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## **Post-secondary Preparation: Strategic Transition Planning for Employment Outcomes in Vocational Education for Students on the Autism Spectrum**

Robin Jones

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## ABSTRACT

### ROBIN JONES: Post-secondary Preparation: Strategic Transition Planning for Employment Outcomes in Vocational Education for Students on the Autism Spectrum

Many transition programs and services fail students on the autism spectrum, causing them to have the worst post-secondary outcomes. Due to the importance of helping high school students with disabilities transition to adulthood and consider post-secondary education, employment, and independent living, secondary transition education, and services are receiving increased attention. Situated Learning Theory-based transition intervention programs that led to post-secondary employment were tested. To demonstrate the need for effective transition intervention programs that lead to post-secondary employment, Florida professionals who worked with vocational education students with ASD in secondary schools completed a 38-question electronic survey. A thematic analysis addressed the three study objectives and informed post-secondary transition planning for secondary special education students. This study examined 17 participants from an urban school system in South Florida, most of whom were experienced female practitioners with over 16 years of experience working with secondary students on the autism spectrum in vocational educational settings. Data analysis revealed nine themes among the chosen codes of the three research questions. The study found that differentiated instruction for ASD students, real-world/hands-on work experiences, and vocational-based curriculum content lead secondary special education students to competitive post-secondary employment. Results also showed that Strategic Transition Planning's family participation, student input, resource knowledge, and teacher/service provider input & training help students on the autism spectrum

find post-secondary employment. Finally, Situated Learning Theory's confidence-building and real-world experience helped ASD students find post-secondary employment. The study showed that Situated Learning Theory-based transition intervention programs lead to post-secondary employment. The researcher provided solutions to the research issues. The study's results illuminated secondary transition facilitators that lead to post-secondary employment for students on the autism spectrum, and the study questions helped explain that incorporating Situated Learning Theory principles into post-secondary transition planning improved post-secondary employment outcomes for students on the autism spectrum.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated with love and admiration to my daughter, Donisha. I am forever grateful for the assignment bestowed upon me as your mother! It is that assignment that is responsible for shaping the woman I have become! Let this work be a testament to you that: “All things are possible through Christ who strengthens you.”

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### **Background**

Secondary transition education and services for youth with disabilities are receiving more attention due to the significance of assisting high school students with disabilities as they transition to adulthood and think about various options after high school, including post-secondary education, employment, and independent living (Gothberg et al., 2018). As noted by Ule (2017), young adults with significant disabilities are considerably less likely to enroll in post-secondary and vocational programs, work, live independently, participate in organized community groups, and form connections, leaving them socially isolated. High school students with disabilities experience multiple factors that can contribute to their post-school success, such as social and communication difficulties, sensory issues, and narrow interests (Eastman et al., 2021). Compared to their non-disabled classmates, students with disabilities are more likely to encounter unemployment, lower salary, and job discontent (Sundar et al., 2018). Compared to students with disabilities, students on the Autism spectrum have some of the worst post-secondary outcomes, indicating that many programs and services currently available to assist with transitioning are not working (Findley et al., 2022). Career awareness, inclusion in general education, work experience, self-determination and self-advocacy, parental involvement, self-care/independent living skills, social skills, vocational education, and work-study have all been studied as predictors of positive adult outcomes for students with significant disabilities (Mazzotti, 2016). Peer mentoring as an effective strategy for improving preparedness has also been studied, such as Hillier et al. (2019). Hillier et al. (2019) conducted a quantitative study to evaluate the effectiveness of a college preparation mentoring program which concluded that peer mentoring could be an effective strategy for preparing students on the Autism spectrum for post-secondary education or employment.

The transition of students with disabilities into adulthood or life after high school has been studied extensively. Studies such as the one by White et al. (2019) examined the

effectiveness of the Stepped Transition in Education Program for Students with ASD. The study's findings conclude that secondary school students who completed STEPs showed more significant gains in transition readiness from high school than students who did not complete the program. Another important finding of this study is that the improvements were sustained after the program was completed. As seen in the study by White et al. (2019), evidence-based services and support programs provide students with disabilities with the skills needed to transition to post-secondary employment or education. While it has been noted that programs do exist to assist students with disabilities with transitioning, many young people with disabilities are still not experiencing outcomes aligned with the personal aspirations and priorities they have set for themselves (Trainor et al., 2020).

For decades, research has been conducted to inform, guide, and evaluate the transition programs and services available to students with disabilities (Trainor et al., 2020). A study by Setchutz et al. (2022) explored parents' perceptions and experiences of their children's transition from childhood to adulthood. Thompson et al. (2018) concluded that policies and services available to assist in transitioning should focus on the strengths of individuals to maximize their participation in higher education, employment, and independent living. The study results by Thompson et al. (2018) also emphasized that interventions and support services should target environmental factors, and individualized approaches could further complement existing services. Programs emphasizing the social aspects of post-secondary education should also be part of programs created to help students transition to post-secondary life (Ncube et al., 2019).

Family involvement and, most importantly, parent involvement are essential to the success of students with disabilities in their effort to transition to post-secondary education programs or employment. Family involvement for students with disabilities is vital because it has been associated with higher academic achievement and school completion rates (Hirano et al.,

2018). Other studies have explored the factors contributing to poor transition outcomes for students with disabilities. The study by Anderson et al. (2018) concluded that factors such as poor person-environment fit, uncertainty about the roles of parents, and the lack of comprehensive services all contribute to poor transition outcomes.

The relevance of student transition planning and its vital role in preparing students with disabilities for life after high school was addressed in the most recent reauthorization of the IDEA (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.) in 2004. School administrators in the United States have been expected to follow federal regulations regulating the education of students with disabilities since 1975, the enactment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), also known as the EHA. In a 1990 reauthorization, the law's name changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA, then reauthorized again in 2004. The IDEA acknowledges the significance of preparing students for success post-high school and requires that transition planning for students who receive special education services and have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) must begin by age 16.

The federal particular education policy on transition services for students with disabilities has grown since 1983, when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was amended 1983, allowing for funding for transition-focused research and model demonstration grants and contracts. Post-school employment is one of the achievements attributed to IDEA. (A History of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2022). In addition to the IDEA, school leaders should be aware of many critical federal legislations when examining prospective transition choices for students with disabilities, including trade, vocational, and technical-related vocations that can lead to long-term employment. The Perkins V Act, or Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act, is the most recent version of the federal Perkins Act, which authorizes federal funds to support new and existing Career Technical

Education (CTE) programs in high schools and post-secondary institutions across the country. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was created to assist in education and training to close gaps in essential workforce skills, particularly for marginalized groups.

The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) was initially funded by the US Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs from 2000 to 2008. It collaborated with six significant organizations focused on secondary education and transition for disabled youth during that time. NCSET brought together national resources, provided technical aid, and disseminated information on secondary education and transition for disabled kids to help them achieve successful futures.

### **Significance of the Study**

The Florida Department of Education defines secondary transition as the process a student with a disability goes through when transitioning from high school to post-secondary education, work, and independent living (FLDOE, 2022). For students with severe disabilities in Florida, this begins at 14 or earlier and may not stop until 22. In October 2013, the Executive Order designated Florida as an Employment First state. Employment First is a concept and policy that emphasizes the importance of employment for all people, including those with substantial disabilities.

There have been increasing court actions concerning transition plans decided in favor of students with disabilities and their families during the past few years (Prince et al., 2020). The National Longitudinal Transition Studies (NLTS; i.e., NLTS, NLTS2, NLTS 2012) were funded by the US Department of Education and followed various cohorts of youth with disabilities during and after high school. These studies' descriptive data helped the secondary transition field understand how in-school experiences of youth with disabilities affect their in-school and post-school results and outcomes. Test (2020) identified research-based practices and predictors in

areas that impact the research efficacy of transition-age students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The National Professional Development Center on ASD's comprehensive review identified evidence-based interventions in education/training, employment/vocational outcomes, and independent living/adaptive outcomes. The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition's systematic review identified practices for practitioners who work with secondary ASD students to incorporate into their teaching. Through an update of two previous systematic reviews, Fong (2021) determines the effectiveness of an employment-related intervention on the employment outcomes of individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

This current study is significant in various ways. This research focuses on students in secondary grades nine through twenty-two in Secondary Special Education Classes with Autism Spectrum Disorder and the effectiveness of their transition programs on their post-secondary employment. This study provides empirical evidence as to what factors of strategic transition planning give the most favorable outcomes for students on the autism spectrum. The study also provides data that can be used for secondary schools to offer programs and transition plans that meet the student's individual needs. Students with disabilities transitioning into post-secondary education or employment will also benefit from this study because the data obtained will help create individualized programs to meet their needs before the transition stage begins. The study addresses the need for effective transition intervention programs that lead to post-secondary employment. This current study is conducted in a small location that could also apply to the community.

### **Study Rationale for the Study**

This section justifies the theoretical framework chosen. The theoretical framework guides the study and the analysis of the findings.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**



The theoretical framework used in this study is the situated learning theory by Jean Lave. Situated learning was first defined by John Seely Brown, Paul Duguid, and Allan Collins in 1989. Lave then expanded the theory in 1991 (Binti Pengiran & Besar, 2018). This theory argues that learning is situated and usually occurs when learning is embedded within an activity (Lave, 2009). J. Lave quotes, “Learning as it normally occurs is a function of the activity, context, and culture in which it occurs (i.e., it is situated).” He introduces Situated learning as a general theory of knowledge acquisition. Situated Learning Theory is grounded in two principles: 1. Knowledge needs to be presented in an authentic context, i.e., settings and applications typically involve that knowledge. 2. Learning requires social interaction and collaboration. Zhao (2018) demonstrates that the existing theoretical frameworks guiding workplace learning draw from different learning theories. In this comprehensive desk-based review of the related literature, Zhao defines and discusses the concept of workplace learning and its contribution to teachers’ continuous professional development in vocational education. The process by which vocational education teachers actively participate in their workplace and learning environments to enhance their professional knowledge is referred to as workplace learning in this article. Formal training and informal learning activities that entail interactions between vocational teachers and their working environment include workplace learning.

Situational learning is emphasized in this working definition of vocational teachers’ workplace learning. Learning is used to acquire knowledge and skills and develop the habits and skills of sharing knowledge in vocational education and training. Different learning theories, such as Lave and Wenger’s (1991) situated learning theory, Wenger’s (2000) social learning systems, Jarvis’s (2011) adult learning model, and Kolb’s (2014) experiential learning cycle, are widely used to guide workplace learning. Learning theories have traditionally focused on cognition processes (Patel, 2018). With the growing emphasis on providing students in vocational training

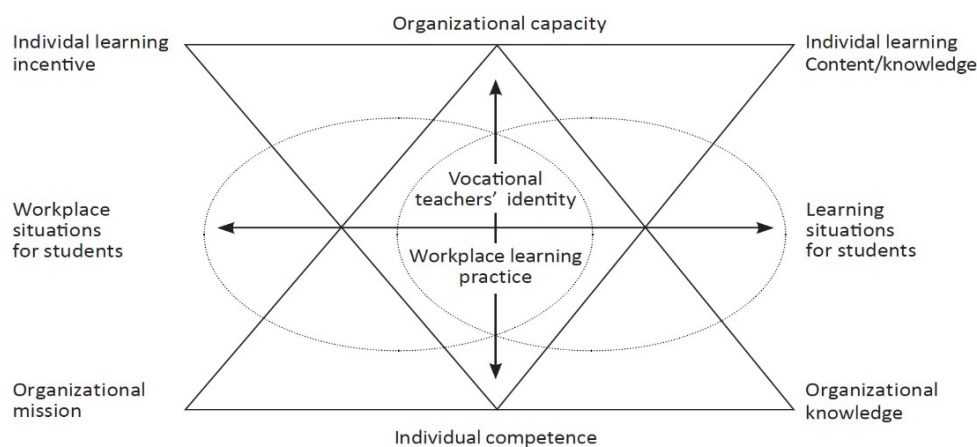
with workplace experiences, the Workplace Learning Model for Vocational Education Teachers was created (Rintala & Nokelainen, 2020). This model presented by Illeris (2005; 2011) provides a theoretically sound foundation that can be modified and extended to hypothesize about the workplace learning of vocational education teachers with various vital concepts.

- Content Dimension consists of learners’ knowledge, skills, understanding of the learning content, and attitudes toward learning.
- The incentive Dimension contains learners’ feelings, emotions, and motivations in the learning process.
- The interaction dimension encompasses learners’ mutual communication and cooperation in learning.

The triangular learning model reflects deep theoretical foundations of workplace learning as the three dimensions form a learning triangle in an individual’s socially situated work in society.

## Figure 1

### *Triangular Learning Model*



*Note.* From “Workplace Learning in the Professional Development of Vocational Education Teachers” by Zhao and Ko, 2018. *Studia Paedagogica*, 23(43). <https://doi.org/10.5817/SP2018-24>.

The proposed model for vocational education teachers’ workplace learning emphasizes

the interactions of their work identities with individual and organizational learning situations and the development of their competence by integrating workplace practices in work situations. Pei-Ling (2020) explores the impact of the cognitive apprenticeship teaching approach in food and beverage (F&B) service training courses on learning satisfaction. Cognitive apprenticeship teaching facilitates students' acquisition of holistic cognition and post-cognitive skills through observation, guidance, and practice. Situated learning emphasizes that effective learning occurs in authentic contextual situations, and cognitive apprenticeship teaching facilitates students' acquisition of holistic cognition and post-cognitive skills through observation, guidance, and practice.

Three key concepts are included in this understanding of the theory. (1) Community of practice: A community of practice is a group of people who work in a specific field. Newcomers join this circle and attempt to adopt its social and cultural traditions. (2) Legitimate peripheral participation: Legitimate peripheral participation means that all parties in the community of practice are willing to accept new and unqualified novices as members of their community, whereas peripheral participation means that novices enter the community from the periphery by first engaging in peripheral work. They become increasingly active and absorbed into the culture as they travel from the perimeter to the center of the community. According to participation, learners develop knowledge through the work in which they are involved. This assumption is founded on the premise that knowledge only manifests in the community through social behaviors. (3) Cognitive apprenticeship: This phrase refers to a situation in which a master of a skill teaches that skill to an apprentice, focusing on contextual learning and practical knowledge acquisition. According to Pei-Ling (2020), this method is regarded as a new teaching paradigm, which, when properly implemented, leads to significant gains in terms of positive teaching outcomes and talent development.

## **Context of the Study**

The Florida Department of Education and Secondary Special Education department within the urban school district was chosen as the locale for this study. The urban school district comprises 236 schools and 187,057 students (U.S. news education). The community currently sponsors 49 charter schools in all major geographic areas of the urban school district in Florida, providing school choice to over 22,000 students in elementary, middle, high, alternative, and technical education school settings. Within these numbers, the county serves approximately 38,178 students identified as eligible for Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and 4,060 diagnosed with ASD (Florida Department of Education. (2021).

Florida was designated as an Employment First state by Executive Order in 2013. Employment First is a policy that emphasizes the importance of employment for all people, including those with disabilities. Because of this designation, the data collected from the educational system provided rich data to meet the study's purpose. The educational system in the state of Florida was also chosen because of the researcher's location. The researcher was able to access the site to collect data quickly.

## **Purpose of Study**

This research study aimed to determine the effectiveness of transition intervention programs that apply principles of Situated Learning Theory and lead to post-secondary employment. This study sought to answer the proposed three research questions and solve the research problem. Answering the research questions aided in understanding transitional programs for students on the Autism Spectrum by providing the factors of secondary transition programs that lead to post-secondary employment. Addressing the research questions also offered a needed understanding of how the principles of the situated learning theory contributed to post-secondary employment. The research problem in this study is the

effectiveness of transition intervention programs for students on the Autism Spectrum. This study's second purpose is to contribute knowledge for post-secondary transition planning for students in secondary special education classes.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: What factors of secondary transition programs lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment?

RQ2: What factors of Strategic Transition Planning contribute to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum?

RQ3: In what ways do the principles of Situated Learning Theory lead to post-secondary employment?

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions in qualitative research are necessary elements in a research study. Assumptions are required to conduct the study and are often beliefs needed for the examination but cannot be proven (Simon & Goes, 2013). The first assumption of this study is that a qualitative method was able to address the research question. The data analysis provided a narrative review of all information collected from the participants. This information helped identify whether the data answered the research questions. Another assumption of the study was that transition preparation leads to competitive employment. The literature review described transition preparation's impact on students with ASD. The findings helped to identify the significance of transition education planning among secondary students with ASD. Another assumption of this study was that the participants were truthful and honest in their responses to the survey questions. The reliability of the collected responses was validated with the consent of the study participants, helping to ensure the authenticity and consistency of the collected responses.

## Definition of Terms

- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a range of pervasive developmental disorders that adversely affect a student's functioning and result in the need for specially designed instruction and related services (*Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)*, 2022).

- **Autism Spectrum**

Autism spectrum includes individuals diagnosed with autistic disorder, Asperger's disorder, childhood disintegrative disorder, and pervasive developmental disorder (Hodges et al., 2020).

- **Career & Technical Education (CTE)**

Develop and maintain educational programs that prepare individuals for occupations important to Florida's economic development (*Career & Technical Education*, 2022).

- **Community-Based Instruction (CBI)**

Instruction takes place in community locations and is designed to help students perform skills such as grocery shopping and using public transportation. CBI often includes training in the classroom followed by practice in community settings. CBI often ensures students can apply skills and knowledge learned through the Community Next Generation Sunshine State Standards Access Points (*Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities*, 2022).

- **Didactics**

Systematic instruction (*Didactics*, n.d.).

- **Employment**

Filled jobs, whether full- or part-time, temporary or permanent, by place of work (*Glossary: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, n.d.).

- **Intellectual Disability (InD)**

Intellectual Disabilities is significantly below average general intellectual and adaptive functioning manifested during the developmental period, with significant delays in academic skills (*Intellectual Disabilities (InD)*, 2022).

- **On-The-Job Training (OJT)**

Instruction provides students with work experiences to help them acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to hold a job (*Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities*, 2022).

- **Project 10**

Project 10: Transition Education Network is Florida's statewide discretionary project supporting the secondary transition of youth with disabilities. It is funded by the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS) within the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) (*Project 10: Transition Education Network*, 2022).

- **Secondary Transition**

Secondary transition refers to the process a student with a disability goes through as they move from high school to whatever comes next, including post-secondary education, employment, and

independent living (*Secondary Transition, 2022*).

- **Supported Employment**

Competitive work at or above minimum wage provides regular opportunities for interaction with non-disabled people (*Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities, 2022*).

- **Exceptional Special Education (ESE)**

programs for students with disabilities (*Exceptional Student Education, 2022*)

- **Transition Programs**

For students with disabilities, the process of getting ready to move from school to adult life. The process occurs over several years and involves planning, goal setting, instruction, services, and activities designed to make that move successful (*Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities, 2022*).

- **Vocational Education (VE)**

The 1990 Perkins Act defines vocational education as “organized educational programs offering a sequence of courses directly related to the preparation of individuals in paid or unpaid employment in current or emerging occupations requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree.” (*National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a Part of the U.S. Department of Education, n.d.*)

## **Organization of the Dissertation**

This chapter provided an overview of the research study conducted and background information on post-secondary preparation for students on the Autism spectrum. The research



questions used to guide the study were also stated. The significance of this research study and why it was conducted were discussed, along with the purpose of the research and the study rationale. The chapter concluded with the assumptions found in this study, and specific terms used throughout the study were defined. Chapter 2 of this study provides an extensive literature review of the research topic. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used, including the sample population, data collection, and how the data was analyzed. Chapter 4 presents the results of the data collection and analysis phases, and Chapter 5 discusses and recommends future studies based on the results.

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### **Introduction**

The literature review presented in this chapter describes current studies on implementing various transition interventions and post-secondary outcome options for students on the autism spectrum. The studies reviewed explain research on the facilitators and barriers that influence the post-secondary outcomes of transition-age youth. This systematic review collects, integrates, and examines pragmatic evidence on various curriculum integration techniques, strategies, products, and systematic structures for the best possible post-secondary outcomes. The principal theoretical framework of Jean Lave's Situated Learning Theory will be defined, explained, and applied.

The beginning of this literature review details recommendations for research presented by Test et al. (2020). The second section describes the available transition planning and services to show the most current research on factors influencing transition outcomes. Next, a framework developed for higher education-inclusive programs is discussed. Section four details curriculum-based interventions in secondary educational settings and how they impact student readiness for post-secondary options. Section five, the theoretical framework of Situated Learning Theory, discusses the relationship to the construct of Post-Secondary Transition Planning. The final section explores the facilitators and barriers when preparing for post-secondary transition planning. The chapter concludes with a rationale for the current study, discussing how this research helps fill the gaps presently missing from the existing literature. The summary at the end of the chapter summarizes the significant findings of the literature review and transitions into Chapter 3.

### **Recommendations for Research**

From the literature review that was conducted, various recommendations for future research were discovered. Test et al. (2020) identified research-based practices and predictors in areas that impact the research efficacy of transition-age students with autism spectrum disorder. Because of the poor post-school outcomes for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), the U.S.

Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services gave the responsibility to the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition to identifying and disseminating evidence and research-based practices and predictors for students with ASD that are of transition age. Test (2020) used a meta-analysis approach using current practice and predictor findings from comprehensive and systematic reviews of ASD intervention literature and results from three projects on transition-age students with autism spectrum disorder. The National Standards Project's comprehensive review addressed the need for evidence-based practice guidelines for individuals with autism and answered how to treat this population effectively.

The National Professional Development Center on ASD's comprehensive review identified evidence-based interventions in education/training, employment/vocational outcomes, and independent living/adaptive outcomes. The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition's systematic review identified practices for practitioners who work with secondary ASD students to incorporate into their teaching. Test et al. (2020) also used quality indicators to identify predictors of improved post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. The findings were translated into specific implication areas of research that would help transition students with ASD. The purpose of this meta-analysis was to recommend research in the areas of a) identifying effective interventions, b) tailoring available interventions, c) addressing mixed samples, d) improving measurement, e) equipping professionals, and f) developing and evaluating programs based on findings in areas that directly impact the research efficacy when looking for what works for students with ASD.

Research needs within these areas were identified as follows:

- a) Identifying effective interventions
  - Evaluate existing transition interventions across a much more comprehensive range of students.

