College to Career

Navigating the Path to Professional Employment for Those on the Autism Spectrum

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Spectrum Support Program

The Spectrum Support Program strives to provide innovative supports that **positively impact** the college experience for RIT students, particularly those with autism spectrum disorders.

We are committed to assisting students in **building the confidence and connections** necessary for academic, social and career success.

The program seeks to **create a culture of acceptance and understanding** at RIT through collaboration, consultation and training.

Objectives

- Identify the skills that connect college readiness to college success
- Identify the skills that lead to career success
- Identify skills needed to navigate the transition from high school to college and from college to work
- Understand the emerging landscape of neurodiverse employment initiatives

Plan

Part 1

- Redefining College and Career Readiness
- Key Learning Skills and Competencies for the Transition to College
- Preparing for College: Strategies and Tools

Part 2

- Key Skills and Competencies for the Transition to Career
- Jane Thierfeld Brown, PA's A ACHIEVE
- Autism at Work Initiatives

Specialisterne: From Hope, to Action, to Impact

Check-in

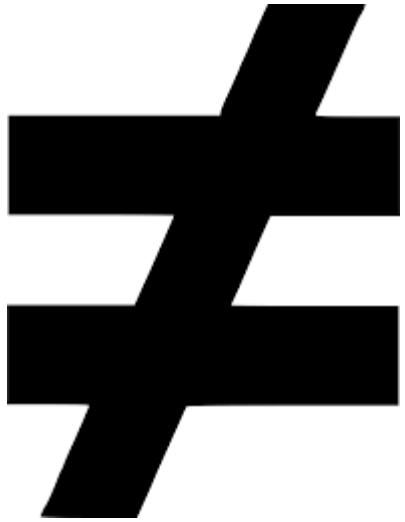
College ready?

89% of high school teachers believe that their students are “well” or “very well” prepared for freshman-level work.

26% of college faculty members think students are ready.

College Autism Spectrum, 2016 (with permission)

