

# THE BRADY BULLETIN

*CTP Trends: Research to Practice in Postsecondary Transition Programs*

Florida Atlantic University – Academy for Community Inclusion (ACI)

In Partnership with Southeast Post Secondary Education Alliance (SEPSEA)

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ISSUE 13

## ABOUT THIS BULLETIN

### For Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Programs (CTPs)

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 working to develop, expand, and sustain these programs.

The professionals at the Academy for Community Inclusion (ACI) at Florida Atlantic University (FAU), a Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Program (FPCTP), and Southeast Post Secondary Education Alliance (SEPSEA) regularly review over 30 peer-reviewed journals to identify promising practices and research findings. Each selected article is summarized to report major findings and provide pragmatic recommendations for college programs.

We hope you enjoy this issue. Please provide feedback to improve our effort. If you see an article that may be helpful to others, use the Article Template at the end of this bulletin to summarize it and send it to us.

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## Admissions Process and Criteria for IPSEs



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### ABSTRACT

The exponential growth of inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) programs in the United States has reshaped transition pathways for many young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). However, limited research pertains to the admissions process and eligibility criteria of IPSE programs, leading to a lack of knowledge of how to best equip students for successful entry into college. [The authors] conducted a survey ( $n = 89$ ) and interviews ( $n = 14$ ) with IPSE staff members to explore the admissions process and eligibility criteria of IPSE programs and the extent to which staff views align with the criteria of their programs. [The] sample represented 62 programs across 32 states. Findings indicated that, although admissions criteria vary widely, most IPSE programs evaluate applicants based on their functional skills and social behaviors rather than academic skills. [They] share implications for research and practice in transition planning, secondary instruction, and college preparation for students with IDD.

### Research Questions:

- What are the admissions criteria for IPSE programs, and how are they assessed? (Mixed)
- What does the admissions process entail for IPSE programs to recruit, interview, and enroll students with IDD? (Qualitative)
- What are the perspectives of IPSE staff regarding the eligibility criteria and admissions process for their program? (Mixed)

### RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is relevant to all IPSE program directors, coordinators, staff, coaches, students, and family members of students with IDD. Additionally, K-12 teachers should read this article to better understand the importance of transition-related IEP goals and the various IPSE program opportunities available across the United States (over 353).

It is imperative for practitioners (special education coordinators, directors, and teachers) to know about IPSE programs and be able to differentiate across programs based on a student's abilities, needs, and desires. Transition teams must create a collaborative transition planning process. IEP teams should consider backward planning approaches when co-creating a student's IEP goals regarding the desire to attend college.

**STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT**

The study was conducted using a sequential, explanatory mixed-methods design. The quantitative portion was a survey for program staff members across US IPSE programs. The qualitative portion consisted of semi-structured interviews, based on the survey completed during the quantitative phase.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

Admissions criteria were identified across six categories: applicant goals, applicant demographics, academic skills, independent and community living, employment skills and desire to work, and social, communication, and behavioral skills. Basic reading and math skills were generally sufficient, while independent living, employment readiness, medication management, time management, teachable hygiene skills, and appropriate social behaviors were emphasized.

Challenges managing aggressive behaviors were identified as a potential barrier to acceptance. IPSE staff generally viewed admissions criteria as essential to student success but identified challenges including limited accessibility, transparency, and clarity in application processes, misunderstandings about intellectual disability, reliance on paper applications, and potential negative impacts of family involvement. Overall, findings highlighted the importance of self-determination and student agency.

**REFERENCE**

Gilson, C. B., Prah, A., Morissette, L., Kwon, D., & Walker, P. (2026). A mixed-methods exploration of the admissions process and criteria for inclusive postsecondary education programs. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 49(1), 35–47.

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# Suicide Prevention and Intervention for Young Adults with IDD

## ABSTRACT

Suicide is a significant public health issue for young adults, especially for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The authors explored the increasing concern of suicidality in young adults with IDD and the importance of targeted suicide prevention and intervention strategies.