- Providing better descriptions of the students with ASD who participate in these studies
- b) Tailoring available interventions
- Using comparative designs
  - Identifying data-driven approaches for adapting interventions
- c) Addressing mixed samples
- Design studies that focus narrowly on students with ASD
  - Incorporating analytic approaches that allow the impact of autism to be examined within mixed samples
- d) Improving measurements
- Researchers must better capture the outcomes of students with ASD using a combination of objective and subjective measures.
  - Quality of life measurements includes physical and psychological health, social relationships, self-determination, spirituality, sexuality, and sense of community.
  - Additional research is needed to explore how young people with ASD experience these other domains and the interventions that lead to better outcomes in each area.
  - The temporal aspects of measurement in transition also require further consideration.
- e) Equipping professionals
- The field should examine multiple approaches to professional development to identify how each impacts implementation and enhances the outcomes of students with ASD.

- Researchers should more actively involve practitioners in their evaluation studies.

f) Developing and evaluating programs

- Schools and districts need clear guidance on how transition education should be designed and delivered to multiple students by multiple staff across different years.
  - What combination of instruction and experiences should students with ASD have before graduation?
  - How should it all be ordered?
  - How much time should be devoted to each?
  - How should these programs be resourced and staffed?

The need for these recommendations is based on current research results on post-school outcomes, the increase in the prevalence of ASD, and the range of abilities for individuals with ASD. The significance of this meta-analysis to this body of work is that it identifies and emphasizes the various areas of research needed to improve the post-school outcomes of individuals with autism spectrum disorder.

Further recommended research by Heinze, M. (2019) suggests comparing current Vocational Education Training (VET) programs to new interventions used amongst vocational specialists or employers. Research findings indicate that there is a disparity between equal opportunity and employers. The analysis has provided an excellent starting point for identifying research gaps and pointing out tools and resources to guide future research.

### **Transition Planning and Services**

Transition planning and services for students with disabilities are imperative in helping them succeed after high school. Strategies that are implemented may not provide autistic students

with the exact support they need (Webster et al., 2022). The transition from childhood to adulthood is a period in an individual's life characterized by brain and behavior changes (King et al., 2019). As noted by Ule (2017), young adults with significant disabilities are considerably less likely to enroll in post-secondary and vocational programs, work, live independently, participate in organized community groups, and form connections, leaving them socially isolated. Programs emphasizing the social aspects of post-secondary education should be part of programs created to help students transition to post-secondary life (Ncube et al., 2019).

Lindsay et al. (2018) concluded from their study that post-secondary transition programs improved college enrollment, self-determination, self-confidence, social and vocational self-efficacy, autonomy, social support, career exploration, and transition skills. The United States federal education law requires schools to provide transition services for students with disabilities as part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) (Sanderson & Goldman, 2021). Part of the IEP planning process is encouraging a seamless and successful transition to post-secondary outcomes (Snell-Rood et al., 2020). For the IEP programs to be successful, there needs to be meaningful student and parent involvement in the transition planning (Cavendish and Connor, 2017). Daytime activities are a post-secondary outcome for individuals with autism spectrum disorder, including engagement in an occupation or education. Knüppel et al. (2019) surveyed parents of young adults diagnosed with ASD in childhood and provided information about their current daytime activity, behavioral characteristics, comorbidity, history of their schooling, and availability of support. The young adults who did not participate in regular daytime activities had more behavioral difficulties and comorbidities than the young adults that participated in regular daytime activities. It can be concluded from the study findings by Knüppel et al. (2019) that transition programs may not be providing students with ASD the needed support and services to transition to post-secondary education or employment properly. In the study by Snell-Rood et al. (2020), participants noted that

student outcomes depended on which transition team members were involved in IEP meetings.

The significance of these studies to this body of work impacts this research as it identifies and describes how daytime activities play a significant role in the quality of life of young adults with autism spectrum disorder. The studies also provide an understanding of what factors may lead to unsuccessful transitions for young adults with ASD. The findings by Knüppel et al. (2019) and Snell-Rood et al. (2020) have also provided great insight into how secondary educational and occupational training affect interest in post-school activities. The studies identified several factors that play a part in the characteristics of young adults with ASD performing different daytime activities. This information is beneficial for secondary and post-school curriculum planning.

Poor employment outcomes and gaps in services exist for transition-age youth with autism. Vocational rehabilitation is a public assistance service that individuals with disabilities can use to help them seek employment (Rast et al., 2020). Other than the support services and accommodations that students can receive through Post-Secondary Institutions, an additional source of support is through vocational rehabilitation and rehabilitation interventions. In the study by Rast et al. (2020), individuals who received post-secondary education training services from vocational rehabilitation more often left vocational rehabilitation with employment than those who did not take advantage of the service. The study by Rast et al. (2020) and findings could be combined with the results from Sherwood et al. (2020) to create a comprehensive program for young adults with autism to pursue successful post-secondary outcomes. Sherwood et al. (2021) evaluated job interviews and vocational effects among transition-age youth (TAY) who received special education pre-employment transition services. Because few studies have highlighted whether interviewing could be critical to obtaining vocational outcomes such as employment or internships, this study was essential to conduct (Sherwood et al., 2021).

Rehabilitation interventions have also been effective in the employment and functioning of

people with intellectual disabilities and barriers and facilitators of employment. Reviewing quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies and using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) framework as the guiding theoretical orientation, Nevala et al. (2019) selected titles, abstracts, and full papers using the modified selection instrument (PIOS: participants, intervention, outcome, and study design). Thirty-eight studies met the inclusion criteria; ten were quantitative, six were qualitative, one was mixed methods, and 21 were case studies. Within the 38 studies, there were 2,41,080 participants. All trials included a variety of intervention components. The interventions took place during secondary school and consisted of multiple factors. Factors considered in the study by Nevala et al. (2019) include but were not limited to the following:

- vocational training in different parts of the labor market
- specially designed or individually tailored programs to improve vocational qualifications and work awareness
- programs and courses that include helping the janitor and working in the school kitchen
- watching videos about work
- talking about presenting oneself at work and health and safety instructions at school
- placement support
- vocational assessment
- career counseling
- pre-vocational education
- career-related technical or vocational education
- pre-vocational or job readiness training
- instructions for job-seeking
- job shadowing



- job coaching
- special job skills
- services to include post-secondary education institution accommodations and services
- job training services
- life skills services
- internship or apprenticeship programs
- work experience at school
- paid work experience
- postschool and transition services during education to improve the transition from education to work
- job tasting (short, unpaid, time-limited work experience period at the workplace allowed people to sample various jobs and work cultures).
- employment-related transition services
- training

The key facilitators of employment found in the study by Nevala et al. (2019) were people's activity and support from their families, effective job coaching, a well-designed work environment, appreciation of their work, and support from their employer and work for an organization.

Effective job coaching reflects the results of the Sherwood et al. (2021) study and the effectiveness of virtual reality job interview training. Sherwood et al. (2021) found positive effects for transition-aged youth who participated in vocational services and virtual reality job interview training. Other facilitators included knowledge and job experience gained throughout education and utilizing a support person by entrepreneurs. Nevala et al. (2019) concluded that personalized services and procedures could help more people with intellectual disabilities find work. Secondary or tertiary education, including correct teaching methods and personal support services, supported work, job

accommodations, and family and employer support, are all examples of tailoring.

Virtual Reality Job Interview Training (VR-JIT) and Virtual Interview Training for Transition Age Youth (VIT-TAY) are computerized job interview simulations delivered via the internet. Sherwood et al. (2021) recruited schools to participate in an open trial to evaluate the effectiveness and implementation of two technology-based job interview training tools. Using the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) locale framework, the findings from Sherwood et al. (2021) concluded the following characteristics of TAY receiving special education services: mean age of 18 years old, majority males, majority white, most were seniors in high school and read at a 6th-grade level, or more increased from large suburb schools. The characteristics of the sample in the study by Sherwood et al. (2021) were complemented by the characteristics of the sample used in the study by Rast et al. (2020). In the study by Rast et al. (2020), the TAY who received vocational and post-secondary education training services were less likely to receive Social Security Income at application and less often obtained on-the-job support for employment or short-term employment on-the-job supports. In addition, both the studies by Rast et al. (2020) and Sherwood et al. (2021) concluded positive results for TAY who participated in vocational rehabilitation or the VR-JIT or VIT-TAY training. The results of these two studies provide evidence that vocational rehabilitation and VR-JIT/VIT-TAY training could be combined to further the success of TAYs in post-secondary outcomes.

Training in job interview skills and the services provided through vocational rehabilitation are essential for TAYs to have access to succeed after school. Sherwood et al. (2021) also reported employment-related outcomes of having competitive jobs. Those currently employed had interviewed for their jobs and earned a mean wage of \$9.23 per hour. With internship-related outcomes, the majority of TAYs also worked unpaid internships. The findings by Sherwood et al. (2021) indicated that training in job interview skills is a critical target for pre-employment

transition services and, if combined with vocational rehabilitation services such as was discussed in the study by Rast et al. (2020) are essential for pre-employment transition services. These findings also support the justification for developing and evaluating whether job interview training tools can effectively enhance interview skills and access to jobs for youth and young adults with disabilities, mainly when delivered in the settings as part of special education services provided to transition-age youth. The significance of this review to this body of work is that it identifies and describes how technology can be incorporated into pre-employment curricula to train in interviewing skills and how services can be better tailored for TAY to achieve higher success. Sherwood et al. (2020) identified practical interventions for teachers to add to a particular education program to support positive post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. This information is critical to enhancing the transition curriculum.

Transitioning from adolescence to adulthood is challenging for many students and even more challenging for students with autism spectrum disorder. Students with autism spectrum disorder have lower success rates when transitioning from high school to post-secondary outcomes (Nasamran et al., 2017). Through a logistic regression analysis using the National Longitudinal Transition Study – 2 (NLTS2; SRI, 2000) dataset, Nasamran et al. (2017) examined how academic skills and social skills predict post-secondary outcomes for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) students. The study measured academic achievement, post-secondary education success, employment success, overall success, and independent living from data pulled from the NLTS2 Wave 1 Parent Interview, Wave 2 Direct Assessment, and Wave 5 Parent/Youth Survey. Table 1 below summarizes the measures, methods, and results of the study conducted by Nasamran et al. (2017). This study measured post-secondary educational success, employment success, and overall success of those enrolled or have graduated from post-secondary institutions, holding a current paid job since leaving high school and within the past two years of the interview, and experiencing

post-secondary education and employment success.

Overall, results from Nasamran et al. (2017) concluded that academic achievement was significantly related to post-secondary education and success. Social skills significantly predicted all three post-secondary outcomes for students with autism spectrum disorder. The study by Nasamran et al. (2017) is not the only study that explored these factors. Whittenburg et al. (2019) also compared employment rates and outcomes for young adults with autism spectrum disorder with different levels of education who received supported employment services. The study by Whittenburg et al. (2019) concluded that young adults with post-secondary educational experiences had increased employment rates, earned weekly wages, and worked more weekly hours than individuals with autism spectrum disorder and less education. The combination of these two studies provides evidence that education affects post-secondary outcomes. It is significant for educators to ensure that students with autism spectrum disorder receive the most appropriate and productive education to assist them with post-secondary employment. The findings of these studies prove the importance of continued support of the academic needs of individuals with autism spectrum disorder in high school to facilitate the successful transition to post-secondary educational programming. The significance of these studies to this body of work and the impact of research is that it defines predictors for successful outcomes for transitioning individuals with autism spectrum disorder. This analysis has provided greater insight into social, academic, and employment success factors.

Research has also cited a need to characterize the population of individuals with autism spectrum disorder that are college bound. Studies conducted by Kaya et al. (2021) and Strum and Kasari (2019) attempted to address this issue. As post-secondary schools seek to respond to the growing need for support services for individuals with autism spectrum disorder, evaluating the public assistance available to this population is crucial so these services are used more efficiently

(Kaya et al., 2018). Strum and Kasari (2019) concluded that self-reported functioning levels in critical domains differ by reported comorbid disorders and gender. Kaya et al. (2018) investigated the relationships between demographic variables, receipt of vocational rehabilitative (VR) services, and employment outcomes for transition-age youth (TAY) with autism, which is similar to the study conducted by Rast et al. (2020). The difference between the two studies is the variables that were studied. Kaya et al. (2021) explored the relationship between the two independent variables: demographic variables and VR services, and the dependent variable, competitive employment. Rast et al. (2020) used three categories to organize covariates: individual characteristics, VR characteristics, and receipt of other VR services.

The use of post-secondary (PSE) training services through vocational rehabilitation (VR) is limited in research. Rast et al. (2020) were among the first to describe the use of (PSE) training services through (VR) for transition-age youth with autism (TAY-ASD) and specifically considered the association of (PSE) training services and exit from VR with employment. Using data from the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Service Administration Case Service Report (RSA-911), Rast examined TAY ages 14–24 who received VR services and had a primary or secondary cause of disability of autism. With the RSA defining employment as a full- or part-time job in an integrated setting, paying below, at, or above minimum wage, or self-employment, the primary outcome measured was employment at the exit from VR. Rast used three categories to organize covariates for this study: 1. individual characteristics, 2. VR characteristics, and 3. Receipt of other VR services.

Additionally measured was the advancement of PSE in TAY during VR. This research targeted 3 Aims that resulted in TAY-ASD who receive PSE training services through VR being more likely to exit employment, highlighting the underutilization of PSE for TAY-ASD compared to other TAY who use VR services. Table 3 shows the three Aims of the study by Rast et al.

(2020).

**Table1**

*Aims and Results of the study by Rast et al. (2020)*

Aim	Result
<p><b>Aim 1-</b> Prevalence of Receipt of PSE Training Services Among TAY-ASD Compared to TAY with Other Disabilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Fewer TAY-ASD received SSDI or SSI at application than TAY with IDD but more than all other TAY.</li> <li>-TAY-ASD spent less time in VR services between the individualized plan for employment (IPE) signature and case closure than TAY with IDD or all other TAY</li> <li>- About half were referred to VR from secondary or elementary school</li> <li>-most had a "most significant" disability</li> <li>- More TAY-ASD exited VR with employment than TAY with IDD or TAY with all other disabilities.</li> <li>-About half of TAY-ASD, TAY with IDD, and all other TAY were secondary students at the time of VR application.</li> <li>-Most of TAY-ASD, TAY with IDD, and all other TAY had high school completion or less as their highest level of education.</li> <li>-Of those who had high school as their highest level of education, fewer TAY-ASD advanced PSE experiences during VR than all other TAY, but more than TAY with IDD</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aim 2-</b> Characteristics of PSE Training Service Recipients</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-TAY-ASD who received PSE training services were younger</li> <li>-less likely to be receiving SSI at the application</li> <li>-less often had a most significant disability</li> <li>-less often received on-the-job support for supported employment or short-term on-the-job supports than TAY-ASD who did not receive PSE training.</li> <li>-more often referred to by an elementary or secondary school</li> <li>-I spent more days in VR between the IPE signature and exit</li> <li>-more often received VR counseling services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aim 3-</b> Association of PSE Training Services with Employment</p>	<p>TAY-ASD, who received PSE training services from VR, more often exited VR with employment than TAY, who did not</p>

Understanding the factors of competitive employment is key to tailoring post-secondary programs to be the most effective for individuals with autism spectrum disorder. Results of the study by Kaya et al. (2018) and Rast et al. (2020) had similar results in finding several key

predictors of competitive employment for transitioning-aged youth with autism. Positive competitive employment was also credited to having a higher level of education and being male, and receiving several VR services in a shorter period. It was also found that clients who remained in the VR system for more extended periods and received cash benefits were less likely to obtain competitive employment. The study by Kaya et al. (2020) also pointed out that after controlling for other predictor variables, job placement services, including referring TAY with Autism to job interviews, may improve employment outcomes. The significance of the chi-squared automatic interaction detector by Rast et al. (2020) and multivariate logistic regression analysis to this work is that it provides several data collection resources and investigative techniques to assist future research.

Heinze, M. (2019) aimed to improve the employment possibilities for adults with ASD by creating the guide "An Employer's Guide for Integrating Employees with Autism Spectrum

Disorder". The Vocational Training Guide is intended to help employers employ people with ASD and to help people with ASD find and retain long-term employment. It details various strategies and interventions that can be implemented in the workplace. The guide defines a strategy, its importance, and how to implement it effectively. Additionally, the guide provides a variety of examples and diagrams for employers to understand better. This analysis has provided more profound insight into exploring options for transitioning-aged youth with autism. This analysis has also identified additional vocational rehabilitation services tools and resources to lead future research.

### **Framework for Inclusive Programs in Higher Education**

There are frameworks that higher education institutions can use to assist them with creating programs for students with intellectual disabilities. Baker et al. (2018) provided a framework to help those interested in beginning their inclusive program at an institution of higher education for

students with an intellectual developmental disability. With the reauthorization of The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) in 2008, National Coordinating Center and, thus far, 52 Transition and Post-secondary Education Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSIDs), college campuses across the United States are becoming more diverse and seeing an increase in creating programs to help support those with intellectual developmental disabilities. Through a three-part step-by-step startup framework, Baker et al. (2018) highlighted the following factors: (a) understanding the philosophical foundations, (b) program design, and (c) getting off the ground, along with suggested tasks that will be important to consider and complete throughout the process. The suggested framework is based on the authors' experiences at the beginning of the program or assisting post-secondary education (PSE) programs at different universities and regions in the United States. The article responds to frequent requests to share experiences when creating programs. Baker et al. (2018) thoroughly explained specific tasks that ensure fidelity throughout the program-building process within the three-part framework.

Baker et al. (2018) describe suggested steps that higher education institutions should use in building an inclusive program. Proposed as the Framework Guidelines for Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Programs, an outline for Building an Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Program is detailed as follows:

- I. Part 1: Do Your Homework: Understanding the Philosophical Foundations
  - a. Task 1: Read for Foundational Knowledge
  - b. Task 2: Watch for Foundational Knowledge
  - c. Task 3: Review Examples & Comparative Information of other Programs
- II. Part 2: Program Design
  - a. Task 1: Know your University Mission and Community Need
  - b. Task 2: Know Your Community Wants and Needs
  - c. Task 3: Set Up an Advisory Board
  - d. Task 4: Meet with Groups on Campus
  - e. Task 5: Funding
  - f. Task 6: Space
  - g. Task 7: Specific Details
  - h. Task 8: Plan for Future Research
- III. Part 3: Getting Off the Ground



- a. Task 1: Make an Application Process and Recruit Students
- b. Task 2: Recruit Mentors
- c. Task 3: Grow Awareness
- d. Task 4: Become a Certified Transition Program
- e. Task 5: Continuous Evaluation

Understanding the philosophical foundations and historical work supporting these programs is emphasized in understanding the Philosophical Foundations part of the outline. Serving as the National Coordinating Center for PSE programs for students with an intellectual developmental disability in the United States, Baker et al. (2018) suggest utilizing Think College at the Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston, as the first resource. Additionally, Baker et al. (2018) share readings, videos, and webinars that provide an in-depth analysis of PSE while setting the tone for why college is essential and beneficial for students with intellectual developmental disabilities. It is also recommended to explore examples and comparative information of other programs. Next, in the Program Designing part, Baker et al. (2018) point out specific considerations to be made. A program must fit into the college's mission and the community's needs to ensure complete inclusion and program acceptance. By networking with professionals, community leaders, stakeholders, and campus groups, forming a board and committees to collaborate with is essential.

Critical components such as funding and space are grassroots necessities in program design. These two crucial components will guide the program direction and structure of sustainability. Lastly, in the Program Design part, several foundational pieces to put in place while preparing for future research will assist in the reliability and validity of the program. Finally, in the Getting Off the Ground part, Baker et al. (2018) explain the necessity of Awareness and recruiting process and a program application separate from the college or university. The ability to have a planned evaluation technique of internal and external objectives was suggested, which moved to become a certified transition program. Several implications for promoting the inclusion of individuals with intellectual developmental disabilities were indirectly addressed. Baker et al.'s

(2018) framework support creating an inclusive post-secondary education program for students with intellectual developmental disabilities. The significance of this article to this body of work is that it provides a step-by-step framework to use in planning and implementing a post-secondary educational program on a college or university campus. This process has provided a valuable resource to improve inclusion and access to higher education for individuals with intellectual developmental disabilities. Baker et al.'s (2018) article has identified the problem, solution, and access to the strategy for academic inclusion and pointed out additional resources to guide future research.

### **Secondary Interventions that Prepare Students for Post-Secondary Options**

The ongoing employment issues for youth and young adults with autism spectrum disorders show the importance of adequately preparing them for the workplace. Systematic literature reviews were conducted by Lee et al. (2018) and Fong et al. (2021) to explore interventions on employment skills and outcomes for youth and adults with autism spectrum disorder. Fong et al. (2021) identified the effectiveness of an employment-related intervention on the employment outcomes of individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Lee et al. (2018) conducted a similar systematic review of intervention studies on employment skills. Fong et al. (2021) used a meta-analysis approach using a comprehensive search strategy to identify relevant studies that evaluated employment outcomes for interventions for individuals with ASD. Lee et al. (2018) only conducted a systematic review of 39 studies regarding their participant characteristics, research methodologies, intervention features, and employment outcomes.

Previous studies have examined the practices and programs that promote vocational skills and lead to improved employment outcomes. Lee et al. (2018) explored practices and programs that promote vocational skill acquisition, improve employment outcomes, and provide benefits. Lee et al. (2018) analyzed the findings based on four questions; (1) Which individuals with ASD

have been the focus of employment research? (2) Which research methodologies were used to examine their employment experiences?; (3) What employment interventions were analyzed in the literature?; and (4) What were the employment-related outcomes? Lee et al. (2018) found that the average age of participants was over sixteen with varied severity levels of autism spectrum disorder. It was also noted that various research designs were used in multiple studies reviewed.

Table 4 breaks down the various interventions used in the study.

**Table 2**

*Interventions Used in the Study by Lee et al. (2018)*

Delivery Approach	Intervention Format	Setting	Intervention Intensity	Intervention Focus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Audio</li> <li>- Video</li> <li>- High Tech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual</li> <li>- Group</li> <li>- Mixed (both)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On the job site</li> <li>- Outside of the job site</li> <li>- Combination of both</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Based on the individual needs</li> <li>- High in the beginning, then faded and eased as mastered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Employment Training</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Generic work-related skills</li> <li>b. Specific job tasks</li> <li>c. Other non-work-related skills</li> </ul> </li> <li>- <b>Project ABLE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Prevocational skills</li> <li>b. Generic vocational skills</li> <li>c. Social and communication skills</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Lee et al. (2018) showed that participants showed substantial improvement across all three sets of job skills. Participants showed an increase in the percentage of those who obtained non-traditional jobs and earned more than minimum wage. There was an increased employment rate, higher status job, and increased work hours and salary after participants received the comprehensive, community-based supported employment intervention, and intervention participants improved their social skills and increased their work hours per week.

