FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY
ACADEMY FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION

The Brady Bulletin

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

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.

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**Purpose of the Study**

A survey was administered to assess overall expectations of administrators, teachers, families, and students with mild, moderate, and severe intellectual disabilities (ID) ranging in age from 14 to 21. Survey questions assessed expectations regarding paid jobs after school, wages, obtaining a regular high school diploma, getting a driver’s license, living away from home, and attending postsecondary education. The survey was completed online or returned by mail. A total of 2,015 surveys were sent to four school districts with a 33.6% (n=677) response rate. This survey analysis focused more specifically on student and family expectations. Major findings indicated student expectations were higher than family expectations especially in postsecondary education.

**Relevance of the Study**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Does respondent role (student or family) predict postsecondary education (PSE) expectations?
2. Are other expectations for post-school outcomes predictive of PSE expectations?
3. Among those with PSE expectations, is role associated with expectation of college?
4. Are family PSE expectations stronger when their children have mild ID compared to moderate/severe ID?

This article is relevant to the following stakeholder groups who play a role in supporting and coordinating transition planning for students with ID and their families: 1) transition specialists; 2) secondary teachers; 3) family consultants or advocates; and 4) parents/families of students with ID.

**Strategy Spotlight**

**Differences in PSE Expectations**

Results from this study indicated that students and their families differ in their PSE expectations thus highlighting the need to include the voices of both in transition planning and encourage more frequent conversations about the student’s future. Students had higher expectations for PSE and indicated more interest in participating in 2- or 4-year colleges as compared to their families.

**Sharing Success Stories**

Family expectations can be influenced by hearing and seeing students with ID accessing PSE. PSE programs “...have an obligation to share these stories more widely because otherwise we are asking for families to believe in a fantasy when expectations seem in many cases to be rooted to a perceived reality of circumstance and opportunity.”
College and Employment Connection

Research supports the positive association between participation in PSE and employment for students with ID. A study by Cimera, Thoma, Whittenburg, and Ruhl (2018) reported that 70% of adults with ID that had some PSE were employed and had access to a wider range of occupations. Other studies (e.g., Grigal, Hart, & Migliore, 2011; Moore & Schelling, 2015) supported this positive correlation between PSE participation and employment.

Lessons Learned

Transition planning is a collaborative and coordinated process to support individuals with disabilities which involves a group of committed stakeholders including the individual and his/her family. The family must be involved early in the process and have access to information such as PSE and employment options available to their student. Such information can be disseminated to families via workshops and mentoring networks that “can be valuable opportunities to help build these relationships and present information about post-school opportunities, as well as building natural support systems...”

Reference


Photo by Shane Rounce on Unsplash
Purpose of the Study

The study aimed to determine the feasibility of a designed total body resistance training for 11 adult participants with intellectual disabilities (ID). Data collection was illustrated using descriptive statistics measuring completion rate, exercise form, and participant experience. The intervention’s development and implementation were based on a prior group discussion of illustrating and allowing the participants to model 46 exercises. Based on feedback from the participants and researchers, seven exercises were used for the pilot study that presented capabilities for all the participants. Findings indicated the need to tailor physical activity programs based on the present level of performance of the adults with ID. Discussion and implications suggest additional consultation with fitness personnel, replicating in various settings, and establishing training within a structured schedule for adults with ID.

Relevance of the Study

The study was conducted with participants with ID. Based on the literature review presented in the study, individuals with ID do not have access to resistance training (RT) workouts or are limited based on motor and ambulatory physical health concerns. Other barriers included motivation, encouragement, and enjoyment of physical activities. The researchers discussed the use of fitness equipment and supported the need for access equipment for completing effective RT. This study’s results and discussion sections indicate the need for health personnel to (1) create physical activities that meet the population’s needs, (2) use qualitative research findings, and (3) use motivational tools that are natural supports and not stigmatizing.

Strategy Spotlight

Resistance exercise set for adults with intellectual disabilities (RESID) involved modeling by a physical therapist or instructor, two sets of ten repetitions per exercise, and motivation and support used as needed. Full body exercises included step up, push off, seated squat, abdominal curl, bridge pose, seated bicep curl, and seated triceps curl. See the visual on page 6 for a graphic organizer of the intervention.
Lessons Learned

Opportunities to experience various physical activities should be available to all adults. Takeaways from this study indicate the need to teach components such as exercise safety, movement form, self-efficacy, self-management, accountability, and evaluating progress. It is important to note that engaging in physical activity is and may always be a quality of life outcome that all should experience, maintain, and be able to generalize across settings and people.

