to others and the environment. To support this difficult abstract concept, the information is sequenced in concentric circles, starting with Me and You, then moving out to Me and My Environment.

At this juncture the individual is supported in moving into the more difficult exercise of projecting into less familiar territory – Me and My Community, and then to the most open-ended aspect of his experience,

Me and the World. Depending on the individual's capability, fund of knowledge and experience base, it might prove quite challenging to move from Me and My Environment to Me and My Community and/or Me and the World. The latter two introduce higher order thinking skills such as visualizing, projecting, guessing, hypothesizing, and other abstract thinking capabilities.

If a student reaches Me and My Community and is unable to benefit meaningfully from the content, it is wise to stop the process, add some community experiences, and then return to that section of the ADEF once he has concrete experiences from which to draw.

Conversely, individuals who struggle with establishing and maintaining relationships might excel with Me and My World but hit a wall with Me and You and possibly Me and My Community. In this case it is recommended that the individual engage in a series of peer-based activities followed by reflection and explicit feedback sessions. Once awareness, language, and experiences surrounding relating to peers have accumulated, the student may be far more equipped to navigate the Me and You section.

In summary, the tools a practitioner will value most in working through the ADEF module with an individual on the autism spectrum or with other developmental disabilities are:

- SIP and other background information
- Wide-range of experiential-based activities available
- Willingness to self-disclose when helpful to the learner
- Use of analogies, metaphors, visuals, and other learning enhancers
- Creativity
- Flexibility
- Sense of humor
- Patience
- Enthusiasm
- Empathy and compassion

6.07.1 The Physical Body

The Brain – Mind-Mapping Important Regions of the Brain

The brain section is meant to provide a context for each individual to begin reflecting on himself as a thinker and a learner. It is not intended to become overly involved in great scientific detail. Many of the functions introduced here will resurface later in the ADEF and be further explored in other Transition Curriculum modules.

Activities will need to be included for each sub-section below to develop awareness of how the student thinks, how things go wrong, and how to improve or solve the difficulties. Activities may include: brain games and exercises; art, coloring books, models; videos, media clips, guest speakers, field trips.

- Right brain vs. left brain
- Information processing – how information comes in and is received:
 - regulatory functions
 - emotional regions and responses
 - sensory regions and responses
 - visual-spatial regions and processes
 - temporal-sequential regions and processes
 - language: verbal and non-verbal regions and responses
 - movement regions and responses, including reflexes
 - executive functioning regions
- Memory: different kinds of memory, stored in several places
- Things that affect brain functioning
 - nutrition
 - sleep
 - stress
 - medication
 - learning disabilities
- How MY brain works – tailored to individual
 - General brain-based activities such as testing reflexes, right/left brain games, memory games, etc. (there are more activities later in the curriculum when the information becomes more individualized and detailed)
 - Beginning to identify strengths and weaknesses and how they may be related to brain functioning
 - Additional personal factors – address these if the student has brain functioning issues such as seizures, learning disabilities, medication side effects, or other issues that can be linked with the brain for deeper understanding

- Making connections between my brain and my habits:
 - ✓ my nutrition
 - ✓ my sleep
 - ✓ my exercise
 - ✓ my stress
 - ✓ my medication
 - ✓ my learning issues
- Personal goals: Are there things I would like to do to improve my brain functioning (examine habits above)

Gastrointestinal (GI)

The gastrointestinal section is designed as a broad overview to provide context for individuals to understand how their own gastrointestinal systems affect their regulation and quality of life, and is not intended to become caught up in great scientific detail. Activities can include taste testing, mindful eating practice, food journals, etc.

- Basic explanation of how the gastrointestinal system works
 - chewing, swallowing, and esophagus
 - digestion and intestines
 - elimination
- Things that affect gastro functioning
 - stress
 - nutrition (healthy, unhealthy foods)
 - eating habits (slow down, chewing well, not eating too much, etc.)
 - exercise
 - medication
 - medical disorders (irritable bowel syndrome, ulcer, dysphasia, etc.)
- How MY gastrointestinal system works
 - Address if individual has chewing and swallowing issues, personal GI problems (typically associated with individuals on the autism spectrum) or a GI disorder diagnosis.
 - Link to sensory issues with food textures and how can affect diet
 - Do my habits and behaviors support my gastro system?
 - ✓ Is my diet healthy for me?
 - ✓ Are there things that make my gut feel bad after I eat them
 - ✓ Are my eating habits healthy for me? (Rush, eat late, etc.)

Other Personal Medical Conditions

This section is meant to provide context and meaning to other individual medical issues and conditions affecting their lives without becoming burdened by excessive detail or statistics. Care should be taken to acknowledge the anxiety that accompanies having a medical condition.

Activities can include: internet research, guest speakers, field trips, and talk with others with condition.

- List and define chronic medical conditions and diagnosis not addressed in brain and gastro sections

For each condition, explore:

- How did I get it/develop it?
- How common is it?
- prognosis (difference between a condition and a chronic illness)
- How do I manage it? (doctors, medication, lifestyle)
- questions, fears, and emotions
- restrictions and limitations
- How do others who have it manage and cope?

Muscles

The muscles section is meant to provide a context for individuals to understand how they move, coordinate, and balance their bodies. Keep this purpose in mind; do not allow this section to become burdened with excessive details. Activities can include movement and experiential-based games and experiments; models, charts, visuals, art, coloring books, media, guest speakers, field trips.

- Basic understanding of how muscles work. Introduce the following concepts:
 - rigidity/flexibility
 - stamina
 - strength
 - reflexes
- How MY muscle system works – tailored to individual
 - my level of rigidity/flexibility
 - my stamina
 - my strength
 - my reflexes

Sympathetic/Parasympathetic Systems

The parasympathetic/sympathetic nervous systems are the two main divisions of the nervous system responsible for the automatic (unconscious) regulation of the internal glands and organs. This section is meant to provide a context for individuals to understand how they react to stimuli and how this process affects their regulation. Keep this purpose in mind; do not allow this section to become burdened with excessive details. Activities can include games and exercises, videos, media clips, guest speakers, practice relaxation techniques, and evaluate and compare.

Metaphors, analogies and scenarios are highly effective teaching tools for grounding this information and provide a concrete cognitive framework

- How it works – fight, flight, freeze, or submit (examples from nature)
- How MY sympathetic/parasympathetic systems works
 - which do I do (fight or flight, etc.) and under what types of stressors
 - tie in stress response and relaxation - ways to relax

Immune System

The immune system section is meant to provide a context for individuals to generally understand how immunity works, how it affects their personal health and their frequency of illness. It is not intended to get heavily detailed or scientific.

Metaphor, analogies, and visual aids are highly recommended teaching tools to ground the information and provide a concrete cognitive framework, as the concept of immunity is abstract. Activities can include 3D models, charts, science experiments on bacteria, videos, media clips, guest speakers, and field trips.

- How it works – basic
- Things that interfere with the immune system:
 - genetics
 - allergies
 - immune disorders (PANDAS/PANS, Lyme disease, and other chronic inflammatory diseases, etc.)
- Ways to support the immune system:
 - sleep
 - nutrition
 - hygiene/hand washing
 - exercise
- How MY immune system works
 - How often am I sick?
 - Things I do to stay healthy

Sleep

The sleep section is meant to provide a context for individuals to understand their sleep patterns and how they affect overall energy levels, thinking, emotions, and health. It is not intended to be detailed or scientific.

Activities can include a sleep log, dream discussions, and experimenting new sleep habits (naps, different bed times/nighttime routines).

- Stages of sleep
- How adequate sleep affects overall health
 - mood
 - stamina
 - cognition
 - creativity
 - regulation
 - reactivity
 - other
- Ways to improve sleep
- My sleep patterns
 - quality: ability to fall asleep, stay asleep
 - habits and preferences (dark room, body pillow, soft sheets, etc.)
 - dreaming
 - energy level
 - sleep issues and disorders (sleepwalking, restless leg, etc.)

Physical Senses

The senses section is meant to provide a context for individuals to understand how they react to sensory input, identify sensory sensitivities and soothing experiences and raise environmental awareness.

There is a significant amount of focus on sensory sensitivity and sensory integration woven throughout the Transition Curriculum. This section is intended to create a context and knowledge base for further discussions, reflection, and activities aimed at raising awareness, building coping skills, and overall management of one's sensory experiences and reactions.

Experiential teaching aids that provide firsthand sensory experiences are highly recommended to ground the information and provide a concrete cognitive framework.

Activities can include experiential games and exercises (smell test, taste test, tactile test, etc.), models, videos, media clips, guest speakers, and field trips.

Concept mapping (also called mind mapping) is a means of visually representing information using words and pictures related by lines drawn amongst them in a similar way to how sentences are diagramed in English grammar textbooks. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concept_mapping

- Identify and establish an understanding of the senses
 - auditory
 - visual
 - tactile
 - olfactory
 - smell
 - proprioceptive
 - vestibular
- *Concept mapping* where senses are located in the brain (charts of the brain regions and what they do)
- Normalize how sensory experiences can be different for individuals with ASD or other developmental disabilities (sensitivities, etc.)

- How MY sensory system works
 - auditory
 - visual
 - tactile
 - olfactory
 - proprioceptive
 - vestibular
 - create sensory list of sensitivities, preferences, dislikes, and strong aversions
 - coping mechanisms
 - ✓ when sensory system is overloaded
 - ✓ when under-stimulated or bored
 - ✓ when seeking soothing

See section 6.14 Activity 1:
Experimenting with the
Senses: Smell

Basic Anatomy

The basic anatomy section is meant to provide a big picture context for students to understand their bodies. Since quite a bit of anatomy will have been covered at this point in the process, the goal is to fill in the gaps so there is a cohesive sense of the physical body. Avoid getting into great detail; keep it as simple as possible.

Information is best shared through art, models, visuals, and experience as well as explanations.

Activities can include coloring books, videos, media clips, guest speakers, and field trips.

- Bones and skeletal system
- Circulatory system
- Any other parts still needing to be covered
- Address questions

Sexual Development and Hormones

This sexuality section is meant to provide a big picture context for students to understand that sexuality is an integral aspect of the self. It is an introduction to a personal concept that will be examined in more depth later in the program when the student shows developmental readiness.

Because of its importance to overall independence and adult self-awareness, Sexuality is a stand-alone module in the Transition Curriculum. Teaching approaches, scope and sequence, guidelines, and content will be detailed in greater specificity in the Sexuality module.

Sexuality is a highly personal topic – the timing, depth, and approach should be aligned with the individual's developmental, social-emotional, and maturation levels.

Activities are highly individualized to the individual's language, higher-order thinking capabilities, social-emotional development, and maturation levels. May include coloring books, models, and videos.

Depending on readiness possible topics include:

- Anatomy
- Puberty and sexual development
- Masturbation
- Gender differences
- Sex hormones
- Pregnancy
- STDs

Depending on readiness, the My Sexuality section might include

- Answering questions
- Debunking myths
- Dispelling anxiety
- Normalizing feelings and behavior

6.07.2 The Emotions

This section on emotions, feelings, and emotional experiences is meant to introduce and establish a context for students to understand the role emotions play in their life. It provides an opportunity at the beginning of the individual's program experience to establish a repertoire of emotional language the individual will then be able to use in a wide variety of program contexts relating to his emotional work.

This module is intended to raise awareness, strengthen understanding, and elicit curiosity about one's emotions. It is designed to be approached with a sense of curiosity and to be seen as an opportunity for exploration (rather than an opportunity to process difficult emotions or become a counseling session).

Emotions and the Body

- Emotions and the brain
 - Review content covered earlier in the brain section and expand to greater detail as needed to get it well understood. Helpful activities might include: coloring books, models, visuals, and media clips.
 - emotional regions of the brain and their function
 - ✓ amygdala and mood, aggression, fight/flight
 - ✓ hippocampus and emotional memories
 - ✓ hypothalamus and reward center, pleasure, rage
 - ✓ activities: coloring books, models, visuals, media clips
- Biochemistry and how medication helps
 - stress hormones - cortisol and *emotional hijacking* when anxious or panicked
 - serotonin and feeling good
 - norepinephrine and fight/flight, heart rate, blood pressure
 - medications for mood stability
 - my mood medication (if applies)
 - ✓ what I take
 - ✓ why I take it
 - ✓ how does it help?
- Hormones
 - adolescent/young adult patterns
 - how hormones affect moods
- Physical toll of emotions
 - stress, intense and difficult emotions
 - ✓ muscular tension
 - ✓ gastrointestinal upset, ulcers, etc.
 - ✓ headaches

Emotional hijacking

is a condition where one's emotional reaction to some stimulus overwhelms cognitive abilities and self-control.

- ✓ sweating
- ✓ heart rate increases
- ✓ blood pressure raises
- ✓ dysregulation
- ✓ other stress-related physical effects
- ✓ activities: experiential games, reflection/recalling emotional experiences, and identifying body reactions, journaling
- The physical toll stress has on MY body
 - generate personal list
 - identify experiences, environments, sensations, and situations that cause my body to feel physically stressed
 - resiliency
 - ✓ How long does it take me to bounce back and feel better when I feel this kind of stress?
 - ✓ When I am feeling physical stress from my emotions, are there things that help me feel better?
 - ✓ activities: experiential games, reflection/recalling emotional experiences, and identifying body reactions, journaling
- The physical benefit positive emotions have on the body
 - muscle relaxation
 - increased brain functioning (attention, memory, etc.)
 - increased physical health, less illness
 - increased physical energy
 - stay regulated
 - strengthened immune system
- The physical benefits I experience from positive feelings
 - generate personal list
 - identify experiences, sensations, environments, and situations that make my body feel good
 - activities: experiential games, reflection/recalling emotional experiences, and identifying body reactions, journaling
- Drawing conclusions and making goals
 - What do I feel more often in my body, negative or positive effects of my emotions?
 - Do I feel too much emotional stress in my body? What can I do to feel less physically stressed?
 - Do I want to experience more positive emotions in my body? What can I do to help myself feel better physically?

Feelings

Activities for this section may include discussions, watching media clips (YouTube, movie scenes), acting, role playing, improvisation, creative writing, art, looking at pictures of faces with emotion, watching soap opera with sound muted and track emotions of characters.

- Difference between emotions and feelings
- Using language to describe feelings
 - Generate general list of feeling words
 - What words do I use to describe my feelings? (personal list)
 - ✓ Do people understand when I use these words?
 - ✓ Do I need new feeling words to better express myself?
- Linking feelings to sensations
 - match sensations to personal feeling word list
- Linking feelings to activities
 - match activities to personal feeling word list
- Linking feelings to people
 - match people to personal feelings list
- Linking feelings to environments
 - match known environments to personal feelings list

How Facial and Body Expressions Display Feelings

- Generate list of facial and body expressions and their associated feeling words
- What facial expressions and body language do I use to express my feelings? (refer to personal feelings list above)
 - Do these non-verbal displays communicate my feelings well to others?
 - Do I want some new/other non-verbal ways to express my feelings?

Internal Sensations Associated with Feelings

- Generate general list and match with associated feeling words (examples: giddy, dizzy, itchy, etc.)
- What internal sensations do I have when I have feelings? (refer to personal feelings list above)
 - Which sensations are pleasurable?
 - Which sensations do not feel good?
 - How do my feelings affect my regulation

- Behaviors and physical reactions that express or represent a feeling
 - Generate list of behaviors people do associate with feeling words (*Example: what do people do when they are angry*)
 - Behaviors I do and the feelings associated with them (refer to personal feeling list above)
 - ✓ Do my feeling-driven behaviors accurately communicate what I am feeling?
 - ✓ How do people respond to me when I act out my feelings?
 - ✓ Do I want new/other ways to show people my feelings with my behavior?
 - ✓ How do my feeling-driven behaviors affect me?
 - ✓ How do my feeling-driven behaviors affect others?

My Emotional Profile – What Have I Learned?

This section allows the teacher to help students review and summarize what they have learned about themselves and their emotions through all the previous discussions and activities. The goal is expanding and raising awareness, applying meaning, and drawing conclusions.

To reduce feeling overwhelmed and assist with seeing connections and parts-to-whole thinking, use visual aids such as a concept map, chart, color coding on a white board, or large poster board.

- **My feelings**

What are the major feelings affecting me and my life? What are the ways in which they manifest? Source from information gathered above as well as generate new ideas as the profile is built.

Activities may include discussion, media clips, role playing, storyboarding, creative and journal writing, improvisation, emotionally-based games, mirror exercises, watch video clips of self-expressing emotions and discuss.

 - **My internal emotional experiences (what I feel inside)**
 - ✓ positive
 - ✓ difficult
 - ✓ patterns and trends
 - ✓ changes I would like to make in how I handle my feelings on the inside
 - **My external emotional experience (what I show)**
 - ✓ positive
 - ✓ difficult
 - ✓ patterns and trends
 - ✓ how others react to my feelings (raising awareness to perspective taking and effect on others)
 - ✓ changes I would like to make to how I show my feelings to others

- **My emotional reactivity**
 - Defining emotional reactivity, connecting to other information covered in the ADEF related to reactivity such as the brain
 - How I emotionally react to my internal experiences?
 - ✓ thoughts
 - ✓ physical sensations
 - ✓ fears and anxieties
 - ✓ other
 - How I emotionally react to my environment?
 - ✓ sensory stimuli
 - ✓ environmental stressors
 - ✓ the unexpected
 - How do I emotionally react to other people?
 - ✓ in general
 - ✓ when they make demands on me (being rushed, asked to do things)
 - ✓ when I have limits put on me (told no, restrictions)
 - ✓ when they touch me
 - ✓ when I want to be their friend
 - ✓ when I need my space/to be left alone
 - Making meaning and drawing conclusions about my emotional triggers and patterns
 - ✓ summarize list of triggers based on discussion above
 - ✓ how I react to each of my triggers – intensity, duration, reactivity/sensitivity, predictability, coping mechanisms currently used (if any)
 - ✓ identifying patterns of emotional reactivity
 - ✓ big-picture thinking - What effect does my emotional reactivity have on my life, my choices, and my relationships?
 - Developing strategies - What coping mechanisms could be refined or established to help me feel more in control of my emotional reactions?
 - ✓ self-driven (what I can do for myself)
 - ✓ other driven (what others can do to support or calm me)
 - ✓ object driven (soothing and calming objects)
 - ✓ activity driven (soothing and calming activities)

- **Emotions and my behavior**

Activities for this section can include: experiential games, reflection/recalling emotional experiences and identifying behavioral reactions, explicit tying of emotions and common behavioral reactions associated with it, improvisation, mime, charades, and media clips.

- What do I typically do in response to my feelings?
- What reactions do my emotional-based behaviors have on others?
- Identify patterns and trends in behavior
- Self-evaluation
 - ✓ Do the ways I act in response to my feelings work for me/get my needs met?
 - ✓ How do my emotional behaviors affect my relationships with people?
 - ✓ Am I okay with the ways I express my emotions through my behavior?
 - ✓ What changes do I want to make?

- **Emotions and my thinking**

- When I have a strong emotion, what thoughts does it bring up?
 - ✓ generate personal list
 - ✓ What effect do these thoughts have on me?
- Drawing big picture conclusions about my thought patterns, and my world view
Now that I understand a lot more about how my emotions, thoughts, and behaviors are connected...
 - ✓ How does my emotional thinking affect how I view myself?
 - ✓ How does my emotional thinking affect how I view others?
 - ✓ How does my emotional thinking affect my ability to solve problems and make decisions?
 - ✓ How does my emotional thinking affect my ability to connect to other people?
 - ✓ How does my emotional thinking affect my opinions and beliefs?
 - ✓ How does my emotional thinking affect my view of the world?

- **Emotional resiliency**

- Establish concept and link to their individual levels of emotional reactivity. Define with examples, role play, and metaphors
- How resilient am I emotionally?
 - ✓ Generate concrete examples and experiences from the individual's life and evaluate intensity, duration, and effect
 - ✓ What helps me bounce back? (*Examples: soothing/calming objects; things people say; things people do; things I do, think, or feel that make it better*)
 - ✓ What makes it hard for me to bounce back? (*Examples: things that keep me agitated; things people say that make it worse; things people do that make it worse; things I do, think, or feel that make it worse*)
 - ✓ What effect does my emotional resiliency have on me? (*Examples: my social life/relationships, my choices, the quality of my experiences*)

- ✓ What can I do to increase my emotional resiliency? *(Examples: things I can do, think, feel to take better care of me; things people can do or say to help)*

- **Emotional goal setting**
Given what I now understand about myself, my emotional makeup, how I experience and express feelings, how others experience me when I am emotional, and the effect emotions have on my life – what personal goals do I want to make? *(Examples: seek to reduce reactivity, seek to expand resiliency, react to my emotions/behave differently, experience more joy, etc.)*

6.07.3 The Mind

Elements of the Mental Structure

Mindset

Mindset is broadly defined as a set of attitudes or beliefs about the self, others, and the world that dictates the perspective one uses to interpret information and draw conclusions about one's experiences. It is a relatively new concept in the research world and we are only just beginning to understand the vital role it plays in shaping perception, self-concept, self-esteem, behavior, and motivation.