The qualitative data report identified that there are interventions that improve employment.

Age and the severity of disability were factors that required interventions to be tailored. Interventions should be designed based on duration, frequency, delivery format, and setting. The significance of this review to this research is that it identifies and describes specific factors that influence the outcome of a particular vocational intervention. Lee et al.'s (2018) findings have provided significant insight into the design, delivery, and effect of interventions to enhance the quality of vocational experiences for youth and adults with ASD.

As individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder age, post-secondary outcomes such as employment and education become more important for planning the rest of their lives. In the study conducted by Fong et al. (2021), two studies were used, the Project SEARCH Plus ASD Supports (PS-ASD) model and Sherwood et al. (2021) Virtual Reality Job Interview Training (VR-JIT). Employment status was the primary outcome measure of the two studies reviewed. Fong et al. (2021) translated the analysis results into quantitative data showing increased employment rates with both interventions. Key variables related to the modified Project SEARCH model included the ASD supports and strategies of Applied Behavior Analysis. Fong et al.'s (2021) updated review answered the research question of the previous studies; Do employment-related interventions improve employment rates for individuals with ASD? The PS-ASD model and VR-JIT effectively increased the employment rate of individuals with ASD. This updated meta-analysis reported an improvement in employment outcomes for individuals with ASD. This review provided promising evidence for the effectiveness of similar interventions to Project SEARCH and Virtual Reality Job Interview Training and the need for additional resources and support. The study by Sherwood et al. (2021) showed similar results in the positive effect of Virtual Reality Job Interview Training on post-secondary employment for individuals with ASD. The findings from both the studies by Fong et al. (2021) and Sherwood et al. (2021) could be used as empirical evidence for integrating Virtual Reality Job Interview Training into vocational rehabilitation programs.

The significance of Fong et al.'s (2021) study to this body of work is that it identifies and describes specific employment-related interventions that improve the employment outcomes for individuals with autism spectrum disorder. Fong et al. (2021) have identified Project SEARCH and Virtual Reality Job Interview Training as effective employment-related interventions for youth and adults with autism spectrum disorder. This study complements the one by Sherwood et al. (2021), which explored the same variables using a systematic literature review.

### **Autism Spectrum Disorders and Culturally Diverse Backgrounds**

To better cater programs to individuals with disabilities, it is essential to consider these individuals' culturally diverse backgrounds. While the importance of culturally diverse backgrounds has been cited, limited research has been conducted on school-based autism spectrum disorder assessments in the context of culturally diverse backgrounds (Harris et al., 2019). Wilt et al. (2018) attempted to fill this gap by exploring whether culturally responsive practices are utilized with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) families during transition planning. A literature review examined recent research using a conceptual framework informed by a culturally sustaining pedagogy in response to the concerns of ineffective transition planning and services for CLD youth with intellectual disabilities (ID) and families. Wilt et al. (2018) examined whether culturally sustaining practices are reflected within current research on transition planning for CLD families and youth with disabilities, including those with ID. Two research questions guided the study:

1. What are the current barriers to engaging culturally diverse parents and families in transition planning?
2. What culturally sustaining practices have specifically identified promoting family involvement in transition planning?

Seven studies with 115 participants were used in the review by Walt et al. (2018). Only

published research focused on CLD families within the United States engaged in the transition planning process was included. All seven studies used qualitative research designs of focus groups and interviews. The findings reported that all parents encountered barriers to engagement during transition planning. Walt et al. (2018) explained specific obstacles in communication and access to information, negative professional attitudes, experience mistrust, and limited community support. Walt et al. (2018) reported that the practices that promoted culturally and linguistically diverse parent involvement during transition planning included: communication with the school and teachers, culturally sustaining supports like community engagement by school personnel and social/emotional supports, and positive relationships between families, teachers, and other transition school staff. Walt et al.'s (2018) findings indicated that culturally and linguistically diverse families value qualities associated with family-centered, culturally sustaining approaches to transition planning. The significance of this review to this body of work impacts the research as it identifies and describes how culturally responsive practices are utilized with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) families during transition planning. Walt et al. (2018) shed light on CLD families' difficulties in transition planning while offering insight into improving the experience, which is limited in its research. This data provides a culturally sensitive approach for teachers and school transition staff to address students' and families' transition needs. Walsh et al. (2018) evaluated the effectiveness of the Walker social skills curriculum: the ACCESS program and video modeling to increase social communication skills necessary for workplace inclusion in adults with autism spectrum disorder and co-occurring intellectual disabilities.

Using a multiple probe design, Walsh probed seven participants in target skills within the ACCESS program's three curricular areas (peer-related social skills, adult-related social skills, and self-related social skills). The Walker social skills curriculum: the ACCESS program (adolescent curriculum for communication and effective social skills; Walker et al. (1988) was designed to

teach social skills necessary to support individuals with mild and moderate learning disabilities within a range of school, community, and employment environments. The curriculum teaches 31 social communication skills distributed across three primary domains; (1) peer-related social skills, (2) adult-related social skills, and (3) self-related social skills. In evaluating participant behavior changes over time, pre and posttest were used. In a vocational rehabilitation-training center for adults with intellectual disabilities, Walsh measured a battery of social skills with direct and indirect standardized assessments targeting 31 social skills and introduced video modeling. A multiple probe design to evaluate intervention outcomes showed significant increases in target social skills and decreased problem behaviors following the intervention. The significance of this multiple probe design study to this body of work impacts the research as it targeted outcomes of social skills training instruction and presented a successful curriculum for adults with autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disabilities that prepares them for employment. This analysis has identified valuable resources and interventions to guide future research.

Technology can help individuals with intellectual disabilities perform a wide variety of tasks. Leung et al. (2021) cited that mobile technology can be a potential intervention medium for people with autism spectrum disorder. Lin et al. (2018) applied video prompting to provide instructional prompts to accurately help students with intellectual disabilities perform an assigned occupational activity. The study by Lin et al. (2018) aimed to evaluate whether the occupational skills of students with intellectual disabilities could be improved through the intervention of applying video prompting combined with dance pads and then to determine whether those students with intellectual disabilities could maintain the learned skill after the withdrawal of the intervention. Leung et al. (2021) evaluated previous studies to assess the effectiveness of mobile devices as an intervention medium targeting social and cognitive skills among individuals with autism spectrum disorder. The study by Leung et al. (2021) and Lin et al. (2018) utilized different

data collection methods. Leung et al. (2021) conducted a systematic literature review to analyze previous studies, and Lin et al. (2018) used a qualitative approach. The benefit of utilizing the qualitative approach is that the researchers could get firsthand accounts instead of relying on the interpretations of other study findings, such as Leung et al. (2021). The results from the study by Lin et al. (2018) allowed the reader to evaluate the methods used and the subsequent results.

Video prompts could effectively teach students with autism spectrum disorder how to complete specific tasks specifically. Lin et al. (2018) used a purposive sampling approach to select the three participants from a particular education school. A multiple baseline design amongst participants included baseline, intervention, and maintenance phases. Each participant underwent 17 sessions of a formal Chinese meal table setting course, providing a foundational understanding of Chinese tableware and setting. In an activity room at the participants' school, the intervention configuration included two tables, two dance pads placed on the floor in front of the tables, and two notebook computers put on the tables and used to play the video instructions. SPDP software installed on the notebook computer was used as the control system to turn the dance pad into a detector to detect the participant standing on the dance pad and automatically trigger video prompting. The video instruction consisted of 16 task steps in separate video clips. A verbal prompt was delivered simultaneously when the control system played a video clip. The intervention, which included video prompting and dance pads, was an excellent technique to help students with intellectual disabilities complete the prescribed occupational activity effectively while increasing their willingness to learn. The study by Leung et al. (2021) also showed positive results with technology. The results of that study concluded that the participants from the studies reviewed indicated significant intervention effects, and the participants were more inclined to engage with mobile technology. Table 5 shows the phases, activities, and study results by Lin et al. (2018).



**Table 3***Phases, Activities, and Results from Lin et al.'s (2018) Study*

Phases	Activities	Results
Baseline Phase	- three sessions - participants are instructed to pick up tableware and complete the setting of table 2 - no assistance or prompting was provided	correct performances for were 5.67, 6.67 and 7.33
Intervention Phase	- 11 sessions - researcher explained and physically guided participants of how to trigger video prompting - no feedback, reinforcement, or assistance was provided	the mean number of correct performances was 15.72, 15.64 and 15.91
Maintenance Phase	- three sessions were conducted one week after each of their respective intervention phases - participants performed table setting - no video prompting was provided	Mean number of 16 for all participants

The findings demonstrate that following exposure to the video prompting intervention, the participants' correct performance of the target behavior greatly improved, and this favorable result persisted throughout the maintenance phase. The significance of this investigation to this body of work impacts the research as it uses software technology as an intervention to teach occupational skills. This analysis has provided a proven successful teaching method to improve the occupational skills of students with intellectual disabilities. This analysis has identified strategies, tools, and resources for future research.

### **Teachers' and Parents' Experience Transitioning Students with Intellectual Disabilities**

The transition process for students with intellectual disabilities or autism spectrum disorder can be difficult for students and teachers. Strnadová et al. (2016) used Bronfenbrenner's ecological model as a theoretical framework that focused on the quality and context of a child's environment to examine the processes involved in transitions. The findings from the study were translated into

qualitative data from semi-structured interviews to understand transition experiences perceived by parents and teachers of students with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder attending special schools. Hopkins and Dymond (2020) investigated the factors that high school education teachers considered when deciding whether to use community-based instruction with students with severe disabilities and the factors they consider when selecting the skills to teach that population. Data for the study conducted by Hopkins and Dymond (2020) was collected using in-depth interviews. Both studies by Hopkins and Dymond (2020) and Strnadová et al. (2016) used a constant comparative method to analyze the data collected. The study by Hopkins and Dymond (2020) aimed to investigate the factors special education teachers believe influence their decisions to use CBI with individual high school students with severe disabilities and the factors they report considering when selecting skills to teach each student during CBI. Hopkins and Dymond (2020) translated the findings into qualitative data of two guiding questions:

1. What factors do special education teachers believe influence their decision to use CBI with a particular student?
2. What factors do special education teachers report they consider when selecting skills to teach each student during CBI?

Two themes emerged from the study that teachers believe influence their decision to use CBI: (1) program organization and (2) individual student needs. Additional themes that emerged that teachers considered when selecting skills to teach during CBI were: (1) students' current and future needs, (2) classroom curriculum, (3) skills needed in the community, and (4) students' ability to learn. The qualitative data report identified critical variables that affect teachers' decision-making on CBI; decisions for the whole group versus individual students and lack of participation for students with the most severe disabilities. The findings report described several factors influencing teachers' decisions about Community-Based Instruction.

Hopkins and Dymond (2020) found that program organizations and individual students must influence CBI's use. When selecting skills to teach students during CBI, teachers consider students' current and future needs, classroom curriculum, skills required for the community, and students' ability to learn. The findings from the study by Strnadová et al. (2016) described the main topics brought up by teachers and parents at each transition level. In transitioning students from primary to secondary levels, Strnadová et al. (2016) found that the category topics included the 'seamless' nature of the transition from the primary to secondary level in special schools, the transitions to and from special and mainstream environments, and ways of making transitions easier for students with ID/ASD and their parents. Additionally, categories in transitions from secondary school to post-school life included limited post-school options for students with ID/ASD, lack of information about these options, and ways students with ID/ASD are prepared to transition to post-school life.

The results by Strnadová et al. (2016) and Hopkins and Dymond (2020) suggest a critical need for mandated evidence-based transition planning processes for students with disabilities, facilitating the inclusion of the crucial components identified by caregivers and parents and contributing to positive post-school outcomes for ID and ASD students. The significance of these reviews to this body of research is that it identifies and describes the needs and experiences of parents and teachers in the transition process. Both studies by Strnadová et al. (2016) and Hopkins and Dymond (2020) have provided excellent insight into the views of parents and teachers on how to improve the process of transition planning. Strnadová et al. (2016) have identified that the transition planning process in special schools needs evidence-based mandated guidelines. This information benefits transition planning on multiple levels, teachers, and parents of students with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder. The analysis by Hopkins and Dymond (2020) has provided excellent insight into teachers' views on how and why they engage students in

CBI. Hopkins has identified that using Community-Based Instruction is beneficial, but from a teacher's perspective, when, how, and with what students do they use it? This is valuable information for teachers on curriculum planning and delivery.

The parents' perspectives of students with disabilities are essential to explore so that available services can address any gaps they perceive in attaining support. Parents have always been seen as a critical factor in supporting transitioning to the workforce (Schutz et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2020). Francis et al. (2018) investigated parents' perspectives of young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities as they supported their young adults in transitioning from high school and college. DaWalt et al. (2019) conducted a similar study providing a preliminary evaluation of multi-family group psychoeducation interventions to address the gap in transition-focused services. Using a three-step convenience sampling process, Francis et al. (2018) interviewed 26 parents on questions related to participants:

- experiences with secondary school professionals
- experiences as their young adults graduated from secondary school
- experiences of 'letting go' of primary caregiving responsibilities once their young adults entered college
- experiences of interacting with professionals in college
- suggestions for ways in which professionals and parents can better collaborate to support positive young adult outcomes
- ideas for enhancing positive outcomes for young adults as they enter adulthood

DaWalt et al. (2019) used a randomized waitlist control design and compared an intervention condition group and a waitlist control condition group on three key outcomes of interest; 1. parental well-being, 2. Parent-child relationship, and 3. adolescent social functioning. The study posed the following questions:

- Is there a change from pre to post for families in the intervention compared to families in the waitlist control condition on crucial outcome measures?
- How satisfied were participants with the intervention?
- What did participants report learning from the intervention?
- What did participants report doing differently as a result of the intervention?

In the study by Francis et al. (2018), the participants described seven primary strategies that parents and professionals can use to support positive transition experiences: (a) start earlier; participants expressed challenging transitions and regretted not being more proactive in their transition planning. (b) maintain high expectations; participants advised that other parents keep an 'image' of their children as 'capable, independent, 'feeling connected and useful in their communities. (c) permit choice and risk; participants recommended that families should "let go" and "allow their kids a chance" to engage in "independent decision-making," (d) recognize family interdependence and involvement; Participants consistently stressed that it is important for parents, professionals and young adults recognize that 'everyone is interdependent' (e) prioritize parent skill development and support; participants indicated that parents need to 'transition' from a mindset of 'poor Susie' to 'Susie can' and how to 'help your child separate from you while still providing the support that they need' (f) maximize technology; texting is very crucial for young adult language development, because it forces young adults to spell, communicate, and describe how some young adults with 'terrible' handwriting or who read at a low level were great at texting,' allowing them to interact more effectively with family, friends, educators, service providers, and jobs, and (g) promote inclusion; participants specified that, although 'isolation is part of the disability experience,' parents and professionals should 'minimize' isolation by involving young adults in 'as many mainstream activities as possible.

Participants included in the study by DaWalt et al. (2019) were families of adolescents

between the ages of 14 and 17 with autism spectrum disorder who was verbally fluent and, at the time, participating in a general education setting for at least 50% of the school day and living with their parent or legal guardian. Parents participated in a standardized interview and completed self-administered Questionnaires on the son or daughter's well-being, behaviors, and activities.

Adolescents also participated in structured interviews, focusing on friendships and social activities. The Transitioning Together intervention involved two individual family joining sessions to build rapport and partnership in clarifying family goals for the program by using activities such as a family timeline and ecomap., eight weekly parent and teen group sessions, ongoing resources, and referrals. The most relevant intervention measures that were utilized in the DaWalt et al. (2019) study were adolescent outcomes of social interactions, which measured autism symptoms, and social engagement resulting in social interactions increased from pre- to post-intervention for the intervention group, but not for controls and significant increase across the eight weeks in social engagement. The social validity resulted in parents reporting that the information presented and the interactions with other families were valuable, and the overall parental satisfaction with the program was high.

The goal of multi-family group psychoeducation is to provide (1) education about a clinical condition, (2) guided practice in problem-solving, and (3) opportunities for social support from others who have similar experiences to reduce the overall level of distress in the home and turn to improve outcomes for all family members, DaWalt et al.'s (2019) findings were consistent with results of multi-family group psychoeducation interventions for families of individuals with mental health conditions, suggesting benefits of the intervention on parent well-being, parent-child relations, and social outcomes for adolescents with ASD. The significance of this preliminary evaluation to this body of work impacts the research as it provided an intervention that improved family functioning for individuals with ASD. This analysis has provided insight into factors that

give some relief to families. This analysis has identified a valuable and supportive resource and areas of need to guide future research.

The results of this qualitative study reflected frequently reported transition needs or best practices. The same was concluded in the study by Knüppel et al. (2019). The significance of this qualitative study to this body of work impacts the research as it gives firsthand transition experiences of a parent of young adults with disabilities. This analysis has provided a deeper insight into how the transition experience can be improved. This analysis has identified recommendations of parents based on their lived experiences and pointed out strategies to guide future research.

### **Pre-Vocational Skills Laboratory**

A pre-vocational skills laboratory (PVS-Lab) is a web-based learning environment that supports students with autism spectrum disorder in developing pre-vocational and employment skills. Tsiopela et al. (2017) explain the theoretical foundations, the design framework, and the structure and functionality of the PVS-Lab system. Tsiopela et al. (2017) report through a literature review that "alternative learning environments and individualized interventions are promising towards supporting individuals with autism to overcome their barriers of adaptive functioning and social interactions." He also reports that computer-assisted instruction is considered efficient in designing and implementing alternative developmental interventions and treatment strategies to enhance the quality of life for people with ASD. Tsiopela et al. (2017) primary goals for this environment are (a) to support pre-vocational skills' development, (b) to discover ASD students' inclinations and make suggestions for efficient working tasks, (c) to monitor students' stress levels, and (d) to create a detailed learning profile for each student so that the individualized intervention plans can be appropriately designed and adapted to meet individuals' needs. The lab is designed and developed to help educators design information and communications technologies (ICT)

assisted, individualized educational interventions supporting the transition of ASD students from school to work. PVS-Lab is accessible by any device using just a browser. A database system also keeps log files of students' performance. Tsiopela et al. (2017) describe the PSV- Lab design framework as a web-based environment simulating a school laboratory that includes a series of tasks related to pre-vocational skills that adolescents and young adults need to achieve. The software has two main rooms with different tasks with various difficulty levels. Students can be transferred to the selection screen of the task's difficulty. After completion, students can repeat the task, return to the level selection screen, or return to the laboratory room.

PSV-Lab includes eleven activities simulating real-life and working environments tasks. The activities can be divided into five categories: (a) sorting objects, (b) grouping objects, (c) creating patterns, (d) memorizing objects' positions, and (e) assembling objects. The experimental design followed a single-subject approach that observed individual participants' behavior and changes on a day-to-day basis. The findings report showed a positive response to the PVS-Lab environment. The student familiarized himself with the system and used PVS-Lab independently. He was willing to interact with the environment and implement the included tasks. Tsiopela et al. (2017) reported that the intervention positively impacted students' performance, speed, and implementation accuracy. Findings showed that progress appeared as a continuous and systematically evolving process, not only in practicing and developing employment skills but also in improving his behavioral and communication skills.

Tsiopela et al. (2017) suggest a new research framework to improve the performance and pre-vocational skills development of students with ASD, emphasizing the interrelation between performance, behavior, and stress-emotional situations. The significance of this review to this body of research is that it identifies and describes a particular intervention that incorporates technology and real-world simulations to teach vocational skills. Tsiopela et al. (2017) present a helpful



framework for secondary transitional and post-school vocational students. This provides additional curriculum options to improve the post-school outcome of students with autism spectrum disorder.

### **Situated Learning Theory/ Workplace Learning**

Zhao and Kao (2018) demonstrated that the existing theoretical frameworks guiding workplace learning are mainly drawn from different learning theories. In this comprehensive desk-based review of the related literature, Zhao and Kao (2018) define and discuss the concept of workplace learning and its contribution to vocational education teachers' continuous professional development. The process by which vocational education teachers actively participate in their workplace and learning environments to enhance their professional knowledge is referred to as workplace learning in this article. Formal training and informal learning activities that entail interactions between vocational teachers and their working environment are included in workplace learning. More emphasis will be placed on situational learning in this working definition of vocational teachers' workplace learning. Learning is used to acquire knowledge and skills and develop the habits and skills of sharing knowledge in vocational education and training. Different learning theories, such as Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory, Wenger's (2000) social learning systems, Jarvis's (2011) adult learning model, and Kolb's (2014) experiential learning cycle, are widely used to guide workplace learning. The Workplace Learning Model for Vocational Education Teachers presented by Illeris (2005; 2011) provides a theoretically sound foundation that can be modified and extended to hypothesize about the workplace learning of vocational education teachers with various key concepts.

- The content Dimension consists of learners' knowledge, skills, understanding of the learning content, and attitudes toward learning.
- The incentive Dimension contains learners' feelings, emotions, and motivations in the learning process.

- The interaction dimension encompasses learners' mutual communication and cooperation in learning.

Pei-Ling and Yen-Cheng (2020) explore the impact of the cognitive apprenticeship teaching approach in food and beverage (F&B) service training courses on learning satisfaction. Cognitive apprenticeship teaching facilitates students' acquisition of holistic cognition and post-cognitive skills through observation, guidance, and practice. Situated learning emphasizes that effective learning occurs in authentic contextual situations, and cognitive apprenticeship teaching facilitates students' acquisition of holistic cognition and post-cognitive skills through observation, guidance, and practice. Three key concepts are included in this understanding of the theory. (1) Community of practice: A community of practice is a group of people who work in a specific field. Newcomers join this circle and attempt to adopt its social and cultural traditions. (2) Legitimate peripheral participation: Legitimate peripheral participation means that all parties in the community of practice are willing to accept new and unqualified novices as members of their community, whereas peripheral participation means that novices enter the community from the periphery by first engaging in peripheral work. They become increasingly active and absorbed into the culture as they travel from the perimeter to the center of the community. According to participation, learners develop knowledge through the work in which they are involved. This is founded on the premise that social behaviors only manifest knowledge in the community. (3) Cognitive apprenticeship: This phrase refers to a situation in which a master of a skill teaches that skill to an apprentice, focusing on contextual learning and practical knowledge acquisition. According to Pei-Ling and Yen-Cheng (2020), this method is regarded as a new teaching paradigm, which, when properly implemented, leads to significant gains in positive teaching outcomes and talent development.