College Acceptance



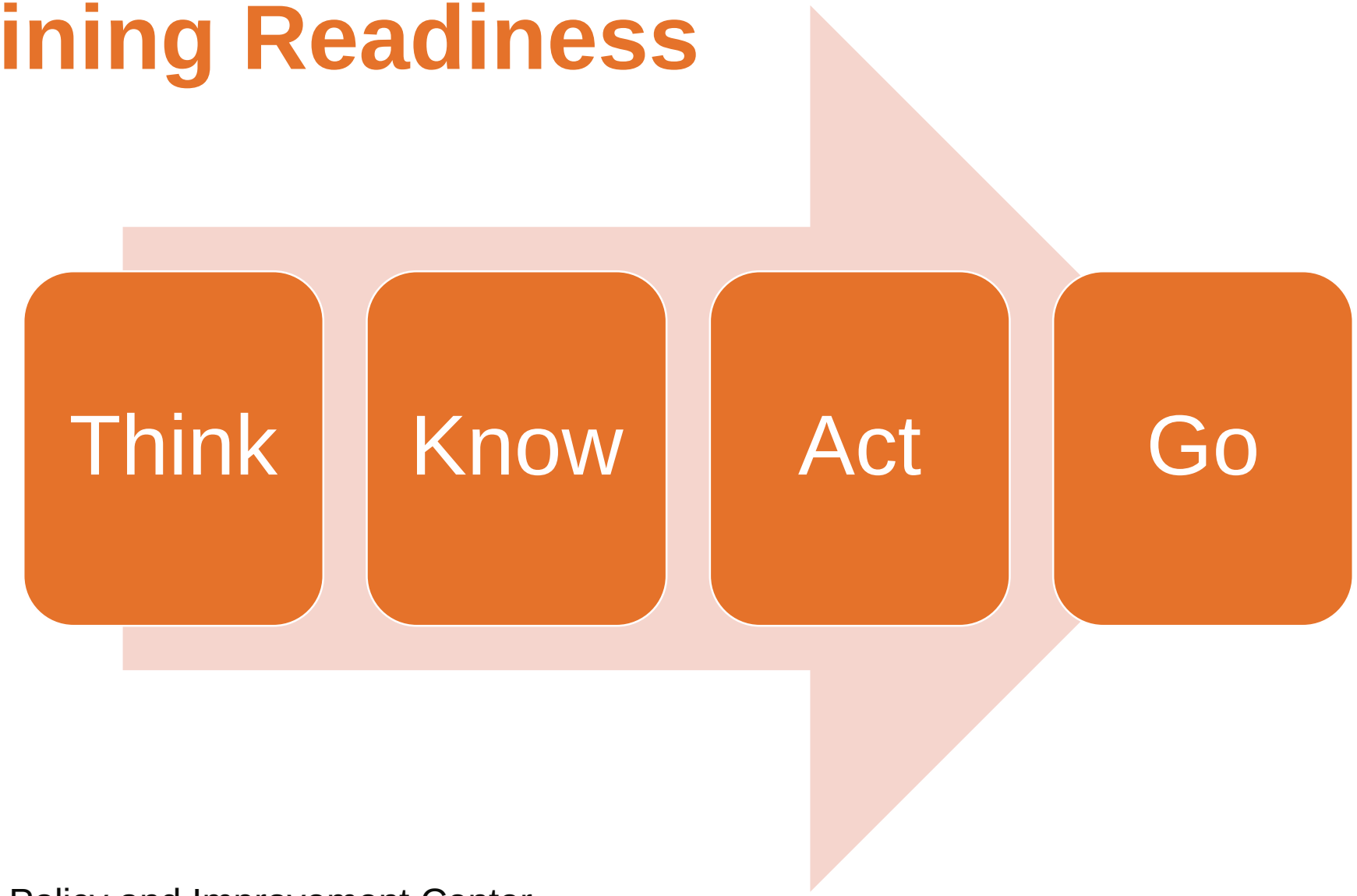
College Ready

Nationwide: 6-Year College Graduation Rate= 59%

ASD: 7-Year College Graduation = 39%

https://www.autismspeaks.org/science/science-news/study-suggests-communitycolleges-provide-advantages-young-adults-autism

Redefining Readiness



EPIC Educational Policy and Improvement Center
http://evergreen.edu/washingtoncenter/docs/conleycollegereadiness.pdf

Redefining Readiness

KEY COGNITIVE STRATEGIES

openness
curiosity
Analysis
critical thinking
problem solving

EPIC Educational Policy and Improvement Center
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Redefining Readiness