The preponderance of definitions, material, and research currently available about mindset tend to focus on the idea of a "fixed" mindset, which locks individuals into a limited way of interpreting and perceiving themselves, others, and the world around them. Carol Dweck, Stanford University professor and leading researcher on mindset, qualifies the term by illustrating that individuals have either a "fixed" mindset ("I was born with whatever skills I have, things are the way they are and I cannot change them") or a "growth" mindset ("with effort and time I can develop skills"; "I have the capacity to learn, change, and grow") when it comes to their own intelligence and achievements. Her research shows that individuals with "fixed" mindsets tend to get stuck in their thinking and beliefs, and thus their mindset is a limiting factor in their ability to succeed. Individuals with a "growth" mindset tend to be more resilient to failure and difficulty and have increased motivation. (Dweck, 2010)

We believe many individuals with ASD or other developmental disabilities tend to be either unfamiliar with the concept of having a mindset or are entrenched firmly in fixed or negative mindsets. Often this is due to long histories of accumulated failures and struggles and tendencies to be reactionary when drawing conclusions (as opposed to reflecting and weighing multiple possible perspectives one could take). Exploring mindset provides enormous opportunity to investigate distortions and negative belief systems and replace them with more flexible, compassionate, resilient, and productive thinking.

Due to the abstract nature of this material, it is important to evaluate the individual's cognitive ability to engage in a meaningful discussion. The content will need to be accompanied by visuals, charts, and metaphors to establish an understanding of the process, may need to be simplified in language and complexity, or presentation of the concept delayed until the individual is cognitively ready for it to be meaningful.

A general procedure for exploring mindset and building the capacity to have growth mindsets that will increase optimism, self-esteem, motivation, and resiliency is as follows:

1. Define mindset (as given above).
2. To help establish the concept of mindset, it is suggested that the individual get practice and experience identifying mindsets in others such as familiar and favorite characters (cartoon, TV shows, super hero, movies, etc.) or a movie star or historical figure he knows well. By observing video clips, individuals can be supported in identifying the characters' mindset: identifying and

listing their actions and what they say, and then making guesses about how the characters might view themselves, others, and the world. By using high affinity and very familiar characters, students can more easily comprehend what mindset is and how to identify it. The characters can then be used as reference points of comparison to begin reflecting one's own mindset.

3. Generate a few examples of mindsets from the individual's life, both positive and negative.
 - Example: Mindset – I am not safe.
4. Identify the emotions that connect with that mindset.
 - Example: Feelings of anxiety and fear
5. Make connections between the mindset and emotions and the correlating reactions and behaviors.
 - Example: Behaviors such as withdrawal or heightened reactivity, obsessive thoughts, and phobias
6. Use the Ladder of Inference (Robinson & Lai, 2006) to introduce a broader framework for understanding mindset (graphically organized way of presenting how we draw data from our experiences to shape our thinking and reinforce our beliefs)
7. Selecting data (introduce idea of subjectivity)
 - Ground it well with experiential exercises aimed to highlight subjectivity and different levels of observation
 - Example of selecting data: noticing things in your surroundings that feel unsafe, over-focusing on things related to safety.
8. Drawing conclusions
 - Establish with concept mapping and other visuals that highlight the process of using data to draw conclusions
 - Example of drawing conclusions: "There is a lot of danger in the world."
9. Making assumptions
 - Define the difference between drawing a conclusion and using it to then make assumptions
 - Establish the ideas with concept mapping and other visuals that highlight the process
 - Example: making assumptions – because of all the danger out there, going out of the house is not safe
10. Creating biases
 - Define concept of bias, using examples
 - Make connection to how assumptions lead to biases and how bias affects perspective and decision making
 - Establish the ideas with concept mapping and other visuals that highlight the process

Example of creating biases: "I am only safe if I stay at home, I only want to do things at home. Leads to rejecting opportunities, anxiety/panic attacks when think of or made to go out," etc.

11. Reinforcing noble certainties

- Define noble certainties (fixed beliefs one has about the world that one will go to great lengths to defend as absolute truths) (Robinson & Lai, 2006)
- Establish the ideas with examples, concept mapping, and other visuals that highlight the process

Example of reinforcing noble certainties: "Anytime I go out and something bad happens it reinforces my belief that the world is unsafe. I look for bad things to happen, even sometimes set myself up for bad things to happen and then I use them as proof I was right (I should have stayed at home, going out of the house is always hard and stressful). I start to notice good things less and less because I am only focusing on the bad."

- Drawing big picture conclusions about my thought patterns, my mindset, and my world view
"Now that I understand a lot more about how my emotions, thoughts, and behaviors are connected..."

12. Continue running mindset examples from the individual's life through this Ladder of Inference as needed until the student has a good working understanding of *mindset* and how beliefs get reinforced.

Values, Ethics, Morals

The cognitive and developmental level of the individual will dictate the language, depth, and scope of exploration into value, ethics, and morals. For those struggling with cognition, categorization, and abstract thinking it is suggested that the information be reconfigured into more simplified categories such as what the individual believes is "the right thing to do" vs. "the wrong thing to do" in concrete scenarios that can be easily generalized (taking someone's cookie and stealing, etc.).

1. Establish the definition of ethics, values, and morals

- Use examples of ethically driven, morally clear fictional and non-fictional characters (historical figures, superheroes, etc.) with easily identifiable ethics to establish the ideas before asking the individual to reflect on himself.
- Use examples of clear and concrete scenarios to practice generating ethics/value/moral-based opinions and reactions (example: someone knocks over your ice cream, laughs, and walks away: it isn't right to ruin someone else's things, it is not good to be mean, if you ruin something belonging to someone else you must replace it)

- Watch an episode of a moral-based story, cartoon, or sitcom that has easily identifiable ethical dilemmas in play.
- If capable, introduce more moral ambiguity that challenges the person to think more abstractly (morally ambiguous fictional characters, movie or TV video clip)

2. My ethics

Helps identify his own ethical framework, whether based on the theories of others (see below) or one he created on his own.

- Ethics of behavior
- Ethics of friendships
- Ethics in families
- Ethics of right and wrong
- Other ethical sub categories that help the individual break down a broad concept into manageable chunks
- Explore how your mindset and ethics affect decision making, preferences, and lifestyle choices
- Explore how ethics, values, and morals change over time
- Use concrete examples from individual's life (example: "when I was a young child I believed _____ and now that I am a teenager I think _____")
- What aspects of my ethics, morals, and values have stayed the same and what has changed?
- Discuss some of the major ethical theories and frameworks

The discussion on ethical theories and frameworks might need to be modified, delayed, or omitted depending on the individual's ability to grasp and analyze abstract and philosophical concepts.

Each theory should be grounded with developmentally appropriate scenarios and examples, and then reflected upon in terms of whether the individual agrees or disagrees with the theory.

- stoicism (Epictetus)
- ethics of duty and respect (Kant)
- utilitarianism/ethics of Consequence (Mill)
- ethics of rights (Locke, Jefferson, Thoreau)
- religious-based ethics
- ethics of character (Aristotle)
- ethics of the family (what inherited from family system)

3. "Everyday" ethics

All individuals will benefit from everyday ethics discussions, even if they struggle with ethics on a more conceptual or philosophical level. Everyday ethics would include such topics as:

- Ethics of truth telling: telling the truth, lying and omission, white lies, etc.
- Observer ethics: when to speak up/get involved if you witness something you feel is "wrong", hear about something someone did or someone confides in you
- Ethics of friendship: loyalty, honesty, secret keeping, gossip, taking sides, loaning money, covering up
- Ethics of ownership: stealing, shoplifting, what do when you find money
- Ethics of personal responsibility: what is my responsibility in a given situation, who is depending on me, admitting you damaged something when there were no witnesses, etc.
- Ethics of money: someone else's money, found money, taking parent's credit card to use online (gaming, purchases)
- Ethics of social behavior: dating, at public events, parties; gift giving, re-gifting (taking a gift that has been received and giving it to somebody else), cheating on a test or in a contest, respecting other people's belongings, how we treat service people, etc.

Mental and Intellectual Interests, Hobbies, and Affinities

- Things, ideas, and topics I love to think about and/or talk about
- Things, ideas, and topics I know a lot about
- Share what you know
- Discuss how the knowledge was accumulated
- Things, ideas, and topics that have become hobbies and activities
- Things, ideas, and topics I want to learn more about
- What can I do to find out more about things, ideas, and topics
 - internet research
 - reading
 - ask questions
 - going to places to learn more (zoo, aquarium, museum, library, etc.)
 - watching movies, television, etc.
- Seeking information and learning more - goal setting and brainstorming
 - identify things, ideas, and topics I want to know more about
 - ways my mental interests could be used for community activities and outings
 - ways my mental interests could be used for social interaction and connecting with others (affinity clubs, group discussions, topics of conversation, etc.)

Playing with My Cognitive Skills

This section is designed to be an activity-based, experiential approach rather than lectures. Through experience the individual is exposed to the different ways people use cognition without getting heavily into details and scientific labels. The activities should be low stress, non-competitive, and not timed to reduce anxiety

- Concept formation
 - visualizing and verbalizing exercises to show how words are turned into pictures and parts to whole thinking (concept formation with language)
 - nonverbal concept formation exercises and games to use gestures, facial expressions and movement to represent ideas
 - process – understanding something by its process (how something works). Activities and experiences that elicit understanding through a process (science experiment, acting out/miming a process such as planting a garden or making a phone call)
 - parts-to-whole thinking – understanding something by examining and putting together its parts (puzzles, connect the dots, and other games and activities that emphasize parts to whole)
- Critical thinking/analysis
 - activities and experiences focusing on drawing conclusions, compare/contrast, and making evaluations (riddles, short mysteries, brain teasers, etc. all in alignment with the individual's language, cognitive and developmental levels)
- Creativity and brainstorming
 - activities and experiences that require the use of creativity and brainstorming (art, creating a story, brain teasers, what I would take with me to a desert island and other fantasy scenarios that call upon the individual to generate ideas and be creative)
- Concrete vs. abstract thinking

Through examples that are developmentally appropriate, generate a list of concrete and abstract concepts and how they are related

 - example #1 simplified: concrete words = ice cream, candy; associated abstract words: sweets, fattening food
 - example #2 more complex: concrete words: voting at the polls, politician standing at a podium to debate; associated abstract word = democracy

See section 6.15 Activity 2:
Playing with My Cognitive Skills: Visualizing and Verbalizing

See section 6.16 Activity 3:
Playing with Cognitive Skills: Creativity and Brainstorming

- Categorizing
 - games and activities aimed at different ways to categorize objects, ideas, feelings, etc.
- Interpretation, multiple possibilities and drawing conclusions
 - games, role play, scenarios, brain teasers and other activities which challenge the individual to examine a behavior, statement or situation; generate multiple possibilities for interpreting; and drawing conclusions based on the known evidence
 - characters from books, cartoons and video clips also provide excellent fodder for interpretation-based activities. Turning the volume off will make the activity even more nuanced as the individual is left to interpret non-verbal language and has more nuanced clues to detect.
 - discussion of controversial issues, debates, examples from pop culture or the news (if the individual is able to become more complex in his thinking).
- Strategic thinking, problem solving, and decision-making
 - activities and experiences that draw upon one's ability to think strategically, solve problems, and make decisions (movement, creative, verbal, and non-verbal exercises)
 - technology such as computer games helpful in activating domain, in particular for individuals who are not strong in language or who are non-verbal (Logical Journey of the Zoombinis)
- Rule use
 - exercises and activities that require following a list of external rules and a specific sequence (board games, lab experiments, etc.)
 - movement and non-verbal games integrated with verbal-based activities (Twister, Simon Says)
- Reasoning and logical thinking (generating own thoughts based on information and what can be inferred, critical thinking, creativity, brainstorming)



Note: Individuals with stronger language and cognition will have a wider range of activities from which to draw.

6.08 Developing Awareness

6.08.1 Developing Awareness of the Physical Body's Influence on Sensory, Emotional, and Cognitive Experiences

This section is designed to help individuals understand the connection between a sensory experience and the body's physical reaction to it. By raising one's awareness of having a physical reaction to sensory input, the individual can then begin to predict his body's responses in various environments. He learns that the body gives signals when it is in distress and those signals act as warning signs that tell us we need to act to take care of our needs. Once an individual's awareness is increased to his personal physical "warning signs", he can begin to anticipate his needs, generate plans to accommodate for them, and make decisions that incorporate his sensory sensitivities.

The underlying goal of this process is to reduce the dysregulation and distress. It will also equip them with strategies to anticipate and manage uncomfortable or surprise physical reactions they feel when exposed to sensory stimuli to which they are sensitive.

Example: Charlie displays acute sensory sensitivity to loud noises. As a result, he often experiences dysregulation in public places when loud noises occur. He has become very resistant to going out in public, and when he does venture out he often has to be taken home when a loud noise occurs. He is inconsolable until he is back home in familiar surroundings that he can control, and once calmed does not want to discuss what happened. This pattern has compromised his ability to practice social skills in his community and to learn adaptive strategies for handling his dysregulation in public places.

Earlier in the ADEF, Charlie explored his sensory system and had many discussions and experiential activities that helped him understand that his hearing is extremely sensitive and the culprit for why a lot of outings go wrong. He explored the types of noises that upset him and also learned that if the noise is unexpected, his negative reaction is even stronger.

This section of the module helps Charlie to identify more explicitly that in reaction to loud noises he tenses up the muscles in his entire body and he has a strong startle reflex that makes him feel jumpy. He can then work to understand that when he feels this way he gets hijacked and he just wants to get away

Materials for this section would include experiential-based games and exercises followed by reflection. This would be excellent for group work so different experiences can be compared.

It is most effective at this point to tailor activities to the individual or individuals in the group rather than try to cover all possibilities. By this time the students will have identified their personal profiles in these domains and have the information available to them for planning purposes.

Activities would also include flow charts and concept mapping to make visual representation of connections.

and hide somewhere quiet. With this connection and reaction chain understood, he can then work to see that he has some choices. He can still choose to leave, but he learns there are middle grounds and other options:

- Wearing earplugs or noise canceling earphones
- Having his iPod with him with soothing music that he can listen to
- Asking to step outside or away from the noise until he feels calm enough to return
- Having a squeeze ball in his pocket so when he feels his muscles tense he squeezes the ball really hard,
- Anticipating noises before he goes out to reduce surprises
- Engaging in exploring “quiet” places in public he might enjoy such as a library or park, etc.

Through discussion, activities, carefully planned social experiments, and more, Charlie begins to realize it is not being out in public that causes him to become dysregulated, but the sounds that sometimes occur. He gets support in getting in the habit of previewing what sounds to expect before he goes out and deciding what his plan will be for managing them if they arise.

Emotional Experiences

This section is designed to help individuals understand the connection between an emotional experience and the body’s physical reaction to it. By raising one’s awareness to the dynamic of having a physical reaction to emotions, the individual can then begin to predict his body’s responses in various environments. He learns that our emotions signal we are in distress and those signals act as warning signs that tell us we need to act to take care of our needs. Just as in the last section, once an individual’s awareness is increased to his personal *emotional* “warning signs”, he can begin to anticipate his needs, generate plans to accommodate for them, and make decisions that incorporate his sensory sensitivities.

The underlying goal of this process is to reduce the dysregulation and distress that many individuals with ASD or developmental disabilities experience in response to the unexpected, and to equip them with strategies to both anticipate and manage uncomfortable or surprise physical reactions they feel when intense emotions arise.

Example: Craig has a lot of anxiety when he is with young adults of his own age. He tends to stay calm and regulated around younger children and adults, but in peer social interactions he gets derailed by anxiety. As a result he rubs his hands together in a frantic motion that is off-putting to his peers, which further spikes his anxiety. He has become hesitant to try any social outings and activities, and thus is increasingly socially isolated despite his intense desire to have friends his own age.

Earlier in the ADEF Craig did a lot of work on understanding his emotions and emotional reactions in social situations. In this section he gets to take that knowledge to a deeper level and begin to understand that it is not his entire self that pushes peers away but the physical behavior of wringing his hands that they do not understand and see as “weird”. He can begin to realize that the urge to wring his hands is a warning sign that he is anxious.

This awareness opens the door for Craig to work on getting support identifying what social situations are anxiety-producing enough to cause the handwringing to surface. He can then strategize and practice ways he can substitute other, less socially off-putting physical responses when he feels his anxiety spike:

- Holding onto a worry stone
- Having a squeeze ball
- Keeping his hands in pockets or behind his back
- Fidgeting with a bracelet or necklace, etc.

Concurrently, this work enables him to also address more directly the real culprit at play – his social anxiety.

As with the last section, it would be important to include experiential-based games and exercises followed by reflection. This would be excellent for group work so different experiences can be compared.

It is most effective at this point to tailor activities to the individual or individuals in the group rather than try to cover all possibilities. By this time the students will have identified their personal profiles in these domains and have the information available to them for planning purposes.

Activities could also include drama and improvisation, various other forms of art, flow charts, and concept mapping to make visual representation of connections.

Cognitive Experiences

This section is designed to help individuals understand the connection between a mental experience and the body's physical reaction to it. By raising one's awareness to the dynamic of having a physical reaction to a thought, the individual can then begin to predict his responses in various environments. He learns that the body gives signals when we have thoughts, and those signals act as warning signs that tell us we need to act to take care of our needs. Once an individual's awareness is increased to his personal physical "warning signs", he can begin to anticipate his needs, generate plans to accommodate for them, and make decisions that incorporate his sensitivities.

The underlying goal of this process is to reduce the dysregulation and distress that many individuals with ASD or other developmental disabilities experience in response to the unexpected, and to equip them with strategies to both anticipate and manage uncomfortable or surprise physical reactions they feel when having a thought that is intense or difficult.

Example: Asher has a habit of falling asleep in the middle of or immediately after a complex or difficult discussion. When he is exposed to a high volume of language, much of which he does not understand, his body reacts by getting sleepy and falling into a very deep sleep from which it is very hard to rouse him.

Asher has not made this connection and has a long history of getting into trouble with teachers and peers who felt he was faking sleepiness or pretending to fall asleep. Sleep disorders such as narcolepsy have been medically ruled out but falling asleep does not appear to be in his control.

In this section of the ADEF Asher gets support in raising his awareness to when the sleepiness onset begins so he has an opportunity to catch himself earlier and try different strategies:

- Ask for a break
- Scale down language load and simplify the discussion
- Stop and have him paraphrase what has been discussed thus far
- Engage in movement to wake up
- Have difficult conversations on a walk or while engaging in physical activity so his body is more alert
- Practice building endurance for receiving language through exercises
- Give him written information to read and reflect on at his own pace and then follow up with a conversation

Asher continues to fall asleep after complex discussions but now he has strategies for stretching his endurance and taking breaks so he is less disruptive by “checking out” in the middle of a discussion. He is also able to tell people before a discussion that he may need a break or get sleepy, which allows him to negotiate and problem solve with others.

Materials for this section would include experiential-based games and exercises followed by reflection. This would be excellent for group work so different experiences can be compared.

It is most effective at this point to tailor activities to the individual or individuals in the group rather than try to cover all possibilities. By this time the students will have identified their personal profiles in these domains and have the information available to them for planning purposes.

Activities could also include drama and improvisation, various other forms of art, flow charts, concept mapping, and flow charts to establish connections.

6.08.2 Developing Awareness of the Sensory System's Influences on the Physical Body, Emotional Experiences, and Cognitive Experiences

This section is designed to help students understand the connection between a physical experience and the body's sensory reaction. By raising one's awareness to the dynamic of having a sensory reaction to a physical sensation, the individual can then begin to predict his body's responses in various environments. He learns the senses give signals when we are in distress and those signals act as warning signs that tell us we need to act to take care of our needs. Once an individual's awareness is increased to his personal sensory "warning signs", he can begin to anticipate his needs, generate plans to accommodate for them, and make decisions that incorporate his sensitivities.