## **Facilitators and Barriers to Positive Post-Secondary Outcomes**

Additional research must be conducted on the effectiveness of inclusive and special education programs. Chandroo et al. (2018) noted that the lack of input on goals by students with autism spectrum disorder could attribute to the struggles they experience with post-school employment, post-secondary education, and independent living. High school students with disabilities experience multiple factors that can contribute to their post-school success, such as social and communication difficulties, sensory issues, and narrow interests (Eastman et al., 2021). While it has been noted that programs do exist to assist students with disabilities with transitioning, many young people with disabilities are still not experiencing the outcomes that are aligned with the personal aspirations and priorities they have set for themselves (Anderson et al., 2018; Pearson et al., 2020; Trainor et al., 2020).

Hornby (2021) attempted to fill that gap by exploring the effectiveness of inclusive and special education programs in young people with moderate to severe learning or behavioral difficulties. Hornby (2021) used a comparative analysis approach to the findings of three long-term follow-up studies of young people with special needs that he was involved with for over 30 years. The three studies included 1.) A Case Study of a Special Class in New Zealand, 2.) A follow-up study of young people with moderate learning difficulties, and 3.) A follow-up study of young people in New Zealand at a special residential school for emotional or behavioral challenges. Hornby (2021) translated his findings into qualitative data examining the outcomes of young people with moderate learning difficulties taught in a secondary school special class and those who attended a special school and were transferred to mainstream schools for the final years. Hornby et al. (2021) research question is: Which of these two approaches, special education or inclusive education, is more likely to achieve the goal of maximum inclusion in the community as adults?

The qualitative data reports the views of three stakeholders; research on parents, teachers, and young people's perspectives, short-term achievement of children with learning or behavior difficulties, and long-term outcomes for children with learning or behavior difficulties. The findings report describes that students who left school directly from the special class in the mainstream school were more successful in being included in their communities post-school than those who left school from mainstream schools who transferred in for their last few years of schooling. This finding is related to the difference in curricula that the students experienced during their final years of education.

The results of this study believe that including the views of parents and teachers and assessments of young people's views with their short and long-term outcomes in various educational settings is the best way of evaluating the quality of the education that young people with learning or behavioral difficulties are receiving, and of gaining feedback to improve outcomes of the various settings and programs used continuously. This coincides with results from the studies by Strnadová et al. (2016) and Hopkins and Dymond (2020). The significance of this review to this body of work impacts the research as it identifies and describes specific short and long-term outcomes in various educational settings that improve the evaluation of the quality of education that young people with learning or behavioral difficulties are receiving. Hornby's analysis has provided excellent insight into the views of parents, teachers, and students on their experience in inclusive mainstream education versus special education programs. Hornby had identified that young people who left school from a special class in the mainstream school were more successful in being included in their community's post-school than those who had left school from mainstream schools they had been transferred into for their last few years of schooling. These findings show promise for transition planning for educational placements and settings.

The needs of transition professionals are essential to address so that these professionals

can provide the best outcome for students with autism spectrum disorder. Kester et al. (2019) examined transition professionals' perceived interdisciplinary needs across roles and practice levels who support youth with autism spectrum disorders in special education and public state-federal vocational rehabilitation (VR) systems. Kester set out to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the interdisciplinary training needs across levels of practice for professionals who support the secondary transition of youth diagnosed with ASD? (2) Are there significant differences in training needs across professional roles based on experience working with youth and young adults with disabilities and those diagnosed with ASD? (3) Were there significant differences in interdisciplinary training needs based on professional role or employment setting, specifically working in an educational compared to a VR environment? Kester et al. (2019) used a descriptive, quantitative research design and a post-positivist framework to use the Interdisciplinary Transition and Autism Competencies Survey (ITACS) with 147 professionals. The self-report, Likert-based questionnaire identified professional transition skills and knowledge-based competencies for working with transition-age youth diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Transition Specific Competencies and Autism Specific Competencies were identified as the two primary domains with the following sub-domains:

- curriculum and content
- instructional planning
- assessment
- services
- programs and models
- evidence-based practices
- policy and law
- interdisciplinary collaboration

Significant differences in transition competencies between levels of practice, experience, and professional roles were identified. A need for a greater understanding of specific transition competencies was noticed in vocational rehabilitation and educational professionals. Field-specific gaps in knowledge and skills were evident in the responses based on roles, levels of practice, and experience. The significance of this descriptive, quantitative research approach to this body of work impacts the research as it provides insight to improve current and future state and district-level professional development topics. This analysis has shed light on the specific training needs of transition professionals working with a student with autism spectrum disorder. This analysis has identified target developmental needs within the curriculum, instructional settings, and delivery styles and techniques while pointing out research tools and resources to guide future research.

### **Rationale**

This systematic review integrated the empirical evidence of the need for strategic planning for specific post-secondary outcomes for students on the autism spectrum. Because a considerable amount of research indicates practices and predictors that impact the research efficacy of transition-age students, academic, vocational, and social skills interventions must be strategically planned during the secondary school years. With the integration of Workplace Learning through the Situated Learning Theory, a foundational theoretical framework can guide the planning process. Further, the goal will be for educational leaders to use this framework to help them strategically plan for successful post-secondary outcomes for students on the autism spectrum. Chapter three provides the research methodology used for this study, including a description of the population and sample, the chosen research methodology, the data collection and analysis, and the limitations and delimitations of the study.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### **Introduction – Recap of Study and Purpose**

This chapter presents the methodology used to address the research questions. The population and sample used are discussed in detail, and how the recruiting took place is documented. The site that will be used for recruitment is stated. The ethical considerations the researcher considered in protecting the research participants are addressed. A detailed data collection and analysis plan concludes the chapter and summarizes the research plan.

Increased attention has been given to supporting high school students with disabilities as they transition to adulthood and consider their options after high school (Gothberg et al., 2018). Post-secondary education, employment, independent living, secondary transition education, and services are all options for high school students with disabilities. Multiple factors can contribute to the post-school success of students with disabilities, such as social and communication difficulties, sensory issues, and narrow interests (Eastman et al., 2021). Compared to students with disabilities, students on the Autism spectrum have some of the worst postsecondary outcomes, indicating that many programs and services currently available to assist with transitioning are not working (Findley et al., 2022).

This research analysis aimed to determine the effectiveness of transition intervention programs that apply principles of Situated Learning Theory and lead to post-secondary employment in a large urban school district in South Florida. The researcher sought to answer the proposed three research questions and solve the research problem. Answering the research questions aided in understanding transitional programs for students on the Autism Spectrum by providing the factors of secondary transition programs that lead to post-secondary employment. Addressing the research questions also offered a needed understanding of how the principles of the situated learning theory contribute to post-secondary employment. The research problem in this

study was the effectiveness of transition intervention programs for students on the Autism Spectrum. This study's second purpose was to contribute knowledge for post-secondary transition planning for students in secondary special education classes.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were used to guide this research:

**RQ1:** What factors of secondary transition programs lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment?

**RQ2:** What factors of Strategic Transition Planning contribute to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum?

**RQ3:** In what ways do the principles of Situated Learning Theory lead to post-secondary employment?

### **Context/Setting of the Study**

The Florida Department of Education and Secondary Special Education within an urban school district in Florida was chosen as the locale for this study. The urban school district in Florida comprises 236 schools and 187,057 students (An Urban school district in Florida - U.S. news education). The district currently sponsors 49 charter schools in all major geographic areas of an urban school district in Florida, providing school choice to over 22,000 students in elementary, middle, high, alternative, and technical education school settings. Within these numbers, the county serves approximately 38,178 students identified as eligible for Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and 4,060 diagnosed with ASD (Florida Department of Education. (2021). Florida was designated as an Employment First state by Executive Order in 2013. Employment First is a policy that emphasizes the importance of employment for all people, including those with disabilities. Because of this designation, the data collected within an urban school district in Florida provided rich data to meet the study's purpose. Secondary educational institutions in and



around South Florida were chosen because of the researcher's location. This ability of the researcher to collect data is discussed further in Data Collection.

### **Description of Population and Sample**

In qualitative studies, the population is the people the researcher intends to research (Majid, 2018). The population for this study is professionals that have or are currently teaching vocational education to students with ASD in a secondary educational setting. Because a researcher cannot study an entire population, a sample of that population is used to represent the whole (Johnson et al., 2020). The researcher solicited over 200 participants based on the area's demographics, with a 12% expected response. While all gender classifications were welcome to participate, most answers were expected from women with at least ten years of teaching experience. The sampling design in qualitative studies includes the most appropriate participants to provide the most prosperous and relevant data according to the study purpose and the research questions (Johnson et al., 2020). The sample for this research was vocational educational professionals who have worked with students with ASD in an urban school district in Florida. The participants gained access to past and current professional relationships and acceptance by local private and charter school principals.

### **Research Design – Rationale for Design**

The methodological approach to address this study's research questions was action research. Qualitative research aims to further our understanding and insight into people's experiences and consider how individuals make sense of complex thoughts and actions (Denny & Weckesser, 2018). In generic qualitative inquiries, the researcher investigates a group of individuals' subjective opinions, beliefs, and reflections according to how they experience the topic being studied (Kennedy, 2016). This research method is appropriate for this examination because its purpose is to determine the effectiveness of transition intervention programs that apply

principles of Situated Learning Theory and lead to post-secondary employment. To fully understand the effectiveness of the transition intervention programs, a qualitative study provided the tools and design needed to explore the phenomenon and understand what makes the program effective. Using narrative data from qualitative studies provided a richer understanding of the problem.

### **Data Collection**

To collect data for this study, surveys were conducted (see appendix D) from the school district mentioned above with vocational education professionals who do or did educate students on the Autism spectrum in the Florida Department of Education system. Before any data collection began, Institutional Review Board approval was obtained from Lynn University. Once IRB approval was received, the recruitment of participants from the local private and charter schools in an urban school district in Florida. To recruit participants for the study, purposive sampling was used. When a researcher utilizes purposive sampling, they intentionally select participants to maximize the data sources that meet a specific set of inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria that the participants of this study must meet were:

- a) must be a current or past vocational education professional who currently or previously taught students with ASD
- b) must have been or are employed within Florida
- c) must currently have had in the past, worked with high school students with ASD and
- d) must be able to read and write in English.

The exclusion criteria for this study were:

- a) could not live outside of the state of Florida during vocational education and reported experience

b) could not be an elementary school teacher during vocational education reported experience and

c) could not be a teacher who has not worked with ASD students during vocational education reported experience.

For the study, purposive sampling was used to recruit eligible participants from an urban school district in Florida. The transition education department at local private and charter schools was contacted via phone (see appendix D) and follow-up emails for permission to recruit from the site via email. Once site approval was received, recruitment flyers were provided to the site and placed in common areas where secondary vocational education professionals had access. Additionally, the researcher had personal relationships, having worked locally in the field. Thus, professional courtesy allowed for a convenient sample. The recruitment flyer (see appendix B) contained information about the study, contact details for the researcher, and how the data collection was conducted. The researcher aimed to recruit 25 participants in the hopes that data saturation would be reached. If data saturation is not reached with the initial 25 participants, additional recruiting will occur until the researcher feels a sufficient number was reached.

### **Instrumentation**

After recruitment, interested participants were emailed an embedded link to the survey using Google Assessment (see appendix B and D). The survey was open for 21 days. A minimum of 200 email requests were sent out. The survey took approximately 20 minutes. The questions in the survey were guided by the research questions and the study purpose. The survey opened with a question for electronic informed consent. After consent was approved, demographic data were collected on gender, years of experience, professional role, current role status, and program setting. The remainder 38 multiple-choice, linear scale, checkbox, and open-ended questions allowed the participants to expand on the questions and the topic and provide any additional information they

felt was relevant to the survey questions. During the survey, the participants could refuse to answer any questions they did not want to.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Approval from the Institutional Review Board was sought before any data collection or recruitment of participants took place. The goal of the Institutional Review Board was to ensure that the participants of research studies were protected and that the study was conducted ethically (Balon et al., 2019). The beneficence principle in the Belmont Report was adhered to throughout the study. This principle refers to ethically treating the participants by respecting their decisions and protecting them from physical or mental harm (U.S. National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Informed consent must have been provided to participate. The survey would have automatically dismissed a participant if informed consent was refused. The informed consent contained information about the study, what was expected of the participant during the study, and whom they could contact if they had additional questions—the steps to take if they decided to withdraw. No identifying information was to be collected, stored, or used. The risks involved in the study were minimal, and participants were not required to answer any questions they may not feel comfortable answering. By participating in the study, the participants benefited from providing information on what they had experienced as practical factors contributing to the successful transition of students on the Autism spectrum to post-secondary employment.

### **Anonymity & Confidentiality**

Anonymity and confidentiality are processes that the researcher takes in a study to protect the privacy of the participants (Hoft, 2021). These processes apply to all study phases, including collecting, analyzing, and reporting findings. All identifiable information was removed from the transcribed files to reduce the risk of participants being identified. From the survey, no identifiable

information was collected. The files were also stored separately in separate folders on Microsoft OneDrive. In the analysis and reporting phases of the study, no identifiable information was used besides quotes from the participants. To assist in anonymity and confidentiality in the study, the surveys were conducted through Google Assessment, where only the researcher could access the results.

To secure the data after the surveys were conducted, each file was labeled with a pseudonym and stored password-protected on Microsoft OneDrive. The data will be kept for one year, after which all files will be securely deleted from Microsoft OneDrive.

### **Quality of Data**

The data quality in this research study depended on the study's trustworthiness. Four criteria help establish reliability in a study, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985). These criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Triangulation addressed the study's credibility, including using previous studies and a theoretical framework to confirm and interpret the findings. The member checking conducted after the survey was transcribed another way this study is credible. Ensuring the transcriptions accurately represent what the participants wished to convey lends credibility to the results. Transferability in qualitative studies refers to how the findings can be applied in other contexts and populations (Stahl & King, 2020). The detailed information regarding the study design, the population and sample, the steps taken to collect the data, and how the data analysis is performed allows other researchers to replicate the study. Due to the small sample size, transferability was not recommended in this study. Confirmability is present in the study by limiting the number of researchers involved in interpreting the study results. The reflexive analysis acknowledges the researcher's bias and value regarding the study topic, increasing the study's dependability.

## **Data Analysis**

The thematic analysis was used to analyze the data for this study. The data were analyzed using an iterative approach following the steps in Clarke & Braun's (2017) thematic analysis process. A thematic analysis was chosen because it assists in identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning in the survey files (Clarke & Braun, 2017). To begin the analysis, the files were read multiple times to familiarize the researcher with the data. Once all files were read three times, coding began. Coding qualitative data is the process of notifying information relevant to the study purpose and research questions and notating any data that may be important (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The coding process entailed a thorough and systematic creation of meaningful codes from the data and had a relationship to the research questions. This process was repeated twice to ensure that all critical and relevant information was noted. After coding was complete, themes were created according to the data in the codes. Developing themes involved examining the codes and then combining them into meaningful patterns. Once coding and themes were completed, the process was repeated to ensure the codes and subsequent themes were related to the research questions and purpose. A frequency table was used to analyze multiple-choice data, and a calculated average was scored for Likert responses.

## **Limitations and Delimitations**

Limitations in a research study are factors beyond the researcher's control and can limit the scope and effectiveness of the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). The study findings were limited to vocational teachers and those the researcher knew in one school district. The small sample group used for this study was also a limitation as it does not accurately represent all vocational teachers in the Florida Department of Education that educate students on the Autism spectrum. Data quality is also a limitation as it was assumed that the participants answered the survey questions honestly. Since this is a qualitative study, there was no way to verify the data

collected during the survey. Due to the small sample size, transferability was not recommended in this study. Delimitations in qualitative studies are limitations the researchers set on the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). The sampling method chosen was a delimitation because the researcher chose a purposive sampling method so that the selected participants would provide the most information-rich data regarding the research study. The population chosen and the study site was also a delimitation because recruiting from an area in the state of Florida was a location that is geographically close to the researcher.

### **Summary**

Chapter three of this study provided a detailed overview of the research design used. This research study aimed to determine the effectiveness of transition intervention programs that apply principles of Situated Learning Theory and lead to post-secondary employment. A generic qualitative inquiry addressed the research questions and fulfilled the study purpose. The target population and sample were discussed, and the justification for the recruitment method was explained. The steps taken to protect the participants and what was expected from them in this study were documented. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, and the steps were recorded. Chapter 4 presents the conclusion and discussion of the data collection and analysis, and recommendations for further research will be discussed.

## CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

### **Introduction**

This research study aimed to determine the effectiveness of transition intervention programs that applied principles of Situated Learning Theory and led to post-secondary employment. The researcher sought to answer the proposed research questions and solve the research problem. The results aided in understanding transitional programs for students on the Autism Spectrum by providing the factors of secondary transition programs that lead to post-secondary employment. Addressing the research questions also offered a needed understanding of how the principles of the situated learning theory contribute to post-secondary work. This chapter contains the results of the action research methodology study conducted to answer the three research questions:

RQ1: What factors of secondary transition programs lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment?

RQ2: What factors of Strategic Transition Planning contribute to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum?

RQ3: In what ways do the principles of Situated Learning Theory lead to post-secondary employment?

This chapter also discusses whether the analysis was consistent with the action research methodology and how the study ties back to the research questions. Additionally, this chapter includes sample demographics, using tables to complement the summary. See Appendix G.

### **Summary of Analyses**

The process used to analyze the surveys from the 17 participants conducted to uncover codes and themes is described in detail in this chapter. There were six analysis steps:

1. Become familiar with the data.



2. Generate initial codes.
3. Search for themes
4. Review themes
5. Define themes.
6. Write-up

The researcher became familiar with the data from the emailed survey responses before analyzing it. No identifying information was collected, stored, or used. Coding began after file reading. The data was carefully coded to answer the research questions. Themes were derived from coded data. Preconceived themes stood out based on research questions, assumptions, and expertise. The researcher classifies survey responses by research question theme. Each study topic (coding category) had themes. Examining codes and creating meaningful patterns creates themes. Coding and topic generation were repeated to ensure the codes and themes were relevant to the research objectives and goal. Multiple-choice data was analyzed using a frequency table, and Likert responses were averaged. At each level of analysis, a constant comparison was used to distill the data further until the preconceived themes were confirmed from the data. The chapter includes tables and graphics to present detailed code, theme data, and graphs emphasizing key themes and their consequent theory.

### **Participant Data**

Seventeen participants were surveyed for this study by reaching out to over 200 potential participants via email. Appendix G indicates the participant demographics representing a sample less than the minimum requirements sought, as Chapter III describes. Table 4 shows that females were dominant in the survey, with 13 women and four men.

### **Table 4**

*Survey Participant Data by Gender*

Twelve participants were current vocational education professionals, while five were no longer practicing vocational education professionals. Table 5 describes the various experience levels represented in the sample ranging from 1 year of teaching experience to 33 years of teaching experience, with Four (24%) with between 1 and 5 years of teaching experience, four (24%) with between 6 and 10 years of teaching experience, two (11%) with between 11 and 15 years of teaching experience, and seven (41%) with over 16 years of teaching experience.

**Table 5**

*Survey Participant Data by Years of Experience*

0-5 years	4
6-10 years	4
11-15 years	2
16+ years	7

Seventeen (100%) participants have worked with students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in their role as vocational education professionals. The instructional affiliation roles of the study participants in the high school vocational education program that serves students on the autism spectrum are represented in Table 6 as five (29.4) program administrators, eight (47.1%) teachers, two (11.8%) job coaches, and two (11.8%) reported their affiliation roles as other.

**Table 6**

*Survey Participant Data by Instructional Affiliation Role*

Program Administrator	5
Teacher	8
Paraprofessional	0
Job Coach	2
Other	2
Male	4
Female	13

Fifteen (88.2%) and two (11.8%) have previously been affiliated with secondary vocational education in Florida. As reported by educational setting affiliation, seven (41.2%) survey participants were in public schools, seven (41.2%) were in a charter school, and one (5.9%) was in private school vocational education programs. One (5.9%) reported other educational settings for their vocational education programs, and one (5.9%) said they had worked in public, charter, and private educational settings, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

*Survey Participant Data by Type of Educational Setting Affiliated*

Public School	7
Charter School	7
Private School	1
Other	1
All of the above	1

### **Data Collection**

The 13 research surveys with women professionals that have or are currently teaching vocational education to students with ASD in a secondary educational setting were the primary source of research data. The demographic questions served as supporting research data. After every five submitted surveys, five surveys were coded manually and reviewed for theme categorization based on the research questions. A deductive approach was used to code the data into preconceived themes expected to be found based on established assumptions and existing knowledge. Coding consisted of highlighting phrases or sentences from survey responses. A semantic approach was also used to analyze the explicit content of the data. Themes were further refined by splitting, combining, and discarding them as the entire dataset was processed. Following this method, the researcher ensured that action research methodology was embedded throughout the data collection part of the research process.

### **Data Analysis**

All multiple-choice, linear scale, checkbox, and open-ended survey questions were coded manually. A frequency table was used to analyze the multiple-choice data, and a calculated average was scored for Likert responses. The surveys were analyzed in sets of five submissions, allowing analysis time before moving on to additional submissions. The analysis began with the researcher becoming familiar with the data. Once all files were read, coding began. The coding process entailed a thorough and systematic creation of meaningful codes from the data related to the research questions. The researcher coded each group and analyzed it for categories or themes created according to the data in the codes. Preconceived themes are expected to stand out based on the research questions, established assumptions, and existing knowledge. Developing themes involves examining the codes and then combining them into meaningful patterns. Once coding and themes were created, the process was repeated to ensure the codes and subsequent themes were related to the research questions and purpose. Coding the surveys again, having all 17 surveys to compare, aided the comparative analysis techniques critical to action research methodology. The researcher highlighted portions of the text and coded them to a research question based on the nature of their content. This process helped the researcher consistently emphasize key points during coding. The coding results are shown in Appendix H. In the following analysis phase, the researcher uses a deductive approach. The researcher examines the survey responses and categorizes them under the appropriate themes associated with each research question. Each research question also used as the coding categories, had emerging themes.

There were nine themes within the selective codes of the three research questions. The paragraph section headers that follow indicate the particular themes that emerged. Three themes emerged from coded responses that coincided with research question 1, What factors of secondary transition programs lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment? Four themes emerged from coded responses that coincided with research

question 2, What factors of Strategic Transition Planning contribute to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum? Two themes emerged from coded responses that coincided with research question 3: How do the Situated Learning Theory principles lead to post-secondary employment?