KEY CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

core subjects
technical knowledge

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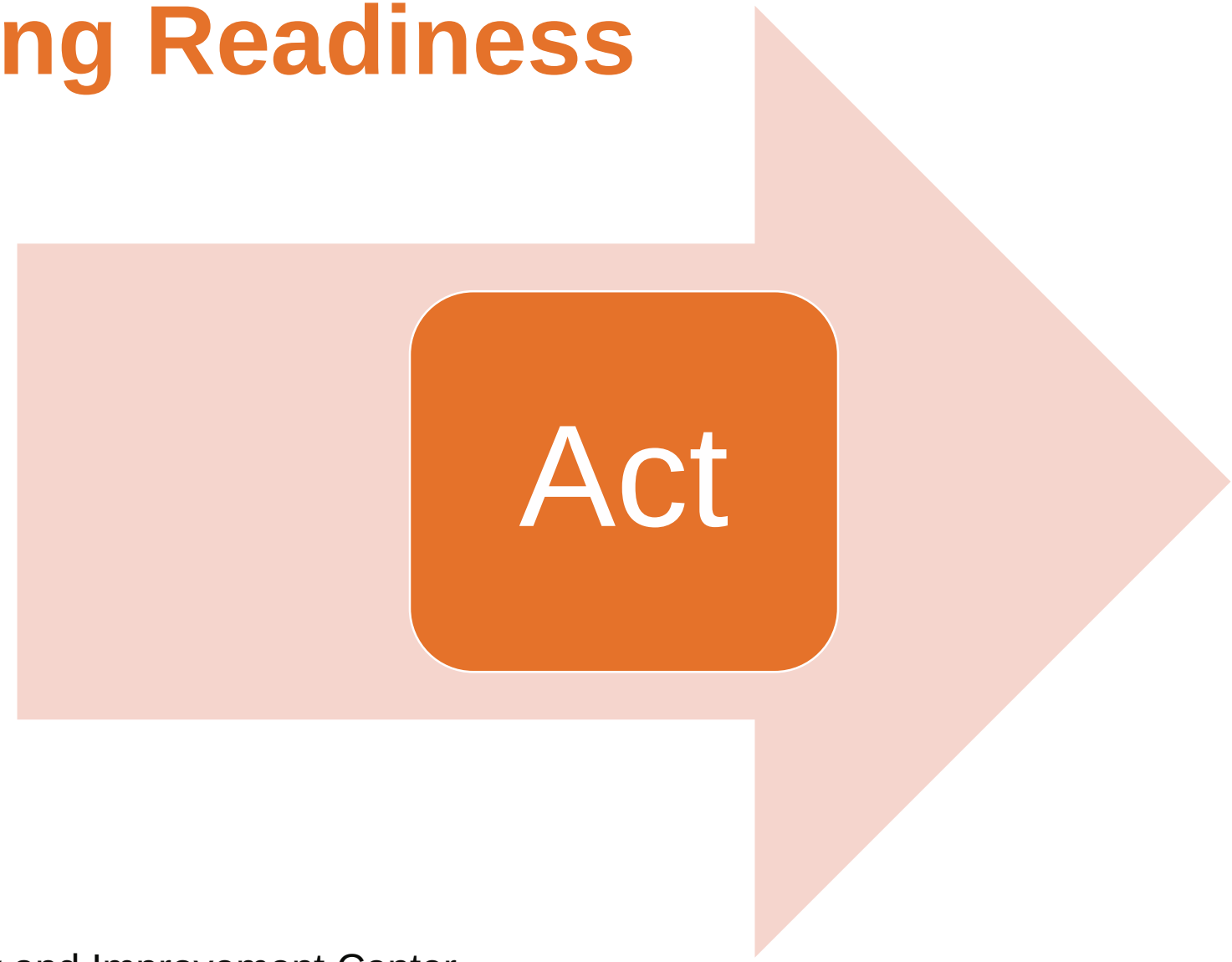
Redefining Readiness



KEY LEARNING SKILLS

Goal setting
Self-awareness
Self-advocacy
Time management
Self-monitoring
Persistence

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Redefining Readiness

KEY TRANSITION KNOWLEDGE

educational system
career pathways
norms/expectations

EPIC Educational Policy and Improvement Center
http://evergreen.edu/washingtoncenter/docs/conleycollegereadiness.pdf

Key Learning Skills

- Self-awareness
- Self-advocacy
- Self-management
- Resilience

College Autism Spectrum, 2016 (with permission)

76% need reminders and prompts to begin and/or complete homework at least some of the time

(17% needing reminders most of the time)

79% require some level of parental monitoring to ensure reasonable computer use

20% need daily reminders to wake in the morning, maintain hygiene, and/or manage required medications.

30% rarely seek out help or ask for clarification when they don’t understand something.

60% rarely seek out new and challenging experiences

We do kids a disservice when we step in so soon so they never experience making mistakes. In fact, children learn more when we allow them to make mistakes; it's all in how we teach them to handle it.