The underlying goal of this process is to reduce the dysregulation and distress many individuals with ASD or other developmental disabilities experience in response to the unexpected, and to equip them with strategies to both anticipate and manage uncomfortable or surprise sensory reaction they feel.

Example: Alfred has significant issues regulating his eating at mealtimes, often stuffing himself to the point of gagging and throwing up. When he overeats to such an extreme, he becomes extremely emotionally dysregulated. His peers do not like eating with him and they tend to get very dysregulated when he overeats, especially in public restaurants when he causes a scene. As a result, he finds himself socially ostracized during food-based school events, outings, and lunchtimes.

Alfred swears it is not the overeating that causes him to gag and throw up, but rather he feels "claustrophobic" all of a sudden and he panics. Because of his intense embarrassment, Alfred will only discuss his eating problem with one trusted staff member to whom he feels particularly close. This staff member explores his eating problem slowly and gently through a series of discussions, reflections, and supported activities.

Alfred begins to eat lunch with the staff member so he can get feedback if he begins to eat too quickly so he can start noticing when he gets overstimulated. He begins to learn the sense of claustrophobia that arises in him and causes panic is his sensory system alerting him his stomach is full. He begins to see the "claustrophobic" sense as a warning signal his body wants him to stop eating. What was once a panic button sensation becomes reframed as a welcome signal to stop and step away from food. He also embarks on many different experiential activities to increase general body awareness and how his senses can be enlisted to help him know what his body needs.

Experiential-based games and exercises followed by reflection. This would be excellent for group work so different experiences can be compared. It is most effective at this point to tailor activities to the individual or individuals in the group rather than try to cover all possibilities. By this time the students will have identified their personal profiles in these domains and have the information available to them for planning purposes.

Activities could include: flow charts and concept mapping to make visual representation of connections.

Emotional Experiences

This section is designed to help individuals understand the connection between an emotional experience and the body's sensory reaction. By raising one's awareness to the dynamic of having a sensory reaction to emotions, the individual can then begin to predict his body's responses in various environments. He learns that our senses signal when we are in emotional distress and those signals act as warning signs that tell us we need to act to take care of our needs. Once an individual's awareness is increased to his personal sensory "warning signs", he can begin to anticipate his needs, generate plans to accommodate for him, and make decisions that incorporate his emotional sensitivities.

The underlying goal of this process is to reduce the dysregulation and distress that many individuals with ASD or other developmental disabilities experience in response to the unexpected, and to equip them with strategies to both anticipate and manage uncomfortable or surprise sensory reactions they feel when intense emotions arise.

Example: When Nick becomes anxious he becomes immediately overwhelmed by sensory input, which further agitates him. He will begin to see dirt everywhere, even particles floating in the air. He complains that the room smells bad. On occasion he even feels itchy "like there are ants in my skin." He becomes so reactive to his sensory experience he is unable to process his anxiety, demanding staff to "make the smells, dirt, and itching go away." As a result, he has made extremely little progress in anxiety management and coping skills and has become resistant and avoidant towards anything he thinks might make him feel anxious.

Nick is unaware that the sensory sensations he feels are in reaction to his emotions and has developed a bias that most places are too dirty and smelly for him to be in. This negative feedback loop has impaired his ability to try new things and be in a wide variety of environments, and he has become heavily dependent on others to manage his anxiety.

Nick works to understand the relationship between overstimulation in his sensory processing and his anxiety. Slowly, the phenomenon is teased out and examined so he can begin acknowledging and addressing the underlying anxiety that has limited his choices and ability to function. He began the process of learning that when he started seeing particles in the air, smelling bad smells, and feeling itchy it was a sign that his anxiety was elevated and he needed to address it.

Materials for this section would include: experiential-based games and exercises followed by reflection. This would be excellent for group work so different experiences can be shared.

Most effective at this level is to focus on the individual or individuals in the group rather than trying to imagine all the possibilities. Since at this point the students will have identified their personal profiles in these domains the information may be available to use for planning purposes.

Activities could include: drama, improvisation, art, flow charts, and concept mapping to make visual representation of connections.

Cognitive Experiences

This section is designed to help students understand the connection between a thought and one's sensory reaction to it. By raising one's awareness to the dynamic of having a sensory reaction to a thought, the individual can then begin to predict his responses in various environments. He learns senses give signals when we have thoughts, and those signals act as warning signs that tell us we need to act to take care of our needs. Once an individual's awareness is increased to personal sensory "warning signs", he can begin to anticipate his needs, generate plans to accommodate for them, and make decisions that incorporate his sensitivities.

The underlying goal of this process is to reduce the dysregulation and distress that many individuals with ASD or other developmental disabilities experience in response to the unexpected, and to equip them with strategies to both anticipate and manage uncomfortable or surprise sensory reactions they feel when having a thought that is intense or difficult.

Example: Susan is sensitive to light. She also struggles with comprehension and abstract thinking. She is in a small book club with peers who have similar cognitive levels and the facilitator paces accordingly, anticipating difficulty and helping when she feels lost or confused in the discussion. Despite many strategies and accommodations in place, she still experiences difficulty understanding the plot of the story.

Often, in the middle of a discussion about the book, Susan will suddenly complain that the room is too bright and she wants the blinds pulled down. She hides her head in her hands or retreats behind sunglasses and it is very hard to re-engage her in the discussion.

Susan begins to understand there is a link between getting confused in a discussion and a spike in light sensitivity after being given consistent feedback about her pattern of withdrawal. She begins to reflect that this dynamic does not only happen at the program, but also when she is out in the community and gets lost. With help she is able to see that a lot of places she coded as "too bright for me to be in" were actually places where she felt lost or confused such as the mall and restaurants when she tried to read the menu and could not decipher it. Susan works with staff to see that when things start feeling too bright it may be a signal she is confused with language and needs to ask for help.

Materials for this section

include: experiential-based games and exercises followed by reflection. This would be excellent for group work so different experiences can be shared.

It is most effective at this point to tailor activities to the individual or individuals in the group rather than try to cover all possibilities. By this time the students will have identified their personal profiles in these domains and have the information available to them for planning purposes.

Activities could include:

drama, improvisation, art, concept mapping, and flow charts to establish connections.

.08.3 Developing Awareness of the Emotional Influences on the Physical Body, Sensory Experiences, and Cognitive Experiences

This section is designed to help individuals understand the connection between physical need and an emotional experience. By raising one's awareness to the dynamic of having a physical reaction to an emotional experience, the individual can then begin to predict his emotional responses in various environments. He learns emotions gives signals when we experience something physically unpleasant and those signals act as warning signs that tell us we need to act to take care of our needs. Once an individual's awareness is increased to his personal emotional "warning signs", he can begin to anticipate his needs, generate plans to accommodate for them, and make decisions that incorporate self-care. The underlying goal of this process is to reduce dysregulation and distress many individuals with ASD or other developmental disabilities experience in response to the unexpected, and to equip them with strategies to both anticipate and manage uncomfortable or surprise emotional reactions they feel.

Example: When Tim has low blood sugar he tends to get extremely irritable, causing him to become rude to staff and peers, impatient and disruptive in learning and other group settings. He is not aware of his irritability or the negative effect it has on the group. It took staff a while to recognize the possibility of a blood sugar-mood connection, after they had exhausted endless strategies to manage his irritability without success and a staff member asked one day, "Have you eaten breakfast?" He had not and agreed to eat a granola bar the staff member offered. His mood improved significantly in a relatively short period of time.

Many discussions followed to help Tim see how irritable he can be when he skips a meal. His morning routine was adjusted to make room for a light breakfast and was given reminders mid-morning to eat a snack. Through trial and error, discussion, feedback, and much reinforcement he began to eat snacks sometimes without reminders and on occasion was able to stop himself when he felt irritable and announced "I am being a jerk because I forgot to eat breakfast". He then excused himself from the group to get a snack.

Materials for this section would include: experiential-based games and exercises followed by reflection. This would be excellent for group work so different experiences can be compared.

Most effective at this level is to focus on the individual or individuals in the group rather than trying to cover all the possibilities. Since at this point the students will have identified their personal profiles in these domains the information may be available to them for planning purposes.

Activities can include color-coded chart – color in body parts with corresponding emotion; flow charts, and concept mapping to make visual representation of connections.

Sensory Experiences

This section is designed to help individuals understand the connection between a sensory experience and an emotional reaction. By raising awareness to the dynamic of having a sensory reaction to what one feels the individual can then begin to predict his responses in various environments. He learns that our senses give signals when we have strong emotions, and that those signals act as warning signs that tell us we need to act

to take care of our needs. Once an individual's awareness is increased to his personal emotional "warning signs", he can begin to anticipate his needs, generate plans to accommodate for them, and make decisions that incorporate his sensory sensitivities.

The underlying goal of this process is to reduce dysregulation and distress many individuals with ASD or other developmental disabilities experience in response to the unexpected, and to equip them with strategies to both anticipate and manage uncomfortable or surprise emotional reactions they feel when they have upsetting sensory sensations.

Example: Joe is extremely tactile sensitive. He goes to great lengths to keep his distance from even people he likes. There are a few staff members with whom he has bonded closely, and he shows his affection by standing alongside them, touching shoulder to shoulder.

Joe is very aware of his sensitivity to touch and, when regulated, he can state his preference calmly. However he does not have the insight to realize when he is touched either accidentally or on purpose he slips immediately into sensory dysregulation and becomes enraged (fight, fright, or flight). As a result, he has had several unfortunate rage incidences at the program and in public and his peers say they are "scared of him". He does not understand why.

This section creates space for Joe to receive feedback and reflect. Eventually he agrees to watch a video of one of his rages and is able to see firsthand why his peers are scared of him. He begins to work on how to establish the no-touch rule in his relationships with people ahead of time, and to work on strategies for how to manage himself in public so he does not become scary or threatening to a stranger who has accidentally brushed by him.

Materials for this section would include: experiential-based games and exercises followed by reflection. This would be excellent for group work so different experiences can be compared.

It is most effective at this point to tailor activities to the individual or individuals in the group rather than try to cover all possibilities. By this time the students will have identified their personal profiles in these domains and have the information available to them for planning purposes.

Activities can include: flow charts and concept mapping to make visual representation of connections.

Cognitive Experiences

This section is designed to help individuals understand the connection between a thought and emotional reaction to the thought. By raising one's awareness to the dynamic of having an emotional reaction to what one thinks, the individual can then begin to predict his responses in various environments. He learns emotions gives signals when we have distressing or dysregulating thoughts, and those signals act as warning signs that tell us we need to act to take care of our needs. Once an individual's awareness of his personal emotional "warning signs" is increased, he can begin to anticipate his needs, generate plans to accommodate for them, and make decisions that incorporate his emotional sensitivities.

The underlying goal of this process is to reduce dysregulation and distress many individuals with ASD or other developmental disabilities experience in response to the unexpected, and to equip them with strategies to both anticipate and manage uncomfortable or surprise emotional reactions they feel when they have upsetting thoughts.

Example: Whenever Alexis thinks about Cirque de Soleil it makes her very giddy and silly. All the excitement she felt seeing the acts, dramatic lighting, and fancy costumes comes rushing back and she becomes very dysregulated and disruptive. She loves feeling giddy and has not made the connection she is actually conjuring up the feeling with her own thoughts.

This section of the ADEF opens the door to examine, reflect, and discuss the pattern Alexis has gotten into and to generate strategies and solutions including: designate a time during the day when she can talk about Cirque and immerse herself in feeling giddy so she can get that need met but at a more appropriate time, explore with her whether she is activating the Cirque-giddy cycle to avoid facing difficult topics or activities by charting when it happens and looking for patterns, examine more deeply what it is about Cirque that makes her feel giddy to increase insight, try techniques for thinking about Cirque without getting so giddy, and explore why she is seeking excitement so often to understand what else she might be feeling.

With a lot of discussion, activities, and reflection Alexis has begun to ask for a "giddy break" when she feels the desire coming on so she can have a private moment and get it out of her system instead of disrupting group activities. Staff also discovered she has an affinity not only for Cirque de Soleil but all circuses and she began an affinity-based class on the history of circuses and their costumes and has signed up for a circus arts class.

Materials for this section would include: experiential-based games and exercises followed by reflection. This would be excellent for group work so different experiences can be compared.

It is most effective at this point to tailor activities to the individual or individuals in the group rather than try to cover all possibilities. By this time the students will have identified their personal profiles in these domains and have the information available to them for planning purposes.

Activities can include: debate, discussion of controversial subjects, flow charts, and concept mapping to make visual representation of

6.08.4 Developing Awareness of the Mind's Influences on the Physical Body, Sensory Experiences, and Emotional Experiences

This section is designed to help individuals understand the connection between a physical sensation and the mind's reaction to it (thoughts). By raising one's awareness to the dynamic that body sensations can elicit thoughts, the individual can then begin to predict his responses in various environments. He learns thoughts give signals when we are physically uncomfortable and those signals act as warning signs that tell us we need to act to take care of our needs. Once an individual's awareness is increased to his personal thought "warning signs", he can begin to anticipate his needs, generate plans to accommodate for them, and make decisions that address his physical needs.

The underlying goal of this process is to reduce dysregulation and distress many individuals with ASD other developmental disabilities experience in response to the unexpected, and to equip them with strategies to both anticipate and manage uncomfortable or surprise thoughts they have when experiencing a physical sensation.

Example: Sue has significant coordination, balance, and motor planning issues. When she stumbles or moves too slowly during a game in PE she immediately begins to think, "Everyone is laughing at me". That thinking causes her to become self-conscious and distracted, which increases her difficulty moving and reacting in the middle of a game. As a result she either makes up excuses why she cannot do PE or quits in the middle of a game and walks off the field suddenly.

Her peers have become hesitant to select her for their team, not because of her physical obstacles but because she shuts down and ruins the game. Sue is unaware that her negative self-talk is what really stops the show and that her negative thinking is actually causing her to be even more uncoordinated and a "bad player".

This section of the ADEF allows Sue to work on raising awareness to how her negative thoughts distract her focus and cause her to play more poorly. Through activities, discussion, and strategies she begins to learn her thoughts affect her response time and her awareness of where the ball is or what direction she should be running. She does many movement and mind-body activities that enable her to practice clearing her mind and thinking positively when she has a physical task at hand. She gets support from staff and team members on thinking positively, and slowly her resistance to attending PE lessens and she is able to experience some enjoyment from the game even if she is not a star player.

1. Establish the mind-body connection and how thoughts affect the body
 - Panic
 - Anxiety
 - Perfectionism
 - Low self-esteem, chronic discouragement
 - Pain and physical discomfort
 - Struggles with weight
2. My mind-body connection – examine how my thoughts affect my body
 - Power of positive thinking
3. Identify problem areas, move into goal setting if individual is able

Sensory Experiences

This section is designed to help individuals understand the connection between a sensory experience and the mind's reaction to it (thoughts). By raising one's awareness to the dynamic of having a thought reaction to sensory input, the individual can then begin to predict his responses in various environments. He learns that the mind gives signals when it is in distress and those signals act as warning signs that tell us we need to act to take care of our needs. Once an individual's awareness is increased to his personal thought "warning signs", he can begin to anticipate his needs, generate plans to accommodate for them, and make decisions that incorporate his sensory sensitivities.

The underlying goal of this process is to reduce dysregulation and distress many individuals with ASD or other developmental disabilities experience in response to the unexpected, and to equip them with strategies to both anticipate and manage uncomfortable or surprise thought reactions they feel when exposed to sensory stimuli to which they are sensitive.

Example: Joe is extremely sensitive to people coughing. When someone coughs within earshot, Joe becomes angry immediately and accuses the person of doing it on purpose to bother him. It has reached the point where peers and staff are on high alert around him when they have allergies or a cold, and many group activities have been derailed because someone cleared his throat without thinking or coughed and forgot to warn him. His parents are extremely nervous when they take him out and about and to social events because one cough can cause an outburst that requires removing him quickly and taking him home.

In this section Joe is given the opportunity to reflect, discuss, and explore his thought reactions to people coughing. In a safe setting, he can explore that people are not intending to upset him and the thoughts of persecution he is having that make him so angry are really connected to a fear of getting sick.

Through role-play and other activities Joe can begin to explore alternative things to think when people cough, and things he can do to redirect himself or manage his thoughts that make him so angry at unsuspecting coughers. He practices strategies such as: asking when he first joins a group if anyone has a cold or might cough so he is not caught off guard, address more directly his fear of getting sick, asking people to warn him if they are going to cough, learning that coughing does not always mean someone is really sick and contagious by exploring all the benign things that can cause someone to cough, etc.

1. How thinking can bring upon fight/flight/freeze/submit response, which then heightens sensory sensitivity
 - How obsessive thoughts over the fear of something can send my sensory system into alert or overdrive
2. My sensory-thought connection – how do my thoughts affect my senses?
3. Identify problem areas, move into goal setting if individual is able

Joe remains very sensitive to coughing and does not like it, but he has stopped accusing people of doing it on purpose and if needed he will excuse himself for a minute to gather himself instead of yelling and making accusations.

Emotional Experiences and Thought Reactions

This section is designed to help individuals understand the connection between an emotional experience and the mind's thought reaction to it. By raising one's awareness to the dynamic of having a thought reaction to emotions, the individual can then begin to predict his responses in various environments. He learns that the mind gives signals when it is in distress and those signals act as warning signs that tell us we need to act to take care of our needs. Once an individual's awareness is increased to his personal thought "warning signs", he can begin to anticipate his needs, generate plans to accommodate for them, and make decisions that incorporate his emotional needs.

See section 6.17 Activity 4:
Emotions and Thinking: "The
Loneliness Game"

The underlying goal of this process is to reduce dysregulation and distress many individuals with ASD other developmental disabilities experience in response to the unexpected, and to equip them with strategies to both anticipate and manage uncomfortable or surprise thought reactions they feel when experiencing a strong emotion.

Example: When Keith experiences social disappointment he has a pattern of sinking into despair he will never have friends and will die a lonely old man. His fallback position in the face of social disappointment is to spiral downwards in his thinking and become stuck, withdrawn, and inconsolable. Even an unintentional slight like someone not waving back can cause him to sink so quickly that it is hard for others to catch him before he goes down his path of negative thoughts. Consequently he is unable to problem solve or receive support that comforts him, causing peers to be overly cautious when interacting with him. He has rejected many opportunities to socially interact because "it always turns out bad, so why try?"

This section opens the door for Keith to examine his emotion-thought patterning when it comes to peers: uncover underlying fears of rejection and how to manage them, sorting through and making sense of past experiences, reframing cognitive distortions that tend to intensify his emotions, practice role play on new ways to interact with peers, confidence building, supported small group interactions designed to increase confidence, and experience being with peers, etc.

1. How thoughts and beliefs elicit emotional reactions
2. My mind-emotion connection – how do my thoughts affect my feelings?
3. Are there themes and patterns to the relationship between my mind and my emotions?
4. Identify problem areas, move into goal setting if individual is able

Keith continues to need staff support before, during, and after peer interactions but through his work has become slowly and incrementally more confident and resilient in social situations. He is also more likely to share the negative thoughts when they arise from an uncomfortable feeling so they can be addressed and he can receive assurance and support.

6.09 Me and You

6.09.1 Mindset's Effect on Social Relationships

1. What beliefs do I hold about others?
2. How do these beliefs affect my emotions, thoughts, and behaviors when I interact with others?
3. Examples from the individual's personal life – family members, friends, etc.