Reference

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to offer a more comprehensive understanding of how students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) attending postsecondary education (PSE) programs are prepared for competitive employment. Data collected through a national survey indicate that the vocational-related support services offered frequently by PSE programs are: career or vocational counseling, person-centered planning, career or vocational assessment, career exploration, volunteering, internships or co-ops, natural supports, instruction on transitioning to paid employment and between paid jobs, and self-advocacy. The number of students receiving work-based experiences was larger in programs affiliated with a 4-year institution. No differences exist in the provision of work-based experiences, workplace supports, and connections with adult agencies based on location. Authors discussed implications for practice and future research.

Relevance of the Study

This study is relevant to individuals with IDD in search of employment and/or are considering attending a 4-year university or a 2-year community college; PSE program directors, administrators, and staff; and transition support team members.

Strategy Spotlight

A survey was designed to collect information on services and supports that were implemented by PSE programs serving students with IDD to prepare them for competitive employment. Sixty-six directors and coordinators of PSE programs serving students with IDD responded to the survey. The questions that were developed for the survey were based on literature on PSE programs and vocational preparation for students with IDD. The questions were formatted as yes and no responses, multiple choice questions, open-ended responses, and Likert-type responses.

Refer to Table 2 in the article. It shows the number of students receiving vocational related services, work-based services, work-based experiences, work-place support services, and training on selected vocational related content. The support services that were provided mostly consist of career or vocational counseling, person-centered planning, career explorations, volunteering, internships or co-ops, natural supports, instruction on transition skills from training to paid jobs, and self-advocacy.

Lessons Learned

Results indicate that many PSE programs focus on independent living, vocational skill development, and employment rather than academics or social skills. Paid employment is one of the strongest predictors of post-graduation employment (Grigal & Deschamps, 2012; Luecking, 2010; Test et al., 2009). Furthermore, students with IDD were much better prepared for successful post-graduation employment when paid on the job training was presented (Moore & Schelling, 2015).

When examining the differences between attending a 4-year university versus a 2-year community college, researchers found that a 4-year university offers more services such as career or vocational counseling, person-centered planning, training for paid employment, and self-advocacy than a 2-year community college. However, there were no differences in providing work-based experiences, workplace supports, or connections with Vocational Rehabilitation.

Reference

ACADEMIC TECHNOLOGIES
FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH ID
SYNOPSIS WRITTEN BY KALEY ADAMS

Purpose of the Study

Institutes of higher education have encountered an increase in enrollment of students with intellectual disability (ID). This increase is due, in part, to societal movements (e.g., inclusive participation in life activities) and federal legislation. There are potential benefits to both individuals with ID and society when students within this population complete college (e.g., earn certificates, a collection of completed courses and experiences, increased future employment opportunities). Nevertheless, there are barriers to college that students with ID need to overcome to have successful experiences, particularly in their academic or functional academic courses. This paper presents numerous instructional technologies grounded in behavior analytic strategies and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) that university faculty might implement in their courses and/or recommend to their students for studying to facilitate the learning of college students with ID and their classmates.

Relevance of the Study

This article is relevant to the following stakeholder groups who play a role in supporting students with disabilities in a postsecondary educational environment: 1) inclusive postsecondary education program directors, administrators, and staff; 2) transition planning members and teachers; and 3) university faculty and staff.

### Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

Behaviorally-based strategies grounded in research, guided by principles of behavior, and demonstrate a functional relation between environmental events and behavior. Such strategies include but are not limited to:
- Prompting and instructional cues
- Active student responding
- Consequences and feedback
- Teaching to fluency
- Generalization and maintenance strategies
- Collecting student academic performance data

### Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

A framework for designing curriculum suitable for all learners through variation in 3 core areas:
(a) Representation: flexibility and variation in content presentation
(b) Action and Expression: flexibility in the ways students engage with the lesson and how they demonstrate learning
(c) Engagement: flexibility in student interests, curiosity, and motivation

### Overlap of ABA and UDL

Both approaches emphasize arranging learning environments to produce positive learning outcomes.