- from "Eight Ways to Help Your Students Build Resiliency"

Build resiliency

- Praise efforts instead of results
- Praise skills instead of talent
- Teach how to fail forward
- Teach problem-solving
- Use resiliency language
- Develop skills to manage stress, frustration, disappointment

There is an inverse relationship between level of self-care, self-advocacy and self-management skills and college academic standing

Nick

Competencies for College (and Career)

- Self-Care
  - Stress/Anxiety/Self-regulation
  - Medication compliance/management
  - Hygiene
  - Sleep/Wake

Competencies for College (and Career)

- Self-Advocacy
  - Help Seeking Skills
  - Understanding of Self
  - Self-Accommodate

Competencies for College (and Career)

- Self-Management and Executive Functioning
  - Focus and Initiation
  - Manage time
  - Prioritize and Plan
  - Persistence
  - Adjusting to new environments
  - Self-regulation
  - Reflection and Correction

Check-in

Preparing for College: Strategies

1. Follow a daily hygiene routine and wake/sleep routine
2. Have a system for obtaining and managing medications
3. Create a system for tracking assignments and tasks
4. Create a system for reminders
5. Set up systems for organizing personal space and academic work

Preparing for College: Strategies

6. Identify (practice) effective coping mechanisms
7. Identify social goals (clubs of interest)
8. Identify strategies and tools for managing time (including computer time)
9. Practice asking for help and using resources (assistive technology)
10. Engage with community counselor for transition preparation

Preparing for College: Tools

1. Daily Living/Med Mgmt: Touchstream Solutions
2. Keeping Track of items: Tile
3. Task Management: Todolist
4. Assistive Tech for Notes: Live Scribe
5. Time on task, estimating: Time Timer

Preparing for College: Tools

6. Initiating/Focus: Pomedoro Method
7. Organizing responsibilities: iHomework or iStudiez
8. Establishing Habits: Habitica
9. Manage Computer Use: Cold Turkey, Productivity Owl (chrome ext)
10. Social: The Sims 3 University Life

Takeaways

- Begin preparing for independence early
- Permit low risk failures
- Practice problem solving process
- Expect college challenges

Resources

Going to College: http://www.going-to-college.org/index.html

Manage daily living and meds: http://www.touchstreamsolutions.com

Keep track of items: https://www.thetileapp.com/en-us

Pomadoro Method: https://tomato-timer.com/

Task Management: https://en.todoist.com/

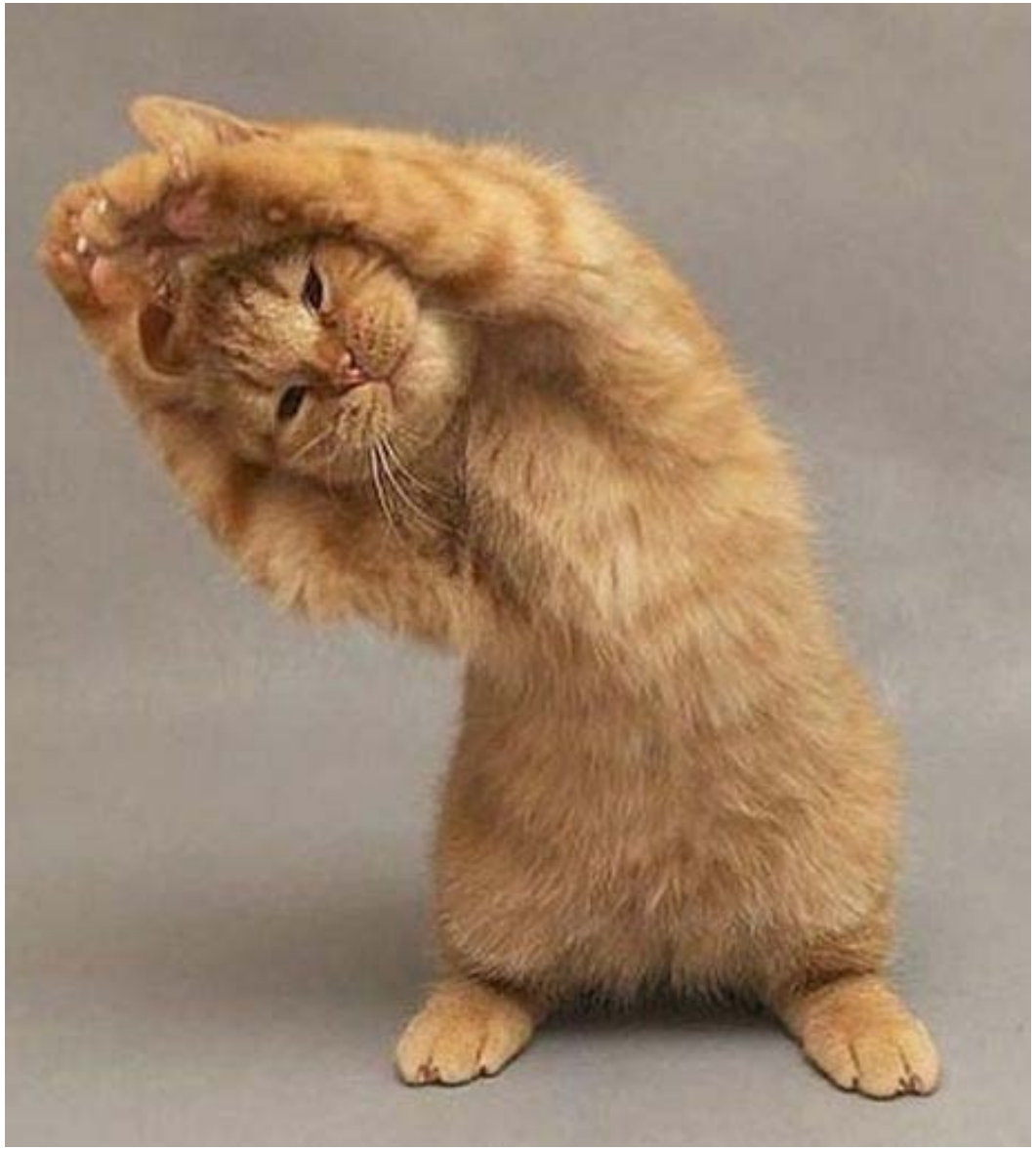
Notetaking: https://www.livescribe.com/en-us/smartpen/