(Dweck, 2006)

6.09.2 Perspective Taking - Variance Awareness (Among Contexts and People)

1. Establish definition and concept of separation of self from others
2. Explore through both discussion and experientially:
 - Role playing, improvisation
 - Media, movie clips
 - Interviews
 - Self-quizzes and questionnaires
 - Scenarios and case studies
 - Debates
 - Creative writing
 - Scenes in plays and literature
 - Charts, graphs, color coding of differing options to help conceptualize and organize understanding visually
 - Reading biased articles and essays, discuss
 - Dissect a political, world, or current issue multiple perspectives

See section 6.18 Activity 5:
Perspective Taking I:
Guessing the Viewpoint of
Others on Video

See section 6.19 Activity 6:
Perspective Taking II:
Guessing the Viewpoint of
Others in Role-Play

See section 6.20 Activity 7:
Perspective Taking III:
Guessing the Viewpoint of
Others through Real Life
Observation

3. How do others see me?

- My behaviors when around others
- My expressions of emotion and reactions when around others
- My body language and facial expressions when around others
- My communication style when around others
- My temperament and personality when around others
- Detecting themes and patterns to how others see you based on your behaviors, expressions of emotions, etc.
- Drawing conclusions from reflecting on the above – help individual put parts together to assess from a big picture standpoint how others think and feel about them.
- Looking at me through someone else's eyes

People who know me well and see me frequently

- ✓ What effect do I have on them?
- ✓ Are these the effects I intended to create/want?
- ✓ Is there anything I want to do less or more of to make it better?
- ✓ Is there anything the other person could do less or more of to help the interaction go better?
- ✓ Social goal setting if individual is able

People I see occasionally

- ✓ What effect do I have on them?
- ✓ Are these the effects I intended to create/want?
- ✓ Is there anything I want to do less or more of to make it better?
- ✓ Is there anything the other person could do more or less of to help the interaction go better?
- ✓ Social goal setting if individual is able

Strangers

- ✓ What effect do I have on them?
- ✓ Are these the effects I intended to create/want?
- ✓ Is there anything I want to do less or more of to make it better?
- ✓ Is there anything the other person could do more or less of to help the interaction go better?
- ✓ Social goal setting if individual is able

4. Evaluation of self in relation to others

- Overall, what is easy/goes well for me in relating to others?
- Overall, what is hard/falls apart in relating to others?
- When I am at my best I come across as _____
 - identify if possible contributing factors (emotional, sensory, physical, cognitive, etc.)
- When I am at my worst I come across as _____
 - identify if possible contributing factors (emotional, sensory, physical, cognitive, etc.)
- What do I like about how I relate to others?
- What would I like to be different?
- What kinds of people do I feel comfortable around? How does that affect the interaction?
 - identify if age, gender, size, tone of voice, level of authority, etc. play a part
 - identify if environmental factors play a part
- What kinds of people are hard for me to be with? How does this affect the interaction?
 - identify if age, gender, size, tone of voice, level of authority, etc. play a part
 - identify if environmental factors play a part
- Social goal setting if individual is able

5. How do I react around others? How do my thoughts, feelings, or behaviors change?

- In one-one and group formats
 - examine internal reactions and changes
 - examine external reactions and changes
 - examine self-control
 - Examine past experiences and interactions
- Examine interactions that went wrong the individual did not understand (lost a friend, made someone angry at them, etc.)
- Engage student in group experiences designed to highlight peer interactions (activities, games, and exercises incorporating negotiation and compromise)

Do debriefing/feedback session to reflect on experiences, behavior, and reaction to others, and how others responded/interacted with individual

- Examine reactions around strangers, peers, friends, family

Other activities can include: Play detective and journal or discuss; conduct experiments in community, then go back and debrief; improvisation, role playing scenarios; creative writing, art

6. How do I affect others?

- Activities can include: reflection on past experience; rigged experiences then debrief; examining experiences with strangers, peers, friends, family; playing detective and journal or discuss; role playing and improvisation

6.10 Me and My Current Surroundings

6.10.1 Evaluating Environments

List all the environments the student experiences on a frequent or semi-frequent basis. Have the student qualify them with descriptors. If he struggles with language (difficulty articulating or impoverished descriptive language) or has weak visualization skills use the concept formation structure words to help guide the individual – what, size, color, number, shape, where, movement, mood, background, perspective, sound – and encourage gesturing and movement to activate visualization.

- Bedroom
- House
- School/program
- Restaurants
- Stores
- Recreational locations
- Other

Evaluate each of the above in terms of:

- Immediate physical layout (crowded, big space, structured, chaotic, things moving around, very still)
 - Evaluate in terms of physical preferences and regulation
 - How do these physical elements affect my behavior?
 - How do these physical elements affect my mood?
 - Problem solving – generating coping strategies
 - Identifying areas of potential self-advocacy and self-care
- Sensory elements (sounds, smells, sights, tactile, etc.) inherent in environment
 - Evaluate in terms of sensory preferences and regulation
 - How do the sensory elements affect my behavior?
 - How do the sensory elements affect my mood?
 - Problem-solving – generating coping strategies
 - Identifying areas of potential self-advocacy and self-care

Activities: Use discussion and experiential activities, such as role-playing, geared towards developing awareness of one’s immediate environment; how it impacts physical/sensory, emotional, cognitive experiences, and reactions; and what one can do to self-soothe and regulate.

Since the topic is familiar places the individual feels positive about, introduce realistic elements of the unexpected to see how well he can manage and adapt. (Role-play scenario: One day you show up for bowling class and there is a very loud, very big birthday party at the alley disrupting the regular routine – can’t use the lanes you typically use and your favorite bowling ball is being used by someone else.)

- Emotional elements - elicited from or in reaction to aspects of the environment (examples: stressful because of the small spaces, scary because of the loud machinery, giddy because of the girls there, etc.)
 - Evaluate in terms of emotional preference and regulation
 - How do the emotional elements affect my behavior?
 - How do the emotional elements affect my mood?
 - Problem solving – generating coping strategies
 - Identifying areas of potential self-advocacy and self-care
- Cognitive elements
 - How do my thoughts, preferences, dislikes, fears/phobias, mindset/beliefs affect how I feel in this environment
 - How do my thoughts and mindset about the environment affect my behavior?
 - How do my thoughts and mindset about the environment affect my mood?
 - Problem solving – generating coping strategies
 - Identifying areas of potential self-advocacy and self-care

6.10.2 Evaluating Difficult Surroundings

List all the environments the individual experiences that are heightened or are sources of dysregulation, anxiety, avoidance or meltdowns

Qualify them with descriptors. If he struggles with language – difficulty articulating or limited descriptive language – or has weak visualization skills, use the concept formation structure words to help guide the individual (examples of descriptors: what size, color, number, shape; where movement, mood, background, perspective, and sound). While he is doing this, encourage gesturing and movement to further activate visualization.

- doctor's offices and other treatment locations
 - recreational activities
 - obligatory activities (*Examples: church, Grandma's for Thanksgiving, etc.*)
 - places where the student wants to go but is scared OR a place he associates with something negative so he avoids or gets dysregulated while there.
- Evaluate in terms of:
 - Immediate physical layout (*Examples: crowded, big space, structured, chaotic, things moving around, very still*)
 - ✓ evaluate in terms of physical preferences and regulation
 - ✓ How do the physical elements affect my behavior?
 - ✓ How do the physical elements affect my mood?
 - ✓ problem solving – generating coping strategies
 - ✓ identifying areas of potential self-advocacy and self-care

- Sensory elements (sounds, smells, sights, tactile, etc.) inherent in environment
 - ✓ evaluate in terms of sensory preferences and regulation
 - ✓ How do the sensory elements affect my behavior?
 - ✓ How do the sensory elements affect my mood?
 - ✓ problem solving – generating coping strategies
 - ✓ identifying areas of potential self-advocacy and self-care
- Emotional elements - elicited from or in reaction to aspects of the environment (*Examples: stressful because of the small spaces, scary because of the loud machinery, giddy because of the girls there, etc.*)
 - ✓ evaluate in terms of emotional preference and regulation
 - ✓ How do the emotional elements affect my behavior?
 - ✓ How do the emotional elements affect my mood?
 - ✓ problem solving – generating coping strategies
 - ✓ identifying areas of potential self-advocacy and self-care
- Cognitive elements
 - ✓ How do my thoughts, preferences, dislikes, fears/phobias, mindset/beliefs affect how I feel in this environment?
 - ✓ How do my thoughts and mindset about the environment affect my behavior?
 - ✓ How do my thoughts and mindset about the environment affect my mood?
 - ✓ problem solving – generating coping strategies
 - ✓ identifying areas of potential self-advocacy and self-care



Activities: Use experiential activities geared towards developing awareness of one's immediate environment; how it impacts physical/sensory, emotional, cognitive experiences and reactions; and what one can do to self-soothe and regulate. Incorporate stressors into activities since the focus is on milieus in which individual is already reactive and needs to practice responses to unwanted or distasteful elements.

6.10.3 New Unfamiliar Places

This section offers a format for:

- processing new, recent experiences such as being new to the program milieu, unfamiliar activities, experiences, and outings (*Examples: new family activities, new internship or job site, attending an event for the first time, flying a plane for the first time, etc.*)
- previewing, predicting, and preparing for an upcoming new experience. (The language will need to be adjusted to make the questions future-oriented and to add conditional language such as “might”, “possibly”, “could” in terms of what they will see, feel, experience, etc.)
- Immediate physical layout (*Examples: crowded, big space, structured, chaotic, things moving around, very still*)
 - Evaluate in terms of physical preferences and regulation
 - ✓ What aspects of my physical environment did I find challenging?
 - ✓ What aspects of my physical environment did I enjoy?
 - ✓ How did the physical elements affect my behavior?
 - ✓ How did the physical elements affect my mood?
 - ✓ problem solving – generating coping strategies
 - ✓ identifying areas of potential self-advocacy and self-care
 - Evaluate sensory elements (sounds, smells, sights, tactile, etc.) inherent in environment in terms of sensory preferences and regulation
 - ✓ What parts of my sensory experience were uncomfortable for me/difficult to manage?
 - ✓ What parts of my sensory experience did I enjoy?
 - ✓ How did the sensory elements affect my behavior?
 - ✓ How did the sensory elements affect my mood?
 - ✓ problem solving – generating coping strategies
 - ✓ identifying areas of potential self-advocacy and self-care
 - Evaluate in terms of emotional preference and regulation emotional elements elicited from or in reaction to aspects of the environment (*Examples: stressful because of the small spaces, scary because of the loud machinery, giddy because of the girls there, etc.*)
 - ✓ What emotions connected to this experience did I find uncomfortable or distressing?
 - ✓ What emotions connected to this experience did I find pleasurable?
 - ✓ How did the emotional elements affect my behavior?
 - ✓ How did the emotional elements affect my mood?
 - ✓ problem solving – generating coping strategies
 - ✓ identifying areas of potential self-advocacy and self-care

- Evaluate in terms of mindset and regulation cognitive elements they brought into the experience with them or were elicited in the experience (*Examples: thoughts, fears, mindsets, biases, assumptions, etc.*)
 - ✓ How do my thoughts, preferences, dislikes, fears/phobias, mindset/beliefs affect my experience of this environment?
 - ✓ What thoughts related to this experience was upsetting to me?
 - ✓ What thoughts related to this experience was pleasant and positive?
 - ✓ How did they affect my behavior?
 - ✓ How did they affect my mood?
 - ✓ problem solving – generating coping strategies
 - ✓ identifying areas of potential self-advocacy and self-care



Activities: Experiential activities geared towards developing awareness of one's experiences, and reactions; and what one can do to self-soothe and regulate. Build in the element of the unexpected since the focus is on unfamiliar milieus.

6.10.4 Drawing Conclusions

In this section, the student should draw some big picture conclusions about his environmental preferences and needs:

- Physical
 - When I am out and about, what physical elements do I like to have around me because they are calming, organizing, or soothing? (Things I can take with me or things I can seek out because they are comforting)
 - When I am out and about, what physical elements do I wish to avoid or handle better because they are upsetting and dysregulating?
 - Coping mechanisms and adaptive strategies
 - ✓ things I can do to help myself before/in/during/after preparation
 - ✓ things other people can do to help me before/in/during/after preparation
- Sensory
 - When I am out and about what sensory sensations do I like to have because they are calming, organizing, or soothing?
 - When I am out and about what sensory sensations do I wish to avoid or handle better because they are upsetting and dysregulating?
 - Coping mechanisms and adaptive strategies
 - ✓ things I can do to help myself before/in/during/after preparation
 - ✓ things other people can do to help me before/in/during/after preparation

- Emotional
 - When I am out and about, what emotions do I like to feel because they are calming, organizing, or soothing?
 - When I am out and about, what emotions do I wish to avoid or handle better because they are upsetting and dysregulating?
 - identify external emotional triggers
 - identify internal emotional triggers
 - Is there a pattern to my emotions that is predictable? (*Example: crowds make me anxious*)
- Coping mechanisms and adaptive strategies
 - ✓ things I can do to help myself before/in/during/after preparation
 - ✓ things other people can do to help me before/in/during/after preparation
- Cognitive
 - When I am out and about what mindset or thoughts help me remain calm, organized, or soothed?
 - When I am out and about what mindset or thoughts do I wish to avoid or handle better because they are upsetting and dysregulating?
 - Do I have sticky thoughts that make my experience harder I would like to get rid of?
 - Coping mechanisms and adaptive strategies
 - ✓ things I can do to help myself before/in/during/after preparation
 - ✓ things other people can do to help me before/in/during/after preparation



Activities: Since this section is a big picture overview, use strategies that help condense information into a visually clear format – flow charts, write in ADEF journal, concept maps, etc.

- Using my awareness to take care of my needs
 - What strategies can I put in place to help reduce anxiety, stress, and dysregulation before going into a new environment?
 - Do I need to gather information ahead of time/preview what to expect?
 - Would it help me to have a visual of what to expect (map of the place/layout, video of the venue, etc.)?
 - Do I need to build in time to prepare emotionally?
 - Should I identify who will be my support person/touchstone doing the event? Do I need to talk to them about my fears/concerns ahead of time?
 - Are there things I might want to take with me to help me stay calm and regulated?
 - Other ideas (make suggestions, brainstorm with individual)

- What strategies can I put in place to help reduce anxiety, stress, and dysregulation once I am already out and about?
 - ✓ seek comfort and support from staff
 - ✓ seek comfort/assistance from peers
 - ✓ hold a comfort object
 - ✓ self-soothing techniques that are socially acceptable in public
 - ✓ think about something comforting
 - ✓ take a break (let staff know)
 - ✓ get a drink of water
 - ✓ chew gum, suck on candy
 - ✓ other (make suggestions, brainstorm together)



Activities: Would be designed to practice and role play coping mechanisms and self-care in a wide variety of settings.

6.11 Me and My Community

The purpose of this section is to raise awareness of the self in relation to the community with the additional goals of:

- Personal and independence goal setting
- Career development
- Affinity and interest development
- Identifying potential community partnerships, internship opportunities and job sites
- Increasing social interactions and opportunities
- Executive function practice
- Building self-advocacy

This section is the beginning of an exploration into community participation. The topic will be addressed more extensively in the Understanding and Participating in Community module, which aims to build fund of knowledge, executive functions in the context of the local community, and independence skills.

Instead, it is an opportunity to collect information, identify and prioritize needs and goals, assess the individual's capability to expand skills and knowledge in this realm; and a starting point for longer range planning after discovery phase is complete.

Me and My Community takes a bigger picture look at the systems and structures inherent in the individual's community (whereas Me and My Environment focuses on an individual's direct relationship with the surroundings) and assesses:

- The extent to which the individual has a fund of knowledge for the systems and structures of the community in which he lives (examples: police, fire, public transportation, commerce, governing entities such as the DMV, etc.)
- Takes an inventory of those systems and structures the individual has current firsthand experience (examples: rides the train, has toured the fire department, went to the DMV with a parent when he renewed his license, etc.)
- Identifies those structures and systems the individual wants and needs to become more familiar with to increase community involvement and awareness

Possible structures and systems include:

- Grocery stores
- Public transportation
- Medical and pharmacy services
- Retail stores
- Restaurants
- Social venues and community recreation (examples: concert halls, museums, bowling alleys)
- Police, fire, and other public safety organizations
- Community events (examples: concerts in the square, parades)

- Local government and elections
- Public parks and other community-wide meeting places
- Local concerns and issues (examples: crime, pollution, river cleanup, etc.)
- Local industries
- Local history, famous figures, interesting local lore and facts
- Demographics: what is the people makeup of my community (examples: ethnicities, religions, race, gender, age)
- This list becomes the starting point for designing the community-based aspect of the individual's program after the discovery phase, which involves:
 - Community-based goal setting
 - Ways to embed executive function exercises into community work (examples: planning, execution, and evaluation of community outings)
 - Formation of activities such as online research, following local current events, discussions, guest speakers, and community outings

To get ideas for tailoring this part of the program, refer to Community-Based Experiences List.



Activities: Activities include developing awareness of navigating one's local community and how it impacts physical/sensory, emotional, cognitive reactions:

- How to navigate/logistics
- Coping mechanisms
- Anticipating potential difficulties and generating potential solutions
- Preferences
- Self-advocacy and getting needs met
- Managing the unexpected

6.12 Me and the World

The purpose of this section is to raise awareness of the self in relation to the world with the additional goals of:

- Goal setting
- Career development
- Affinity and interest development
- Strengthening big picture thinking
- Opinion development
- Expanding fund of knowledge and world view
- Strengthening research skills (*Examples: computer and news reports*)
- Widening potential topics for discussions and casual conversation with others

This section is not intended to take the place of the more extensive module on Understanding and Participating in Society, which aims to build fund of knowledge, executive function, and independence skills. It is an opportunity to collect information, identify and prioritize needs and goals, assess the individual's capability to expand skills and knowledge in this realm; and a starting point for the longer range planning after the Discovery phase is complete.

Me and the World takes a big picture look at the world, acknowledges the time period in which the individual lives and assesses:

- The extent to which the individual has a fund of knowledge surrounding his state of residence, his country, and the world
- Takes an inventory of aspects the individual has current firsthand experience (*Examples: has traveled within the state, around and/or outside the country, knows people from another country, parents from another state or country, has read books or seen movies, etc.*)
- Identifies aspects of his country and the world with which the individual wants to become more familiar
- Part 1 of this section focuses on the student's awareness and understanding of his state:
 - Basic geography
 - Significant historical facts, figures, and sites
 - Major industries
 - Culture and demographics

Activities should be selected that are relevant to the individual's life, interests, and goals, AND provides opportunities to strengthen critical thinking skills. This section is not intended to build lists of rote facts to store in memory, but rather aims to create:

- A general sense of awareness
- Peak interest for topics to explore deeper from an intellectual curiosity, social justice, or career standpoint

- Underscore the individual's overall understanding of social connections and how things work
- Part 2 addresses his awareness and understanding of his country
- Basic geography
- Significant historical facts, figures, and sites
- Major industries
- Culture and demographics
 - politics
 - pop culture
 - current significant news events

As with the last section, activities should be selected that are relevant to the individual's life, interests, and goals, and provides opportunities to strengthen critical thinking skills rather than build lists of rote facts to store in memory. It aims to:

- Create a general sense of awareness of the individual's state outside things that directly impact the individual on a daily basis
- Peak interest for topics to explore deeper from an intellectual curiosity, social justice, or career development standpoint
- Underscore the individual's overall understanding of his country's infrastructure, the aspects of his country that affects his life, larger social networks, and how things work

Part 3 addresses his awareness and understanding of his awareness and understanding of the world as a whole:

- Basic geography (*Examples: continents, hemispheres, etc.*)
- Significant historical facts, figures, and sites
- Major world issues (*Examples: war, environmental, etc.*)
- Culture, religions, and demographics
- Resources
- Politics
- Famous figures
- Current significant news events

Activities should be selected to:

- Create a general sense of awareness of the world outside things that directly impact the individual on a daily basis
- Peak interest for topics to explore deeper from an intellectual curiosity, social justice, or career development standpoint
- Underscore the individual's overall understanding of large social networks, how things work on a large scale, and the similarities and differences of people in general

6.13 ADEF Module Completion Exercises

At the completion of the ADEF, the student should be involved in activities that help to integrate and internally summarize what he has learned over the course of doing the module. Many types of activities can be devised locally by users. Here are a few you can include and/or use as models for others.

