Educating Students
with Intellectual Disability
& Autism Spectrum Disorder

Book 4
Academics, Life Skills, and Transition

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Contents

Introduction

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Book 4 of *Educating Students With Intellectual Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorder* series continues the content and focus of those preceding it: a focus on research-based—and, if applicable, evidence-based—practices for teaching students with intellectual disability (ID) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). *Academics, Life Skills, and Transition* maintains the discussion of how each content chapter aligns with the phases of learning (i.e., acquisition, fluency, maintenance, and generalization; Collins, 2012; Haring & Eaton, 1978) that anchors this series as well as noting the foundational information related to teaching that domain to students with ID or ASD (e.g., being a teacher leader and advocate, collaborating with colleagues, working with paraprofessionals, collaborating with families, and working with diverse students). Also, consistent with all chapters in Books 2 and 3 of this series, each chapter in Book 4 presents two different case studies each involving an elementary or secondary student with ID or ASD to highlight the content of the chapter in practical terms.

However, in *Academics, Life Skills, and Transition* we come to perhaps the most controversial of topics—the *what* to teach, for students with ID and ASD. What to teach—the content and concepts—has sparked controversy and debate, most namely regarding whether the focus should be on academics or on functional or life skills (Bouck, 2012). Although many have framed the discussion as all or none (i.e., academics *or* functional life skills; Ayres, Lowrey, Douglas, & Sievers, 2011; Courtade, Spooner, Browder, & Jimenez, 2012), we do not believe it is one or the other. We believe the education of students with ID and ASD should involve both academics *and* life skills, and that teaching one does not preclude or prevent teaching the other. Although discussion of a framework or approach for embedding a functional approach and an academic approach together is outside the purview of this series and book, we direct the reader to another Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities publication, *Footsteps Toward the Future: Implementing a Real-World Curriculum for Students With Developmental Disabilities* (Bouck, Taber-Doughty, & Savage, 2015).

In this book, we have opted to focus on more traditional concepts of content (e.g., academics, life skills) as well as less standard but equally important concepts (e.g., sexuality— which can be controversial itself). Specifically, Chapter 1 of this book addresses academic instruction. The authors (Wood, Root, & Thompson)

discuss evidence-based practices for teaching academics (e.g., reading, mathematics) to students with ID and ASD, providing the reader with explicit and accessible instructional procedures for implementing such practices as well as examples from research. Wood and colleagues also provide readers with concrete examples of technology to aid in supporting the teaching and learning of academic content by elementary and secondary students with ID and ASD.

Chapter 2 of the book tackles life skills and community participation. Savage and Taber-Doughty present readers with evidence-based practices that can be used to provide instruction on life skills as well as specific examples of how teachers can set goals related to the four stages of learning to different life skills content. Savage and Taber-Doughty also discuss where different types of instruction can occur, such as in community as well as simulation. We would be remiss if we did not note the overlap in evidence-based and research-based practices noted in Chapter 2 for teaching life skills and those noted in Chapter 1 for teaching life skills.

In Chapter 3, Cihak, O'Reilly, Krile, and Eshbaugh tackle another option for what to teach, although one that can also be taught simultaneously with academics and life skills: vocational education and training. As with academics and life skills instruction, vocational education and training is focused on preparing students with ID and ASD for successful adult (i.e., postschool) lives, although vocational education and training is focused directly on employment. Cihak and colleagues note the importance of instruction in "hard" skills and "soft" skills, as well as in self-determination and academics, and the value of building digital literacy skills and having work experience while in school.

Chapter 4 highlights the important topic of transition and promoting successful adult life outcomes in the areas of employment, independent living, community participation, and postsecondary education. Although multiple transitions occur in the education and lives of students with ID and ASD, this chapter by Kelley explicitly addresses the transition from high school to post-high school. Many of the research-based instructional strategies noted for adult learners and for supporting transition are those suggested as evidence-based in the academic and life skill chapters of this book.

The last chapter in this book—Chapter 5—addresses an important but often avoided element of what to teach: sexuality. Whitby and Travers appropriately address the range of sexuality content regarding the education of students with ID and ASD. Although the authors rightfully acknowledge the lack of evidence-based interventions specifically focused on sexuality for this population of students, they urge educators to utilize those evidence-based and research-based practices that support students with ID and ASD. In other words, they support the application of the evidence-based and research-based practices discussed in the preceding chapters of this book to the content of sexuality. Hence, there is a consistency throughout *Academics, Life Skills, and Transition* that good teaching interventions are good teaching interventions!