“Instructional approaches grounded in sound behavioral principles within the UDL framework can, and should, be considered when designing more inclusive university courses.”
**Strategy Spotlight**

This article presented selected technologies that can be used while planning, delivering, and/or assessing instruction while utilizing ABA techniques and a UDL framework. Eighteen different tools were selected based on research conducted in various types of technology including faculty-led instructional technologies; student notetaking; reading, studying, and homework technologies; and writing technologies. The authors included a table that lists specific technology tools that encompass those components. Below are two examples pulled from the table. See the article for the entire list.

### Lessons Learned

As the number of students with disabilities enrolled in college increases, so does the need for growth among faculty and students. The authors pointed out that before selecting technology, faculty must take into account the following key components to instructional design (a) consider current abilities and skills of students with ID; (b) clearly identify the lesson objectives and teach those directly; (c) deliver instruction using clear and precise language; and (d) demonstrate or model the concept or skill being taught. Incorporating behaviorally-based strategies within a UDL framework will improve academic access for students with ID.

### Reference


The authors of this article are part of Project EMBRACE at Florida International University, a Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Program (FPCTP).
Purpose of the Study

As students with intellectual disabilities (SWID) are increasingly attending inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) programs, their specific needs and barriers to success must be assessed and addressed. Additionally, mental health (MH) conditions are common in college age students; this remains true for SWID enrolled in IPSE programs. This study surveyed 33 IPSE program directors nationwide regarding the MH needs of SWID enrolled in their programs. Survey results concluded that the majority of IPSE program directors reported having experienced students having MH concerns while enrolled in an IPSE program. The most frequently observed MH concerns were noted to be anxiety and depression. Barriers to MH services for SWID in IPSE programs included lack of competent MH professionals on campus, long wait times, and IPSE students not being eligible for campus-based MH services.

Relevance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the following research question: How do IPSE program directors describe the mental health needs of postsecondary SWID in their programs? The study was exploratory and descriptive in nature to be able to identify current practices across IPSE programs related to the MH needs of SWID as well as categorize needs, resources, and concerns. Data were collected via a survey completed by 33 program directors who reported being female (81%) and White/Caucasian (84.4%). Survey consisted of 10 demographics questions and up to 23 content related questions. Results indicated that the most common MH issues were related to anxiety and depression and the majority of program directors surveyed had experienced a student with a MH issue.

This article is relevant to the following stakeholder groups who play a role in supporting SWID in a postsecondary educational environment: 1) IPSE program directors, administrators, and staff; 2) university-based mental health counselors; 3) community-based mental health counselors; and 4) university faculty and staff.
Strategy Spotlight

1. Faculty Awareness & Training

MH issues experienced by college students are increasing in both intensity and frequency; with prevalence rates between 28% to 45% (Auerbach et al., 2018; Eisenberg et al., 2013; Lipson et al., 2016). Most of these MH concerns center around the areas of academic performance, pressure to succeed, and post-graduation plans. And yet, 50% to 80% of college students with MH concerns do not seek treatment due to a variety of reasons (e.g., stigma, perceived lack of need, accessibility, etc.). Given this scenario, faculty have the most interaction with students on campus and should be aware of early warning signs of mental illness or at a minimum be familiar with their college’s mental health resources and services to be able to make a referral or direct the student in the right direction. Providing some basic level of training to faculty on topics such suicide prevention, mental health/first aid, and available campus resources (e.g., counseling and psychological services/centers) would be beneficial.

2. Full Access & Inclusion

Access to MH treatment and services is needed for all college students including SWID. A lack of access to services implies that this population of students is not fully included in their college setting. “Full inclusion for SWID within postsecondary educational settings mandates access to and provision of equitable health care, including MH care, as compared to their neurotypical peers.”

3. Formal MH Program Policy

IPSE program directors need to consider the need for drafting a formal policy on how to identify, support, and accommodate the MH issues of their students to ensure full access, utilization, and coordination of needed services and supports and their full inclusion on college campuses.

Lessons Learned

Understanding the concept of “diagnostic overshadowing” (Whittle, 2018) is critical which is that SWID can have unique MH needs that are not related to their intellectual disability and therefore should be identified, understood, and treated by specially trained mental health counselors. Specific recommendations were given related to the appropriate training of MH professionals and peer mentors as well as program directors and staff becoming familiar with common MH features and how those features manifest in SWID.