Activities:

- My Hierarchy of Needs
- Identifying Personal Goals Based on What I Know About Myself
- Designing My Personal Goals: Steps to Success and Change

See section 6.21 Activity 8:
My Hierarchy of Needs

See section 6.22 Activity 9:
Identifying Personal Goals
Based on What I Know About
Myself

See section 6.23 Activity 10:
Designing My Personal Goals:
Steps to Success and Change

6.14 Activity 1: Experimenting with the Senses: Smell

Applies to:	6.07.1 Physical Body: The Physical Senses
Areas Targeted for Development and/or Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring and identifying olfactory sensitivities, aversions, and preferences through experience • Following directions and guidelines • Verbalizing: putting sensory sensations into words • Categorizing (positive, negative, neutral) • Evaluative thinking (identifying gradations/rating preferences on a Likert Scale 1-6) • Managing stress and anxiety related to sensory input (smells) • Higher order thinking (matching a smell to its source, deductive reasoning, guessing, drawing conclusions)
Student Functional Capacities Engaged by Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptive language (understanding directions) • Active working memory and sequential memory (holding the directions and order of operations for the process – smell, think, describe, guess, rate) • Expressive oral language (verbalizing the experience and articulating the name of each scent) • Descriptive language (generating descriptive words for the smells – “sweet, sour, fruity, stale, burning, fishy”, etc.) • Sensory regulation (maintaining regulation when receiving unpleasant sensory stimuli) • Emotional regulation (managing anxiety and overall emotional regulation when facing anticipation, the unknown and the unexpected) • Critical reasoning (guessing and rating smells, big picture summary of the experience)
Time Required	Approximately 1 hour: approximately 10 minutes to anchor topic (identifying and rating smells according to preference, having student list smells he likes and doesn’t like) and explain steps of the experiment (smell, think, describe, guess, rate).
Number of Participants	<p>Can be done with one individual or a small group (3-5). For individuals with slow processing, expressive language difficulty, strong reactivity to smells, high anxiety or impulsivity, the activity is best done 1:1 so the process can unfold at the student’s pace and time can be used as needed to calm and soothe if dysregulated.</p> <p>If done in a small group, students can write down their guesses or hold them in memory until each participant has had a chance to smell the same smell. Each student should have the opportunity to guess and rate each one by preference (on a whiteboard, a piece of paper, etc.)</p>
Space Needed	Distraction-free room with no interfering sensory stimuli (noises, competing smells, etc.)

<p>Materials Needed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 10-12 small bottles filled with different types of scents - preferably scents that are familiar to the age group's experience (example: sweet/flower, sour/vinegar, fresh/mint, spicy/nutmeg, strong/soap, etc.). Label the bottles with numbers. If student gets easily overwhelmed, dysregulated, or fatigued use fewer scents. ● Create master key of smells (bottle #1 is peppermint, etc.) ● Provide descriptive list of words from which individual can draw if having difficulty generating language ● A visual chart of the 1-6 scale with accompanying language (1= awful, 3 = neutral/no reaction, 6 = awesome) for the student to reference as needed. ● Paper or a white board to list each guess, accompanying descriptors, and the rating number the student has attributed to it.
<p>Pre-activity Preparation and/or Discussion Topics</p>	<p>Discussion preceding exercise to anchor context and set the climate for the experiment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The sense of smell ● List smells the student likes, dislikes ● Practice rating things from 1-6 ● Discussing student's overall reactivity and sensitivity to smells
<p>Activity Steps</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss rules and procedures for the experiment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students smell bottle, taking as many sniffs as needed/wanted ● Reflect ● Describe (disgusting, nice, strong, etc.), refer to word bank as needed ● Identify the smell (vanilla, soap, pickles, etc.) ● Rate from 1-6 (1=awful, 3=neutral, 6=awesome) ● Repeat process with each smell 2. Answer any questions and clarify any confusion 3. Begin experiment 4. After students have described, guessed, and rated each smell they are told what the smell is to confirm whether their guess is right or wrong 5. Take breaks as needed 6. When finished <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rate all smells from best to worst ● Count how many guesses are correct and discuss how accurate they are ● Discuss what was learned and to what extent students enjoyed or disliked the experience and why ● Draw conclusions about students' overall sensitivity/reactivity to smells ● Reflect on how this information is helpful and discuss if smells are a

<p>Situations and Remedies</p>	<p>dysregulating factor when in different environments</p> <p>If a student has significant regulatory issues or sensory sensitivity that impairs his ability to be fully engaged in this activity and draw meaning, scale the exercise back to (for example)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on readiness to <i>try</i> experiment • First identify smells he likes and doesn't like • When ready, start with a few smells that are drawn directly from the examples the student generated so they are familiar • If necessary prompt student by letting him know "this is one of the smells you said you liked", "this is one you said you didn't like" <p>If a student has cognitive or conceptual difficulty understanding the complexity of gradations and rating things on a scale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a thumbs up/thumbs down or smiley face/unhappy face instead of Likert scale <p>If a student has expressive language difficulty and/or difficulty with categorization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate a list of familiar descriptive words and allow him to circle, point, or otherwise indicate which one he feels goes with the smell • Provide a list of the smells in a different order and see if the student can identify/recognize it from the list
<p>Follow-up / Post-activity Discussions or Other Steps</p>	<p>Once the exercise is done and students are alerted to and able to identify smells and express preferences or dislikes, begin pointing out the smells inherent in various environments both at school and on outings to raise awareness (<i>"This car has a new car smell – can you smell it? Do you like it?"</i>; <i>"Wow, this bakery smells good. I can smell vanilla and cinnamon. What do you smell?"</i>)</p> <p>Preview and anticipate possible sensory difficulty, and generate coping strategies (Example: <i>"We are going into a gym and it will smell like sweat. Do you know what that smells like? Do you think it will bother you? If it does, what can we do once we are there?"</i>; <i>"This art project will include paint and paint has a very strong smell. Will that make it difficult for you to do the project? Would make it easier for you if we were to open a window or do the art project outside?"</i>)</p> <p>Help a student who is dysregulated by an environmental smell to identify why he is in distress (Example: <i>"You seem very anxious to me. I noticed it smells like bleach in here and I remember you really did not like the bleach when you smelled it during the smell test. Is the smell bothering you?"</i>)</p>
<p>Notes</p>	<p>If a student reacts poorly to the exercise, stop and discuss. He may need more foundation work with the senses and language before participating.</p>

Section 6.0 AWARENESS DEVELOPMENT AND EXECUTIVE
FUNCTIONS (ADEF) MODULE

Source	Created by Elana Himmelfarb, 2012

6.15 Activity 2: Playing with My Cognitive Skills: Visualizing and Verbalizing

<p>Applies to:</p>	<p>6.07.3 The Mind, Playing with My Cognitive Skills: Visualizing and Verbalizing (Building Blocks of Concept Formation)</p>
<p>Areas Targeted for Development and/or Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anchoring the 12 foundational structure words that are the building blocks to concept formation. • Visualizing using the structure words as a guide. • Verbalizing what one sees in the mind’s eye so another can see the image through the use of words • Following directions and guidelines • Visualizing skills (constructing an image in the mind’s eye) • Verbalizing skills (communicating the image constructed by using structure words and description) • Critical thinking and categorization (understanding the meaning of each structure word and being able to categorize according to each structure word) • Parts-to-whole thinking (identifying both the details and the big picture of the visualized image) • Managing stress and anxiety related to visualizing and verbalizing
<p>Student Functional Capacities Engaged by Exercise</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptive language (understanding directions, understanding structure words) • Active working memory and sequential memory (holding the directions and order of operations for the process of visualizing and verbalizing) • Concept formation/visualization • Expressive oral language (verbalizing the image and finding words to describe it) • Descriptive language (generating descriptive words for the image) • Emotion regulation (managing anxiety and overall emotion regulation in the face of anticipation, the unknown, and the unexpected)

<p>Time Required</p>	<p>Approximately 1 hour: approximately 10 minutes to review structure words, 15 minutes for facilitator to visualize and verbalize and have student construct an image based on their words; 5 minutes to “share pictures” and see if matching; 15 minute to switch and have student visualize and facilitator has to construct image; 5 minutes to “share pictures” and see if matching.</p>
<p>Number of Participants</p>	<p>1:1 exercise until the student is stable with the meaning of the 12 structure words and an understanding of what it means to visualize. Can be adjusted to a small group exercise if all students are stable with structure words and have had practice with visualization exercises.</p>
<p>Space Needed</p>	<p>Distraction free room with no interfering sensory stimuli (noises, competing smells, etc.)</p>
<p>Materials Needed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 index cards with a structure word written on each card • Sample pictures or images from a magazine in case the student is not yet able to generate visualization on their own • A list of descriptive words associated with each structure word that can be referenced if the individual is having difficulty generating language on their own.
<p>Pre-activity Preparation and/or Discussion Topics</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce and anchor concept of visualizing (seeing an image in the mind’s eye). Can practice with an image shown and then taken away or by using an image the student knows well such as a family member, favorite cartoon character, or a known image such as a policeman or fireman. Once student is able to “see” images, begin practice visualizing objects not in the room and wean him off of the dependence of having to look at a picture to create one in his mind. 2. Introduce the 12 structure words in the following manner: Anchor the most concrete first and make sure the student is stable before moving on. Have him use gestures, movement, and other non-verbal actions when applicable. Use visualization cues such as “what do you see for...”, “How should I picture this cat sitting on a wall?” “Can you use your words and movement to show me what you see so I can make the same picture in my mind?” etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What – (Examples: cat, umbrella, clown, a candy bar, etc.) • Size – (Examples: big, small) Encourage gesturing by asking them to show you how tall, small, etc. with their hands. • Shape – (Examples: square, round, bumpy, etc.) Encourage gesturing and also encourage comparisons (example: “Should I picture something round like a ball or more oval like an egg?”) • Number – (Examples: a few, a lot, 5, some) • Color – (Examples: blue, red, etc.) Student should not simply list the color but describe the color of the object he sees (example: a light brown cat) • Where – Have student describe what he sees around the image that tells

where it is “located”. (Example: “The cat is on a wall outside so I see green plants and a red brick wall.”) If the student is seeing the image in isolation (floating in space with no context) use this as an opportunity to ask him to “put” the image somewhere: “Instead of having your policeman floating in space, can you put him at work and tell me where you see him.” (Example: *directing traffic, in a mall, guarding a bank, etc.*)

- **When** – (Example: “It is light out and I see a sun so it is daytime.”)
- **Movement** – (Example: “The cars are moving fast so everything around them is blurry.”) This structure word lends itself well to having students use nonverbal communication to reflect meaning (have them show you how the man walks, get on the floor and move like a cat sneaking up on a squirrel, etc.)
- **Sound** – (Example: Image is a traffic jam - “I hear honking and brakes squealing.”) Student can use words and make sounds to highlight any sound associated with their image.
- **Mood** – (Examples: “The cat is arching his back and his hair is standing up so I see him as scared”, “The policeman has a serious face so he is mad.”) Identifying the mood associated with an image can be a challenge for some individuals. If they assign a mood word without explanation, ask what they see in their picture that tells them what the mood is.
 - The last two structure words are the most abstract and for some it may be wise to stop and solidify skills with the first ten.
 - Students with visual-spatial ordering difficulty may not be able to image in 3D. If the student is able to do abstract reasoning and create complex, 3D images try to introduce and anchor:
- **Background** – Describe what is behind the image. (Examples: “Behind the boat I see a horizon with the sun setting” and “A group of children surrounds the clown.”) May be able to use discussion of **Where** to help if student was able to generate what he saw around his image.
- **Perspective** – Most abstract of the structure words as it not only requires 3D conceptualization but nuances and angles. (Example: “I am looking at the circus ring from above/from the stands, from on top of an elephant”) May need to get student to move around and practice seeing a real 3D object from many angles to anchor the concept of perspective (Example: Lie on ground and look at an action figure, stand on a chair and look down on it, put it up high on a shelf, etc.)

Take as much time as needed to establish and practice visualizing and identifying the structure words with pictures and cut-out images. Lay the structure word index cards out so they can be easily referenced. Once the student is able to do the process with visual aids with some success, this activity can be done repeatedly in sessions spread out over time to build and reinforce visualization and verbalization skills.

<p>Activity Steps</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review rules and procedures for visualizing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an image in the mind’s eye (if unable, use pictures from magazines, etc.) • Using the structure words as a guide, incorporate words, gestures, sounds, and movement to describe your picture to the teacher • The teacher will then repeat back what the student’s words made them see and any mistakes are corrected • Switch places and now it is the teacher’s turn to create an image and use words, gestures, sounds and movement to describe the picture to the student. 2. Answer questions and clarify any confusion 3. Review structure words student will be using (depends on skill level) 4. Student visualizes and verbalizes with support 5. Teacher repeats back image student made and student corrects any differences 6. Take a break if needed 7. Teacher visualizes and student is in charge of making sure he uses all the structure words (may need to have index cards available for reference or have them written on a board) 8. Student repeats back and teacher corrects
<p>Situations and Remedies</p>	<p>If a student has significant regulatory issues, a lack of engagement, or a weak sense of reciprocity this exercise should be delayed until such time as he is able to be regulated, engaged, and reciprocal enough to benefit from the activity.</p> <p>If a student has cognitive difficulty understanding the concept of visualization, work should be done to anchor the structure words with 1D, 2D images, and 3D objects.</p> <p>If a student has expressive language difficulty and/or difficulty with categorization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with 3D objects he can hold and use his senses to examine instead of creating visualization he will have to verbalize. • Generate a list of familiar descriptive words and allow student to circle, point to, or otherwise indicate which one he feels goes with each structure word.

<p>Follow-up / Post-activity Discussions or Other Steps</p>	<p>Since structure words and visualization are the building blocks to writing and reading comprehension, they can be applied in a wide range of teaching scenarios and teachable moments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If a student is having trouble describing an event, an object, or a scene from a movie the structure words can help prompt thinking, ability to describe orally, and recall from memory with increased detail. ● When making comparisons, exposure to work with the structure words can be very helpful (examples: Great Danes can be as big as a small horse, the locker room smells like it does when you go to the health club) ● Providing guidance, inspiration, and language in writing – structure words can be used to guide the content that needs to be included in a paragraph written describing something. ● Visualization techniques have tremendous value in education and learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – helps anchor auditory information given in explanations or lectures – increases one’s ability to follow directions – assists students in comprehension of vocabulary words, understanding new concepts, making connections – Provides inspiration in art, improvisation, role playing, presentations, discussions, writing, brainstorming, problem solving, etc.
<p>Notes</p>	<p><u>Lindamood-Bell</u> offers an entire structured program for remediating and building Visualizing and Verbalizing skills, starting with single images and building up to visualizing whole paragraphs.</p>
<p>Sources</p>	<p>Bell, N. (1991). Gestalt imagery: A critical factor in language comprehension. <i>Annals of Dyslexia</i>, 41(1), 246-260. doi: 10.1007/BF02648089</p> <p>Hayes, C.B., ed. (2006, May 2). <i>Dyslexia in children: New research</i>. New York: Nova Science Pub Inc.</p> <p>Johnson-Glenberg, M. C. (2000, December). Training reading comprehension in adequate decoders/poor comprehends: Verbal versus visual strategies. <i>Journal of Educational Psychology</i>, 92(4), 772-782). doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.92.4.772</p> <p>Mendelson. (2004). For whom is a picture worth a thousand words? Effects of a visualizing cognitive style. <i>Journal of Visual Literacy</i>, 24(1), 1-22A.</p> <p>Stimley, R. E. (2006). Reading to learn: The role of metacognition in reading comprehension and academic achievement of students with learning disabilities. Retrieved November 28, 2012 from http://cardinalsolar.bsu.edu/handle/handle/192730</p> <p>Snowling, M. J., & Hulme, C. (2011, January 12). Evidence-based interventions for reading and language difficulties: Creating a virtuous cycle. <i>British Journal of Educational Psychology</i>, 81(1), 1-23. Doi: 10.1111/j.2044-8279.2010.02014.x</p>

6.16 Activity 3: Playing with Cognitive Skills: Creativity and Brainstorming

Applies to:	6.07.3 The Mind: Playing with My Cognitive Skills
Areas Targeted for Development and/or Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following directions and guidelines • Verbalizing • Creativity • Brainstorming • Managing stress and anxiety related to generating ideas on the spot in the absence of clues or an explicit, “right” answer • Using humor and visualization in the creative process
Student Functional Capacities Engaged by Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptive language (understanding directions, sifting through known vocabulary to find those that sound similar to the nonsense word) • Expressive oral language (verbalizing ideas) • Emotional regulation (managing anxiety and overall emotion regulation in the face of an open-ended exercise with no correct answer) • Critical reasoning (generating fake meaning for nonsense words) • Inhibition/facilitation (taking turn, waiting for others to take their turn) • Focal maintenance (sustaining attention needed during task to focus on answers peers give and respond) • Phonological processing/encoding (Ability to spell name then reverse the letters to spell it backward)
Time Required	Approximately 45 minutes: approximately 10 minute to anchor rules of the game, 25 minutes to play, 10 minutes to process experience
Number of Participants	Small to medium sized group (3-8). For individuals with slow processing, expressive language difficulty, high anxiety when put on the spot, or verbal impulsivity when others are speaking, the activity might need additional staff to float and facilitate. Each participant should have a chance to make his own guesses during each group member’s turn.

Space Needed	Distraction-free room with no significant interfering sensory stimuli (noises, competing smells, etc.). Can sit in circle on floor or in chairs.
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chalkboard or white board to write down names • Dry erase markers or chalk • Sample already prepared using teacher's first name • Chairs if students do not want to sit on floor
Preparation	None needed
Activity Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss rules of the game: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each student in the group will take a turn at the board writing his first name backwards. • Students are to pretend it is a word in a strange foreign language (or an alien language if students prefer fantasy). Group decides upon the pronunciation of the backward name. • Including the person who's name is on the board, each student makes up a definition for the word • Go around so everyone has a chance to have their name done 2. Answer questions and clarify any confusion 3. Begin by using the teacher's first name (example: yllas for Sally) 4. Students brainstorm how to pronounce (example: ee-las, yeelas, ill-as, etc.). Then make up a definition (example: a house for eels to live in, a dish people make in Greece, etc.) 5. Once the trial run is done and the students have a sense of how to play, the game begins. 6. Game over when each student has had his name done 7. When finished: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss tricks students used to brainstorm (find another word that looks like or sounds like a word they know, imagination, sources of inspiration such as Anime or Pokémon names, etc.) • Identify definitions students made up that stood out as particularly funny or creative • Discuss ease/difficulty in making up definitions and being put on the spot to be creative • Discuss if students were able to have fun or if they were reactive to other people's definitions of their name they did not like, etc. • Discuss times in real life when students felt put on the spot to be creative to generate ideas (examples: classroom, social situations, ordering food, asked a question and was caught off guard); discuss strategies for coping in such situations
Situations	If a student has difficulty writing on the board or spelling his name backward,

<p>and Remedies</p>	<p>facilitator should write for the individual so his spelling does not interfere with his ability to play the game.</p> <p>If a student has cognitive or conceptual difficulty understanding what a definition is and is unable to generate definitions for objects he knows well, he should not participate in this exercise until he has gained the ability to work with and understand the concept of a definition.</p> <p>If a student has expressive language difficulty or slow processing, he can either get help from a facilitator or not engage in the game until he is able to process what is said and respond when it is his turn at a speed that enables him to benefit from the experience.</p> <p>If an individual has high emotional reactivity/defensiveness to peers, the game may prove very challenging when it is his turn and others guess definitions for their name they may not like. Additional coaching and facilitation may be required to help keep reactivity manageable so the individual and his peers can enjoy the game.</p>
<p>Follow-up / Post-activity Discussions or Other Steps</p>	<p>Continue to provide exercises that center on creativity and idea generation/brainstorming in a group setting to strengthen cognitive skills and self-regulation in group settings.</p>
<p>Notes</p>	<p>If a student reacts poorly to the exercise, stop and discuss. He may need more foundation work with language, brainstorming, creativity, and understanding the group process before participating.</p>
<p>Source</p>	<p>Morris, K., & Cinnamon, K. (1974). <i>A handbook of verbal group exercises</i>. Hoboken, NJ: Pfeiffer & Co. Expanded by Elana Himmelfarb, 2012</p>

6.17 Activity 4: Emotions and Thinking (The Loneliness Game”)

Applies to:	6.08.4 Developing Awareness of the Mind: Emotional Experiences and Thought Reactions
Areas Targeted for Development and/or Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring and identifying thought patterns that surface in reaction to an emotional experience • Understanding that emotions cause thought reactions, and that those thoughts can further intensify one’s emotions • Verbalizing emotional experiences • Abstract thinking (understanding the game is a metaphor for the experience of social rejection and loneliness) • Critical reasoning (analyzing emotions and the thoughts it elicited) • Managing stress and anxiety related to emotional input (rejection) • Evaluative thinking (connecting the experience of the activity to real life examples and identifying emotion/thought patterns) • Emotional thinking (reflecting upon one’s feelings and emotional thoughts surrounding loneliness, feeling left out, social rejection)
Student Functional Capacities Engaged by Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptive language (understanding directions) • Expressive oral language (verbalizing the experience, feelings, thoughts) • Descriptive language (generating descriptive words for emotional experiences) • Emotion regulation (managing anxiety and overall emotion regulation in the face of anticipation and few guidelines) • Critical reasoning (making connections between the game and real life social interactions)
Time Required	Approximately 1 hour: no set-up time needed. Game should be cued and ready but student should not see screen until game begins.
Number of Participants	This activity is best done 1:1, but it can be modified to a small group configuration by having each student take a turn alone in the room while he plays the game, then have small group convene to share their experiences.
Space Needed	Distraction-free room with no interfering sensory stimuli (noises, competing smells, etc.)
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer screen, internet access, mouse • A list of descriptive words handy during discussion so student can draw from the word bank if having difficulty generating language on his own to describe the experience. (Example: lonely, frustrating, easy, hard, confusing, realistic, unrealistic, etc.) • Pad of paper or a white board to write down what student says and does as he plays the game so feedback can be given and observations referenced during discussion. (Student may be so absorbed in game he is not aware of what he said and did.)

