FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY
ACADEMY FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION

A Research Bulletin for Programs that Serve College Students with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities

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CTP TRENDS

Navigating College, Employment, Community, and Independent Living by Bringing the Research to Practitioners
Each week a tremendous amount of information is published that could be helpful for educators who deliver postsecondary comprehensive transition programs for college students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Unfortunately, much of this work does not make it into the hands of professionals and families who are working to develop, expand, and sustain these programs. This research bulletin disseminates the lessons of research and practical reports to help get this information into the hands of professionals who deliver these postsecondary programs, and individuals and their families who participate in these programs.

The professionals at the Academy for Community Inclusion (ACI) at Florida Atlantic University (FAU), a Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Program (FPCTP), regularly review over 30 peer-reviewed journals to identify promising practices and research findings that can improve these programs. Each article that is selected is summarized to report the major findings, and to provide pragmatic recommendations for college programs. Those research synopses are gathered into an issue of the research-to-practice bulletin, and disseminated to you to support your effort to deliver a meaningful postsecondary comprehensive transition program.

We hope you enjoy the issue. Please provide us with feedback to improve our effort. If you see an article that you think might be helpful to others, please use the Article Template found at the end of this bulletin to summarize it. Send it to us and we'll run your contribution.

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Journal/Source</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Experiences with CTPs;</td>
<td>C. Hall, L. McCabe, E. Carter, E. Lee, &amp; L. Bethune-Dix</td>
<td><em>Journal of Inclusive Postsecondary Education</em></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring Students with IDD;</td>
<td>R. Agarwal, L. Heron, M. Naseh, &amp; S. Burke</td>
<td><em>Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders</em></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach CPR and AED;</td>
<td>K. Kearney, D. Dukes, M. Brady, K. Hall Pistorio, M. Duffy, &amp; J. Bucholz</td>
<td><em>The Journal of Special Education</em></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Report of Executive Functioning in College Students with ID;</td>
<td>A. Grieve, L. Webne-Behrman, R. Couillou, &amp; J. Sieben-Schneider</td>
<td><em>Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability</em></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing Exercise Intensity: High-Intensity-Interval Training to Individuals with DD;</td>
<td>B. May, &amp; R. Treadwell</td>
<td><em>Behavior Analysis in Practice</em></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Soft Skills with UPGRADE Your Performance;</td>
<td>K. Clark, D. Test, &amp; M. Konrad</td>
<td><em>Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities</em></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Purpose of the Study**

New opportunities for postsecondary education have emerged for young adults with intellectual disability (ID). As a growing number of institutions establish inclusive higher education programs, it is important to understand the experiences of faculty who welcome students with ID into their courses. This qualitative study explored the views of 23 university professors who had recent experience teaching students with ID. Focus group interviews addressed the roles of faculty within their classrooms, the strategies they found helpful, and the issues they found challenging. The authors offer recommendations for supporting faculty in this new endeavor and suggest areas for future research.

**Relevance of the Study**

This article is relevant to Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP) staff who support university faculty in planning, accommodating, and executing inclusive education including instructors, job coaches, and administrators. The authors provide an important perspective that CTP staff can consider when finding ways to improve the inclusive educational experience of their students who have ID. This article may also prompt other CTP programs to conduct similar focus groups to gain an understanding of the faculty perspectives on teaching adults with ID at their own university.

**Strategy Spotlight**

Faculty focus groups could help get buy-in from faculty to begin to participate and maintain participation in teaching students with disabilities. This qualitative study used data gathered and coded from focus groups of 23 faculty members at a university that had a CTP. The faculty members discussed their feelings about teaching students with ID, student involvement, challenges, and supportive strategies. The following summarizes the authors’ findings in these areas:

**Feelings Regarding Teaching Students with ID**

Results indicated varying opinions on the extent to which teaching students with ID requires a different amount of effort than teaching students without ID: (a) requiring somewhat less than, (b) requiring somewhat more than, or (c) being the same as they provided to others. Factors that may contribute to the difference in faculty involvement include the nature of the class, the needs of the student with ID, the availability of program staff, and the prior experiences faculty had with students with ID.
Student Involvement