Authors reviewed relevant literature on the prevalence of suicidality among young adults with IDD and discussed the limitations of current suicide assessment and screening tools. Drawing from the Behavioral Pathway Model (BPM) and the Suicidal Barometer Model (SBM), the authors provide accessibility strategies and recommendations to improve suicide risk assessments, intervention planning, and training for caregivers and helping professionals.

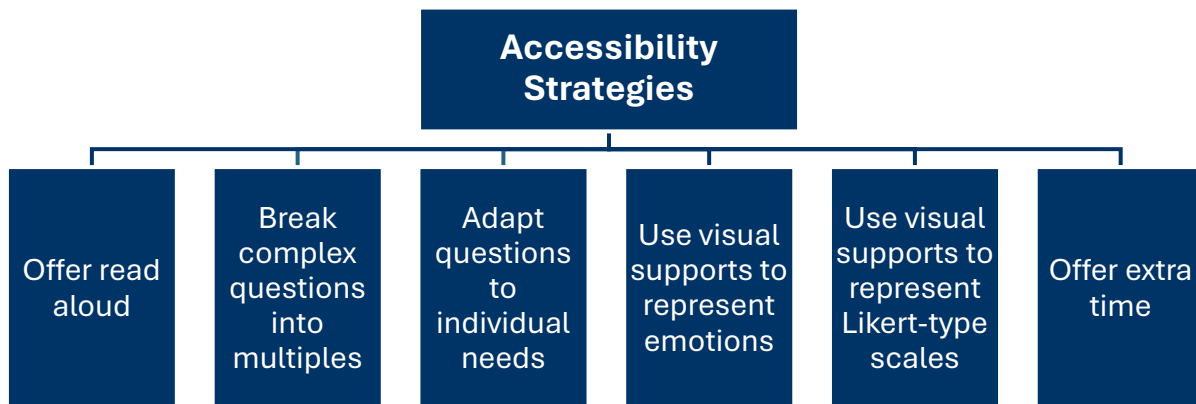
## RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

This practical review is relevant for mental health practitioners, other helping professionals, and caregivers. The article outlines a framework and specific strategies aimed at professionals with the competencies to effectively identify suicidality amongst young adults with IDD and intervene when necessary.

## STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT

The article recommends various strategies to increase accessibility of formal suicide risk assessments, provides mnemonics to use when assessing warning signs or suicidal plan, and provides strategies for safety planning. The visuals below outline these strategies and recommendations.