<p>Pre-activity Preparation and/or Discussion Topics</p>	<p>Discussion preceding exercise to anchor context and set the climate for the experiment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How video games can simulate real life (generate examples from experience and also bring in other examples such as the military and medical school trainings using video simulation) • Have student identify overall reactions to video game obstacles and frustrations • Have student reflect on preference and possible reaction regarding doing something “blind” (no rules or hints) vs. knowing what to expect
<p>Activity Steps</p>	<p>No prompting or explanation; simply tell the student to play the game. Observe student’s emotional reactions and write down verbalizations as he plays. After finished (approximately 5 minutes of play time) have discussion.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask student to describe how he is feeling in the moment 2. Cue up “The Loneliness Game” so it is ready for the student to play http://www.necessarygames.com/my-games/loneliness 3. Make sure the student reads or is told the only instructions: use the arrow keys to move your man. There are no other instructions. 4. Do not answer any questions or clarify any confusion, simply reassure the student to keep playing and discussion will follow afterwards. 5. Take notes on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether student notices the name “The Loneliness Game” right as it starts • All physical and behavioral reactions • All verbalizations, sighs, groans, etc. and level to which they are repetitive • Any spontaneous insights or realizations during or at completion of game 6. Before launching into discussion, ask student again how he is feeling 7. Discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional experience of playing the game (feelings, sensations, emotional reactions) • Thoughts student had while playing • Connection between his feelings and thoughts • Difference between how student felt before and after game • Have student explain in his own words why it is called “The Loneliness Game” and have student try to identify with the game and understand what it is saying about social rejection and loneliness. • Reflect on whether his reaction to being rejected by the dots brought up feelings and thoughts similar to when people reject him. Did he make the dots behave like they would when they are in groups of peers? What feelings does it bring up when people move away, and what thoughts surface about him and others when he feels this way? Did he identify with his dot, feel bad for it (empathy)?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Imagine the dots as people, provide a simple scenario and have student reflect on what he would do (keep trying, not try at all, give up, etc.). Reflect on how well his strategies work and generate alternate strategies. ● Evaluate whether it accomplished the goal of eliciting feelings of loneliness in the player. ● What was learned about his emotions and thought reactions and to what extent he enjoyed or disliked the experience and why ● Draw conclusions about student’s overall sensitivity/reactivity to social rejection and loneliness ● Reflect on how this information is helpful in the real world
<p>Situations and Remedies</p>	<p>If a student has</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Significant emotional regulation issues in general, ● Tremendous anxiety doing something without step-by-step instructions, or ● Significant social isolation or loneliness issues <p>Care will need to be taken to decide the timing, appropriateness, and level of support needed. The activity can either be delayed until the student shows readiness or the facilitator can “play” the game with him to increase the level of emotional support.</p> <p>If a student has cognitive or conceptual difficulty understanding what a simulation is or has weak abstract reasoning in general, the activity can either be delayed until the student shows readiness or the facilitator can “play” the game with him to increase the level of cognitive support by verbalizing insights during the game.</p> <p>If a student has expressive language difficulty but strong receptive language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generate a list of descriptive words (feelings and thoughts) and allow him to circle, point, or otherwise indicate which ones surfaced during his experience ● Have the student write, keyboard, or use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices to express his feelings and thoughts
<p>Follow-up / Post-activity Discussions or Other Steps</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Simulate the dot game with a live group of peers. Do not allow anyone to talk and the only gesturing allowed is to look away or turn your back to the “outsider”. Discuss and reflect on feelings and resulting thoughts. 2. Provide feedback to the individual when they behave among peers like their dot did. 3. 1:1 and group discussions (all students should have had first-hand experience playing the game) generating social scenarios that highlight issues surrounding the emotional experience of social rejection and how it changes thinking about oneself and others. Generate alternative solutions and healthy coping strategies 4. Role play/improvisation a human version of the dot game using scenarios. Make sure each student has a chance to be both isolated as the rejected one and part of the group that rejects the outsider.

Notes	If a student reacts poorly to the exercise, stop and discuss. He may need more foundation work with social rejection and managing emotions before being in a position to benefit from the experience, draw meaning, and self-reflect.
Source	Exercise created by Elana Himmelfarb, 2012 using “The Loneliness Game,” created by David Lerin www.necessarygames.com

6.18 Activity 5: Perspective Taking I: Guessing the Viewpoint of Others on Video

Applies To:	6.09.2 Me and You, Perspective Taking, #2
Purpose:	Exploring and identifying the perspective of other people
Areas Targeted for Development and/or Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following directions and guidelines • Verbalizing skills (putting ideas into words) • Contextual thinking (incorporating the context of a situation into one’s analysis) • Perspective taking (projecting what others might think based on the information available) • Critical thinking (analyzing a scenario and another’s behavior to find clues to conclusions about their perspectives)
Student Functional Capacities Engaged by Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptive language (understanding directions) • Expressive oral language (verbalizing ideas, generating descriptive words for context clues) • Emotion regulation (managing anxiety and reactivity that may surface in the scenarios) • Critical reasoning (identifying and analyzing context clues and incorporating them into conclusions) • Social cognition (perspective taking, reading non-verbal cues such as behavior)
Time Required	Approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour: approximately 5 minutes to introduce and anchor the activity guidelines. Can extend or shorten the activity depending on attention, mental stamina, etc.
Number of Participants	Can be done with one individual or a small group (3-5). For individuals with slow processing or expressive language difficulty the activity is best done 1:1 so the process can unfold at his pace and time can be used as needed with each scenario. If done in a small group, students need to take turns guessing and listening to each other’s ideas
Space Needed	Distraction-free room with no significant interfering sensory stimuli (noises, competing smells, etc.)

<p>Materials Needed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TV or computer ● Pre-selected recorded or cued up soap opera, sitcom, or movie clips ● If group activity, can sit on ground or use chairs. All students need to be able to view the screen ● White board to write down ideas as students generate them ● Dry erase markers with several colors so each character analyzed is coded in distinct color
<p>Pre-activity Preparation and/or Discussion Topics</p>	<p>Discussion preceding exercise to anchor concept of perspective taking (ADEF). Enough examples should be generated until the individual understands the concept and is able to participate in the activity.</p>
<p>Activity Steps</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss rules and procedures for the activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Watching short scene clips with the sound muted ● Facilitator will stop/pause the scene ● Students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – recall what they saw happen – Identify each character and guess their role in the scene (example: bad guy, mother, store clerk, etc.) – discuss how each character behaved, identify the emotions expressed (body language and facial expressions) – draw conclusions about the perspective of each character (example: the male student wanted to get his teacher mad and did a lot of things behind her back and then made faces to his friends and seemed really proud of being obnoxious; the teacher was confused and angry because she was being disrespected, she did not know how to control the student so she stormed out of the classroom to get the principal)

	<p>2. Watch scene clips, each followed by discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If activity is done in a small group, facilitator should write down each student’s contributions and encourage debate if there are differences of opinion, guiding them back to the scene. Can re-watch if there is variance in what students recall. ● If done 1:1 can also re-watch the scene as needed to reference ● If students add information that was not present in the scene or make assumptions that are not logical watch the scene again and point out the discrepancies <p>3. When finished</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Decide which scenes where it was easiest to figure out the characters’ perspectives. Identify what made it easy (large gestures, big actions, strong emotions) ● Decide which scenes where it was difficult to figure out the characters’ perspectives
<p>Situations and Remedies</p>	<p>If student has significant regulatory issues that impair his ability to be engaged fully in this activity and draw meaning, scale the exercise back to 1:1 and/or watch fewer scenes in each session and spread out over multiple sessions</p> <p>If a student has cognitive or conceptual difficulty understanding the complexity of non-verbal cues or perspective-taking the activity should be delayed until the student has the skills to benefit from the experience and draw meaning.</p> <p>If a student has expressive language difficulty he can act out the various behaviors and facial expressions he found significant.</p> <p>If a student has difficulty tracking multiple pieces of information or has slow processing, break down steps into smaller pieces:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Watch scene and let student know that he will be asked to describe what happened ● Watch scene again and prompt student to identify each character and guess their role in the scene (examples: bad guy, mother, store clerk, etc.). Can pause as much as needed to stop and reflect, discuss context clues and put pieces together

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch scene again and prompt student to pay attention to how each character behaved, identify the emotions expressed (body language and facial expressions). Can break it down character by character if needed to decelerate pace and complexity further. • Watch scene one last time to see if student can generate a big picture conclusion about the perspective of each character (example: “The male student wanted to get his teacher mad and did a lot of things behind her back and then made faces to his friends and seemed really proud of being obnoxious”; “The teacher was confused and angry because she was being disrespected, she did not know how to control the student so she stormed out of the classroom and got the principal”.)
<p>Follow-up / Post-activity Discussions or Other Steps</p>	<p>This activity can be done repeatedly with different video clips. Once a student is able to identify key perspectives through non-verbal behavior on a video, can progress to Perspective Taking II: Guessing The Viewpoint of Others Through Role Play, and Perspective Taking III: Guessing The Viewpoint of Others Through Real Life Observation</p>
<p>Notes</p>	<p>If a student reacts poorly to the exercise, stop and discuss. He may need more foundation work with social cognition and language before participating.</p>
<p>Source</p>	<p>Created by Elana Himmelfarb, 2012</p>

6.19 Activity 6: Perspective Taking II: Guessing the Viewpoint of Others in Role Play

Applies to:	6.09.2 Me and You, Perspective Taking, #2
Purpose:	Exploring and identifying the perspective of other people
Areas Targeted for Development and/or Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following directions and guidelines • Verbalizing skills (putting ideas into words) • Contextual thinking skills (incorporating the context of a situation into one’s analysis) • Perspective taking skills (projecting what others might think based on information available) • Critical thinking skills (analyzing a scenario and another’s behavior to find clues to conclusions about perspectives)
Student Functional Capacities Engaged by Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptive language (understanding directions) • Expressive oral language (verbalizing ideas, generating descriptive words for context clues.) • Emotion regulation (managing anxiety and reactivity that may surface in the scenarios) • Critical reasoning (identifying and analyzing context clues and incorporating them into conclusions) • Social cognition (perspective taking, reading non-verbal cues such as behavior)
Time Required	Approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour: approximately 5 minutes to introduce and anchor the activity guidelines. Can extend or shorten the activity depending on attention, mental stamina, etc.
Number of Participants	<p>Can be done with one individual, small or medium sized group (3-8).</p> <p>For students with slow processing or expressive language difficulty, the activity is best done 1:1 so the process can unfold at their pace and time can be used as needed with each scenario.</p> <p>If done in a small group, students need to be able to take turns guessing and listening to each other’s ideas</p> <p>Two facilitators are needed for this exercise, as there are times when the actors have to step out of the room and discuss</p>

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<p>Space Needed</p>	<p>Distraction-free room with no significant interfering sensory stimuli (noises, competing smells, etc.)</p>
<p>Materials Needed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room to move around during role-play • Index cards with simple, real-life scenarios • Props for role-play that would be useful to the scenarios given to the students • If a group activity, can sit on ground or use chairs. All students need to be able to view the screen. • White board to write down ideas as students generate them • Dry erase markers with several colors so each character analyzed is coded in distinctive color
<p>Pre-activity Preparation and/or Discussion Topics</p>	<p>Discussion preceding exercise to anchor concept of perspective taking. Enough examples should be generated until the student understands the concept and is able to participate in the activity.</p> <p>Experience engaging in Perspective Taking I: Guessing the Viewpoints of Others in Video</p>
<p>Activity Steps</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss rules and procedures for the activity 2. Students pick up an index card (1-2 players per scene) 3. Students who drew scene card step out of the room with a facilitator and partner if it is a 2-person scene. 4. Students reads the scenario 5. Facilitator makes sure students understand and can articulate the “scene”. If students have a partner, discuss strategy and roles. Facilitator helps as needed 6. Students return to the room and act out a short scene 7. Peers discuss and reflect on the following (students who acted out the scene do not speak): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recall what they saw happen • Identify each character and guess their role in the scene (example: bus driver and passenger, mother and child, babysitter and child, etc.) • Discuss how each character behaved, identify emotions expressed (body language and facial expressions)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw conclusions about perspective of each character (example: “The babysitter thinks the child is a brat and the child is doing everything he can to get her upset because he doesn’t like her/is mad at his parents for leaving him home, etc.”) <p>8. Acting students tell peers whether their observations or conclusions matched their scene</p> <p>9. After scene has been discussed and evaluated the next student or pair of students get to pick a scene card until each person in the group has had a turn</p> <p>10. When finished</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide which scenes where it was the easiest to figure out the characters’ perspectives. Identify what made it easy (large gestures, big actions, strong emotions, have been in a similar experience) • Decide which scenes where it was difficult to figure out the characters’ perspectives (didn’t understand or know how to interpret certain behaviors or expressions, had no prior context for scene)
<p>Situations and Remedies</p>	<p>If a student has significant regulatory issues that impairs his ability to be engaged fully in this activity and draw meaning, scale the exercise back to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:1 • Do simplified scenes and facilitator should exaggerate behaviors, gestures, and emotions to help prompt <p>If a student was not able to do the pre-activity Perspective-Taking I, participation in Perspective-Taking II should be delayed until he has skills to benefit from the experience and draw meaning.</p> <p>If a student has expressive language difficulty the scenes can be done non-verbally</p> <p>If a student has difficulty tracking multiple pieces of information or slow processing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify scenes • Exaggerate context clues with high affect and grand gestures • Call “freeze” intermittently in the scene so the actors will freeze and the group can discuss the scene in smaller parts

Follow-up / Post-activity Discussions or Other Steps	Once a student is able to identify key perspectives and draw accurate conclusions from the role playing scenarios in Perspective Taking II: Guessing The Viewpoint of Others Through role-play, introduce Perspective Taking III: Guessing The Viewpoint of Others Through Real Life Observation
Notes	If a student reacts poorly to the exercise, stop and discuss. He may need more foundation work with social cognition and language before participating.
Source	Created by Elana Himmelfarb, 2012

6.20 Activity 7: Perspective Taking III: Guessing the Viewpoint of Others through Real Life Observation

Applies to:	6.09.2 Me and You, Perspective Taking, #2
Purpose:	Deepening the ability to identify the perspective of other people by watching their interactions
Areas Targeted for Development and/or Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following directions and guidelines • Verbalizing skills (putting ideas into words) • Maintaining focus on a task in the midst of environmental distractors • Contextual thinking skills (incorporating the context of a situation into one’s analysis) • Perspective taking skills (projecting what others might think based on the information available) • Critical thinking skills (analyzing a scenario and another’s behavior to find clues to conclusions about their perspectives)
Student Functional Capacities Engaged by Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptive language (understanding directions) • Expressive oral language (verbalizing ideas, generating descriptive words for context clues.) • Emotion regulation (managing anxiety and reactivity being around people) • Critical reasoning (identifying and analyzing context clues and incorporating them into conclusions) • Social cognition (perspective taking, reading non-verbal cues such as behavior) • Attention regulation (ignoring non-salient information and stimuli, maintaining focus despite distractors)
Time Required	<p>Approximately 45 minutes: 10 minutes to discuss activity and review what student will be looking for, 20 minutes of observation, 15 minutes for post-observation discussion and reflection.</p> <p>If activity is done on program grounds, time can be more controlled. If activity is done in a public milieu, staff will need to factor in time for logistics (driving to the mall, parking, walking to the food court, etc.).</p>

<p>Number of Participants</p>	<p>Can be done with one individual or a small group (1-3).</p> <p>For students with slow processing or expressive language difficulty the activity is best done 1:1 so the process can unfold at their pace.</p> <p>If done in a small group, students need to be able to take turns guessing and listening to each other's ideas.</p> <p>2 Facilitators may be needed for this exercise if done in small groups to help with logistics and to pull a student who might become dysregulated and need to leave the place of observation.</p>
<p>Space Needed</p>	<p>On-site at program or school location, observation opportunities are best where there is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An increase in chance to see a variety of behaviors ● The actions of the observed group are obvious and not too subtle and nuanced ● The presence of the observers will not cause a disruption or change the way the observed students behave ● Possible viable locations: playground/recess, PE, lunchroom, classroom where there is an involved activity and the students are preoccupied <p>In the community, observation opportunities are best when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students can be observed without knowing they are being watched ● There can be a respectful distance between the observers and the students they are watching ● The observation does not cause a disruption or change the behavior of the students being observed ● The students observed are engaged in an activity (not sitting and reading, etc.) ● The location is not too chaotic or sensorily dysregulating (loud noises, etc.) ● Possible viable locations are areas in the community including public parks, airports, food court in a mall, train or bus station, etc.
<p>Materials Needed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to transportation to community or permission from school if on-site ● Pad of paper and pens/pencils to write down observations (students write or teacher can scribe)

<p>Pre-activity Preparation and/or Discussion Topics</p>	<p>Discussion preceding exercise to anchor concept of perspective taking. Enough examples should be generated until students understand the concept and are able to participate in the activity.</p> <p>Experience engaging in Perspective Taking I: Guessing the Viewpoints of Others in Video and Perspective Taking II: Guessing the Viewpoints of Others Through Role-Play</p> <p>How to manage self in public/during school observation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keeping voice down ● Not pointing ● Looking away occasionally so observed person does not feel stared at or become self-conscious ● Role is as observer – do not approach the students you have been watching
<p>Activity Steps</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss rules and procedures for the activity. 2. Students settle into observation location 3. Teacher will select, point out, and “assign” what students should be looking for. Students can also generate ideas for observation (<i>Example: mother shopping with child who is behaving badly and she is trying to manage her frustration. Students should be assigned to watch the mother and child over someone simply walking by</i>) 4. Students quietly verbalize observations and teacher writes them down. If any students are good writers they can have their own notepad. 5. When the observed party moves on, select another observation focus or move locations to get a different viewpoint. If at a mall or somewhere with open levels, it may be interesting to do an observation from an upper level looking down to provide the experience of variance in physical perspective. 6. When students get restless or fatigued, end the exercise and regroup in a quiet location to discuss (classroom, van, outside parking lot) 7. Peers discuss and reflect on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recall what they saw happen (<i>Example: watched playground; two children fought over a toy</i>) ●

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify each character and guess their role in the scene (<i>Example: one child owned the toy and the other wanted it</i>) • Discuss how each character behaved, identify emotions expressed through body language and facial expressions as they may be too far away to hear words (<i>Example: The owner of the toy was tearful, the other child had a mean expression and was physically aggressive</i>) • Draw conclusions about perspective of each character (<i>Example: The child who owns the toy likes to share and tried to share toy but the other child was greedy and grabbed it away. The child who owns the toy got frustrated and grabbed it back, refusing to let the other child see it again because he did not trust the other child anymore. If the second child had not been so grabby and aggressive they probably could have played with the toy together.</i>) <p>8. When finished</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide which scenes where it was the easiest to figure out the characters' perspectives. Identify what made it easy (large gestures, big actions, strong emotions, have been in a similar experience) • Decide which scenes where it was difficult to figure out the characters' perspectives (didn't understand or know how to interpret certain behaviors or expressions, had no prior context for scene)
<p>Follow-up / Post-activity Discussions or Other Steps</p>	<p>Continue to reinforce perspective taking in the following contexts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding characters and their motivation in movies, shows, and books • Discussions about peer relationships and peer conflicts • Bring things to their awareness when out and about in the community (example: notice how the man at the next table is speaking to the waiter. How would you describe it (demanding, rude, mean, polite, friendly, etc.)? Why would someone treat his or her waiter rudely?)
<p>Notes</p>	<p>If a student reacts poorly to the exercise, stop and discuss. He may need more foundation work with social cognition, regulation, and language before participating.</p>
<p>Source</p>	<p>Created by Elana Himmelfarb, 2012</p>