Productivity: https://getcoldturkey.com/ ; http://www.productivityowl.com/

Track assignments, office hours, etc: https://istudentpro.com/

Goal setting, motivation: https://habitica.com/static/home

Time on task: https://www.timetimer.com/collections/all



Rochester Institute of Technology

Autism Spectrum Disorders Fact Sheet for Faculty

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are neurodevelopmental disorders characterized by difficulties with social interaction and communication. Asperger's Syndrome (AS) falls within this spectrum and is sometimes referred to as "high functioning autism." The following list is designed as a general overview of the autism spectrum. An individual on the autism spectrum may exhibit some of the following characteristics:

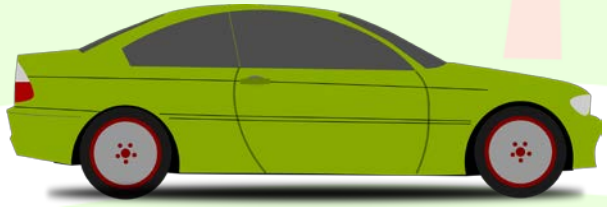
What You Might Notice

- May exhibit awkward eye contact, posture, and/or gestures
- Difficulty with changes in classroom, seating, and syllabi
- Sensory sensitivity (lights, sounds, touch, smells)
- May have delayed responses
- May misunderstand tone of voice, jokes, facial expressions, sarcasm, and other subtle messages
- Oddities in vocal pitch, volume, intonation
- May be easily distracted, particularly in long classes
- Strong, narrow interests
- May come across as argumentative, rude, or monopolizing
- Displays literal and concrete thinking patterns
- May use calming or focusing strategies such as rocking, tapping, or pacing
- May become easily overwhelmed

The following strengths and struggles are generally shared by students across the spectrum, although each individual student experiences unique strengths and challenges. Consult the strategies column for ways to better assist students to have a successful experience both in and out of the classroom.