CHAPTER 1

Academics

Leah Wood, Jenny Root, and Julie Thompson

Academic instruction for students with intellectual disability (ID) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) should ensure access to the general curriculum. This means providing all students—including students with the most extensive support needs—opportunities to acquire, practice, maintain, and generalize grade-aligned academic skills to meet their individualized goals. Students with ID and ASD have demonstrated success in academic skills across topics. Examples of such success include the ability to learn to decode text (e.g., Ahlgrim-Delzell, Browder, & Wood, 2014), answer comprehension questions about grade-aligned social studies content (Wood, Browder, & Flynn, 2015), solve algebraic equations (Browder et al., 2012) and math word problems (Root, Browder, Saunders, & Lo, 2017), and develop and evaluate predictions about the natural world through the inquiry process (Jimenez, Lo, & Saunders, 2014).

Research on Teaching Academics

Multiple evidence-based practices have been identified for supporting academic instruction for students with ID and ASD. These foundational evidence-based practices, shown in Table 1.1, along with brief descriptions and examples of instructional strategies within each practice, can be employed throughout the four stages of skill attainment (i.e., acquisition, fluency, maintenance, and generalization; see Book 1 of this series; Shurr, Jimenez, & Bouck, 2019).

These foundational evidence-based practices support students in academic domains including English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science, and can be applied to social studies as well. These practices are almost always used in combination with other evidence-based instructional supports and strategies in what are called *treatment packages*. For example, a teacher may use a model-lead-test (*explicit instruction*) procedure to teach students to fill out a graphic organizer (*visual support*) to support comprehension of an adapted novel in ELA or adapted informational text in social studies or science. Specific applications of these foundational evidence-based practices, as well as additional practices specific to ELA, mathematics, and science instruction, are discussed later in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2
Life Skills and Community Participation
Melissa N. Savage and Teresa Taber-Doughty

Community involvement includes many layers, from being physically present without interaction with others through involvement in activities that promote the development of interpersonal relationships (Simplican, Leader, Kosciulek, & Leahy, 2015). Skills needed to make self-empowered decisions, engage in positive social and emotional relationships, be successfully employed, plan for the future, and enjoy life are key to being an active, participating community member. To make this happen, teachers and family members must emphasize opportunities for practice and life skill instruction in the "real world." Life skills are those that facilitate an individual's ability to be more independent in life, from personal hygiene to money management (Bouck, Taber-Doughty, & Savage, 2015; Cronin & Patton, 1993). When curriculum content focuses on life skills, it can prepare students for situations and environments they are likely to encounter in life (Gargiulo, 2015). For individuals with intellectual disability (ID) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD), life skills instruction is a critical component of their education and preparation for independent participation as adults.

Life Skills: The Research Base

There are a number of evidence- and research-based practices that can be used to teach life skills to students with ID and ASD. Many of the same evidence-based practices used to teach academic skills (e.g., task analysis, prompting, time delay) are also used to teach life skills (Browder, Wood, Thompson, & Ribuffo, 2014; Wong et al., 2015; see also Chapter 1). The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders (NPDC) conducted a review of the research and found that of the 27 evidence-based practices identified for individuals with ASD, 17 were also used to address adaptive skills (i.e., life skills; NPDC, n.d.). Table 2.1 provides a list and definition of the specific 17 evidence-based practices identified by the NPDC for adaptive skills assessment and instruction.

In addition, The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) recognized simulation and community-based instruction as evidence- and research-based practices respectively for life skills instruction (NTACT, n.d.).

CHAPTER 3

Vocational Education and Training

David F. Cihak, Carrie L. O'Reilly, Mary Jo Krile, and Jessica Eshbaugh

Vocational education and training (VET) prepare students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), to participate in a continuously changing labor market. VET programs consist of a sequence of coursework and educational opportunities geared toward developing career awareness, knowledge, and skills, as well as self-advocacy and self-determination. The ultimate goal is skill generalization as students obtain, apply, and sustain job skills in a variety of settings and situations. This occurs through embedded community experiences, volunteer work, job shadowing, internships, and paid or unpaid employment opportunities.