### Accessibility Strategies for Formal Assessments



Risk Assessment Mnemonics

**IS PATH WARM  
(AAS, 2016)**

**Look for the following warning signs:**

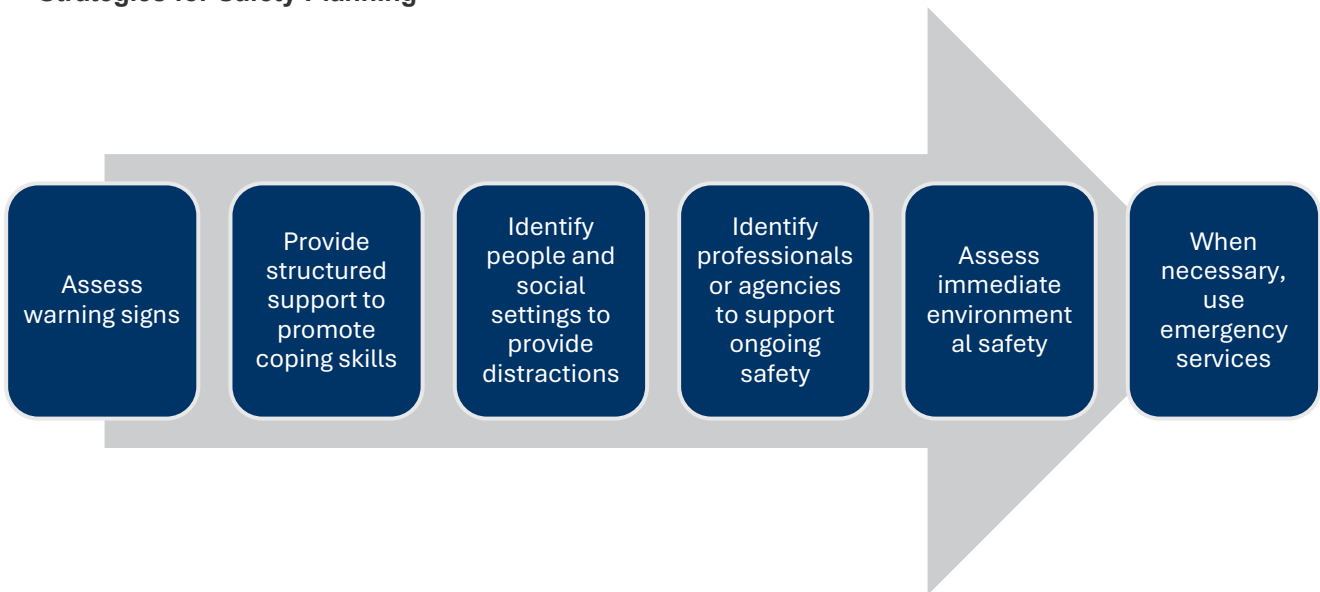
- Ideation
- Substance Abuse
- Purposelessness
- Anger
- Trapped
- Hopelessness
- Withdrawal
- Anxiety
- Recklessness
- Mood Change

**SLAP  
(Sommers-Flanagan, 1995)**

**Assess Suicide Plan for**

- Specificity
- Lethality
- Availability
- Proximity

Strategies for Safety Planning



**LESSONS LEARNED**

There is a high and often overlooked suicide risk amongst young adults with IDD. However, practitioners and caregivers can take steps to better prevent, screen, and intervene with young adults with IDD who demonstrate risk of suicide. Authors also recommend several societal and policy-based action steps:

- Prioritize the creation of mental health services for all
- Develop and validate accessible versions of already established assessments
- Support the development of community-based resources
- Ensure that crisis intervention resources are accessible for individuals with IDD

**REFERENCE**

Fields, A. M., Lewis, O. J., Smith Hill, R. B., Reynolds, M., Gilreath, R., & Castle, M. (2025). Suicide prevention and intervention for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities: Considerations for caregivers and helping professionals. *Current Psychology*, *44*(11), 10442–10455. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-025-07900-1>

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## Natural Supports in Competitive Integrated Employment

### ABSTRACT

This study examined how natural supports, informal assistance provided by coworkers, can be used in competitive integrated employment (CIE) settings to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in learning job tasks, improving performance, and maintaining employment. The authors conducted a scoping review of 17 studies (1985–2024) to identify how natural supports have been implemented and their effectiveness across workplace settings. The study highlights natural supports as a sustainable and cost-effective alternative to traditional job coaching models.

### RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is highly relevant for practitioners working in employment and transition contexts, including job coaches, vocational rehabilitation professionals, educators, IPSE program staff, and employers. It is particularly useful in competitive integrated employment settings, work-based learning experiences, and transition programs for students with IDD. The findings are applicable to workplace accessibility, social integration, and skill development, and can inform practices that promote independence and long-term employment outcomes.

### STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT

The key strategy highlighted is the use of natural supports, where coworkers are trained or encouraged to assist employees with IDD rather than relying solely on job coaches. Practical implementation strategies include:

- Training coworkers to provide task guidance, feedback, and modeling
- Encouraging peer mentoring and collaborative problem-solving
- Embedding support within typical workplace interactions rather than external interventions
- Gradually fading job coach involvement to promote independence

This approach allows support to occur naturally within the workflow, increasing authenticity and sustainability while fostering stronger workplace relationships.