## **Results**

The survey results will be discussed below about the overall effectiveness of several factors that play a part in the transition and planning of students with ASD. From the effectiveness of students with ASD participating in Career Technical Education (CTE) programs and being included in general education and post-school employment to work experience participation and parents expressing expectations for their child to obtain post-high school employment will be discussed.

### **Effectiveness Data**

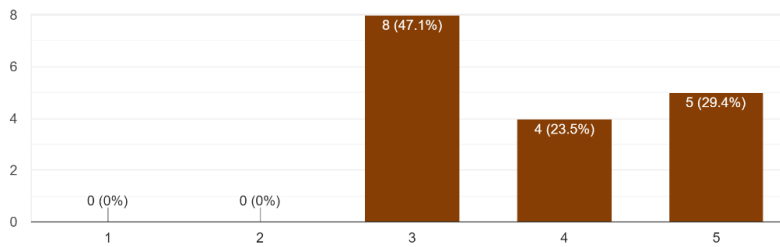
Five survey respondents (29.4%) rated the overall effectiveness of students with ASD participating in Career Technical Education (CTE) programs as very effective, four (23.5%) as somewhat very effective, and eight (47.1%) as practical. No participant rated as ineffective the overall efficacy of ASD students' participation in Career Technical Education (CTE) programs.

### **Figure 2**

*Overall effectiveness of students with ASD participation in Career Technical Education (CTE) programs*

5. What do you believe is the overall effectiveness of students with ASD participation in Career Technical Education (CTE) programs? (Scale 1-5, 1 = Not effective 5 = Very effective)

17 responses



Four (23.5%) survey respondents believe the inclusion of students with ASD in general education and post-school employment is very effective, five (29.4%) believe it is somewhat effective, seven (41.2%) believe it is effective, and one (5.9%) believe it is somewhat ineffective. No participant believes that including students with ASD in general education and post-school employment is ineffective overall. Seven (41.2% of respondents) believe that the overall efficacy of work experience participation for students with ASD in post-school employment is very effective, four (23.5%) believe it is somewhat effective, and six (35.3%) believe it is effective. No participant believes that the overall efficacy of post-schoolwork experience participation for students with ASD is ineffective.

Six participants (35.3%) believe that the overall impact of parents expressing expectations for their child to obtain post-high school employment is very effective, three (17.6%) believe it is somewhat very effective, and eight (47.1%) believe it is effective. No participant believes that the overall efficacy of parents expressing expectations for their child to obtain post-secondary employment after high school is ineffective. Eleven (64.7% of respondents) believe that the overall effectiveness of providing students with ASD with strong functional living skills training in high school (e.g., telling time, reading, and understanding common signs) in post-school employment is very effective, five (29.4%) somewhat very effective, and one (5.9%) effective. No participant believes that the overall efficacy of high school functional living skills training for students with

ASD is ineffective. Eight (50%) survey respondents believe that the overall effectiveness of self-determination/self-advocacy- students with ASD who have innate psychological empowerment as a belief in the relationship between actions and outcomes experienced in post-school employment is very effective, four (25%) believe it is somewhat very effective, and four (25%) believe it is effective. No participants believe that the overall efficacy of self-determination/self-advocacy for students with ASD who have innate psychological empowerment as a belief in the relationship between actions and outcomes experienced in post-school employment is ineffective. Seven (43.8%) survey respondents believe that the overall effectiveness of student support from contributing studies, including students with ASD receiving career counseling at any time in high school for post-school employment, is very effective, five (31.3%), somewhat very effective, three (18.8%), and one (6.3%) somewhat not effective. No participants believed that the overall efficacy of student support from contributing studies that included students with ASD receiving career counseling at any point in high school for post-school employment was ineffective.

Seven (43.8%) survey respondents believe the overall effectiveness of Student support from contributing studies, including students with ASD obtaining help finding a job after high school, is very effective, five (31.3%) believe it is somewhat very effective, and four (25%) believe it is effective. No participants believe that the aggregate effectiveness of student support from contributing studies, which included students with ASD receiving assistance in finding a job at any time during high school, is effective. Seven respondents (43.8%) believe that the overall effectiveness of student support from contributing studies, including students with ASD training for job skills at any time in high school in post-school employment, is very effective, seven (43.8%) believe that it is somewhat effective, and two (12.5%) believe that it is effective. No participant believes that the overall efficacy of student support from contributing studies, including training for job skills at any time in high school for students with ASD, is ineffective. Eight (50%)

of respondents believe that the overall effectiveness of Student support from contributing studies, including students with ASD acquiring vocational education services at any time during high school in post-school employment, is very effective, five (31,3%) somewhat very effective, and three (18.9%) effective. No participant believes that the overall efficacy of student support from contributing studies, which included students with ASD acquiring vocational education services at any time during high school, is ineffective. Seven (48.3%) of survey respondents believe that Students with ASD developing transition planning skills to help them assess options and strategies for transitioning to adult life in post-school employment is very effective, six (37.5%) believe it is somewhat very effective, two (12.5%) believe it is effective, and one (6.3%) believes it is somewhat not effective. No participant believes that the overall efficacy of students with ASD developing transition planning skills to help them evaluate post-school employment options and strategies is ineffective.

Ten (58.8%) of survey respondents believe the overall effectiveness of Providing students with opportunities to participate in work-study programs in high school (e.g., work skills instruction/experiences to develop work attitudes and behaviors in post-school employment) is very effective, four (23.5%) believe it is somewhat very effective, two (11.8%) believe it is effective, and one (5.7%) believes it is somewhat not effective. No participant believes that the overall efficacy of allowing high school students to participate in work-study programs is ineffective. Five (31.3%) survey respondents believe that the overall effectiveness of Youth autonomy/decision-making - the extent to which an individual acts per their preferences, interests, and abilities and assumes a leadership role in the transition planning process for post-school employment - is very effective, six (37.5%) believe it is somewhat very effective, four (25%) believe it is effective, and one (6.3%) believes it is somewhat not effective. Youth autonomy/decision-making - the extent to which individuals act according to their preferences,



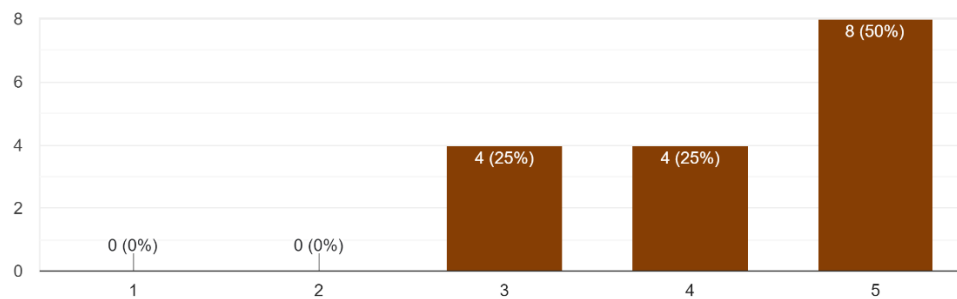
interests, and abilities and assume a leadership role in the transition planning process for post-school employment - is deemed effective by all participants. Eight (50%) survey respondents believe that the overall effectiveness of self-determination/self-advocacy- students with ASD who have innate psychological empowerment as a belief in the relationship between actions and outcomes experienced in post-school employment is very effective, four (25%) believe it is somewhat very effective, and four (25%) believe it is effective. No participants believe that the overall efficacy of self-determination/self-advocacy for students with ASD who have innate psychological empowerment as a belief in the relationship between actions and outcomes experienced in post-school employment is ineffective.

### Figure 3

*Overall effectiveness of self-determination/self-advocacy- students with ASD have innate psychological empowerment as a belief in the relationship between your actions and outcomes experienced in post-school employment*

10. What do you believe is the overall effectiveness of self-determination/self-advocacy- students with ASD having innate psychological empowerment a...(Scale 1-5, 1 = Not effective 5 = Very effective)

16 responses



Seven (43.8%) survey respondents believe that the overall effectiveness of student support from contributing studies, including students with ASD receiving career counseling at any time in high school for post-school employment, is very effective, five (31.3%), somewhat very effective, three (18.8%), and one (6.3%) somewhat not effective. No participants believed that the overall

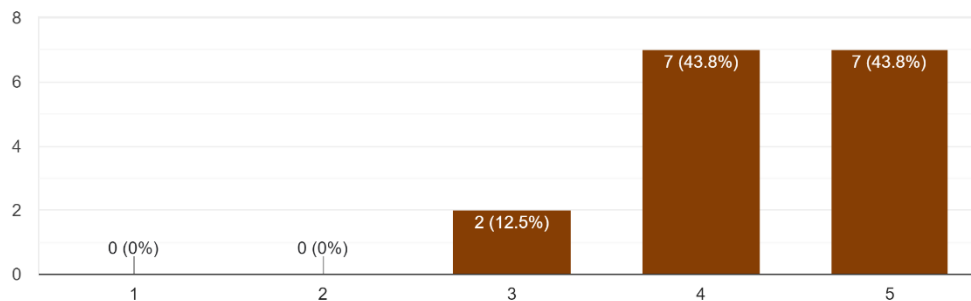
efficacy of student support from contributing studies that included students with ASD receiving career counseling at any point in high school for post-school employment was ineffective. Seven (43.8%) survey respondents believe the overall effectiveness of Student support from contributing studies, including students with ASD obtaining help finding a job after high school, is very effective, five (31.3%) believe it is somewhat very effective, and four (25%) believe it is effective. No participants believe that the aggregate effectiveness of student support from contributing studies, which included students with ASD receiving assistance in finding a job at any time during high school, is effective. Seven respondents (43.8%) believe that the overall effectiveness of student support from contributing studies, including students with ASD training for job skills at any time in high school in post-school employment, is very effective, seven (43.8%) believe that it is somewhat effective, and two (12.5%) believe that it is effective. No participant believes that the overall efficacy of student support from contributing studies, including training for job skills at any time in high school for students with ASD, is ineffective.

#### Figure 4

*Overall effectiveness of student support from contributing studies, including students with ASD training for job skills at any time in high school in post-school employment*

13. What do you believe is the overall effectiveness of student support from contributing studies including students with ASD training for job skills at...t? (Scale 1-5, 1 = Not effective 5 = Very effective)

16 responses



Eight (50%) of respondents believe that the overall effectiveness of Student support from

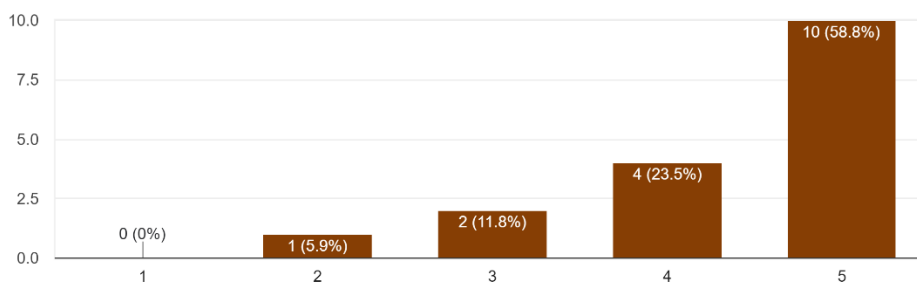
contributing studies, including students with ASD acquiring vocational education services at any time during high school in post-school employment, is very effective, five (31.3%) somewhat very effective, and three (18.9%) effective. No participant believes that the overall efficacy of student support from contributing studies, which included students with ASD acquiring vocational education services at any time during high school, is ineffective. Seven (48.3%) of survey respondents believe that Students with ASD developing transition planning skills to help them assess options and strategies for transitioning to adult life in post-school employment is very effective, six (37.5%) believe it is somewhat very effective, two (12.5%) believe it is effective, and one (6.3%) believes it is somewhat not effective. No participant believes that the overall efficacy of students with ASD developing transition planning skills to help them evaluate post-school employment options and strategies is ineffective. Ten (58.8%) of survey respondents believe the overall effectiveness of Providing students with opportunities to participate in work-study programs in high school (e.g., work skills instruction/experiences to develop work attitudes and behaviors in post-school employment) is very effective, four (23.5%) believe it is somewhat very effective, two (11.8%) believe it is effective, and one (5.7%) believes it is somewhat not effective. No participant believes that the overall efficacy of allowing high school students to participate in work-study programs is ineffective.

**Figure 5**

*Overall effectiveness of Providing students opportunities to participate in work-study programs in high school (e.g., work skills instruction/experiences to develop work attitudes and behaviors in post-school employment)*

16. What do you believe is the overall effectiveness of Providing students opportunities to participate in work-study programs in high school (e....t? (Scale 1-5, 1 = Not effective 5 = Very effective)

17 responses



Five (31.3%) survey respondents believe that the overall effectiveness of Youth autonomy/decision-making - the extent to which an individual acts by their preferences, interests, and abilities and assumes a leadership role in the transition planning process for post-school employment - is very effective, six (37.5%) believe it is somewhat very effective, four (25%) believe it is effective, and one (6.3%) believes it is somewhat not effective. Youth autonomy/decision-making - the extent to which individuals act according to their preferences, interests, and abilities and assume a leadership role in the transition planning process for post-school employment - is deemed effective by all participants.

### Results for Research Question 1

As previously noted, preconceived themes emerged based on the research question, assumptions, and the researcher's expertise. For research question 1, What factors of secondary transition programs lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment? Three themes emerged.

**Theme 1:** Differentiated Instruction is an important factor in secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment.

**Theme 2:** Real-World/Hands-on Experiences are an important factor in secondary

transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment.

**Theme 3:** Specific Curriculum Content is an important factor in secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment.

- **RQ1/Theme 1:** Differentiated Instruction is an important factor in secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment.

This theme is derived from the researcher's expertise (years of experience as a special education teacher) and the content embedded within the research question (factors in secondary transition special education classes). As responses were reviewed and coded, the theme of differentiated instruction as an important factor in secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment was presented as expected. As the researcher examined the coded responses and categorized the fitting replies of the differentiated instruction theme associated with research question 1, based on the responses below in RQ1T1, the theme was validated as appropriate for answering the research question, What factors of secondary transition programs lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment?

**RQ1T1 Validating responses:**

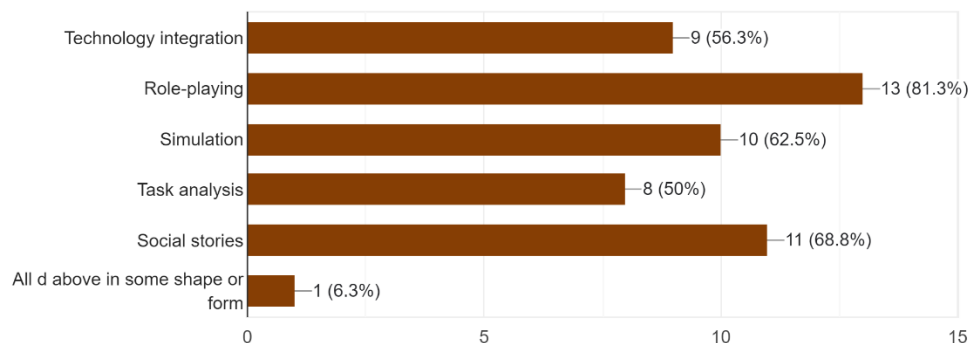
- "Provide different types of task analysis and detailed supports."

**Figure 6**

*Teaching strategies incorporated into vocational education training*

### 34. What teaching strategies do you incorporate into your vocational education training?

16 responses



- "Provided information based on the abilities of the student."
- "In the classroom - taking a shared topic that benefits all students (i.e., money)."
- "Providing the necessary accommodations for students that need it (visuals, manipulatives) while adding rigor and enrichment (taking it to the next level) for students that are ready to move forward."
- "Specific informational pamphlets, training on campus and off campus."
- "Developing goals related to the student's current levels of functioning rather than looking at the disability."
- "Providing sensory toys and communication devices for our nonverbal students."
- "Using applied behavior analysis- prompting procedures, adapted and modified materials to include AAC systems and strategies."
- "Individually based on their specific needs or concerns."
- "Task analysis, visuals/social stories, on-site job coaching."
- "I facilitate an on and off-campus job training program with my students."

- "I try to educate my students about the job process (resumes, applications, interviews.) and the employability skills necessary in the workforce."
- "Video support, and visual as well."
- "Language modifications."
- "Technology integration, Role-playing, Simulation, Task analysis, social stories."
- "Structuring activities around their strengths and needs."
- "Tasks were tailored to match those skill sets."
- "Utilizing EBP and through the use of technology/accommodations/job aids."
- "Visual supports and modeling."
  - **RQ1/Theme 2:** Real-World/Hands-on Experiences are an important factor in secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment.

This theme is derived from the theoretical framework used in this study, situated learning theory, where learning as it usually occurs is a function of the activity, context, and culture in which it occurs. As responses were reviewed and coded, the theme of real-world/hands-on experiences as an important factor in secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment was presented as expected.

As the researcher examined the coded responses and categorized the fitting replies on the real-world/hands-on experiences theme associated with research question 1, based on the responses below in RQ1T2, the theme was validated as appropriate for answering the research question, What factors of secondary transition programs lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment?

#### **RQ1T2 Validating Responses:**

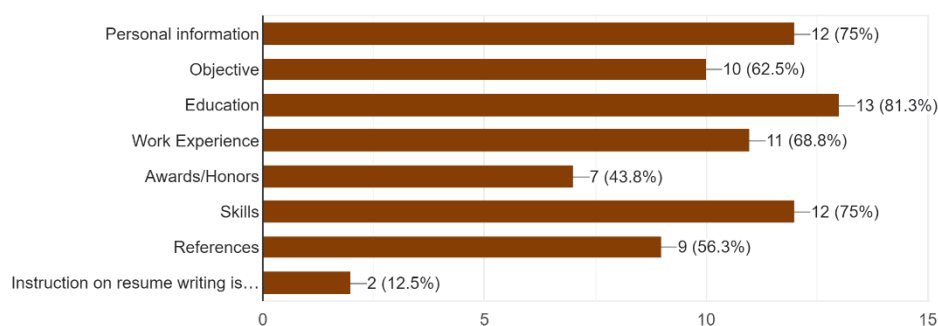
- "Finding areas of strength and success unique to each student in a shared work environment, then building upon that foundation to grow their skill and production level and create a position for them that meets the needs of both the organization and the individual (job carving)."

### Figure 7

#### *Instruction on the elements of resume writing provided in vocational education training*

24. What elements of resume writing instruction does your vocational education training provide?

16 responses



- "Participating in my job training courses on the various services available to them after high school. We visit many of these programs, and I complete the applications and practice for the interviews in my class. I also try to keep my students' parents aware of these services."
- "Incorporating Voc labs and CBI."
- "Specific informational pamphlets, training on campus and off campus."
- "Unique Learning System (Transition Curriculum), task analysis, visuals/social stories, on-site job coaching, weekly performance evaluation/reflection journals."
- "I facilitate an on and off-campus job training program with my students. Students get real-world, hands-on experience on the school campus and off with my business partnerships. I try to educate my students about the job process



(resumes, applications, interviews.) and employability skills necessary in the workforce."

- "Connected with community agencies to ensure transitioning planning begins as early as possible, integration of self-advocacy, pre-employment training, and critical workplace social communication skills into transition-aged programming."
  - "Business partnerships, having them be willing to work with our program (everyone worries about liability these days). I also have a tough time with parental support when they wait until senior year to start worrying about the next steps for their kids, if at all."
  - "Teach interpersonal skills."
  - "Real-life experience, in a nutshell. Dealing with people while learning the task, building relationships, and becoming more socially aware."
  - "Screening, Preparing for an interview, Active interviewing, Follow-up, "Decision (hired/ not hired) ."
  - "Always keeping task bins updated, so long as they are working on the same skill."
  - "Accessible teaching environments and curriculums, community-based vocational training programs."
  - "Real-world experiences using EBP, self-reflection, and executive functioning apps/organization."
- **RQ1/Theme 3:** Specific Curriculum Content is an important factor in secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment.

This theme is derived from the researcher's expertise (years of experience as a special education teacher) and the content embedded within the research question (factors in secondary transition special education classes). As responses were reviewed and coded, the theme of specific curriculum content as an important factor in secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment was presented as expected.

As the researcher examined the coded responses and categorized the fitting replies of the specific curriculum content theme associated with research question 1, based on the responses below in RQ1T3, the theme was validated as appropriate for answering the research question, What factors of secondary transition programs lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment?

**RQ1T3 Validating Responses:**

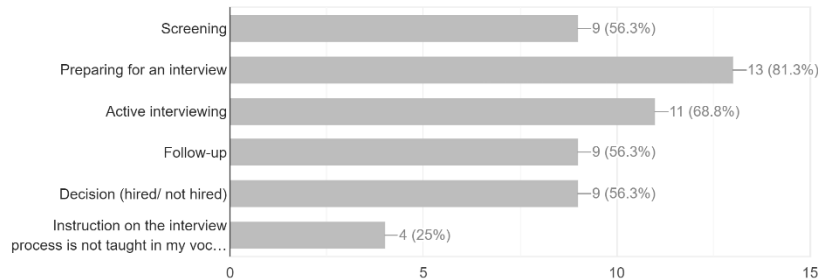
- "Unique Learning System (Transition Curriculum)."
- "Grouping homogeneously and in small groups, providing lessons in the most accessible ways."
- "Weekly performance evaluation/reflection journals."
- "In student transition IEP meetings, these skills were discussed, along with a student work preference assessment."
- "When they reach a benchmark/skill, they move to the next objective."
- "Small, structured programs."
- "Screening, Preparing for an interview, Active interviewing."
- "Follow-up, Decision (hired/ not hired)."
- "Instruction on the interview process is not taught in my vocational education training program."

## Figure 8

### *Instruction on the elements of the interview process provided in vocational education training*

18. What elements of the interview process instruction does your vocational education training provide?

0 / 16 correct responses



- "How to conduct an interview, what to expect."
- "We practice these skills from start to finish, and I always have my students participate in a mock job interview with someone they don't know."
- "Reliability, Punctuality, Telling time, Scheduling."
- "Instruction on attendance is not taught in my vocational education training program."
- "Teaching how to read a schedule, arrive on time, call out sick."
- "Attendance productivity."
- "Bullies."
- "Attention to body language."
- "It briefly was touched upon based on the individual progress or status."
- "how to iron clothes, good hygiene, wearing a uniform, facial hair."
- "Appropriate grooming."
- "Hygiene for work."
- "Personal information, Objective, Education, Work Experience, Awards/Honors, Skills, References."