Strengths	Struggles	Strategies
▪ Above average to superior intellect	▪ Initiating/sustaining effort	▪ Provide direct feedback, set clear boundaries
▪ Passionate commitment to ideas	▪ Setting boundaries	▪ Allow breaks during class
▪ Strong sense of equality and justice	▪ Working in groups	▪ Consider allowing laptop for note taking
▪ Exceptional talents in one specific area	▪ Initiating, planning, organizing, and carrying out tasks	▪ Avoid cold-calling in class
▪ Diligent with routine work and excellent memory	▪ Seeing others points of views	▪ Avoid idioms, metaphors, sarcasm
▪ Strong pursuit of knowledge within areas of interest	▪ Understanding social rules	▪ Consider assigning group roles
▪ Good visual and spatial learners	▪ Assessing priorities and performance	▪ Provide visual learning tools when possible (pictures, charts)
▪ Original ways of solving problems	▪ Asking for clarification or assistance	▪ Supplement oral instructions with written instructions
	▪ Interpreting vague instructions	▪ Explain purpose of assignment
	▪ Abstract concepts and seeing the "big picture"	▪ Utilize syllabus and note changes as soon as possible

College is not an end in itself, but a vehicle towards the goal of employment and career development



Strengths in the Workplace

Adherence to rules

Loyal, trustworthy

Reliable

Avoids office politics

Enjoys routine work

Direct communication style

Attention to detail

Vocational success frequently depends not only on meeting the technical requirements of the job, but upon one's ability to

"fit in"

Employment Obstacles

Acclimating to new routines

Corporate Culture

Social expectations

Communication

Mastering job search process

Microsoft Autism Hiring Program

Preparing for Career: Awareness and Fit

- Interests, Aptitude, Capacity
- Degree Requirements
- Job Prospects
- Career Path

Preparing Students for the Transition to Career

- Ideal Work Environment
- Strengths
- Dream Job vs. First Job
- Decoding Interview Questions
- Follow-Up
- Resources
- Accommodations (self-accommodation)
- Disclosure

Transition to Career: Ideal work environment

Difficult jobs/work environments :	Optimal jobs/work environments:
• Require multi-tasking or responding to frequent interruptions • Involve quick decision-making • Are high pressure • Are unstructured and rapidly changing • Require lots of social interaction • Involve managing other people • Demand high rates of speed	• Allow concentration on one task at a time • Require accuracy and quality versus speed • Offer structure and clear performance expectations • Have at least some element of routine • Require minimal social interaction • Do not involve the management of others

JOB SEACH PROCESS

Job Offer

3: Execute
Interview and follow-up

2. Market: Apply and network

1. Prepare: Research and write

Student programming

Confidence

Practice

Feedback

Plan

Years 1-2 *Early Co-op Prep Seminar*	**Group support** ▪ Identifying your strengths and skills ▪ Finding your ideal work environment ▪ Creating an online presence ▪ Developing your elevator pitch ▪ Building your resume	**Results** ▪ Conduct informational interview ▪ Develop resume template ▪ Create targeted company list ▪ Identify career related support on campus and in personal network
Years 2-3 *Co-op and Career Success Seminar*	**Group support** ▪ Behavioral based interview questions-preparing success stories ▪ Decoding job descriptions ▪ Understand purpose and process for networking ▪ Perfect your elevator pitch ▪ Finalize your resume ▪ Develop a job search strategy ▪ Dress for success ▪ How to work a career fair	**Results** ▪ Conduct a mock interview ▪ Attend on campus career events & career fairs ▪ Resume approval ▪ Develop job-readiness skills ▪ Increase confidence with networking and interviewing ▪ Begin relationships with companies of interest
Years 3-graduation *Job Club*	**Individualized support** ▪ Resume and LinkedIn updates ▪ Moving through the application process ▪ Job search correspondence (cover letters, thank you letters, follow-up) ▪ Diversifying and organizing your job search strategy ▪ Interview preparation and practice ▪ Keeping your job search organized	**Results** ▪ Understand what employers are looking for ▪ Execute your job search ▪ Effectively describe your skills and abilities in interviews ▪ Make disclosure decisions ▪ Consider self-accommodation strategies ▪ ACCEPT A JOB OFFER