**LESSONS LEARNED**

- Natural supports were effective in 82% of reviewed studies, improving job skills, social interaction, and job retention.
- Employees with IDD supported by coworkers often achieved outcomes equal to or better than those supported by job coaches.
- Natural supports enhanced meaningful interactions among employees with and without disabilities.
- Overreliance on job coaches may unintentionally limit social engagement in the workplace.
- Employers benefit from natural supports through improved workplace culture and reduced long-term costs.
- Practitioners should shift toward models that emphasize peer support and integration rather than intensive one-on-one support.

**REFERENCE**

Athamanah, L. S., Cushing, L. S., Fastzkie, E. M., & Brown, E. R. (2024). Natural supports in competitive integrated employment: A scoping review. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 60(3), 327–339. <https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-240017>

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## Career Development in IPSEs for Students with Complex Needs

### ABSTRACT

Students and young adults with complex support needs often lack opportunities to engage in work experiences during the transition process. Historically, experiences have been available in a narrow range of occupational sectors. Inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) programs not only provide real work experiences in community settings but can also provide pathways to meaningful career development and competitive integrated employment in non-traditional occupational sectors. In this article, we will (a) summarize the research literature supporting meaningful career development and work experiences for students with complex support needs, (b) present a first-person account of a student's experience in an inclusive postsecondary education program, and (c) provide readers with research-informed practices and steps to promote high-quality career development. Research-informed practices reviewed will include engaging with community partners, collaborative career planning, creating opportunities for skill acquisition, building student workplace independence, and evaluating workplace performance.

### RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is relevant for transition-age students, their parents/guardians, and those who work in IPSE programs, specifically those in the employment sectors (employment coordinators, job coaches, vocational rehab partners, etc.). The focus is on building career pathways that are meaningful and individualized, moving beyond finding a student a job toward intentional, person-centered career development that aligns with the student's strengths, interests, and long-term goals.

### STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT

The Better Outcomes & Successful Transitions for Autism Program, a web-based approach designed to support adolescents on the autism spectrum in preparing for postsecondary education, training, or employment focuses on the following strategies:

1. Use Person-Centered Planning and collaborative career planning
2. Build meaningful work experiences early
3. Engage employers intentionally
4. Conduct Worksite Analysis before placements
5. Provide job coaching that fades over time
6. Collect data and give strengths-based feedback

**Table 1.** Career Development Strategies for Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs.

Strategy	Important considerations	Key questions for program planning
Engaging with employers		
Reverse career fairs	Hold annually; work with partners (vocational rehabilitation, university career center) to plan and coordinate.	When will it be held? How can we recruit and use volunteers for the event? Which current and potential business partners will we invite?
Developing disability awareness with employers	Be sure to identify and build on employers' existing knowledge; identify with students the key information and strategies they want to share.	How will we involve students in this work? What type of training format and schedule works best for employers?
Worksite analyses	Develop in collaboration with employers; be sure that workers who know the most about the job are involved in the analysis.	Can we pre-develop forms to use? What is the best time to conduct these (i.e., right before internships start, in the summer)?
Ongoing employer engagement	Have regularly scheduled employer check-ins using a format that works well for them.	Which staff members will lead this? How could technology be used for check-ins (e.g., online surveys, video conferencing)?
Prioritizing collaborative planning with students		
Supporting student self-determination	Embed career discussions into student goal/planning sessions.	When will we discuss career goals? How often will we work with students to update career goals? How can we ensure students are actively involved in these meetings?
Developing career portfolios	Find and use examples from other programs when possible; provide explicit instruction and support on developing portfolios—in classes or in partnership with university career center.	What programs or online resources could we use to find portfolio examples? Who will be responsible for working with students on these and when will that happen?
Supporting student skill development		
Creating practice opportunities and training workplace skills	Identify key skills needed across and within work experiences to further student's career development.	How will we teach skills and when will students practice identified skills? What supports may be needed to help students transfer skill use to the workplace setting?