- "My vocational education training program does not teach resume writing."
- "To help one with better knowledge."
- "how to use a template to create a resume."
- "Job search engines, Interest Inventories, Filling out applications."
- "Job descriptions, Qualifications."
- "Making sure client and job are applicable for each other."
- "Safety signs."
- "Labor laws, Designated areas."
- "We don't spend much time on this one but touch upon it."
- "Workplace policies, Code of Conduct, Compensation and Benefits, Working hours, PTO, vacation,
- leave of absence policies."
- "Equal employment and non-discrimination policies."
- "Cell phone and other electronic device use."
- "Social media use."
- "Multiple Intelligence Quiz, Preference Assessment, Interest Inventory."
- "Technology integration, Role-playing, Simulation, Task analysis, social stories."
- "Telephone etiquette, Customer service, Meeting etiquette, Body language, Communication modes,
- Problem-solving, Chain of command."
- "Assessment is key, as well as always keeping task bins updated, as long as they work on the same skill. Visual support and modeling are also used to continue student progress."

- "Instruction on workplace social skills is not taught in my vocational education training program."
- "My vocational education training program does not teach self-awareness."
- "Preference Assessment, Interest Inventory."
- "Personal information, Objective, Education, Work Experience, Awards/Honors, Skills, References."
- "Dress codes, Industry specific attire, Safety wear, Presentation of self."

The data results show that differentiated instruction, real-world/hands-on experiences, and specific curriculum content are vital factors in secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment.

### **Results for Research Question 2**

The research question, assumptions, and researcher's competence shaped preconceived themes. Research question 2: How does Strategic Transition Planning affect post-secondary employment for autistic students? Four themes arose.

**Theme 1:** Parental Involvement is an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum.

**Theme 2:** Student/ Individualized Input is an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum.

**Theme 3:** Resource Awareness is an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum

**Theme 4:** Teacher/ Service Provider Input & Training is an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum.

- **RQ2/Theme 1:** Parental Involvement is an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum.

This theme is derived from the researcher's expertise (years of experience as a special education school administrator) and the content embedded within the research question (parental involvement). As responses were reviewed and coded, the theme of parental involvement as an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum was presented as expected.

As the researcher examined the coded responses and categorized the fitting replies of the parental involvement theme associated with research question 2, based on the responses below in RQ2T1, the theme was validated as appropriate for answering the research question, How does Strategic Transition Planning affect post-secondary employment for autistic students?

**RQ2T1 Validating Responses:**

- "Participating in my job training courses on the various services available to them after high school."
- "We visit many of these programs, and I complete the applications and practice for the interviews in my class. I also try to keep my students' parents aware of these services."
- "Participating in my job training courses on the various services available to them after high school. We visit many of these programs, and I complete the applications and practice for the interviews in my class. I also try to keep my students' parents aware of these services."
- "We work with community partners to support transition and recommend students to our district transition programs."

- "Buy-in from parents."
  - "I believe the most significant barriers to developing transition programs for students with ASD are by having a great support system from both the parents and great educators who will advocate for them."
  - "Ease students into adulthood by breaking down life/social/vocational skills that might be "common sense" to come into attainable short-term and long-term objectives, equipping students with errorless practice to gain confidence and build skill and providing a support system for the students and the family as they navigate major life changes."
  - "Staffing, individualizing, parent involvement/intervention, programming outside of the school day, educating agencies on supporting individuals with ASD."
- **RQ2/Theme 2:** Student/ Individualized Input is an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum.

This theme is derived from the researcher's expertise (years of experience as a special education teacher) and the content embedded within the research question (student/ individualized input). As responses were reviewed and coded, the theme of student/ individualized input as an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum was presented as expected.

As the researcher examined the coded responses and categorized the fitting replies of the student/ individualized input theme associated with research question 2, based on the responses below in RQ2T2, the theme was validated as appropriate for answering the research question, How does Strategic Transition Planning affect post-secondary employment for autistic students?

**RQ2T1 Validating Responses:**

- "Finding the right fit for a program that fits specific needs."
- "I tried to work with them on what their needs are."
- "Just listening to them."
- "Provided information based on the abilities of the student."
- "Goals outlined by IEP – finding areas of strength and success unique to each student in a shared work environment, then building upon that foundation to grow their skill and production level and create a position for them that meets the needs of both the student and the individual (job carving)."
- "We individualize the needs of the students by developing goals related to the student's current levels of functioning rather than looking at the disability."
- "I differentiated transition services and programming for students with ASD by providing sensory toys and communication devices for our nonverbal students."
- "I tried to work with them on what their needs are."
- "Using applied behavior analysis- prompting procedures, adapted and modified materials to include AAC systems and strategies."
- "Individually based on their specific needs or concerns."
- "Unique learning system (transition curriculum), task analysis, visuals/social stories, on-site job coaching, weekly performance evaluation/reflection journals."
- "I facilitate an on and off-campus job training program with my students. Students get real-world, hands-on experience on the school campus and off with my business partnerships. I try to educate my students about the job process



(resumes, applications, interviews.) As well as employability skills necessary in the workforce.

- "The systems that I have implemented to improve the current transitions services and programming for students with ASD social skills, video support, and visual as well."
- "Just listening to them."
- "Connected with community agencies to ensure transitioning planning begins as early as possible, integration of self-advocacy, pre-employment training, and critical workplace social communication skills into transition-aged programming."
- "Not listening to their needs."
- "Prepare them for gainful employment (hopefully). For those students who cannot be employed, they can live a happy & peaceful life (be as independent as possible)."
- "Helping them."
- "Help them better understand them."
- "Structuring activities around their strengths and needs."
- "Tasks were then tailored to match those skill sets."
- "In student transition IEP meetings, these skills were discussed, along with a student work preference assessment."
- "When they reach a benchmark/skill, they move to the next objective."
- "Grouping homogeneously and in small groups, providing lessons in the most accessible ways, utilizing EBP and using technology/accommodations/job aids."

- "Assessment is key, as well as always keeping task bins updated, as long as they work on the same skill. Visual support and modeling are also used to continue student progress."
  - "Staffing, individualizing, parent involvement/intervention, programming outside of the school day, educating agencies on supporting individuals with ASD."
- **RQ2/Theme 3:** Resource Awareness is an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum.

This theme is derived from the researcher's expertise (years of experience as a special education teacher) and the content embedded within the research question (resource awareness). As responses were reviewed and coded, the theme of resource awareness input as an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum was presented as expected.

As the researcher examined the coded responses and categorized the fitting replies of the resource awareness theme associated with research question 2, based on the responses below in RQ2T3, the theme was validated as appropriate for answering the research question, How does Strategic Transition Planning affect post-secondary employment for autistic students?

**RQ2T3 Validating Responses:**

- "Participating in my job training courses on the various services available to them after high school."
- "Transportation and finding the right fit for a program that fits specific needs."

- "We visit many of these programs, and I complete the applications and practice for the interviews in my class. I also try to keep my students' parents aware of these services."
- "Finding areas of strength and success unique to each student in a shared work environment, then building upon that foundation to grow their skill and production level and create a position for them that meets the needs of both the organization and the individual (job carving)."
- "Participating in my job training courses on the various services available to them after high school. We visit many of these programs, and I complete the applications and practice for the interviews in my class. I also try to keep my students' parents aware of these services."
- "We work with community partners to support transition and recommend students to our district transition programs."
- "Connected with community agencies to ensure transitioning planning begins as early as possible, integration of self-advocacy, pre-employment training, and critical workplace social communication skills into transition-aged programming."
- "Voc rehabilitation and ese services via the school."
- "Having or creating the proper staffing with knowledge, understanding, and patience to provide the proper implementation of services."
- "Transportation and finding the right fit for a program that fits specific needs."
- "Community connections/resources."
- "Business partnerships, having them be willing to work with our program (everyone worries about liability these days). I also have a tough time with

parental support when they wait until senior year to start worrying about the next steps for their kids, if at all."

- "Programs and staffing which require training and resources."
- "Not enough programs, especially for high-functioning ASD individuals."
- "Instruction on the interview process is not taught in my vocational education training program."
- "Stay concerned about having the proper support."
- "I am a past special ed teacher, and the program we had did not support transition services; we did not have those resources."
- "Finding any new or traditional services that could enhance the skills of the students with ASD."
- "Accessible teaching environments and curriculums, community-based vocational training programs."
- "Staffing, individualizing, parent involvement/intervention, programming outside of the school day, educating agencies on supporting individuals with ASD."

- **RQ2/Theme 4:** Teacher/ Service Provider Input & Training is an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum.

This theme is derived from the researcher's expertise (years of experience as a special education teacher) and the content embedded within the research question (teacher/ service provider input & training). As responses were reviewed and coded, the theme of teacher/ service provider input & training input as an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum was presented as expected.

As the researcher examined the coded responses and categorized the fitting replies of the resource awareness theme associated with research question 2, based on the responses below in RQ2T4, the theme was validated as appropriate for answering the research question, How does Strategic Transition Planning affect post-secondary employment for autistic students?

**RQ2T4 Validating Responses:**

- "Participating in my job training courses on the various services available to them after high school."
- "We visit many of these programs, and I complete the applications and practice for the interviews in my class. I also try to keep my students' parents aware of these services."
- "Having or creating the proper staffing with knowledge, understanding, and patience to provide the proper implementation of services and staffing which require training and resources."
- "Finding staff dedicated to getting to know and understand the individual student and what they are interested in, their strengths and weaknesses, and what is within the realm of possibility so the student will be successful and satisfied with their future job."
- "I believe the most significant barriers to developing transition programs for students with ASD are by having a great support system from both the parents and great educators who will advocate for them."
- "Vocational training and educator knowledge of AAC strategies and systems."
- "Staffing, individualizing, parent involvement/intervention, programming outside of the school day, educating agencies on supporting individuals with ASD."

- "Minimal skillsets, lack of reinforcement for students, communication barriers."
- "The sensitivity with the peers at the location."

The data also concluded that parental involvement, student/ individualized input, resource access and awareness, teacher/ service provider input and training, and important factors of strategic transition planning contribute to post-secondary employment for students on the autism spectrum.

### **Results for Research Question 3**

The research question, assumptions, and researcher's competence shaped preconceived motifs. Research question 3: How does Situated Learning Theory affect post-secondary employment? Two themes arose.

**Theme 1:** Real-World/Hands-on Experience principles of Situated Learning Theory led to post-secondary employment.

**Theme 2:** Confidence Building principles of Situated Learning Theory lead to post-secondary employment.

- **RQ3/Theme 1:** Real-World/Hands-on Experience principles of Situated Learning Theory led to post-secondary employment.

This theme is derived from the theoretical framework used in this study, situated learning theory, in which normal learning is a function of the activity, context, and culture in which it takes place. As responses were reviewed and coded, the anticipated theme of real-world/hands-on experiences and Situated Learning Theory principles leading to post-secondary employment emerged.

As the researcher examined the coded responses and categorized the appropriate responses on the real-world/hands-on experiences theme associated with research question 3, the theme was validated as appropriate for answering the research question, How does Situated Learning Theory

affect post-secondary employment?

➤ **RQ3T1 Validating Responses:**

- "Finding areas of strength and success unique to each student in a shared work environment, then building upon that foundation to grow their skill and production level and create a position for them that meets the needs of both the organization and the individual (job carving)."
- "Participating in my job training courses on the various services available to them after high school. We visit many of these programs, and I complete the applications and practice for the interviews in my class. I also try to keep my students' parents aware of these services."
- "Incorporating Voc labs and CBI."
- "Specific informational pamphlets, training on campus and off campus."
- "Unique Learning System (Transition Curriculum), task analysis, visuals/social stories, on-site job coaching, weekly performance evaluation/reflection journals."
- "I facilitate an on and off-campus job training program with my students. Students get real-world, hands-on experience on the school campus and off with my business partnerships. I try to educate my students about the job process (resumes, applications, interviews.) and employability skills necessary in the workforce."
- "Connected with community agencies to ensure transitioning planning begins as early as possible, integration of self-advocacy, pre-employment training, and critical workplace social communication skills into transition-aged programming."

- "Business partnerships, having them be willing to work with our program (everyone worries about liability these days). I also have a tough time with parental support when they wait until senior year to start worrying about the next steps for their kids, if at all."
  - "Teach interpersonal skills."
  - "Real-life experience, in a nutshell. Dealing with people while learning the task, building relationships, and becoming more socially aware."
  - "Screening, Preparing for an interview, Active interviewing, Follow-up, "Decision (hired/ not hired) ."
  - "Always keeping task bins updated, so long as they are working on the same skill."
  - "Accessible teaching environments and curriculums, community-based vocational training programs."
  - "Real-world experiences using EBP, self-reflection, and executive functioning apps/organization."
- **RQ3/Theme 2:** Confidence Building principles of Situated Learning Theory lead to post-secondary employment.

This theme is derived from the researcher's expertise (years of experience as a special education teacher) and the content embedded within the research question (confidence building). As responses were reviewed and coded, the theme of confidence-building principles of Situated Learning Theory led to post-secondary employment was presented as expected.

As the researcher examined the coded responses and categorized the fitting replies on the confidence-building principles theme associated with research question 3, based on the responses below in RQ3T2, the theme was validated as appropriate for answering the research question, How



does Situated Learning Theory affect post-secondary employment?

**RQ3T2 Validating Responses:**

- "Goals outlined by IEP - finding areas of strength and success unique to each student in a shared work environment, then building upon that foundation to grow their skill and production level and create a position for them that meets the needs of both the organization and the individual (job carving)."
- "We individualize the needs of the students by developing goals related to the student's current levels of functioning rather than looking at the disability."
- "I tried to work with them on what their needs are."
- "Individually based on their specific needs or concerns."
- "Unique Learning System (Transition Curriculum), task analysis, visuals/social stories, on-site job coaching, weekly performance evaluation/reflection journals."
- "I facilitate an on and off-campus job training program with my students. Students get real-world, hands-on experience on the school campus and off with my business partnerships. I try to educate my students about the job process (resumes, applications, interviews.) As well as employability skills necessary in the workforce."
- "The systems that I have implemented to improve the current transitions services and programming for students with ASD social skills, video support, and visual as well."
- "Just listening to them."
- "Connected with community agencies to ensure transitioning planning begins as early as possible, integration of self-advocacy, pre-employment training, and

critical workplace social communication skills into transition-aged programming."

- "Transportation and finding the right fit for a program that fits specific needs."
- "Prepare for post-secondary."
- "I feel that the support will exude the confidence that is needed to build off of for day-to-day tasks."
- "Improves ability to thrive as an adult."
- "Ease students into adulthood by breaking down life/social/vocational skills that might be "common sense" to come into attainable short-term and long-term objectives, equipping students with errorless practice to gain confidence and build skill and providing a support system for the student and the family as they navigate major life changes."
- "Real-life experience, in a nutshell. Dealing with people while learning the task, building relationships, and becoming more socially aware."
- "Give them a function in society, making our world as a whole better. Skills to work and contribute to society."
- "Self-confidence and happiness."
- "Prepare them for gainful employment (hopefully). Those students who cannot be employed can live a happy & peaceful life (be as independent as possible)."

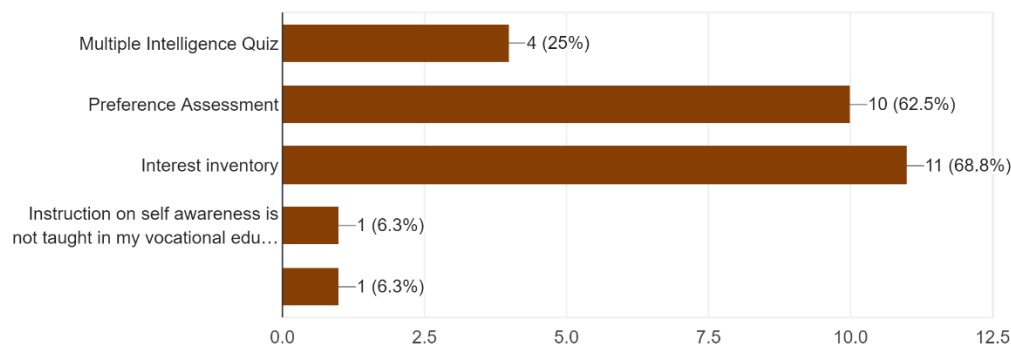
Lastly, the outcomes of real-world/hands-on experience and confidence building described the ways in which principles of Situated Learning Theory led to post-secondary employment.

**Figure 9**

*Instruction on the elements of self-awareness provided in vocational education training.*

32. What elements of self awareness instruction does your vocational education training provide?

16 responses



## Summary of Results

Findings from the analysis of the qualitative data answered the three research questions. Differentiated instruction, real-world/hands-on experiences, and specific curriculum content are vital factors in secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment. Parental involvement, student/ individualized input, resource access, awareness, and teacher/ service provider input and training are important factors of strategic transition planning that contribute to post-secondary employment for students on the autism spectrum. Outcomes of real-world/hands-on experience and confidence building described the ways in which principles of Situated Learning Theory led to post-secondary employment. In conclusion, this study found that the factors of secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment are differentiated instruction specific to students with ASD, real-world/hands-on work experiences, and specific vocational-based curriculum content.

Additionally, results reported that parental involvement, student input, resource awareness, and teacher/service provider input & training are important factors of Strategic Transition Planning that contribute to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum. Lastly, real-world/hands-on experience and confidence-building principles of Situated Learning Theory led to

post-secondary employment in students with ASD. This chapter presented the action research methodology study's findings to address the three research questions. This chapter also discussed whether the analysis followed the action research methodology. How the study related to the research questions was discussed. In addition to the summary, this chapter included table demographic examples.

## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Introduction**

This qualitative action research study aimed to determine the effectiveness of transition intervention programs that apply principles of Situated Learning Theory and lead to post-secondary employment. This chapter discusses significant findings related to understanding transitional programs for students on the Autism Spectrum and the factors of secondary transition programs that lead to post-secondary employment. Also included is a discussion on connections to this study, strategic transition planning, and Situated Learning Theory. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study, areas for future research, and a summary. This chapter contains a discussion and future research possibilities to help answer the research questions:

RQ1 What factors of secondary transition programs lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment?

RQ2 What factors of Strategic Transition Planning contribute to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum?

RQ3 In what ways do the principles of Situated Learning Theory lead to post-secondary employment?

### **Summary of Results**

Clarke & Braun's (2017) thematic analysis process was used to analyze the data for this study using an iterative approach. The analysis of qualitative data yielded results that addressed the three research concerns. In secondary transition programs that prepare students in secondary special education classes for competitive post-secondary employment, differentiated instruction, real-world/hands-on experiences, and specific curriculum content are crucial factors, Research Question 1. Essential factors of strategic transition planning that contribute to post-secondary employment for students on the autism spectrum include parental involvement, student/individualized input, resource access, awareness, and teacher/service provider input and training, Research Question 2. The principles of the Situated Learning Theory led to post-secondary employment through the outcomes of real-world/hands-on experience and confidence building, Research Question 3.

### **Discussion of Results**

While secondary transition programs, strategic transition planning, and the Situated Learning Theory principles may lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment, each of the nine themes was a prominent factor in motivating secondary vocational educational professionals' participation in this study. Programs emphasizing the social aspects of post-secondary education should be part of programs created to help students transition to post-secondary life (Ncube et al., 2019). These themes have a consistent element, such as what will yield the best outcomes for the student. Each theme is described in

detail in the following sections. Factors considered in the study by Nevala et al. (2019) included several of the same factors.

### **Factors of secondary transition programs**

Three themes emerged from coded responses that coincided with research question 1, What factors of secondary transition programs lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment? First, differentiated instruction is essential in secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment. More specifically, respondents pointed out that providing different types of task analysis, visuals, manipulatives, providing sensory toys, and communication devices for our nonverbal students and using principles of applied behavior analysis, such as prompting procedures, adapted and modified materials to include AAC systems are vital components to teaching student on the autism spectrum. It was also added that utilizing evidence-based practices and technology, specific accommodations, and job modeling were valuable and successful differentiation strategies. Lastly, video support and language modifications made a difference in skill acquisition.

The second theme of factors of secondary transition programs was that real-world/hands-on experiences are an essential factor in secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment. Survey participants facilitated on and off-campus job training programs with students to get real-world, hands-on experience through local business partnerships. Effective job coaching reflects the results of the Sherwood et al. (2021) study and the effectiveness of virtual reality job interview training. Sherwood et al. (2021) found positive effects for transition-aged youth who participated in vocational services and virtual reality job interview training. They also educated their students about resumes, applications, interviews, and employability skills necessary in the workforce. It was

noted that connecting with community agencies ensured that transitioning planning began as early as possible. Self-advocacy, pre-employment training, and critical workplace social communication skills were also incorporated into transition-aged programming. Having business partnerships willing to work with the school transition program is challenging but necessary. Lastly, results showed that having accessible teaching environments, real-world curriculums, and community-based vocational training programs connected students to real-life experience.

The final theme that coincided with factors of secondary transition programs leading students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment is that specific curriculum content is essential in secondary transition programs. Survey participants explained that the Unique Learning System Transition Curriculum helped prepare students for employment. Instruction on the interview process, job search engines, and filling out job applications prepared students for employment. Teaching students how to read a schedule, job descriptions, job qualifications, labor laws, and workplace policies were valuable instructional content for students on the autism spectrum. Heinze, M. (2019) aimed to improve the employment possibilities for adults with ASD by creating "An Employer's Guide for Integrating Employees with Autism Spectrum Disorder." The Vocational Training Guide is intended to help employers employ people with ASD and to help people with ASD find and retain long-term employment. Learning about the code of conduct, compensation and benefits, equal employment, and non-discrimination guidelines provided confidence in students and their employment venture. Lastly, telephone etiquette, customer service protocol, body language awareness, the chain of command, and instruction on workplace social skills and industry-specific attire exposed students to occupational expectations and provided an outlook of eagerness instead of anxiety.

### **Factors of Strategic Transition Planning**

Four themes emerged from coded responses that coincided with research question 2, What

factors of Strategic Transition Planning contribute to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum? First, Parental Involvement is a crucial component of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum. Participants said participating in my job training courses on the various services available to students after high school helped communicate these resources to parents. Obtaining "buy-in from parents" was also crucial to strategic planning. The results by Strnadová et al. (2016) and Hopkins and Dymond (2020) suggest a critical need for mandated evidence-based transition planning processes for students with disabilities, facilitating the inclusion of the crucial components identified by caregivers and parents and contributing to positive post-school outcomes for ID and ASD students. Respondents believed that the most significant barriers to developing transition programs for students with ASD are the absence of a robust support system from parents and educators who will advocate for them.