6.21 Activity 8: My Hierarchy of Needs

Applies to:	6.13 ADEF Module Completion Activities
Purpose:	Provide a big picture summary in a graphic model of individual student needs based on work done in the ADEF
Areas Targeted for Development and/or Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Big picture summary in a graphic model of individual student needs based on work done in the ADEF ● Reflecting on what was learned about self through the ADEF ● Verbalizing needs ● Categorizing needs ● Evaluating information in terms of importance. ● Reinforcing new self-knowledge from ADEF ● Producing a graphic representation of needs for future reference
Student Functional Capacities Engaged by Exercise	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receptive language (understanding directions of exercise) 2. Active working memory and long-term access (recalling with salient details and insights that arose during ADEF work) 3. Expressive oral language (verbalizing thoughts) 4. Higher order thinking (evaluating/categorizing needs, conceptualizing “hierarchy” and applying the concept to their own needs, and understanding that the symbol of a triangle represents a hierarchy, summarization) 5. Saliency determination (ability to identify what is the important information from a large amount of information) 6. Prioritization (ability to arrange information according to importance or value) 7. Gestalt/big picture thinking (ability to reflect on an experience and see how the parts of the ADEF together create a big picture of the many parts of oneself)

<p>Time Required</p>	<p>The amount of time needed to perform this activity depends heavily on the individual's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language systems • Processing speed • Efficiency of recall • Critical reasoning skills • Attention controls <p>An individual who struggles with any of the above will need the activity spread over several sessions. An individual who is not struggling with the above list might be able to accomplish the activity in one to two 50-minute sessions.</p>
<p>Number of Participants</p>	<p>The process of constructing the hierarchy should be done 1:1 as the information is so individualized and time needed to complete task will vary greatly.</p> <p>Once students have done their own personal hierarchy, they can be matched with developmentally appropriate peers for group sharing, discussion, and reflection on each student's hierarchy and a comparison of needs.</p>
<p>Space Needed</p>	<p>Distraction-free room with no significant interfering sensory stimuli (noises, competing smells, etc.)</p>
<p>Materials Needed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADEF journal with student's responses for reference and guidance • A large piece of blank white paper • Several different colors of thin tipped markers
<p>Pre-activity Preparation and/or Discussion Topics</p>	<p>Completion of the ADEF</p>

**Activity
Steps**

1. Set climate and expectations by explaining that the activity is designed to:
 - Give students a chance to take all the information they gathered through the ADEF and choose the most important needs and realizations about themselves
 - Create a visual that will summarize a lot of the ADEF information in an easy to reference chart
 - Create a chart that will be useful in other activities, discussions, and group experiences throughout the program
2. Anchor the definition of hierarchy
 - Define hierarchy
 - Provide simple real life examples that are understandable and have context in the student's life (examples: In a courtroom—bailiff, lawyers, judge; in the hospital—nurse assistant, nurse, doctor)
3. If student has higher-level skills, introduce Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and review. If student struggles with more profound processing, language, or cognitive challenges skip #3 and go to #4
4. Introduce a blank triangle chart with the abridged categories written in and large areas left blank to write in (bottom to top):
 - My Basic Sensory and Physical Needs (what I need to feel comfortable and regulated with my senses and in my body)
 - My Basic Cognitive Needs (what I need to understand what is going on around me, what I need to learn best, what I need to express myself best)
 - My Basic Emotional and Social Needs (what I need to feel emotionally calm and happy, what I need to get my social needs met)
 - My Basic Self-Esteem Needs (what I need to do, where I need to be, and who I need to be around to feel good about myself)
 - My Unique Qualities (my morals, my creativity, my gifts and talents)
5. Take the time needed with the student to start at the bottom and fill in each part of the chart. The student should select a color theme for each level. This exercise will require access to the ADEF information for reference. If the student has a lot of cognitive, language, and processing challenges the language load should be adjusted to use vocabulary on his level of comprehension. The student is freed up to reflect as the facilitator guides him through the process and writes down what the student decides should go in each category. To save space, use key words and phrases rather than whole sentences.
6. When the process is finished, however long it takes, time should be set aside to review when complete.
7. Discuss how this is not a fixed chart and needs to change over time. If the student is cognitively able, the facilitator can ask him to predict ways his chart might change as he gets older and more independent.

Situations and Remedies	As noted in activity step #3 above.
Follow-up / Post-activity Discussions or Other Steps	<p>The finished individualized My Hierarchy of Needs chart can be used in a multitude of ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group reflection and sharing • Referenced in therapeutic sessions • Revised on occasion throughout the program experience • Used as inspiration for journal entries, papers, group discussions • Used as a reference when a student is upset or in distress but does not know why – a quick visual review of his needs might prompt insight and understanding • The concept of a hierarchy and the graphic model can be abridged and used for other self-reflection exercises or to help explain/breakdown an abstract concept • The chart should become part of the student’s SIP file
Notes	None
Source	Created by Elana Himmelfarb, 2012 inspired by Dr. Abraham Maslow’s <i>Hierarchy of Needs</i> chart and concept.

6.22 Activity 9: Identifying Personal Goals Based on What I Know About Myself

Applies to:	6.13 ADEF Module Completion Activities
Purpose:	Identifying and formulating personal goals
Areas Targeted for Development and/or Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to reflect on what was learned about self through the ADEF • Identifying and verbalizing needs • Evaluative thinking (identifying information about self – needed to formulate goals) • Reinforcing new self-knowledge that arose from ADEF • Creating attainable and realistic short- and long-term personal goals • Critical reasoning (big picture thinking, strategic thinking, prioritization) • Temporal-sequential ordering (identifying whether goal is short- or long-term based on what is needed to accomplish it) • Visualization skills (envisioning a future self, envisioning what changes would look like if goals were accomplished)
Student Functional Capacities Engaged by Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptive language (understanding directions and vocabulary from ADEF) • Active working memory (recalling with salient detail the insights that arose during ADEF work) • Expressive oral language (verbalizing thoughts) • Higher order thinking (evaluating and prioritizing needs, conceptualizing goals and steps needed to achieve them, designing meaningful and attainable goals) • Saliency determination (ability to identify which goals would be most important or have the most meaningful positive impact) • Visualization/conceptualization (projecting into the future, predicting)

<p>Time Required</p>	<p>The amount of time needed to perform this activity depends heavily on the individual's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language systems • Processing speed • Efficiency of recall • Critical reasoning skills • Attention controls <p>An individual who struggles with any of the above will need the activity spread over several sessions. An individual who is not struggling with the above list might be able to accomplish the activity in one to two 50 minute sessions.</p>
<p>Number of Participants</p>	<p>The process of identifying and designing personal goals should be done 1:1, as the information is so individualized and personal.</p>
<p>Space Needed</p>	<p>Distraction-free room with no significant interfering sensory stimuli (noises, competing smells, etc.)</p>
<p>Materials Needed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADEF journal with student's responses for reference and guidance • Paper or a computer to log goals
<p>Pre-activity Preparation and/or Discussion Topics</p>	<p>Completion of the ADEF</p> <p>An understanding of what a goal is, what it means to set a goal, that it typically requires steps, and changes in behavior and time to make changes. Use examples from the individual's life to anchor understanding.</p>
<p>Activity Steps</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set climate and expectations by explaining that the activity is designed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give students a chance to take all the information they gathered through the ADEF and decide what they feel are most important needs and realizations about themselves • Create personal goals they will receive support in attaining 2. Go through each section of the Parts of Self section in the ADEF and help students identify and reflect upon possible goals. Goals should be written clearly in full sentences. There should be a minimum of 1 goal per section, no more than 2. Assure students this is just the beginning of the goal-making process – that the steps and plans for how to meet goals will be discussed at a different time once

the goals are chosen. Also indicate there are many other categories of goals that will be discussed at a later time (examples: career, relationship, etc.) and they do not have to try to do all now.

- Sensory goals (example: being able to tolerate being touched)
- Physical goals (examples: taking my medication without reminders, running a 5K, eating foods that won't make my celiac disease act up as much, etc.)
- Cognitive goals (examples: learning how to do research on the computer, learn Russian, read a chapter book)
- Emotional goals (example: staying calm and more emotionally regulated when I lose a game)
- Social goals (example: starting a conversation with a stranger)
- Recreational goals: (example: try bowling)
- Creative goals: (examples: take up photography, learn to play the drums)
- Mindset goals (example: I would like to be comfortable with things not being perfect all the time, I would like to not jump to conclusions so fast)

3. Take the time needed with students to construct goals. This exercise will require access to the ADEF information for reference. If a student has a lot of cognitive, language, and processing challenges the language load should be adjusted to use vocabulary on his level of comprehension. The student is freed up to reflect as the facilitator guides him through the process and writes down what the student has decided goes in each category.

4. When the process is finished, however long it takes; time should be set aside to review once complete.

5. Engage the student in a process of deciding:

- Whether goals should be posted somewhere they can see them
- Who to share goals with (parents, other teachers, peers)

6. Discuss how this is not a fixed or complete list, and goals change over time. If students are cognitively able, the facilitator can ask them to predict ways their goals might change, as they get older and more independent.

**Situations
and**

Depending on the students' cognitive capabilities, the facilitator may need to pre-identify goals and spend time reviewing them and their importance rather than having

Remedies	them struggle through the more complex task of vetting through the ADEF to find them.
Follow-up / Post-activity Discussions or Other Steps	<p>Once goals have been itemized and reviewed students will be ready for subsequent sessions designing the steps and sequence for accomplishing them (see activity Designing My Personal Goals: Steps to Success and Change)</p> <p>Once students have completed their personal goals, they can be matched with developmentally appropriate peers for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Group sharing ● Discussion and reflection on each student’s goals ● A comparison of needs ● Identifying commonalities among peers ● Group brainstorming of suggestions for meeting goals ● Enlisting others in achieving goals ● Referenced in therapeutic sessions ● Revised on occasion throughout the program experience ● Used as inspiration for journal entries, papers, group discussions ● Used as a reference when an individual has lost sight of his goal and lapses into behavior that interferes with achieving it. <p>Goals lists should be added to the student’s SIP.</p>
Notes	None
Source	Created by Elana Himmelfarb, 2012

6.23 Activity 10: Designing My Personal Goals: Steps to Success and Change

Applies To:	6.13 ADEF Module Completion Activities
Purpose:	Understanding and formulating the steps needed to meet personal goals
Areas Targeted for Development and/or Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to reflect on what has been learned about self through the ADEF • Identifying and verbalizing needs • Evaluative thinking (identifying information about self – needed to formulate goals) • Reinforcing new self-knowledge that arose from ADEF • Creating the steps and sequence for meeting attainable and realistic short- and long-term personal goals • Critical reasoning (big picture thinking, strategic thinking, brainstorming, creativity) • Thinking in terms of step wisdom, time, and sequence • Visualization skills (envisioning a future self, envisioning what changes would look like if goals were accomplished) • Enlisting others in attaining goals and meeting needs
Student Functional Capacities Engaged by Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptive language (understanding directions and vocabulary from ADEF) • Expressive oral language (verbalizing thoughts) • Higher order thinking (evaluating and prioritizing needs, conceptualizing goals and steps needed to achieve them, designing meaningful and attainable goals, big picture thinking) • Saliency determination (ability to identify which steps would most likely lead to the most meaningful positive impact) • Visualization/conceptualization (projecting into the future, predicting level of difficulty with steps to meeting goal)

<p>Time Required</p>	<p>The amount of time needed to perform this activity depends heavily on the individual's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language systems • Processing speed • Efficiency of recall • Critical reasoning skills • Attention controls <p>An individual who struggles with any of the above will need the activity spread over several sessions. An individual who is not struggling with the above list might be able to accomplish the activity in two to four 50-minute sessions.</p>
<p>Number of Participants</p>	<p>The process of identifying and designing the steps to meeting personal goals should be done 1:1, as the information is so individualized and personal.</p>
<p>Space Needed</p>	<p>Distraction-free room with no significant interfering sensory stimuli (noises, competing smells, etc.)</p>
<p>Materials Needed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADEF journal with student's responses for reference and guidance • Paper or a computer to log steps
<p>Pre-activity Preparation and/or Discussion Topics</p>	<p>Completion of the ADEF</p> <p>An understanding of what a goal is, what it means to set a goal, that it typically requires steps, changes in behavior and time to make changes. Use examples from the individual's life to anchor understanding.</p> <p>An understanding of steps and sequence</p> <p>An understanding that change occurs over time and the process will have its own ups and downs (times when it is easier to make changes and the goals feel attainable, and other times when it is harder to accomplish or the end result feels far away).</p>
<p>Activity Steps</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set climate and expectations by explaining that the activity is designed to give them a chance to take the personal goals they identified through the ADEF and generate paths to get there

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Go through each goal one at a time. Break down goals so students understand the parts where change is needed and co-generate ways to work towards meeting the goals in a step-wise manner. This process should not be rushed, as much emphasis needs to be placed on process so students do not focus solely on the end result: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sensory goals ● Physical goals ● Cognitive goals ● Emotional goals ● Social goals ● Recreational goals ● Creative goals ● Mindset goals 3. This exercise will require access to ADEF information for reference. If a student has a lot of cognitive, language, and processing challenges the language load should be adjusted to use vocabulary on his level of comprehension. The student is freed up to reflect as the facilitator guides him through the process and writes down the steps in the proper sequence. 4. When the process is finished, however long it takes; time should be set aside to review once complete. 5. Engage students in a process of deciding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Whether goals should be posted somewhere that they can see them ● Who to enlist in helping meet goals (parents, other teachers, peers) ● Any materials, resources, or experiences that are needed in the steps to meeting goals 6. Predict what may be easy/hard to do of the steps created and brainstorm strategies.
<p>Situations and Remedies</p>	<p>Depending on the student’s cognitive capabilities, the facilitator may need to pre-identify the steps and sequence for each goal and spend time reviewing them and their importance, rather than having the student struggle through the more complex task of vetting through the ADEF to find them.</p> <p>If a student has a lot of goals and becomes overwhelmed, prioritize for him which goals to approach first and which to address later.</p>

Follow-up / Post-activity Discussions or Other Steps	<p>The plan of action should be put in place, enlisting teachers, peers, and family as needed. Frequent assurance, support, and coaching should be provided as students work towards goals.</p> <p>Once students have completed their personal goals, they can be matched with developmentally appropriate peers for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group sharing• Discussion and reflection on each student’s progress towards his goals• A comparison of needs• Identifying commonalities among peers• Group brainstorming of suggestions for meeting goals• Enlisting others in achieving goals• Referenced in therapeutic sessions• Revised on occasion throughout the program experience• Used as inspiration for journal entries, papers, group discussions• Used as a reference when a student has lost sight of his goal and lapses into behavior that interferes with achieving it. <p>Goals lists should be added to the student’s SIP.</p>
Notes	None
Source	Created by Elana Himmelfarb, 2012

6.24 References

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Section 7.0

Appendices

7.01 Glossary

accommodation

An *accommodation* is an environmental change or approach put in place to help a student overcome or work around an area of need or challenge. Accommodations are used when the individual has a challenge, deficit, or disability that prevents her from accomplishing a task successfully but she has the capability to do part of it. They are put into place to bypass, eliminate, or reduce the challenge so she can devote energy to a more limited area to reach success or mastery.

ADEF

The Transition Curriculum's *Awareness Development and Executive Functions (ADEF)* module. The ADEF is designed to build self-awareness and strengthen executive functioning. Through an individualized process, students are exposed to experiences, concepts, activities, and interactions designed to strengthen the skills needed to become as independent as possible. The sequence, scope, depth, detail, and instruction methods used in delivery of the ADEF module are adjusted according to the *Student Individual Profile (SIP)* to ensure that content is delivered at a rate, volume, and complexity that suits individual learning and emotional needs.

affect

Affect is facial, vocal, gestural, or body language that shows the experience of feeling or emotion.

affective skills

Affective skills are the ability to show emotions and feelings.

affinities

Affinities are beloved subjects and activities that have great meaning to an individual and are a pleasure to participate in.

assistive or facilitated technology

Assistive or facilitated technology includes a wide range of devices and services used by individuals with disabilities to assist in the performance of tasks or functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible. This can include computers (hardware and software), peripheral devices such as special keyboards and screens, mobility devices such as wheelchairs and walkers, etc.

auditory processing

Auditory processing is “The ability to hear auditory messages, distinguish between similar sounds or words, separate relevant speech from background noise, and the ability to recall and comprehend what was heard.” (Source: Stroke Terms in Plain Words, <http://www.speech-therapy-on-video.com/stroketerms.html>, accessed January 17, 2013)

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) refers to all types of communication (with the exception of oral speech) that are used to make known one's wants, needs, ideas, and thoughts. ACC includes both low-tech approaches (gestures, facial expressions, sign language, drawing pictures) and high tech devices such as computer- or web-based software, speech synthesizers, handheld devices, etc.

ASD

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurobiological disorder defined by impairments in social interaction and verbal and nonverbal communication, accompanied by restricted interests and repetitive behaviors.

autonomic nervous system

Autonomic nervous system is the part of the nervous system that regulates involuntary systems such as gastrointestinal functions, heartbeat, blood pressure, etc.

Awareness Development and Executive Functioning

See ADEF

causal relationship

Causal relationship is the connection between one event (cause) and a second event (effect) where the second is understood to be the result of the first.

code switching

Code switching is the ability to understand how social contexts change the meaning of language – that social communication varies depending on the context and the people involved.

cognitive capability

Cognitive capability is brain-based skills needed to understand information being presented and to carry out tasks such as planning, problem solving, perception, and using language.

cognitive regulation

Cognitive regulation is the ability to control the rate, volume, patterning, and complexity of thoughts. Because of the effect biochemistry and the endocrine system has on cognition, cognitive regulation is strongly tied to emotion, attention, motivation, and memory.

complexity

Complexity is the depth, detail, and breadth of information being presented; the details, components, and nuances inherent in a task or activity.

concept formation

Concept formation is the extent to which an individual can understand both concrete concepts (example: “a frog”) and abstract concepts (example: “democracy”).

concept mapping

Concept mapping (also called mind mapping) is a means of visually representing information using words and pictures related by lines drawn amongst them in a similar way to how sentences are diagrammed in English grammar textbooks.

critical thinking

Critical thinking is the ability to evaluate information, draw connections, make conclusions, and apply logic.

depth and detail of processing

Depth and detail of processing is the extent to which an individual is using her attention to stimuli in such a way that it can be processed and encoded into memory. The extent is indicated by the degree to which the individual has a comprehensive, detailed level of understanding rather than just a superficial understanding. Often memory recall problems are linked to weak depth and detail of processing (example: “in one ear and out the other”).

descriptive language

Descriptive language is words used to describe an object, image, event, etc. that appeals to the senses.

discovery phase

Discovery phase is the initial period after the student enrolls lasting about three months. During this time the student is under minimal stress, giving her time to adjust to the new environment and form new relationships. It also gives staff the time to gather more information so they can tailor the program to the student’s needs. Guidelines covering how to do this are detailed in section 4.0 Intake and Individualizing the Transition Curriculum.

distractibility levels and triggers

Distractibility levels and triggers are the degree to which an individual is distracted by internal thoughts and feelings or external environmental sensory inputs. Example: student pays attention to an itchy tag instead of a lecture.

down-regulate

Down-regulate refers to calming or soothing.

dyad work

Dyad work is work done by two individuals working together

dysregulation

Dysregulation is a failure of the regulatory mechanism for some system or function of the physical body (such as immune response or metabolism), of the emotional aspect of one's personality (such as becoming explosively angry when the situation does not call for it), or of one's cognitive processes (such as compulsive thoughts).

emotional hijacking

Emotional hijacking is a condition where one's emotional reaction to some stimulus overwhelms her cognitive abilities and self-control.

emotional regulation

Emotional regulation refers to how an individual experiences emotions, attempts to influence them, and the contexts and triggers that dictate when the emotions surface (Gross, 1998b).

endocrine system

Endocrine system is a system of glands in the body that secrete hormones to regulate the body's activities including growth, development, metabolism, mood, and organ and tissue functions.

engagement

Engagement is the extent to which an individual can participate in a shared emotional experience.

evaluative thinking

Evaluative thinking is the ability to reflect upon or judge the value – positive or negative – of some event or experience. A person with good evaluative thinking can evaluate an experience and draw meaningful conclusions about her performance, success, challenges, and what to do differently in the future.

executive functions

Executive functions are cognitive abilities to perform activities such as organizing, problem solving, planning, strategizing, paying attention to and remembering details, verbal reasoning, and managing time and space. Also used to manage emotions, attention, and behavior.

expressive language

Expressive language is the ability to use spoken language and body gestures to communicate emotions, thoughts, needs, and preferences.

focal maintenance

Focal maintenance is the extent to which an individual can sustain concentration for the appropriate amount of time needed given the task, lecture, etc.

higher order thinking

Higher order thinking is a concept that some types of thinking and learning require cognitive processes beyond simple memorization and repeating back of what was learned. Higher order thinking involves manipulation of information and ideas in ways that transform their meaning and implications. The additional skills required may include *strategic thinking*, *critical thinking*, creativity, brainstorming, *problem solving* and an understanding of *causal relationships*.

humor regulation

Humor regulation refers to the ability to make use of tasteful, appropriate humor. Also includes the ability to detect and respond appropriately to other people's jokes and humorous statements.