Building independence at work		
Developing visual supports	Consider specific tasks and how student learns best to customize supports.	How can we involve students in visual support development? Who will be responsible for creating them?
Developing natural supports	Identify potential mentors within the workplace setting; with student permission, share information about what they may need help with and how they learn best.	What specific strategies and approaches can we teach students and co-workers to increase communication between them?
Job coaching		
Job coaching	Consider program resources and potential partnerships; importance of training for coaches	Who could be job coaches within my program? How can we support and evaluate coaches' work?
Data collection and performance feedback		
Observations	Emphasize the importance of multiple observations over time to highlight skill growth; communicate feedback to the student	How do we establish which forms to use? What systems do we currently use as a program? Who will conduct observations?
Student reflections	Create processes and structures for students to reflect (consider natural points for doing that); tie reflections to career goals	What structures will we use to conduct student reflections? How do these align with employer evaluations? Who will be responsible? When will they occur?
Employer feedback	Provide informal and formal feedback; include a variety of perspectives	What forms/processes will be used to obtain feedback? Who and how will responses be analyzed and action plans created?

**LESSONS LEARNED**

The article highlights a few takeaways for practitioners.

1. Career development should be student-centered. Drive planning by the students' strengths, interests, and goals, rather than default or traditional job options.
2. Develop employment partnerships. Having meaningful employment outcomes depends on strong relationships with each employer. To create a supportive work environment, IPSE staff should conduct worksite analysis, employer training, and have regular communication with the site.
3. IPSE programs should help students build independence by using tools that support students at their sites to develop workplace skills, self-advocacy, and confidence to carry into future careers.

**REFERENCE**

Kieper, G., Taylor, J.P., Whittenburg, H., & Green, Z. (2025). More than just a job: Career development in inclusive postsecondary education programs for students with complex support needs. *Inclusive Practices*, 4(1-2), 3-12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/27324745251318325>

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## Independent Living Skills Development at IPSEs

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Preparing individuals with disabilities to live independently is a vital skill. Research confirms this programming in secondary education, but it is unclear how independent living tasks are taught after secondary education. The goal of this study is to understand what tasks of independent living are being taught in the postsecondary education space and their effectiveness.

Research Question: How is the college setting working to prepare individuals with disabilities for independent living, and what skills are being taught effectively?

### STUDY OVERVIEW

#### Type of Study: Survey

Participants: 50 programs completed the survey using the 'College Think' database. Most programs existed in four-year institutions across 28 U.S. states. Most frequently, the survey was completed by the program director.

Methods: The survey had two major sections: a yes/no section where respondents assessed whether a specific service was being offered, and a scale section (strongly disagree to strongly agree) referring to statements on the effectiveness of the services.

### KEY FINDINGS

- The majority of surveyed programs incorporate independent living skills into their programming and feel they are doing a good job preparing their students.
- Online-related lessons are more common today, such as online safety and online dating.
- There is great inconsistency across programs; there is no universal curriculum and many programs teach skills randomly. Only 9 of the 50 surveyed programs reported using a set curriculum.
- Skills such as driver's education and making doctor's appointments need increased attention.

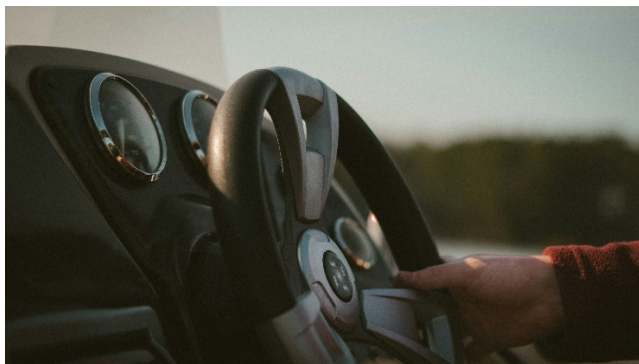


Photo by [Jacob Diehl](#) on [Unsplash](#)

**PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

- It is important to determine a universal curriculum for independent living programs and create a means to measure their success.
- A standardized teaching list would help with recruitment, family supports, and communication.
- More attention must be given to supporting students in IPSE programs who choose to live in the off-campus setting without campus-based resources.