Faculty participants described similarly varying levels of student involvement. When asked about how involved students with ID were in their classes, faculty addressed situations when these students were (a) more involved, (b) similarly involved, or (c) less involved than their classmates without similar disabilities.

a) Faculty discussed higher participation and interest among students with ID compared to their classmates. This included sharing their interests related to the content, more participation in class discussions, better attendance and engagement, and higher interest in the course material.

b) Faculty discussed when students with ID showed similar involvement to their classmates including participation during engaging learning activities like “Think-Pair-Share” and completing assignments.

c) Situations that resulted in less involvement included the physical placement in a large class. One faculty member noted that students with ID did not go to his office hours.

Challenges

Faculty expressed difficulty related to their roles in disability disclosure and maintaining confidentiality of students with ID; they expressed concerns fielding questions about the noticeable differences in expectations. They also noted the students experienced difficulty in regard to self-disclosure of their disability.

Other challenges included communicating with students with ID (due to expressive or receptive communication difficulties or behavioral challenges), addressing distracting behaviors (falling asleep in class, following peers around, vocalizations and excessive hand-raising), lack of interaction with peers and isolation, insufficient support from program staff, limited knowledge about the CTP program, accessibility of class content (either due to lack of student interest, background knowledge, or more intricate class materials that require careful handling), resistance from other faculty, and large class sizes limiting interactions with faculty and students.

Supportive Strategies

Techniques and resources used to support students included (1) collaboration with program staff (to accommodate or modify syllabi and assignments, answer questions about the program, role of the faculty, and student behaviors, etc.), (2) utilizing a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, (3) support from peers, (4) behavioral supports (self-regulation strategies, token systems, and prompting), and (5) accommodations and modifications (additional time, access to materials before class, altering the learning goal or assignment, and adapting materials).

Lessons Learned

University faculty play an integral role in the inclusion of adults with ID on college and university campuses. The findings of this qualitative study should be considered when CTP staff collaborate with faculty at their own institutes of higher education. The authors listed several implications for practice that can be found in the Tips for CTP Programs text box.

Reference

MENTORING STUDENTS WITH IDD
EVALUATION OF ROLE-SPECIFIC WORKSHOPS FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES
SYNOPSIS WRITTEN BY DIANA M. VALLE-RIESTRA

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Transitioning to postsecondary education is often challenging for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). To address this, Florida International University, specifically FIU Embrace, piloted the Embrace Mentoring Program (EMP), which provided unique role-specific workshops to both faculty/staff mentors and student mentees with IDD. A mixed-method design was used to analyze knowledge acquisition and participant perceptions of the workshops. Quantitative findings indicated knowledge improvement in a key area for mentors, while qualitative data demonstrated a positive response to workshop content, and highlighted areas of improvement for future workshops. Ultimately, the results from the pilot EMP demonstrated promise in supporting students with IDD towards academic and career-related goals, by providing mentorship training to both mentors and mentees.

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to describe the development, implementation, and evaluation of a pilot mentoring program designed to assist students with IDD transition into postsecondary education and meet their academic and career-related goals. Research questions were: 1) Did mentors and mentees demonstrate knowledge acquisition through attendance in mentoring workshops? and 2) What are the perceptions and feedback from mentors and mentees regarding the workshops? Participants included 31 faculty and staff from different university departments, and 35 students with IDD enrolled in the program. Workshops were between 1 to 2 hours in duration and followed a sequence of pre-test, workshop presentation, open discussion/activity, and post-test.

This article is relevant to the following stakeholder groups who play a role in supporting students with IDD in a postsecondary educational environment: 1) university faculty and staff; 2) advisors/mentors/coaches; and 3) inclusive postsecondary transition program administrators and staff.

STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT

The researchers included separate workshops for mentors and mentees. Both workshops followed the same structure, as shown in the figure below, but highlighted different information pertaining to the audience. Specifics are outlined on the next page.
STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT

I. Faculty/Staff Mentor Workshops

Mentor workshops were designed around specific topics to offer mentors training on how to best support their mentees in academic and career development. Workshops included: a) Orientation (introduction of dyads, description and scope of program); b) Program Basics (expectations, scope, legal obligations, etc.); c) Disability Awareness (laws, person-first-language, types of disability; d) Essential Mentor Skills (active listening, building trust, giving constructive feedback, etc.); e) Communication and Employability (career opportunities, resources, etc.); and f) Closing Ceremony (sharing of results, completion certificates).

II. Student Mentee Workshops

Mentee workshop topics and content were designed to enhance the students’ communication and self-determination skills. Workshops included: a) Program Basics (expectations, privacy and confidentiality; etiquette, etc.); b) Goal Setting (develop SMART goals, importance of self-determination, etc.); c) Essential Mentee Skills (showing initiative, importance of following through, etc.); and d) Communication (verbal/non-verbal cues, self-advocacy, etc.).

LESSONS LEARNED

Students with disabilities encounter significant challenges as they transition to postsecondary institutions which is often attributed to poor self-determination and self-advocacy skills (Stodden & Conway, 2000), low academic self-efficacy (Pajares, 1996), and limited resources and supports (Lloyd, 2015). Having adult and peer mentoring support has been identified as a positive strategy for students with IDD (e.g., Eisenman & Freedman, 2018). Embedding a mentoring program in a Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP) and identifying content that can lead to the formation of positive mentoring partnerships and positive mentee outcomes should be further explored.

REFERENCE

PUSH HARD AND FAST
TEACHING ADULTS WITH ID TO PERFORM HANDS-ONLY CPR
SYNOPSIS WRITTEN BY KELLY KEARNEY

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Many adults with intellectual disability (ID) do not learn the skills needed to maintain safety of people within their communities. In a pair of studies, a total task presentation with a least-to-most error correction procedure was used to teach four college students with ID how to safely remove personal protective equipment (PPE) (gloves), and how to administer hands-only cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). A multiple probe design was used to evaluate the effects of both studies. Results for the first study showed that students’ accuracy with PPE removal increased after the intervention, and maintained after the intervention was removed. During the second study, student accuracy of hands-only CPR increased, and the CPR skills also generalized to a novel setting. Social validity data for both studies indicated that students believed they learned and were able to demonstrate the skills, however staff impressions were varied. Implications and limitations are discussed.

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

This study taught college students with ID to put on and take off personal protective equipment (gloves) and administer hands-only CPR. Aside from being an important safety skill, this is also an important skill for certain employment sites in the community. This study may be of interest to teachers, job coaches, or other professionals who prepare students to work in the community.

STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT

A total task presentation was used to teach the students CPR and proper glove removal. The total task presentation trained students on each step of the task analysis chain for every learning trial. The interventionist first modeled the entire chain, then completed a side-by-side walk through of the chain (simultaneously performing the steps next to the student). Then the interventionist asked the student to complete the entire chain independently.

LESSONS LEARNED

Students were able to master hands-only CPR and proper glove removal in just a handful of sessions. Students who are interested in working with children may need to know how to administer hands-only CPR. This study demonstrated that total task presentation is an effective way to teach this skill.

REFERENCE

Purpose of the Study

Adults with intellectual disability (ID) are not frequently taught the safety skills to help others within their communities. However, life and safety skills are valuable to individuals with ID. This study used modeling, task analysis, and simultaneous prompting to teach cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) with the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED) to college students with ID. The first phase of the study taught students how to perform CPR. The second phase of the study taught students how to use an AED and incorporate it into CPR. Student accuracy of the task increased after the instructional package was implemented. Data remained stable and high when students were asked to perform the task in a novel environment. Additionally, students maintained the skill once the instructional package was removed.

Relevance of the Study

This research is relevant to practitioners such as teachers, professors, and parents of students attending Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) programs. The population in this article is adults with ID in a college setting but the CPR instructional package from the study can be used in other community learning environments. Learning CPR skills could be useful for adults with ID in any public or private setting, creating a socially valid intervention for adults with ID.