Reference

Purpose of the Study

Job interviewing serves a key function in the process of gaining employment. To date, no research has evaluated whether a literacy-based behavioral intervention (LBBI) might be used to improve the essential vocational skill of job interviewing. The purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness of a LBBI for the acquisition of job interviewing skills. Using a combined experimental design (non-concurrent multiple probe across participants with an embedded A1 B1 A2 B2 design) three young adults with intellectual disability who received an in-person and remote LBBI were evaluated on their correct and independent performance on a task analysis created for job interviewing. Generalization and maintenance were also assessed. The results showed that all three students mastered job interviewing skills with 100% accuracy and maintained the acquired skills after the intervention was removed. The study showed that LBBI is an effective tool to teach and practice job interviewing skills, and can be implemented face-to-face and virtually. Educators, vocational rehabilitation professionals, and families can use this tool in a wide range of settings.

Relevance of the Study

Instructors, job coaches, and other professionals that are involved in employment training would be interested in this study. Students with an intellectual disability were taught job interviewing skills both in-person and virtually. These skills were taught in-person at the university and then through WhatsApp from personal homes once the COVID-19 pandemic closed universities.

Strategy Spotlight

This study taught the job interviewing skills through an LBBI. LBBIs are a class of interventions that use print, visuals, and behavioral rehearsal in a storybook format to teach new skills and routines. The LBBI was originally implemented in person and was later moved to a remote platform using WhatsApp video to teach the job interviewing skill.

Lessons Learned

The students all mastered the job interviewing task analysis. LBBI proved to be an effective way to teach a job interviewing skill once it was task analyzed.

Reference

PERSPECTIVES OF CURRENT AND FORMER STUDENTS WITH IDD
SYNOPSIS WRITTEN BY DIANA M. VALLE-RIESTRA

FRIENDSHIPS THROUGH IPSE PROGRAMS

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The formation of friendships is central to the college experience. Yet little is known about the relationships young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) form through their inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) programs or maintain after graduation. Researchers interviewed 12 current students and alumni about their social networks and their views regarding friendships. Participants shared their perspectives on the multiple meaning of friendship, the size and composition of their social networks, and the areas in which college has positively impacted their social lives. Researchers offer recommendations for research and practice aimed at understanding and enhancing friendship formation within the inclusive higher education movement.

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The design of the study was qualitative and involved the use of a semi-structured individual interview with 12 participants (n=7 alumni; n=5 current students). The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What does friendship mean to current and former students with IDD?
2. Who comprises the social networks of current and former students with IDD?
3. How do they feel their IPSE experience has contributed to their friendships?

The interview protocol consisted of a total of 28 questions (e.g., Tell me what a friend means to you. What makes someone a good friend?), and researchers also completed a social network chart (Biggs & Carter 2017) identifying four (4) categories of relationships: family, friends, other peers, and paid supports and professionals.

This article is relevant to the following stakeholder groups who play a role in supporting the social development of students with IDD: 1) IPSE program staff; 2) peer mentors; and 3) parents/families of students with IDD.
Strategy Spotlight

Findings from this study contributed to the literature on the dimensions of friendship and found similarities between what students with IDD described as a friend as compared to their non-disabled peers; similar friendship qualities emerged.

The Meaning of Friendship

Participants reported that friends are supportive, compatible, have attractive qualities, provide companionship, share similar experiences and characteristics (e.g., interests), are stable, and are like family.

Social Networks

The size and composition of the social networks described by participants were diverse and highly variable. The range of networks was 15 to 93 members with an average social network of 47.3 members. Individuals within these networks came from a variety of contexts including IPSE program, disability organizations, job/internship, university event, sporting activity, etc.

IPSE Experience and Friends

The IPSE program provided opportunities to develop and foster new friendships through formal and informal social opportunities. For example, formal opportunities by being paired with a peer mentor in the program or informal opportunities by reaching out to others via text or social media. Participants reported that these connections allowed them to further develop appropriate social skills, increase their campus engagement, and build their social confidence.

Lessons Learned

“College is a thoroughly social endeavor” where peer relationships and friendships are established and are considered a critical factor in overall college success. Friends in college allow all students, including students with disabilities, to have access to emotional and practical supports, expose them to differing and new perspectives, and increase their sense of belonging. IPSE programs provide opportunities for students with IDD to shape and expand their social networks and fine tune their social skills.

Reference

Journals Reviewed for the Dissemination

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<td>American Journal for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AJIDD)</td>
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