Survey respondents stated, "I visit many of these programs, complete the applications, and practice interviews in class." I also attempt to inform the parents of my pupils about these services." In conclusion, it was determined that "staffing, individualization, parent involvement/intervention, programming outside of the school day, and educating agencies on how to support individuals with ASD" are essential components of the strategic planning process. The second theme of research question 2 is that student/individualized input is a crucial component of strategic transition planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the autism spectrum. According to survey respondents, a program's success was significantly impacted by the ability to locate a program that satisfies specific needs. In addition, it was mentioned that working with students to determine their particular requirements and listening to their concerns and requests were essential factors to consider. Participants added that providing information based on the abilities of the student and the goals outlined in their IEP, as well as identifying areas of



strength and success unique to each student in a shared work environment, would build upon the foundation to increase their skill level and create a position that meets the needs of both the student and the individual (job carving). Respondents stated, "We individualize students' needs by developing goals based on their current levels of functioning, as opposed to focusing on disability." In addition, they stated, "I differentiated transition services and programming for students with ASD by providing sensory toys and communication devices for our nonverbal students and by utilizing applied behavior analysis-prompting procedures, adapted and modified materials, and AAC systems and strategies." The assignments were tailored to the skill sets of particular students. Strategic planning best practices include grouping students homogeneously and in small groups, delivering lessons in the most accessible manner, utilizing evidence-based practices, and incorporating technology/accommodations/job aides. The third theme, resource awareness, is an essential factor of strategic transition planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the autism spectrum. Participants reported that job training courses on the various services available to students after high school were a valuable resource in assisting their transition students. It was also noted that working with partners in the community to support transition programs was successful. Connecting with community agencies to ensure transitioning planning begins as early as possible, integrating self-advocacy, pre-employment training, and critical workplace social communication skills into transition-aged programming is a priceless resource. Vocational rehabilitation services via the school were a valuable resource. Business partnerships and having them be willing to work with school programs were deemed resourceful. The fourth and last theme of research question two, teacher/ service provider input and training is an essential factor of strategic transition planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the autism spectrum, was proven in several responses. Respondents reported that having or creating the proper staffing with knowledge, understanding, and patience to implement services

and staffing that require training and resources properly is vital to the strategic transition planning process. Survey participants believe the most significant facilitator to developing transition programs for students with ASD has a great support system from parents and great educators who will advocate for them. Additionally, it was noted that staffing, individualizing, parent involvement/intervention, programming outside of the school day, and educating agencies on supporting individuals with ASD had been successful factors of strategic transition planning.

### **Principles of Situated Learning Theory Leading to post-secondary employment**

Two themes emerged from the coded responses that corresponded with the research question, "How do the principles of the Situated Learning Theory lead to post-secondary employment?" First, post-secondary employment resulted from the Situated Learning Theory's real-world/hands-on experience principles. Specifically, instruction in simulated vocational laboratories and education in the community were also included. Respondents facilitated a job training program for my pupils on and off campus. Through partnerships with local businesses, students received real-world, hands-on experience on and off campus to educate them about the employment process (resumes, applications, and interviews) and the employability skills required for the workforce.

Teachers can ensure that transition planning commences as soon as possible by incorporating self-advocacy, pre-employment training, and essential workplace social communication skills into programming for transition-aged students. It was also stated that locating business partners willing to collaborate with our program was difficult. The second theme, Situated Learning Theory's confidence-building principles lead to post-secondary employment, has proven significant in post-secondary employment. Respondents to the survey reported that the IEP goals of identifying areas of strength and success that are unique to each student in a shared work environment, building on that foundation to increase their skill and production level, and carving

out a position that meets the needs of both the organization and the individual (job carving) were a great support to the transition of Situated Learning Theory's confidence-building principles. Educators individualize the needs of their pupils by developing goals based on their current levels of functioning, as opposed to focusing on the disability. In addition, the systems implemented to enhance the current transition services and programming for students with ASD include social skills, video support, and visual aids to facilitate differentiated learning, thereby boosting the student's confidence. Respondents believe that parent and teacher support will instill confidence to expand upon daily tasks. They ease students' transition into adulthood by breaking down "common sense" life/social/vocational skills into attainable short-term and long-term objectives, equipping students with errorless practice to gain confidence and build skills, and providing support for the student and family as they navigate significant life changes. This level of transitional education, coupled with situated learning theory principles, gives students a purpose in society, thereby contributing to improving the world by boosting self-confidence and contentment. Different learning theories, such as Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory, Wenger's (2000) social learning systems, Jarvis's (2011) adult learning model, and Kolb's (2014) experiential learning cycle, are widely used to guide workplace learning. The Workplace Learning Model for Vocational Education Teachers presented by Illeris (2005; 2011) provides a theoretically sound foundation that can be modified and extended to hypothesize about the workplace learning of vocational education teachers with various key concepts.

### **Implications for Practice**

In this study, the researcher sought to answer several research questions concerning post-secondary preparation of strategic transition planning for employment outcomes for vocational education students on the autism spectrum. The researcher has inquired explicitly about which aspects of secondary transition programs, strategic transition planning, and situated learning theory

led to post-secondary employment. This section briefly highlights some of the study's implications for practice and the project's impact on future research. This study's primary objective was to determine the efficacy of transition intervention programs that apply Situated Learning Theory principles and contribute to post-secondary employment. The researcher accomplished this by directly surveying and reporting on the required understanding of how the principles of the situated learning theory contribute to post-secondary work, the efficacy of transition intervention programs for students on the autism spectrum, and the contribution of knowledge to post-secondary transition planning for students in secondary special education classes.

This study's first significant practical contribution is that it provides much-needed empirical data on the actual practices of professionals who have or are currently working in secondary vocational education for students with ASD. This information is crucial because the methods utilized are universal and can be implemented across settings and student independence levels. It enables service providers, trainers, instructors, and others to design curricula, training, and resources based on what students need and where they can implement the practice of effective strategic transition planning. For instance, IEP authors could observe that input from various support and service providers can offer a multi-disciplinary approach to transition planning. They enable a more precise program structure and implementation strategy. The majority of the findings could have implications for a large number of individuals. Thus, the study responds to the appeal made, among others, by Eastman (2021) and Findley (2022), who identified factors that can contribute to the post-school success of students with disabilities. According to Ule (2017), young adults with significant disabilities are much less likely to enroll in post-secondary and vocational programs, work, live independently, participate in organized community groups, and establish relationships, leaving them socially isolated. The apparent disparity between the instructional practice methods for promoting vocational transition evidence-based practices and what employers

expect and require from an employee has long informed us about the nature of resource awareness and its implementation in the real world.

A second significant implication of the study is derived from our findings regarding the uniqueness of the knowledge and information work utilized by community-based resources. The study results point to a particular set of capabilities, information sources, decision styles, strategies, and attitudes toward knowledge and evidence that may distinguish the work of a community involvement transition plan from that of a single source transition plan. Although analyzing the data to identify and codify these factors and resources is beyond the scope of the present study, the issue of how to foster and support the knowledge of vocational education professionals in development remains constant. Although our research falls short of developing a fully formed strategic transition planning tool (due to its exploratory nature), it identifies the main dimensions of a framework for reflecting on the personal knowledgeability infrastructure of strategic transition planning for students on the autism spectrum.

Previously cited and recommended through a systematic review, for the IEP programs to be successful, there needs to be meaningful student and parent involvement in the transition planning (Cavendish and Connor, 2017). Framework infrastructure component considerations such as transition team participants; inventory, assessment, and evaluation selections; and community resources and partnership involvement will provide a strong foundation for a strategic transition plan for students on the autism spectrum. As noted in the literature review, Snell-Rood et al. (2020) indicated that student outcomes depended on which transition team members were involved in IEP meetings.

Finally, the study provides indications to secondary vocational transition programs regarding several desirable and necessary program components and curricula content that other programs may need to have or develop to improve the employment outcomes of students on the

autism spectrum.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this investigation. The most significant limitation is the modest sample size. While having a larger sample size was not impossible, participant recruitment was limited due to the precise participation criteria and the geographic area chosen to study. Due to the limited number of vocational educational professionals in Florida who deal with students with ASD in this region, obtaining a larger sample size was impossible. This study did not consider post-secondary vocational programs for the unemployed, reducing the sample size. In addition, this study was limited to specialists working with students with ASD, thus excluding students with other disabilities experiencing the same issue. Each of these limitations may have affected the outcome of the survey. Results are not generalizable.

### **Recommendations for Future Research Summary**

Several recommendations for future research are available to strengthen this research topic. Evaluations of post-secondary vocational programs must consider the factors that contribute to competitive employment. In addition to factors affecting the structure and content of a program, its ability to sustain employment can also be evaluated. Additionally, vocational education programs should be considered based on the individualized and ongoing support services used to secure competitive employment. Future research should examine a larger sample size and not be restricted to a Florida urban school district. To garner more participants for a larger sample size, students with other developmental disabilities facing the same unemployment problem should be included. I expect the factors contributing to competitive employment for students with ASD to have the same effect across other transition special education settings. Situated Learning Theory can be a universal special education framework for all special education transition programming. In addition, alternative research methodologies, such as case studies of a particular program or a

follow-up study of students' post-secondary status after the transition program, should be utilized. A comparative analysis of IEP transition objectives served as the basis for the selection of programming.

### **Summary**

This research study aimed to determine the effectiveness of transition intervention programs that applied principles of Situated Learning Theory and led to post-secondary employment. This study sought to answer the proposed three research questions and solve the research problem. The research problem in this study was the effectiveness of transition intervention programs for students on the Autism Spectrum. This study's second purpose was to contribute knowledge for post-secondary transition planning for students in secondary special education classes.

The literature review presented in this study described current studies on implementing various transition interventions and post-secondary outcome options for students on the autism spectrum. The studies reviewed explained research on the facilitators and barriers that influence the post-secondary outcomes of transition-age youth. This review collected, integrated, and examined pragmatic evidence on various curriculum integration techniques, strategies, products, and systematic structures for the best possible post-secondary outcomes. The principal theoretical framework of Jean Lave's Situated Learning Theory was defined, explained, and applied as the foundational context.

The methodological approach to address this study's research questions was action research. This study aimed to ascertain the efficacy of transition intervention programs that applied Situated Learning Theory principles and led to post-secondary employment. A generic qualitative investigation was employed to address the research questions and fulfill the purpose of the study. The target population and sample and the rationale for the recruitment technique were discussed.

This study documented the measures to protect the participants and what they could anticipate. The stages of using thematic analysis to analyze the data were recorded.

Lastly, this research study fulfilled its purpose of determining the effectiveness of transition intervention programs that apply principles of Situated Learning Theory and lead to post-secondary employment. The researcher answered research questions and found solutions to the research problem. The results provided insight into transitional programs for students on the Autism Spectrum by providing the factors of secondary transition programs that lead to post-secondary employment. Addressing the research questions also offered a needed understanding of how the principles of the situated learning theory contribute to post-secondary work.

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#### APPENDIX A- RECRUITMENT FLYER

## Research Participants Needed

This study is part of the researcher's doctoral education program at Lynn University. The purpose of this study is to contribute knowledge for post-secondary transition planning for ASD students in secondary special education classes. This research study will be composed of multiple-choice, short-answer, and open-ended questions in a survey that will take place virtually for approximately 20 minutes.

### **You may be eligible to participate if you are:**

- A Past or present secondary vocational education professional in the state of Florida and is or has worked with students with ASD

**Feel free to contact me, the researcher.**

**Robin Jones**

**(561) 797-8770**

**[RJones@email.lynn.edu](mailto:RJones@email.lynn.edu)**

Chair, Dr. Brittany Kiser

[BKiser@lynn.edu](mailto:BKiser@lynn.edu)

#### **APPENDIX B- EMAIL TO GAIN STUDY PARTICIPANTS**

Subject Line: Does Transition Planning Matter for Secondary-Age Students with ASD

Subhead: You can contribute to Vocation Education Research

Hello, Past or Present Secondary Vocational Education Professional in Florida,

I am currently working on a new research study and need your help.

The goal of this study is to contribute knowledge for post-secondary transition planning for ASD students in secondary special education classes.

If we are able to identify effective secondary vocational education program elements that result in positive post-secondary outcomes, we will be able to strategically plan for post-secondary transition.

Would you like to help? To see if you are eligible, please read the requirements below.

- Over the age of 18

- A Past or present secondary vocational education professional in the state of Florida

Participation in this Google Assessment survey is voluntary. Each survey will take approximately 20 minutes. Prior to the survey, you will be given an Informed Consent form. Refer to the survey link below.

**SURVEY LINK:** <https://forms.gle/JiTb14stRVEYoqD96>

Please let me know if you have any questions we could answer. Thank you for helping to improve the transition planning for students with ASD.

Sincerely,

Robin Jones

## **APPENDIX C- REMINDER EMAIL TO STUDY PARTICIPANTS WITH 1 WEEK LEFT**

Subject Line: Does Transition Planning Matter for Secondary-Age Students with ASD

Subhead: You can contribute to Vocation Education Research

Hello, Past or Present Secondary Vocational Education Professional in Florida,

I am currently working on a new research study and need your help.

The goal of this study is to contribute knowledge for post-secondary transition planning for ASD students in secondary special education classes.

If we are able to identify effective secondary vocational education program elements that result in positive post-secondary outcomes, we will be able to strategically plan for post-secondary transition.

Would you like to help? To see if you are eligible, please read the requirements below.

- Over the age of 18

- A Past or present secondary vocational education professional in the state of Florida

Participation in this Google Assessment survey is voluntary. Each survey will take approximately 20 minutes. Prior to the survey, you will be given an Informed Consent form. Refer to the survey link below.

**SURVEY LINK:** <https://forms.gle/JiTb14stRVEY0qD96>

Please let me know if you have any questions we could answer. Thank you for helping to improve the transition planning for students with ASD.

Sincerely,

Robin Jones

## **APPENDIX D- SURVEY W/ EMBEDDED ADULT CONSENT**

### **Transition Programs and Services Content Analysis for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder on Post-Secondary Outcomes Survey**

You are invited to participate in a research study about transition planning, transition programs and services, and job preparedness skills being taught to high school students on the autism spectrum in vocational education programs. This research study aims to determine factors for post-secondary transition planning for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This study is being conducted by Robin Jones at Lynn University.

You are invited to participate in this research project because you have an instructional affiliation with a high school vocational education program that serves students on the autism spectrum in Florida. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. You may withdraw anytime if you decide to participate in this research survey. If you choose not to participate in this study or withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized.

The procedure involves filling out an online survey that will take approximately 20 minutes. Your responses will be confidential, and we do not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. The survey includes questions about transition planning, transition programs and services, pre-employment skills, employment skills, visual aids, self-awareness, instructional strategies, self-management and organizational skills, communication skills, and social skills. Participating in this study will help us improve post-secondary employment outcomes through strategic transition planning for secondary-age students with ASD.

To secure the data after the surveys are conducted, each file will be labeled with a pseudonym and stored on Microsoft OneDrive, password protected, and stored in separate folders. Data will be kept for one year, after which all files will be securely deleted from Microsoft OneDrive.

To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you. All responses will be anonymous. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only and may be shared with Lynn University representatives. The risks involved in the study are minimal, and participants are not required to answer any questions they may not feel comfortable asking.

By participating in the study, the participants would benefit from providing information on what they have experienced as practical factors contributing to the successful transition of students on the Autism spectrum to post-secondary employment.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact the researcher, Robin Jones, RJones@email.lynn.edu; Chair, Dr. Brittany Kiser, BKiser@lynn.edu; or IRB Chair, Dr. Jennifer Lesh JLesh@lynn.edu. This research has been reviewed according to Lynn University IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

**ELECTRONIC CONSENT:** Please select your choice below. Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that: • you have read the above information•, you voluntarily agree to participate• you are at least 18 years of age. If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button. \*

Agree

Disagree

What gender do you identify yourself as? \*

Male

Female

I do not want to answer.

Other

Are you a current or past vocational education professional?

\*

Current

Past

How many years of teaching experience do you have? \*

Your answer

In your role as a vocational education professional, do you or have you worked with students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?

\*

Yes

No

What is your instructional affiliation role in the high school vocational education program that serves students on the autism spectrum? \*

Program Administrator

Teacher

Paraprofessional

Job Coach

Option

Are you currently or have previously been affiliated with secondary vocational education in

Florida?

\*

Yes

No

What type of educational setting is your vocational education program? \*

Public School

Charter School

Private School

Other:

The following survey includes questions about transition planning, transition programs and services, pre-employment skills, employment skills, visual aids, self-awareness, instructional strategies, self-management and organizational skills, communication skills, and social skills.

1. How have you differentiated transition services and programming for students with ASD?

Your answer

2. What systems have you implemented to improve the current transition services and programming for students with ASD?

Your answer

3. What are the most significant barriers to developing transition programs for students with ASD?

Your answer

4. From your experience, what do transition programs do to benefit students with ASD?

Your answer

5. What do you believe is the overall effectiveness of students with ASD participation in Career Technical Education (CTE) programs? (Scale 1-5, 1 = Not effective 5 = Very effective)

- 1
- 2
- 3



4

5

6. What do you believe is the overall effectiveness of students with ASD inclusion in general education to post-school employment? (Scale 1-5, 1 = Not effective 5 = Very effective)

1

2

3

4

5

7. What do you believe is the overall effectiveness of work experience participation for students with ASD in post-school employment? (Scale 1-5, 1 = Not effective 5 = Very effective)

1

2

3

4

5

8. What do you believe is the overall impact of parents expressing expectations for their child to gain paid work after high school in post-school employment? (Scale 1-5, 1 = Not impact 5 = Strong impact)

1

2

3

4

5

9. What do you believe is the overall effectiveness of students with ASD having strong functional living skills training in high school (e.g., telling time, reading, and understanding common signs in post-school employment? (Scale 1-5, 1 = Not effective 5 = Very effective)

1

2

3

4

5

10. What do you believe is the overall effectiveness of self-determination/self-advocacy- students with ASD having innate psychological empowerment as a belief in the relationship between your actions and outcomes experienced in post-school employment? (Scale 1-5, 1 = Not effective 5 = Very effective)

1

2

3

4

5

11. What do you believe is the overall effectiveness of student support from contributing studies, including students with ASD receiving career counseling at any time in high school in post-school employment? (Scale 1-5, 1 = Not effective 5 = Very effective)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

12. What do you believe is the overall effectiveness of Student support from contributing studies, including students with ASD obtaining help finding a job at any time in high school in post-school employment? (Scale 1-5, 1 = Not effective 5 = Very effective)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

13. What do you believe is the overall effectiveness of student support from contributing studies, including students with ASD training for job skills at any time in high school in post-school employment? (Scale 1-5, 1 = Not effective 5 = Very effective)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

14. What do you believe is the overall effectiveness of Student support from contributing studies included students with ASD acquiring vocational education services at any time in high school in post-school employment? (Scale 1-5, 1 = Not effective 5 = Very effective)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

15. What do you believe is the overall effectiveness of Students with ASD developing transition planning skills to help them assess options and strategies for transitioning to adult life in post-school employment? (Scale 1-5, 1 = Not effective 5 = Very effective)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

16. What do you believe is the overall effectiveness of Providing students opportunities to

participate in work-study programs in high school (e.g., work skills instruction/experiences to develop work attitudes and behaviors in post-school employment? (Scale 1-5, 1 = Not effective 5 = Very effective)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

17. What do you believe is the overall effectiveness of Youth autonomy/decision-making- the degree to which a person acts according to their preferences, interests, and abilities and takes a leadership role in the transition planning process in post-school employment? (Scale 1-5, 1 = Not effective 5 = Very effective)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

18. What elements of the interview process instruction does your vocational education training provide?

1 point

Screening

Preparing for an interview

Active interviewing

Follow-up

Decision (hired/ not hired)

Instruction on the interview process is not taught in my vocational education training program.

Other:

19. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about instruction on the interviewing process?

Your answer

20. What elements of attendance instruction does your vocational education training provide?

1 point

Reliability

Punctuality

Telling time

Scheduling

Instruction on attendance is not taught in my vocational education training program.

Other:

21. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about instruction on attendance?

Your answer

22. What elements of hygiene instruction does your vocational education training provide?

1 point

Dress codes

Industry-specific attire

Safety wear

Presentation of self

Instruction on hygiene is not taught in my vocational education training program.

Other:

23. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about instruction on hygiene?

Your answer

24. What elements of resume writing instruction does your vocational education training provide?

Personal information

Objective

Education

Work Experience

Awards/Honors

Skills

References

Instruction on resume writing is not taught in my vocational education training program.

Other:

25. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about instruction on resume writing?

Your answer

26. What elements of job searching instruction does your vocational education training provide?

Job search engines

Interest Inventories

Filling out applications

Job descriptions

Qualifications

Instruction on job searching is not taught in my vocational education training program.

Other:

27. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about instruction on the job searching process?

Your answer

28. What elements of workplace symbols and signage instruction does your vocational education training provide?

Safety signs

Labor laws

Designated areas

Instruction on workplace symbols and signage is not taught in my vocational education training program.

Other:

29. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about workplace symbols and signage instruction?

Your answer

30. What elements of instruction on items contained in an Employee Handbook does your vocational education training provide?

Workplace policies

Code of Conduct

Compensation and Benefits

Working hours, PTO, vacation, and leave of absence policies.

Equal employment and non-discrimination policies

Cell phones and other electronic devices use.

Social media use

Instruction on items contained in an Employee Handbook is not taught in my vocational education training program.

Other:

31. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about instruction on items in an Employee Handbook?

Your answer

32. What elements of self-awareness instruction does your vocational education training provide?

Multiple Intelligence Quiz

Preference Assessment

Interest inventory

Instruction on self-awareness is not taught in my vocational education training program.

Other:

33. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about instruction on self-awareness?

Your answer

34. What teaching strategies do you incorporate into your vocational education training?

Technology integration

Role-playing

Simulation

Task analysis

Social stories

Other:

35. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about teaching strategies?

Your answer

36. What elements of workplace social skills instruction does your vocational education training provide?

Telephone etiquette

Customer service

Meeting Etiquette

Body language

Communication modes

Problem-solving

Chain of command

Instruction on workplace social skills is not taught in my vocational education training program.

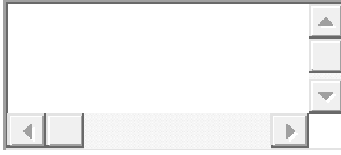
Other:

37. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about instruction on workplace social skills?

Your answer

38. Would you like to add any additional information pertaining to your role in vocational education training for secondary-age students with ASD?