Strategy Spotlight

The strategy used in this study was an instructional package consisting of modeling, task completion, and simultaneous prompting. The researcher first modeled the behavior chain while the student watched, then the researcher and the student practiced the behavior chain together following a step-by-step process while using two separate manikins. The researcher provided prompts to the student during the practice of the behavior chain.

Lessons Learned

This study shows that students with ID are capable of learning safety skills and should be given the opportunity to learn safety skills more often. This study was only the second study to teach adults with ID a CPR routine. Future researchers would want to focus on training students with ID on how to keep themselves safe in a situation if they are going to approach someone in an emergency. Future researchers would also want to focus on generalizing the skill further and utilize a more efficient way to teach safety skills to this population. Life-saving skills are relevant for all members of the community and many jobs require individuals to be certified in CPR. Therefore, learning safety skills is a step towards the inclusion of adults with ID in the community.

Reference

Purpose of the Study

This study presents a unique assessment of executive functioning (EF) among postsecondary students with disabilities, with the aim of understanding the extent to which students with different disabilities and in different age groups assess their own difficulties with relevant and educationally-adaptive skills such as planning, initiating, managing time, staying on task, and controlling emotions. Students from a large Midwest public university applying for and/or receiving services at a university-based disability office (n = 50) completed the Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function-Adult Version (BRIEF-A) and a demographic questionnaire. Study groups were formed according to participants’ self-reported disability or disabilities—including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), psychiatric disabilities, learning disabilities, traumatic brain injury, autism spectrum disorder, deaf and hard of hearing, and/or visual impairment—as well as those reporting single versus multiple disabilities and freshman versus all other class standings. Results revealed elevated EF ratings by students in the ADHD and psychiatric groups, particularly with regard to metacognitive skills. Freshman students reported less frequent EF challenges than older students, and identifying with more than one disability group was not a risk factor for elevated EF scores. Practical implications are discussed in terms of the utility of EF self-assessment in this population, and in supporting metacognitive strategies for postsecondary students with disabilities.

Relevance of the Study

Students with varying levels of ability are attending college, whether it be a typical college program or an Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) program. EF skills are important in navigating college life and can assist in leading to successful outcomes in students’ academic, social, and occupational lives. Those that work in postsecondary college settings, such as professors, IPSE administrators, and even job coaches, can use the Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function-Adult (BRIEF-A) discussed in this article to have students self-assess their strengths and weaknesses in different domains of EF. Utilizing this tool with college students with disabilities can increase self-awareness of underlying factors that may be contributing to academic, social, or occupational difficulties, and allow college personnel to utilize self-reports that can inform supportive interventions.

Strategy Spotlight

Researchers used the BRIEF-A as a screening tool to see how college freshman with disabilities would rate their EF skills. The BRIEF-A is a self-report scale designed for individuals ages 18-90. The BRIEF was originally developed to provide a standardized measure of EF in children that was easy to administer and score, while also generating clinically meaningful information. However, multiple versions have been developed for individuals in preschool, adolescence, and adulthood. The BRIEF-A consists of 75 items that comprise nine clinical scales: inhibit, shift, emotional control, self-monitor, initiate, working memory, plan/organize, task monitor, and organization of materials. The nine scales are then summarized in two broader index scores:

1. The Behavioral Regulation Index (BRI), which measures one’s ability to regulate emotion and behavior,
2. The Metacognition Index (MI), which measures one’s ability to actively problem solve across a variety of situations.
LESSONS LEARNED

Results suggest that college students with ADHD and/or a psychiatric disability are at risk of perceiving more frequent difficulty with metacognitive skills. Students who considered themselves as having a learning disability, however, did not report elevated difficulties with areas of their executive functioning. Postsecondary support staff can utilize a coaching model to support students by assisting with concrete strategies that relate to individually identified daily life tasks that are frequently challenging. Furthermore, staff can implement proactive measures and interventions to prevent difficulties with executive functioning from occurring by scaffolding academic and independent living tasks.

REFERENCE

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to determine if a 30-minute high-intensity interval training (HIIT) 9-week program paired with a lottery reinforcement system resulted in increasing heart rate in three adult participants with developmental disabilities (DD). Data collection was illustrated using both nonconcurrent multiple-baseline-across participants and changing criterion designs. Findings signified a behavioral change from baseline to intervention. Discussion and implications suggest using the lottery reinforcement system with similar exercise programs for adults with DD.