IDEA

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a U.S. federal statute that governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to children (birth to age 21) with disabilities. In 1975 the U.S. Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, which established federal standards for the provision of special educational services to children with disabilities. Until that time, public schools either excluded these children or segregated them into separate facilities with little or no appropriate instruction or assistance.

ideational range

Ideational range is a wide or narrow range of ideas about a given subject.

IEP

Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a documented program mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that defines methods, approaches, and objectives tailored to the specific needs of a person with a disability. It is intended to help the individual more easily reach educational goals than would otherwise be possible.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

See IDEA

intake process

Intake process is used by a skilled educator or clinician to tailor the Transition Curriculum to each individual student.

intermittent reflective thinking

Intermittent reflective thinking is the ability to reflect on personal feelings in relation to one's internal sense of self. Example: "It's not like me to feel so angry" or "I shouldn't feel this jealous".

language processing

Language processing is the way spoken or written language is processed. This ranges from the construction of spoken or written messages to the abstraction of meaning from language.

limbic resonance

Limbic resonance is the capacity for sharing non-verbal, emotional states.

meta-skills

Meta-skills are skills used to acquire or make use of other skills. For example: a person who is good at teaching herself new skills has the meta-skill of being able to learn things; a great teacher is someone who has the meta-skill of being able to learn any subject and then teach that subject back to others.

Meta-cognitive skills are abilities to examine and change how one is thinking or evaluating information.

mindfulness

Mindfulness is the focusing of one's attention on each present moment as it occurs with curiosity, complete acceptance, and without judgment.

mindset

Mindset is a set of attitudes or beliefs about the self, others, and the world that dictates the perspective one uses to interpret information and draw conclusions about one's experiences.

motor planning

Motor planning is the ability to plan out body movements to bring about coordination, balance, and spatial awareness in relation to the body.

neuropsychology

Neuropsychology is the study of the relationship between function and structure of the brain as related to psychological processes and behaviors.

noble certainties

Noble certainties are fixed beliefs one has about the world that one will go to great lengths to defend as absolute truths.

olfactory

Olfactory relates to the sense of smell.

OT

Occupational therapist (OT): "In its simplest terms, occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants help people across the lifespan participate in the things they want and need to do through the therapeutic use of everyday activities (occupations). Common occupational therapy interventions include helping children with disabilities to participate fully in school and social situations, helping people recovering from injury to regain skills, and providing supports for older adults experiencing physical and cognitive changes."

(Source: About Occupational Therapy, <http://www.aota.org/consumers.aspx>, accessed January 17, 2013)

pacing

Pacing is the ability to adjust and control the rate at which one approaches, engages, and performs a task. (Examples: not rushing, not moving too slowly).

parasympathetic nervous system

Parasympathetic nervous system is one of the two major parts of the autonomic nervous system that regulates the functions of the body's glands and organs. It is intimately involved in supporting a large number of functions that occur when the body is not involved in a "fight or flight" response such as urination, defecation, digestion, and reproduction.

parts-to-whole thinking

Parts-to-whole thinking is the notion that understanding the parts of a subject is important to understanding the subject as a whole; the ability to grasp how the parts or elements of some topic add up to a conceptual whole.

performance consistency

Performance consistency is the ability to keep up a reliable and predictable flow of mental energy to function dependably over time. (Examples: Being able to do something competently one day and not the next, being unreliable, inconsistent task performance.)

person-centered approach

Person-centered approach is a psychological approach that provides an individual with the awareness to see how her beliefs, emotions, and behaviors affect her life as well as her decision-making ability, and helping to find her own solutions to problems.

phonological processing

Phonological processing is the ability to detect and discriminate differences in speech sounds.

previewing

Previewing is the ability to project and anticipate what comes next; visualizing consequences.

prioritization

Prioritization is the extent to which an individual can identify and order key information within what is being discussed; the ability to recognize, emphasize, and act upon key components inherent in a task or activity; the ability to order what is important when communicating oral or written information or when trying to produce some end result.

problem solving

Problem solving is the ability to approach problems, work through the details, and seek solutions.

proprioceptive

Proprioceptive is awareness of posture, movement, position, weight, and resistance of objects as they relate to the body.

PT

Physical therapy (PT); physical therapist (PT); “Physical therapists (PTs) are highly-educated, licensed health care professionals who can help patients reduce pain and improve or restore mobility - in many cases without expensive surgery and often reducing the need for long-term use of prescription medications and their side effects. Physical therapists can teach patients how to prevent or manage their condition so that they will achieve long-term health benefits. PTs examine each individual and develop a plan, using treatment techniques to promote the ability to move, reduce pain, restore function, and prevent disability. In addition, PTs work with individuals to prevent the loss of mobility before it occurs by developing fitness- and wellness-oriented programs for healthier and more active lifestyles.”

(Source: Who Are Physical Therapists?, <http://www.apta.org/AboutPTs/>, accessed January 17, 2013)

rate

Rate is the speed at which the flow of information is disseminated and absorbed (receptive, cognitive); speed of the flow of a task or activity (experiential, physical); speed at which an individual speaks, writes, or performs a task (expressive).

receptive language

Receptive language is the ability to hear and derive the intended meaning from spoken and written language. It involves several skills, such as the abilities to pay attention, to hear or read what was said or written, to comprehend its meaning correctly, etc.

reciprocity

Reciprocity is the ability to understand the give and take and timing of social conversation or interactions.

reinforceability

Reinforceability is the ability to use previous experience to correct behavior and work output; to learn from experience. (Example: “Last time I rushed through my math test and failed it. I should slow down on this math test”; “Last time I teased her she broke into tears. I should take a softer approach next time and know she is not a good person to tease”.)

representational thought

Representational thought is the ability to imagine, think in analogies and metaphors, understand symbols, and infer meanings from them.

RVCP

Rate, Volume, Complexity, and Prioritization (RVCP). See each term for its definition as it applies to the Transition Curriculum.

saliency determination

Saliency determination is deciding what incoming stimuli is important to attend to; when exposed to information, the individual is able to identify what is important and what is a small detail; the degree to which an individual gets distracted by or over-focused on information of lesser importance. (Example: Not knowing what to take notes on in class.)

satisfaction threshold

Satisfaction threshold is the level of interest needed for an individual to sustain attention on a subject. A person with a low threshold of satisfaction on a subject can pay attention to what is being taught even if it is “boring” whereas a person with a high satisfaction threshold will only pay attention if the subject can be linked to some activity for which she has a passion.

self-regulation

Self-regulation is the ability to take control of, evaluate, and regulate one's own learning and behavior.

self-advocacy

Self-advocacy is “An individual’s ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs, and rights. It involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions.” (Source: Transition and Self-Advocacy, <http://www.ldonline.org/article/7757/>, accessed Jan 17, 2012 quoting Van Reusen et al., 1994)

self-marketing

Self-marketing is the ability of a person to intentionally build and display an image that is appealing to others.

self-monitoring

Self-monitoring is the ability to watch, analyze, and evaluate self as one is doing a task. (Example: “How am I doing? “What/Who do I need to accomplish this task?”)

sensory processing

Sensory processing is the nervous system's ability to receive messages from the senses, organize and make sense of the different kinds of sensation entering the mind at the same time and turn them into appropriate motor and behavioral responses.

sensory reactivity

Sensory reactivity refers to how an individual reacts negatively to some particular sensory stimulus (smell, taste, etc.).

shared attention regulation

Shared attention regulation is the ability to regulate one’s attention and behavior while being interested in a full range of sensations (sights, sounds, smells, own movement patterns, etc.); the ability to enter into a state of shared attention with another person; the ability to process one’s environment, filter out distractions, and engage with others, attend to games, activities, or tasks.

SIP

Student’s Individual Profile (SIP) a multi-purpose hard copy or electronic portfolio created during the Transition Curriculum intake process and used throughout the student’s participation in the program; a tool for individualizing the curriculum that allows staff to store sample work and information about the student as well as track ongoing changes in patterns, gains, goals, strategies, accommodations, difficulties, achievements, and personal experiences.

sleep/arousal balance

Sleep/arousal balance is getting enough quality sleep at night to be able to wake in the morning and stay awake during the day.

SLP

Speech-language pathologist (SLP) is a clinician who assesses, diagnoses, treats, and helps to prevent speech, cognitive, language, communication, swallowing, voice, fluency, and other related disorders.

social awareness

Social awareness is the ability to perceive and understand viewpoints and feelings of others and act in a manner that shows understanding of such.

social cognition

Social cognition is the way in which cognitive processes play a role in social behavior in relation to the encoding, storage, retrieval, and processing of information in the mind; the way people think about others and the effect this has on social behavior.

social information processing

Social information processing is the ability to understand underlying meanings and agendas in social interactions (reading between the lines, getting the big picture of a discussion, etc.)

social-emotional development

Social-emotional development allows young children to interact with others and show their emotions to express themselves. Social Emotional development includes the ability to initiate and maintain secure relationships. During this development a child learns how to approach other children, how to negotiate issues, how to take turns, and how to communicate effectively.

somatic nervous system

Somatic nervous system is that part of the nervous system that regulates the voluntary systems of senses and movement. Includes sensory regulation, which involves both the physical ability of the brain to detect through the senses and how that input is processed.

special education

Special education is instruction specifically designed to meet the needs of a student with disabilities. Includes classroom instruction, home instruction, instruction in physical education as well as instruction in institutions and hospitals.

speech-language pathology

See SLP

step wisdom

Step wisdom is the sense of proper order and sequence as applied to processes or tasks in life. It is composed of:

Sequencing – the ability to order steps, tasks, and priorities in a logical sequence to complete a task successfully

Visualization – the ability to visualize the sequence in which one is to perform a task

Prioritization – the ability to itemize all the demands, expectations, and parameters of a task and detect priorities.

strategic thinking

Strategic thinking is the ability of an individual to design or apply strategies to approach tasks in an organized, sequenced, and successful manner; the ability to think in a manner that best exploits existing or emerging resources or possibilities.

strategies

Strategies are techniques used when an individual needs support to approach, navigate, and complete a task successfully. They are methods for approaching learning that increase an individual's ability to absorb information successfully, make experience or study meaningful, and generally become productive based on exposure to learning.

strengths and challenges assessment

Strengths and challenges assessment is an analysis of what the individual is able to do well versus not do well throughout the execution of a task.

stressor

Stressor is anything that causes stress in an individual.

Student's Individual Profile

See SIP

sympathetic nervous system,

Sympathetic nervous system is one of the two major parts of the autonomic nervous system that maintains the internal stability of the basic properties (such as temperature, pH levels, etc.) and also controls the body's flight or fight response mechanism.

temporal-sequential processing

Temporal-sequential processing is the way in which we recognize and follow time, including the skills we use and steps taken to accomplish things in a given time, place, and order.

Theory of mind

Theory of mind (also known as mind reading) is the ability to attribute a mental state (intentions, emotions, beliefs, desires, knowledge, etc.) to another person in order to predict or understand that person's behavior and recognize they may be similar to or different from those held by others. Individuals with ASD often have deficits with respect to this ability.

transition services

Transition services are services that meet the unique needs of young adults with ASD and other developmental disabilities and help to prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.

triad work

Triad work is work done by three students working together.

up-regulate

Up-regulate is to stimulate in order to provoke action.

vestibular

Vestibular is the sense that provides orientation in space using motion, gravity, and balance perceptions from the inner ear.

visual-spatial processing

Visual-spatial processing is a set of cognitive skills that allow one to organize and interpret meaning from visual information.

volume

Volume is the amount of information disseminated; the size and scope of a task or activity; the amount of oral or written information and end result individual can produce.

7.02 Communication Strategies and Accommodations for Students with Low or No Verbal Ability

Communication is not one size fits all, nor does it always follow consistent patterns. Since communication capabilities and styles are related to a multitude of factors, it is essential that the approach to designing communication support is comprehensive, flexible, and dynamic.

Communication is affected by:

- Phonemic awareness and other phonological processing issues
- Receptive language skills (vocabulary, language comprehension)
- Expressive oral language skills (word retrieval, vocabulary, syntax, pragmatics)
- Expressive written language (graphomotor, grammar, motor planning, idea generation, letter formulation, visual-spatial processing)
- Auditory processing
- Visual processing
- Visualization capability
- Higher order thinking
- Memory
- Motor planning, oral-motor functioning, and articulation
- Learning differences
- Processing speed
- Anxiety
- Saliency determination (process of selecting and thinking about which information stands out or is most important)
- Thought organization
- Executive function
- Regulatory issues (sensory, emotional, physical)
- Habits and learned behaviors
- Personality and temperament
- Mutism (inability to speak - elective, selective, etc.)

Since the range of potential communication strengths, challenges, and barriers is so vast and highly specific to each individual, the communication plan must be tailored to fit. Furthermore, one's communication needs change over time as interests, goals, and preferences evolve and the activities and demands in life change. For this reason, communication plans must be flexible.

For individuals who are nonverbal or have low verbal ability, the need to individualize communication approaches becomes even more important. Life opportunities expand greatly when avenues are available for an individual to initiate and sustain emotional and social connections, show preference and opinion, display

humor, express will and personal desires, share joy and accomplishments, convey pleasure and displeasure, request assistance, and convey affection. Those for whom traditional forms of communication do not work well depend upon their caregivers, educators, specialists, and friends to connect and communicate with them in other, equally as valuable communication formats.

Examples of successful communication approaches and modalities for non-verbal and low verbal individuals include:

- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) approaches and devices. *See Appendix 7.03 for further information about this.*
- Story-boarding (drawing a story-based pictorial representation)
- Art
- Photography
- Writing notes
- Facilitated writing
- Keyboarding
- Movement (gestures, pantomime, etc.)
- Pictorial images
- Vocalizations (sounds, utterances)
- Sign language
- Use of objects
- Symbolic representation (use of symbols to communicate)

Transition programs should offer a wide range of communication interventions, techniques, and methods so all individuals are able to access and respond to the content in a manner that meets their individual needs.

7.03 Use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) in Transition Curriculum

For many decades sign language has been instrumental in opening up a venue for many individuals with expressive language and articulation challenges to enable them to communicate their thoughts, feelings, preferences, and desires. As the field of technology and specifically assistive technology exploded in scope and complexity, practitioners, families, and educators have expanded their thinking of communication support in ways never imagined before. Technology offers a new future for individuals with expressive language challenges and a much needed expansion of options in addition to and above and beyond the more traditional method of sign language, which is not a viable option for all individuals. The field of Augmentative and Assistive Communication holds tremendous promise in Transition work with adolescents and young adults with ASD and other developmental disabilities across a wide spectrum of capability and severity.

The benefit of technology's speed, accuracy, specificity, and flexibility of design means that it can be individualized and adapted to meet the complex and varied challenges of non-verbal individuals. AAC devices and methods enable an individual with expressive language challenges the opportunity to develop a relationship with language that otherwise would not exist. Its use spans a wide range of possibilities:

- Opening up avenues for relationships
- Developing spontaneous language expression
- Increasing self-advocacy
- Better identifying interests and affinities
- Permitting more specificity and nuance in communication exchanges
- Practicing the reciprocity and flow of language and rapport
- Building emotional language understanding and expression

Now with the help of AAC devices, participation in community outings, group activities, and navigating public places becomes much more possible. In addition, as jobs become more technology based, an individual's skill level, comfort, and familiarity with AAC devices can form a bridge to learning new technology associated with an internship, job, or career.

The cultural trend towards technology as a tool for everyone in everyday life encourages practitioners to think beyond applying devices just for their non-verbal clients. Some practitioners have begun to use AAC technology in their work with individuals who have expressive language skills but need remediation and help with cognitive difficulties.

- Those with slow processing speeds could benefit from the increase in momentum, reciprocity, and response time that an AAC device offers
- For students with weak symbol decoding (letters or shapes), assistive devices provide opportunities to work on and strengthen symbol recognition
- As remediation and assistive tools for writing instruction, devices can help with brainstorming during the idea generation phase of writing or as a replacement for writing for those with high writing anxiety or difficulty with graphomotor and keyboarding

- Individuals with challenges in syntax and language sequencing could benefit from using devices to decelerate the language process and practice sequencing and word choices
- From an interpersonal standpoint, AAC devices can help individuals with more advanced skills to communicate with peers who have reduced skills, and help them understand that non-verbal individuals can have a lot to say, reducing the false impression that they are not intelligent
- It may be a great exercise to have students strong in language have to adjust to communicating through a device as an activity to get first-hand experience in what it feels like to have a different relationship with language. Examples can also be drawn from individuals without ASD who have a great mastery of language and strong cognition but need AAC devices to communicate it to the outside world (e.g., Stephen Hawkins, a brilliant author, physicist, and Professor of Mathematics at the University of Cambridge who had a motor neurone disease and was unable to communicate).
- Lastly, technology- or communication-based affinity classes for students with more advanced skills can include AAC information and research.

Amidst all the new AAC devices on the market, it is still important to understand the low tech approaches (such as sign language), which may be valuable tools for certain individuals with expressive language challenges.

A Comment on Sign Language

Because sign language requires a certain level of motor planning and hand dexterity and because it requires an investment of time and staff training, it is not a good fit for all programs and students. However, it can be an effective alternative for many:

Individuals with more advanced skills, particularly students seeking degrees may opt for sign language to fulfill their foreign language requirements. Individuals needing to improve their motor planning, body awareness, and motor sequencing might find that learning sign language can help to remediate their challenges.

Learning sign language can be a wonderful way to practice decelerating expression for those who engage in rushed or pressured speech.

It may also offer tremendous benefit for students who have weak visual and auditory memory for language but have strong motor memory, as signing enables them to enlist their muscles and body memory systems as a means to strengthening language.

Lastly, the process of learning sign language affords a student the chance to work 1:1 with a staff member on engagement, reciprocity, and learning through mirroring.

A Comment on Supported Communication

“Supported communication is the term used when a child is given emotional, communicative and sensory-motor support (a parent's or therapist's hand supporting the child's hand or arm) so that he is more

able to use an augmentative communication device (most often a keyboard) to point to pictures, letters or other symbols in order to express his feelings and thoughts. In the past, research into supported communication indicated that the communication was being directed by the therapist rather than the child. As a result this technique has been disregarded by many, which is unfortunate. When used properly, supported communication can be an incredibly effective resource for children with severe motor-planning challenges, especially for those who can't point reliably. Many have progressed from supported to independent typing. The most effective means of providing these children with a "voice" that I have encountered in clinical practice is supported communication on a keyboard, which the child uses to type.” (Robinson, 185)

In Summary

There is little doubt that technology is here to stay and that its effect on how people communicate socially and professionally is immense. It is vital that we equip our young adults with the ability to use technology if we wish them to be able to participate in their communities, have a voice among their neurotypical peers, and compete for jobs and careers. AAC builds bridges across the communication gaps many individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities experience on a daily basis.

For young adults with ASD who are in transition, taking advantage of both traditional and innovative uses of these devices reduces their chances of social isolation, increases their capacity for functional and creative expression, and widens their job and career options.

References

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