National Association of Colleges and Employers

- Critical Thinking
- Problem Solving
- Oral/Written Communication
- Teamwork/Collaboration
- Professionalism/Work Ethic
- Leadership

Career Ready Boot Camp

Preparing Students

- Personal projects
- Informational Interviewing
- Networking
- Job Shadows
- Mock interviews
- Portfolios
- Internships/On-campus Employment
- Volunteer Experiences

Check-in

A ACHIEVE

An Autism College High School Innovation for Educational and Vocational Excellence.

Preparing Employers

- Recruitment
- Interviewing
- Onboarding
- Managing

Autism Hiring Initiatives

Inclusive Hiring for People with Disabilities: Autism Program

Solving for the "**front door**" and **onboarding** experience.

Interview Process

Eligible candidates will have an initial
technical skills assignment to assess their skills for the position.

Candidates may also be asked to completed a phone screen to evaluate experience.

We will invite qualified candidates to a one week, Microsoft Redmond campus event to further learn about their workability and skills match for identified roles.

Travel and expenses provided

Evaluation, Hire & On-Board

During the Event:
While on campus, candidates will have an opportunity to participate with Microsoft teams on informal projects and interviews. The candidate may be offered a job if there is a skills match and team fit.

If Hired:
All new hires will have on-boarding support including a job coach and Microsoft mentors.

If you would like to request reasonable accommodation on account of a disability, our Benefits department makes it easy.

Positions

- Software Engineer
- Service Engineer
- Support Engineer
- Lab or Build Engineers
- Data Scientist/BI roles
- Technical and non-Technical Program Manager

How to Apply

How does someone apply?
Interested candidates with autism may email their resumes to msautism@microsoft.com.

Additional information
Please visit our Inclusive Hiring for People with Disabilities career site that has more details on our program – http://aka.ms/inclusivehiring

FastCompany: Microsoft Wants Autistic Coders. Can It Find and Keep Them?
https://www.fastcompany.com/3062835/hr/microsoft-autism-hiring

Nick

Takeaways

- Use every interaction as an opportunity to discuss work readiness
- Engage in early work/volunteer experiences
- Connect with community resources
- Stay informed