**LIMITATIONS & CONSIDERATIONS**

- This survey had only a 16% response rate, so this project should be repeated at a larger, more randomized scale.
- This survey focused on program directors and staff; surveying current students and their families may have added a meaningful dimension.
- These programs only exist within the continental United States, thus cannot be globally generalized.

**REFERENCE**

Valentini, B. J., & Banks, M. R. (2025). Exploration of independent living skills development at inclusive postsecondary education programs. *DADD Online Journal*, 12(1), 81–101.  
[https://doi.org/https://daddcec.com/sites/default/files/2025-11/doj\\_2025\\_final.pdf#page=85](https://doi.org/https://daddcec.com/sites/default/files/2025-11/doj_2025_final.pdf#page=85)

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Katherine DiGiovanni

# Perception of Obstacles and Strategies to Academic Success

## ABSTRACT

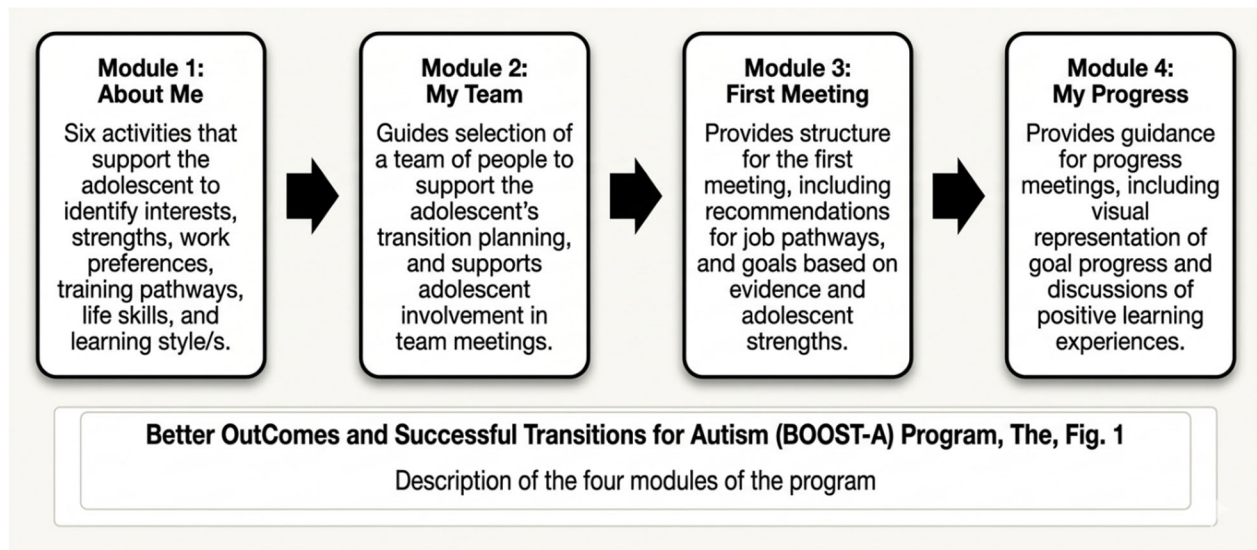
Students with autism (ASD) have lower postsecondary education enrollment rates (47% enroll in college), and if they do enroll, their likelihood of graduating within six years is 35%. This study surveyed 162 high school students with and without ASD. The purpose of this study is to understand students with ASD's perceptions and the internal and external factors that influence motivation in educational engagement.

## RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The rate of identification of students with ASD is increasing, and IPSE administrators will need to be prepared to admit students identified as having ASD into their programs to support student success. Understanding internal and external motivators will provide job coaches, teachers, and IPSE administrators with strategies for detecting issues related to these motivators and knowing how to proceed when a problem arises in academic and vocational environments.

## STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT

The Better Outcomes & Successful Transitions for Autism (BOOST-ATM) Program is an autism-specific, web-based program that aims to prepare adolescents on the autism spectrum for the transition from high school to further education, training, or employment.