For students with intellectual disability (ID) and ASD, work and career are crucially important for independence and self-sustainability (Collet-Klingenberg, 1998). According to the Family and Individual Needs for Disability Supports (FINDS) National Survey, 85% of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities were unemployed in 2010 (Anderson, Larson, & Wuorio, 2011). Of the 15% of participants who reported having employment, only 48% received competitive wages. In addition, 68% of working-aged (i.e., 21 to 64) individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities were not working and had not sought employment in the preceding 4 weeks, compared to 22% of the population without a disability (Winsor et al., 2017). The data is similar for individuals with ASD; Burgess and Cimera (2014) found approximately 36% of all transition-aged adults with ASD had been employed between 2002 and 2011. VET continues to remain one of the most effective practices to promote employment outlooks and job success for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, combating these alarming statistics.

Research on Effective VET Programming

An effective VET program requires continuous development to adapt local and global trends; become more relevant, effective and efficient; support lifelong learning; encourage creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship; and become more inclusive (Pereira, Kyriazopoulou, & Weber, 2016). A critical component

CHAPTER 4
Transition and Adult Life Outcomes
Kelly R. Kelley

Transition was first defined in 1984 by then-Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) Madeline Will as

> an outcome oriented process encompassing a broad array of services and experiences that lead to employment. Transition is a period that includes high school, the point of graduation, additional postsecondary education or adult services, and the initial years of employment. Transition is a bridge between the security and structure offered by the school and the risks of life. (Will, 1984, p. 1)

A year later, Halpern (1985) expanded Will's definition to encompass community adjustment and focus on a more comprehensive approach to transition with residential and social or interpersonal networks. Halpern shifted the focus of transition to a team-oriented approach that helped students achieve desired outcomes.

In the 1990s, transition continued to evolve within the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2006). As a result of revisions, the concept of transition services evolved to focus on coordinated activities leading to outcome-oriented processes from school into the adult world of work (see also Chapter 3), college, and independent living. The expanded service definition also accounted for student preferences, interests, and instruction to support their future goals and community experiences.

Further reauthorizations of IDEA mandated transition planning and integration of transition services by age 14 in middle school through graduation in order to prepare for postsecondary education and employment. Evidence and research to support transition practices continued as legislative mandates and research also focused on strengthening transition planning. IDEA required both greater accountability standards for states' transition services and including appropriate measurable postsecondary goals within the IEP. The 2004 reauthorization of IDEA also changed the age at which transition services should begin, to 16.

In 2015, the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) was funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to evaluate and assist stakeholders in implementing evidence-

CHAPTER 5

Sexuality Education

Peggy J. Schaefer Whitby and Jason Travers

Comprehensive sexuality education involves teaching about human development, relationships, social skills, sexual health, hygiene, and expression (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States [SIECUS], 2004). The skills associated with each of these domains should be taught in a developmentally and age-appropriate progression beginning in childhood and lasting throughout the lifespan (Ailey, Marks, Crisp, & Hahn, 2003). However, people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and intellectual disability (ID) have historically been perceived as not needing sexuality education (Konstantareas & Lunsky, 1997; Stokes & Kaur, 2005). This perception is perhaps a reflection of stereotypical beliefs about people with ASD and ID as being sexually immature, asexual, or deviant (Lesseliers & Van Hove, 2002; Travers, in press). These beliefs, the taboo nature of sexuality, and the sometimes complicated legal issues associated with delivering sexuality education, can result in poor outcomes in a variety of sexuality-related domains of development. Consequently, sexuality education may be delayed or limited in scope until a sexuality-related problem emerges.

Special educators, related professionals, and families may recognize the need to intervene after one or more concerns about a student's sexual development become prominent. For example, inappropriately touching another person or publicly touching one's own genitals may lead education teams to develop plans to address such behavior. Unfortunately, a reactive approach to sexuality education may be inferior to an individualized approach to sexuality education for individuals with ASD and ID.

Rationale for Sexuality Education

There are several reasons for providing sexuality education to individuals with ASD and ID. Generally, the rationale can be organized in two categories: supporting healthy development and preventing undesirable outcomes. Supporting healthy development is predicated on notions that humans are inherently sexual beings and that knowledge about sexual development empowers the individual and contributes to better outcomes (e.g., have friends, a life partner, good physical and mental health, increased opportunities to participate in a plural society).