Your answer

A rectangular text input field with a light gray background. On the right side, there is a vertical scroll bar with a small upward-pointing triangle at the top and a downward-pointing triangle at the bottom. At the bottom of the field, there are four small square buttons: a left-pointing arrow, a solid gray square, a right-pointing arrow, and a white square.

The end

We sincerely thank you and appreciate your time, dedication, and participation in our survey.

**APPENDIX E- IRB PROTECTING HUMAN SUBJECTS CERTIFICATE OF  
COMPLETION**

IRB Protecting Human Subjects  
CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

LYNN  
UNIVERSITY

This certificate is granted to

ROBIN JONES - JANUARY 16, 2023

To certify that they have completed IRB Training

**APPENDIX F- CURRICULUM VITAE-ROBIN JONES**







### APPENDIX G-PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Participant #	Consent Given	Gender	Current/ past vocational education professional	Years of teaching experience	Worked with ASD Students	Instructional affiliation role	Currently/ previously affiliated in Florida	Type of educational setting
1	yes	Female	Past	22	Yes	Program Administrator	Yes	All the above
2	yes	Male	Past	5	Yes	Job Coach	Yes	Public School
3	yes	Female	Current	17	Yes	Teacher	Yes	Public School
4	yes	Female	Current	5	Yes	Teacher	Yes	Charter School

5	yes	Female	Current	23	Yes	Teacher	Yes	Public School
6	yes	Female	Past	10	Yes	Teacher	Yes	Private School
7	yes	Male	Current	33	No	Teacher	Yes	Public School
8	yes	Female	Past	40	Yes	Program Administrator	Yes	Public School
9	yes	Female	Current	1	Yes	Job Coach	No	Charter School
10	yes	Female	Current	9	Yes	Teacher	Yes	Charter School
11	yes	Female	Current	12.5	Yes	Teacher	No	Charter School
12	yes	Female	Current	28	Yes	Program Administrator	Yes	nonprofit
13	yes	Female	Current	8	Yes	Option...	Yes	Charter School
14	yes	Male	Past	17	Yes	Teacher	Yes	Public School
15	yes	Female	Current	14	Yes	Program Administrator	Yes	Charter School
16	yes	Male	Current	4	Yes	Option...	Yes	Public School
17	yes	Female	Current	10	Yes	Program Administrator	Yes	Charter School

## APPENDIX H-CODING RESULTS

### Themes Uncovered in Participant Responses Based on the Research Questions /Codes

#### Coding Legend per Open-ended and Short Answer Question

<b>Question #</b>
<b>1. How have you differentiated transition services and programming for students with ASD?</b>
<b>2. What systems have you implemented to improve the current transition services and programming for students with ASD?</b>

<b>3. What do you believe are the most significant barriers to developing transition programs for students with ASD?</b>
<b>4. From your experience, what do transition programs do to benefit students with ASD?</b>
<b>18. What elements of the interview process instruction does your vocational education training provide?</b>
<b>19. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about instruction on the interviewing process?</b>
<b>20. What elements of attendance instruction does your vocational education training provide?</b>
<b>21. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about instruction on attendance?</b>
<b>22. What elements of hygiene instruction does your vocational education training provide?</b>
<b>23. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about instruction on hygiene?</b>
<b>24. What elements of resume writing instruction does your vocational education training provide?</b>
<b>25. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about instruction on resume writing?</b>
<b>26. What elements of job searching instruction does your vocational education training provide?</b>
<b>27. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about instruction on the job searching process?</b>
<b>28. What elements of workplace symbols and signage instruction does your vocational education training provide?</b>
<b>29. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about instruction on workplace symbols and signage?</b>
<b>30. What elements of instruction on items contained in an Employee Handbook does your vocational education training provide?</b>
<b>31. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about instruction on items contained in an Employee Handbook?</b>
<b>32. What elements of self-awareness instruction does your vocational education training provide?</b>
<b>33. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about instruction on self-awareness?</b>
<b>34. What teaching strategies do you incorporate into your vocational education training?</b>
<b>35. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about teaching strategies?</b>
<b>36. What elements of workplace social skills instruction does your vocational education training provide?</b>
<b>37. Would you like to elaborate on the previous question about instruction on workplace social skills?</b>
<b>38. Would you like to add any additional information pertaining to your role in vocational education training for secondary-age students with ASD?</b>

## **Preconceived Themes Based on Research Questions and Established Assumptions and Existing Knowledge**

**RQ1:** What factors of secondary transition programs lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment?

- **RQ1/Theme 1:** Differentiated Instruction is an important factor in secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment.
- **RQ1/Theme 2:** Real-World/Hands-on Experiences are an important factor in secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment.
- **RQ1/Theme 3:** Specific Curriculum Content is an important factor in secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment.

**RQ2:** What factors of Strategic Transition Planning contribute to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum?

- **RQ2/Theme 1:** Parental Involvement is an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum.
- **RQ2/Theme 2:** Student/ Individualized Input is an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum.

- **RQ2/Theme 3:** Resource Awareness is an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum.
- **RQ2/Theme 4:** Teacher/ Service Provider Input & Training is an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum.

**RQ3:** In what ways do the principles of Situated Learning Theory lead to post-secondary employment?

- **RQ3/Theme 1:** Real-World/Hands-on Experience principles of Situated Learning Theory led to post-secondary employment.
- **RQ3/Theme 2:** Confidence Building principles of Situated Learning Theory led to post-secondary employment.

### **Response Content Divided Between Research Questions and Categorized by Related Themes**

**RQ1:** What factors of secondary transition programs lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment?

<b>Differentiated Instruction is an important factor in secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education</b>	<b>Real-World/Hands-on Experiences are an important factor in secondary transition programs that lead</b>	<b>Specific Curriculum Content is an important factor in secondary transition programs that lead students in secondary special education classes to competitive</b>
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classes to competitive post-secondary employment.	students in secondary special education classes to competitive post-secondary employment.	post-secondary employment.
Provide different types of task analysis, detailed support, and understanding.	finding areas of strength and success unique to each student in a shared work environment, then building upon that foundation to grow their skill and production level and create a position for them that meets the needs of both the organization and the individual (job carving).	Screening, Preparing for an interview, Active interviewing, Follow-up, Decision (hired/ not hired)
provided information based on the abilities of the student	participating in my job training courses on the various services available to them after high school. We visit many of these programs, and I complete the applications and practice for the interviews in my class. I also try to keep the parents of my students aware of these services as well.	Instruction on the interview process is not taught in my vocational education training program.
In the classroom - taking a shared topic that benefits all students (i.e. money) and providing the necessary accommodations for students that need it (visuals, manipulatives) while adding rigor and enrichment (taking it to the next level) for students that are ready to move forward.	voc labs, cbi,	how to conduct an interview, what to expect,
participating in my job training courses on the various services available to them after high school. We visit many of these programs, and I complete the applications and practice for the interviews in my class. I also try to keep the parents of my students aware of these services as well.	specific informational pamphlets, training on campus and off campus	we practice these skills from start to finish and I always have my students participate in a mock job interview with someone they don't know.
developing goals related to the student's current levels of functioning rather than looking	Unique Learning System (Transition Curriculum), task analysis, visuals/social	Reliability, Punctuality, Telling time, Scheduling

at the disability.	stories, on-site job coaching, weekly performance evaluation/reflection journals	
providing sensory toys and communication devices for our nonverbal students.	I facilitate an on and off campus job training program with my students. Students get real world, hands on experience on school campus and off with my business partnerships. I try to educate my students about the job process(resumes, applications, interviews etc.) as well as employability skills necessary in the workforce.	Instruction on attendance is not taught in my vocational education training program.
I tried to work with them on what their needs are.	connected with community agencies to ensure transitioning planning begins as early as possible, integration of self-advocacy, pre-employment training, and critical workplace social communication skills into transition aged programming.	teaching how to read a schedule, arriving on time, how to call out sick
using applied behavior analysis-prompting procedures, adapted and modified materials to include AAC systems and strategies, etc.	business partnerships, having them be willing to work with our program (everyone is worried about liability these days). I also have a tough time with parental support, when they wait until senior year to start worrying about the next steps for their kids, if at all.	Attendance productivity, bullies, to body language
Individually based on their specific needs or concerns	Interpersonal skills	Dress codes, Industry specific attire, Safety wear, Presentation of self
voc labs, cbi,	real life experience, in a nutshell. Dealing with people while learning the task at hand, as well as building relationships and becoming more socially aware.	It briefly was touched upon based on the individual progress or status
specific informational pamphlets, training on campus and off campus	Screening, Preparing for an interview, Active interviewing,	how to iron clothes, good hygiene, wearing a uniform, facial hair

	Follow-up, Decision (hired/ not hired)	
Unique Learning System (Transition Curriculum), task analysis, visuals/social stories, on-site job coaching, weekly performance evaluation/reflection journals	always keeping task bins updated, so long as they are working on the same skill.	appropriate grooming hygiene for work
I facilitate an on and off campus job training program with my students. Students get real world, hands on experience on school campus and off with my business partnerships. I try to educate my students about the job process(resumes, applications, interviews etc.) as well as employability skills necessary in the workforce.	Accessible teaching environments and curriculums, community based vocational training programs	Personal information, Objective, Education, Work Experience, Awards/Honors, Skills, References
The systems that I have implemented to improve the current transitions services and programming for students with ASD social skills, video support, and visual as well.	Real world experiences using EBP, self reflection and executive functioning apps/organization	Instruction on resume writing is not taught in my vocational education training program.
Just listening to them.	Screening, Preparing for an interview, Active interviewing, Follow-up, Decision (hired/ not hired)	To help one with better knowledge.
transportation and finding the right fit for a program that fits specific needs		how to use a template to create a resume
Language		Job search engines, Interest Inventories, Filling out applications, Job descriptions, Qualifications
Interpersonal skills		Making sure client and job is applicable for each other
Small structured programs		Safety signs, Labor laws, Designated areas
Technology integration, Role-playing, Simulation, Task analysis, Social stories		we don't spend a whole lot of time on this one, but we do touch upon it
structuring activities around their strengths, and needs		Workplace policies, Code of Conduct, Compensation and Benefits, Working hours, PTO, vacation, leave of absence policies,



		Equal employment and non-discrimination policies, Cell phone and other electronic device use, Social media use
<p>structuring activities around their strengths, and needs</p> <p>tasks were then tailored to match those skill sets.</p> <p>In student transition IEP meetings, these skills were discussed, along with a student work preference assessment.</p> <p>When they reach a benchmark/skill they move to the next objective.</p> <p>Grouping homogeneously and in small groups, providing lessons in the most accessible ways, utilizing EBP and through the use of technology/accommodations/job aids/etc.</p>		brief overview
<p>Assessment is key, as well as always keeping task bins updated, so long as they are working on the same skill. Visual supports and modeling are also used to continue student progress.</p>		Multiple Intelligence Quiz, Preference Assessment, Interest Inventory
ABA therapy		begins our year!
		Technology integration, Role-playing, Simulation, Task analysis, Social stories
		Telephone etiquette, Customer service, Meeting etiquette, Body language, Communication modes, Problem solving, Chain of command
		Assessment is key, as well as always keeping task bins updated, so long as they are working on the same skill. Visual supports and modeling are also used to continue student

		progress.
		ABA therapy
		Screening, Preparing for an interview, Active interviewing, Follow-up, Decision (hired/ not hired)
		Reliability, Punctuality, Telling time, Scheduling
		Dress codes, Industry specific attire, Presentation of self
		Instruction on workplace social skills is not taught in my vocational education training program.  Telephone etiquette, Customer service, Meeting etiquette, Body language, Communication modes, Problem solving, Chain of command
		Technology integration, Role-playing, Simulation, Task analysis, Social stories
		Multiple Intelligence Quiz, Instruction on self awareness is not taught in my vocational education training program.  Preference Assessment, Interest inventory
		Workplace policies, Code of Conduct, Compensation and Benefits, Equal employment and non-discrimination policies, Cell phone and other electronic device use, Social media use
		Safety signs, Labor laws, Designated areas
		Job search engines, Interest Inventories, Filling out applications, Job descriptions, Qualifications
		Personal information, Objective, Education, Work Experience, Awards/Honors, Skills, References
		Dress codes, Industry specific attire,

**RQ2:** What factors of Strategic Transition Planning contribute to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum?

<p><b>Parental Involvement is an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum.</b></p>	<p><b>Student/ Individualized Input is an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum.</b></p>	<p><b>Resource Awareness is an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum.</b></p>	<p><b>Teacher/ Service Provider Input &amp; Training is an important factor of Strategic Transition Planning that contributes to post-secondary employment for students on the Autism Spectrum.</b></p>
<p>Participating in my job training courses on the various services available to them after high school. We visit many of these programs, and I complete the applications and practice for the interviews in my class. I also try to keep the parents of my students aware of these services as well.</p>	<p>Provided information based on the abilities of the student</p>	<p>finding areas of strength and success unique to each student in a shared work environment, then building upon that foundation to grow their skill and production level and create a position for them that meets the needs of both the organization and the individual (job carving).</p>	<p>Having or creating the proper staffing with knowledge, understanding, and patience to provide the proper implementation of services</p>
<p>We work with partners in the community to support transition in addition to recommending students to our district transition programs.</p>	<p>Goals outlined by IEP – finding areas of strength and success unique to each student in a shared work environment, then building upon that foundation to grow their skill and production level and create a position for them that meets the needs of both the student and the individual (job</p>	<p>Participating in my job training courses on the various services available to them after high school. We visit many of these programs, and I complete the applications and practice for the interviews in my class. I also try to</p>	<p>Programs and staffing which require training and resources.</p>

	carving).	keep the parents of my students aware of these services as well.	
Buy in from parents	We individualize the needs of the students by developing goals related to the student's current levels of functioning rather than looking at the disability.	Voc labs, cbi,	Finding staff dedicated to getting to know and understand the individual student and what they are interested in, their strengths and weaknesses, and what is within the realm of possibility so the student will be successful and satisfied with their future job.
I believe the most significant barriers to developing transition programs for students with ASD are by having a great support system from both the parents and great educators who will advocate for them.	I differentiated transition services and programming for students with ASD by providing sensory toys and communication devices for our nonverbal students.	Specific informational pamphlets, training on campus and off campus	I believe the most significant barriers to developing transition programs for students with ASD are by having a great support system from both the parents and great educators who will advocate for them.
Ease students into adulthood by breaking down life/social/vocational skills that might be "common sense" to come into attainable short-term and long-term objectives, equipping students with errorless practice to gain confidence and build skill and providing a support system for the student and the family as they navigate major life changes.	I tried to work with them on what their needs are.	I facilitate an on and off campus job training program with my students. Students get real world, hands on experience on school campus and off with my business partnerships. I try to educate my students about the job process(resumes, applications, interviews etc.) as well as employability skills necessary in the workforce.	Vocational training and educator knowledge of AAC strategies and systems
Staffing, individualizing, parent involvement/intervention, programming	using applied behavior analysis- prompting procedures, adapted and modified materials to	We work with partners in the community to support transition in addition	Staffing, individualizing, parent involvement/intervention, programming

outside of the school day, educating agencies on supporting individuals with ASD	include AAC systems and strategies, etc.	to recommending students to our district transition programs.	outside of the school day, educating agencies on supporting individuals with ASD
	Individually based on their specific needs or concerns	connected with community agencies to ensure transitioning planning begins as early as possible, integration of self-advocacy, pre-employment training, and critical workplace social communication skills into transition aged programming.	Minimal skillsets, lack of reinforcement for students, communication barriers The sensitivity with the peers at the location.
	Unique Learning System (Transition Curriculum), task analysis, visuals/social stories, on-site job coaching, weekly performance evaluation/reflection journals	Voc rehabilitation and ese services via school	
	I facilitate an on and off campus job training program with my students. Students get real world, hands on experience on school campus and off with my business partberships. I try to educate my students about the job process(resumes, applications, interviews etc.) as well as employability skills necessary in the workforce.	Having or creating the proper staffing with knowledge, understanding, and patience to provide the proper implementation of services	
	The systems that I have implemente to improve the current transitions services and	Transportation and finding the right fit for a program that fits specific needs	

	programming for students with ASD social skills, video support, and visual as well.		
	Just listening to them.	Community connections/resources	
	connected with community agencies to ensure transitioning planning begins as early as possible, integration of self-advocacy, pre-employment training, and critical workplace social communication skills into transition aged programming.	Business partnerships, having them be willing to work with our program (everyone is worried about liability these days). I also have a tough time with parental support, when they wait until senior year to start worrying about the next steps for their kids, if at all.	
	Not listening to there needs.	Programs and staffing which require training and resources.	
	Prepare them for gainful employment ( hopefully). For those students who cannot be employed, that they are able to live a happy & peaceful life ( be as independent as possible).	Language	
	Helping them	Not enough programs especially for high functioning asd individuals	
	Help them better understand them	Not enough programs especially for high functioning asd individuals	
	structuring activities around their strengths, and needs structuring activities around their strengths, and needs	Instruction on the interview process is not taught in my vocational education training program.	

	<p>tasks were then tailored to match those skill sets.</p> <p>In student transition IEP meetings, these skills were discussed, along with a student work preference assessment.</p> <p>When they reach a benchmark/skill they move to the next objective.</p> <p>Grouping homogeneously and in small groups, providing lessons in the most accessible ways, utilizing EBP and through the use of technology/accommodations/job aids/etc.</p>		
	<p>Assessment is key, as well as always keeping task bins updated, so long as they are working on the same skill. Visual supports and modeling are also used to continue student progress.</p>	<p>Stay concerned with having the proper support</p>	
	<p>Staffing, individualizing, parent involvement/intervention, programming outside of the school day, educating agencies on supporting individuals with ASD</p>	<p>I am a past special Ed teacher and the program we had did not support transition services; we did not have those resources.</p>	
		<p>Finding any new, or traditional services that could enhance the skills of the students with ASD</p>	
		<p>Accessible teaching environments and</p>	

		curriculums, community based vocational training programs	
		Staffing, individualizing, parent involvement/intervent ion, programming outside of the school day, educating agencies on supporting individuals with ASD	

**RQ3:** In what ways do the principles of Situated Learning Theory lead to post-secondary employment?

<b>Real-World/Hands-on Experience principles of Situated Learning Theory lead to post-secondary employment.</b>	<b>Confidence Building principles of Situated Learning Theory lead to post-secondary employment.</b>
finding areas of strength and success unique to each student in a shared work environment, then building upon that foundation to grow their skill and production level and create a position for them that meets the needs of both the organization and the individual (job carving).	Goals outlined by IEP - finding areas of strength and success unique to each student in a shared work environment, then building upon that foundation to grow their skill and production level and create a position for them that meets the needs of both the organization and the individual (job carving).
participating in my job training courses on the various services available to them after high school. We visit many of these programs, and I complete the applications and practice for the interviews in my class. I also try to keep the parents of my students aware of these services as well.	We individualize the needs of the students by developing goals related to the student's current levels of functioning rather than looking at the disability.
voc labs, cbi,	I tried to work with them on what their needs are.
specific informational pamphlets, training on campus and off campus	Individually based on their specific needs or concerns
Unique Learning System (Transition Curriculum), task analysis, visuals/social stories, on-site job coaching, weekly performance evaluation/reflection journals	Unique Learning System (Transition Curriculum), task analysis, visuals/social stories, on-site job coaching, weekly performance evaluation/reflection journals
I facilitate an on and off campus job training	I facilitate an on and off campus job training



program with my students. Students get real world, hands on experience on school campus and off with my business partberships. I try to educate my students about the job process(resumes, applications, interviews etc.) as well as employability skills necessary in the workforce.	program with my students. Students get real world, hands on experience on school campus and off with my business partberships. I try to educate my students about the job process(resumes, applications, interviews etc.) as well as employability skills necessary in the workforce.
connected with community agencies to ensure transitioning planning begins as early as possible, integration of self-advocacy, pre-employment training, and critical workplace social communication skills into transition aged programming.	The systems that I have implemente to improve the current transitions services and programming for students with ASD social skills, video support, and visual as well.
business partnerships, having them be willing to work with our program (everyone is worried about liability these days). I also have a tough time with parental support, when they wait until senior year to start worrying about the next steps for their kids, if at all.	Just listening to them.
Interpersonal skills	connected with community agencies to ensure transitioning planning begins as early as possible, integration of self-advocacy, pre-employment training, and critical workplace social communication skills into transition-aged programming.
Real-life experience, in a nutshell. Dealing with people while learning the task at hand, as well as building relationships and becoming more socially aware.	transportation and finding the right fit for a program that fits specific needs
keeping task bins updated, so long as they are working on the same skill. Visual supports and modeling are also used to continue student progress.	prepare for post-secondary
Accessible teaching environments and curriculums, community based vocational training programs	Basically I feel that the support will exude the confidence that is needed to build off of for day to day task.
Screening, Preparing for an interview, Active interviewing, Follow-up, Decision (hired/ not hired)	Improves ability to thrive as an adult
	Ease students into adulthood by breaking down life/social/vocational skills that might be "common sense" to come into attainable short-term and long-term objectives, equipping students with errorless practice to gain confidence and build skill and providing a support system for the student and the

	family as they navigate major life changes.
	real life experience, in a nutshell. Dealing with people while learning the task at hand, as well as building relationships and becoming more socially aware.
	Give them a function in society making our world as a whole, better. Skills to work and contribute to society. Self confidence and happiness.
	Prepare them for gainful employment ( hopefully). For those students who cannot be employed, that they are able to live a happy & peaceful life ( be as independent as possible).
	Our program is one of the most important because we as advocates for our students, we give our students enough time for them to transition from one thing to another. We also reward them for their hard work and have a lot patients so they can feel comfortable in their transition.
	Increase the likelihood of success in post-secondary education and vocational experiences to include paid employment.
	<b>Help them better understand them</b>
	<p>structuring activities around their strengths, and needs</p> <p>structuring activities around their strengths, and needs</p> <p>tasks were then tailored to match those skill sets.</p> <p>In student transition IEP meetings, these skills were discussed, along with a student work preference assessment.</p> <p>When they reach a benchmark/skill they move to the next objective.</p> <p>Grouping homogeneously and in small groups, providing lessons in the most accessible ways, utilizing EBP and through the use of technology/accommodations/job aids/etc.</p>
	Assessment is key, as well as always keeping task bins updated, so long as they are working on the same skill. Visual supports

	and modeling are also used to continue student progress.
	They provide structure, as well as the necessary pre-vocational and vocational skills that students need in order to be successful and independent.