**LESSONS LEARNED**

- Many autistic students experience high levels of anxiety, which directly impacts their motivation and academic performance. Anxiety was identified as a major barrier, with autistic students significantly more likely than nonautistic peers to report it as interfering with their success.
- 44% of students identified a lack of instructor understanding of their disability as a key reason for decreased motivation. When students perceive their needs as an inconvenience, the learning environment itself becomes a barrier rather than a support.
- Students benefit from explicit instruction that builds independence and confidence (e.g., structured approaches like BOOST), helping them engage more fully in learning and decision-making.
- Autistic students are often motivated by intense, specific interests. Instruction, advising, and scheduling should intentionally incorporate these interests to increase engagement.
- External sources of support, such as parental approval, play an important motivational role, providing stability and encouragement when academic tasks feel overwhelming.
- Autistic students are often motivated by personal growth and self-validation rather than competition with peers — emphasizing the need for instruction in self-efficacy and individual progress.

**Key practices for educators:**

- Address anxiety as a primary barrier to learning
- Increase disability awareness and understanding among staff
- Differentiate instruction based on student interests
- Emphasize validation, independence, and confidence over competition

**REFERENCE**

Schaffer, G. E., Faber, A. J., Shafaie, S. M., & Stageberg, D. (2024). Perceptions of autistic and nonautistic high school students regarding factors that impact their motivation to be academically successful. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 40*(4), 288–316. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377903.2024.2353922>

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## Higher Education Experiences Among Students with ID

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Not so long ago, college and higher education seemed inaccessible and out of reach for people with Intellectual Disabilities (ID). However, ensuring broad access to higher education is important in supporting people with ID in gaining employment opportunities, succeeding in independent living, and maintaining self-worth.

Research Question: How do students with ID explain their experiences in university courses and what elements make their educational experience most successful?

### STUDY OVERVIEW

#### Type of Study: Interviews with students with ID

Participants: 10 students with ID who were current students or graduates of a college course, with students with and without disabilities enrolled, were interviewed for this study.

Methods: Students were asked about their experiences in their college course, including what they liked vs. disliked, what was memorable, suggestions for instructors, and any challenges they faced.

### KEY FINDINGS

- Students with ID liked a course more if it was more accessible; courses that were disliked were ones that were inaccessible.
- Students with ID preferred to feel like a standard student and preferred to be “just like regular students.”
- Successful courses provided assignment adaptations, such as breaking a long paper up into smaller assignments.
- Students in the general education setting often denied accommodations out of fear of judgement by their peers.



## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

- Special Education professionals can use student reflections to rethink higher education and how college can be accessible and attainable to all students with disabilities.
- Professors and faculty should build further connections with students in Comprehensive Transition Programs (CTPs), such as through one-on-one check-ins. Private meetings would reduce fear of peer judgement.
- CTPs should partner with their university faculty and staff to share the benefits of their program and express the value of accessible education for all.

## LIMITATIONS & CONSIDERATIONS

- This study focused on a single CTP. Future studies should examine a broader range of programs.
- This sample was very small. Future studies would benefit from interviewing or surveying more than 10 students.
- The interview was very long, limiting the ability to ask follow-up questions and dive deeper into student thoughts.
- Students with speech and language needs who required a supportive individual may have resulted in minor inaccuracy of their responses.

## REFERENCE

Smith, P. S., & Myers, B. (2024). Narrating access and agency: Students with intellectual disability share their experiences with higher education. *Remedial and Special Education*, 46(1), 31-41.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/07419325231226109>

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## Synopsis Template

Use this template to submit a synopsis for the bulletin. Send completed synopses to:

Dr. Kaley Adams, BCBA-D | email: [krobinson2014@fau.edu](mailto:krobinson2014@fau.edu)

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### Article Title

**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 7<sup>th</sup> edition*

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[Name, title, institution, email]

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## Florida Atlantic University

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In Partnership with SEPSEA

*The Brady Bulletin is published to support practitioners in delivering meaningful postsecondary comprehensive transition programs.*