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted with participants with DD. Based on the literature review presented in the study, individuals with DD have a higher percentage of chronic health issues that may impact mortality. The researchers mention several health factors contributing to awareness and choice of engaging in physical activity, such as biological, motivational, self-efficacy, and exposure opportunities. Results and discussion sections within this study indicate the need for health educators and health providers to consider the validity of teaching physical education, opportunities to participate in higher intensity levels, and developing and implementing exercise programs that meet this population’s needs. Certified fitness instructors, community gyms, and recreational centers can also benefit from the knowledge of evidenced-based reinforcers, like the lottery reinforcement system, to increase positive health outcomes for individuals with DD.
Lessons Learned

Physical health is an essential outcome for one's well-being. All populations of adults should be able to experience similar exercise programs and be introduced to various exercise level intensities to benefit from engaging in physical activity. Takeaways from the study indicate the necessity for individuals with DD to have the opportunity to learn and apply physical education components in their lives. Inclusion of physical health education in primary schooling may lead to awareness, participation, and retention throughout grade schooling-to-adulthood years.

Reference

Purpose of the Study

Post-school employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities continue to be inadequate when compared to their peers without disabilities (Newman et al., 2011). One barrier to employment for individuals with disabilities is a lack of employment “soft skills” (Riesen, Morgan, Schultz, & Kupferman, 2014), such as punctuality and work completion. This study investigated the effects of UPGRADE Your Performance on soft skills of secondary students with disabilities at both in-school and community-based job sites. UPGRADE Your Performance instruction included self-monitoring, goal setting, self-graphing, and technology-aided instruction. Results demonstrated all students improved in a self-selected soft skill area, made gains in their overall performance, were able to self-monitor their own performance using a handheld device, and generalized their skills to a second setting. Implications for practice and suggestions for future research are included.

Relevance of the Study

The study is relevant to practitioners who are focused on improving employment as a post-school outcome for adults with disabilities. The authors explained that deficiencies in soft skills related to employment may account for 90% of job loss. The study investigated the effects of UPGRADE Your Performance on the acquisition of soft skills (e.g., attitude, cooperation, reliability, productivity, on-task behavior, quality of work, and teamwork) of secondary students with disabilities across school and community job sites and to other non-targeted soft skill areas.
Results of the study indicated that all participants improved in their selected soft skill area, generalized improvements to other non-targeted soft skills, generalized their soft skills to a job site in the community, and maintained their performance over time. Students were able to independently monitor their performance, reflect on what they needed to improve on, and make changes the next day to improve or maintain their performance. This reduced the need for the interventionist and increased the participants’ level of independence. By the end of the study, three of the four participants were competitively employed in the community. The authors noted the following implications for practice:

1) **UPGRADE Your Performance** could be an effective way to teach students essential soft skills for employment.

2) By utilizing technology and allowing students to track their own performance on their own handheld device, students could track their own performance to share at their planning meetings and gain independence while working.

3) Participants increased skills in other non-targeted soft skill areas which can maximize instructional time.

**Reference**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journals Reviewed for the Dissemination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on Autism &amp; Other Developmental Disabilities (FADD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities (RPSD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Special Education (JSE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Special Education Technology (JSET)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Rehabilitation (JOR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptional Children (EC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation (JVR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Article Title**

**Synopsis Author** Type your name here

**Purpose of the Study**

*What was the Study About? (Article Abstract)*

**Relevance of the Study**

*Where Would This be Relevant? In this section, discuss the relevance of the article: population, who should use it (practitioners such as teachers, job coaches, professors, IPSE administrators, parents, etc.), and where it is useful (social skills, community, employment, classroom, recruitment, etc.)*

**Strategy Spotlight**

Discuss the strategy that was used so that practitioners can implement it. This is a good place for visuals.

**Lessons Learned**

*What were main takeaways from research? What would researchers want practitioners to know?*

**Reference** APA 7th edition
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