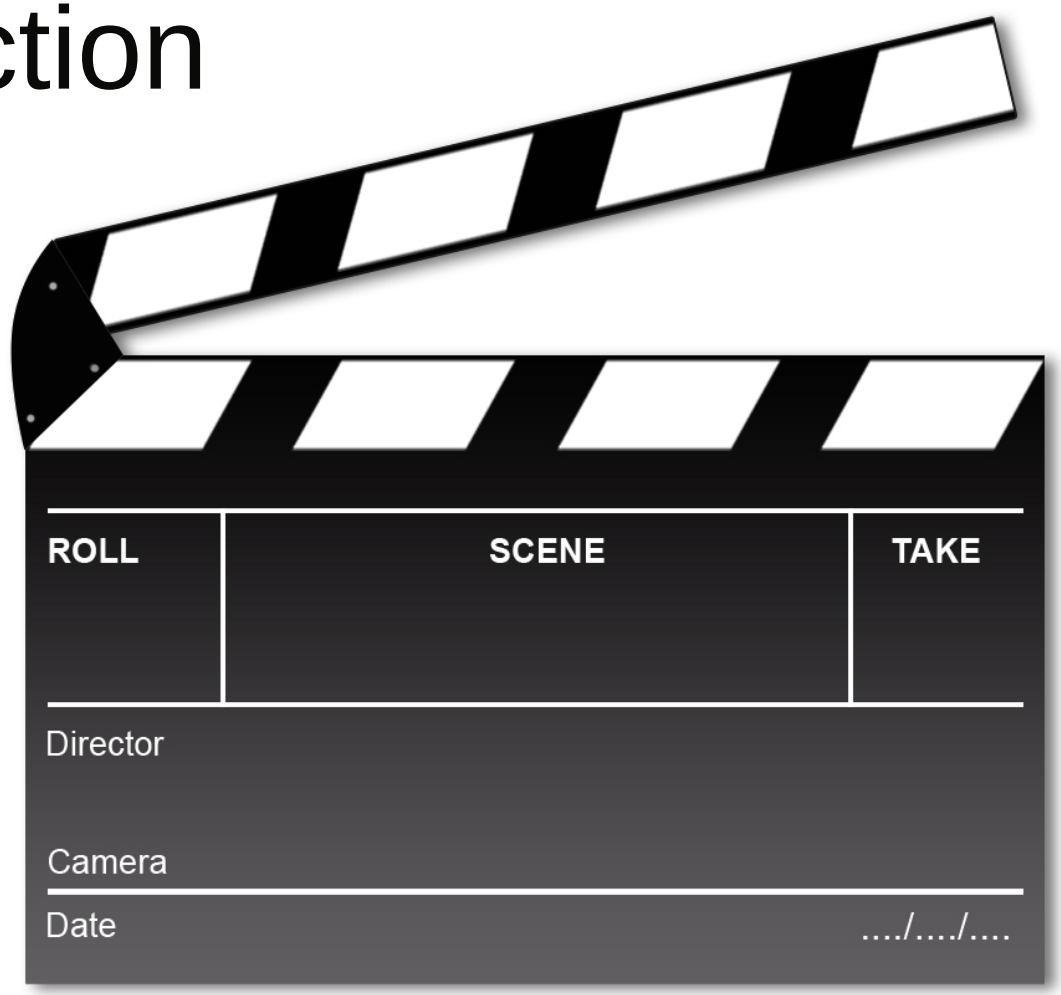
Resources

rit.edu/ssp: Resources>Employers/Job Seekers

- SourceAbled program
- Autism at Work Job Marketplace
- Spectrum Careers
- Specialisterne

The Complete Guide to Getting a Job for People with Asperger's Syndrome: Find the Right Career and Get Hired
by Barbara Bissonnette

Call to Action



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WHAT YOU MIGHT NOTICE

Diffulty in social situations including working with a team or group

Difficulty seeing others point of view

Sensory sensitivity (lights, sounds, smells)

Clear communication with others can be challenging

Facial expressions, body language and tone of voice are atypical so can be misunderstood by others

May not understand sarcasm and other subtle messages

Need extra time to respond

Unpredicted changes can cause high stress

Tendency to vear off topic or monopolize conversation, particularly in areas of interest

May use calming or focusing strategies such as tapping, rocking, pacing, etc

Difficulty managing stress/anxiety and regulating emotions

Others:

The following strengths and struggles are generally shared by students across the spectrum. An individual student will likely only experience a few of them. Consult the strategies column for ways to better assist these students and help them have a successful experience both in and out of the classroom.

Strengths	Struggles	Strategies
▪ Above average to superior intellect ▪ Passionate commitment to ideas ▪ Strong sense of equality and justice ▪ Exceptional talents in one specific area ▪ Diligent with routine work and excellent memory ▪ Strong pursuit of knowledge within areas of interest ▪ Good visual and spatial learners ▪ Original ways of solving problems	▪ Initiating/sustaining effort ▪ Setting boundaries ▪ Initiating or maintaining relationships ▪ Initiating, planning, organizing, and carrying out tasks ▪ Working in groups ▪ Understanding social rules ▪ Assessing priorities and performance ▪ Asking for clarification or assistance ▪ Interpreting vague instructions ▪ Abstract concepts and seeing the "big picture"	▪ Be blunt – provide direct feedback, set clear boundaries ▪ Allow breaks during class ▪ Consider allowing laptop for note taking ▪ Avoid cold-calling in class ▪ Avoid idioms, metaphors, sarcasm ▪ Consider assigning group roles ▪ Provide visual learning tools if possible (pictures, charts) ▪ Supplement oral instructions with written instructions ▪ Explain purpose of assignment ▪ Utilize syllabus and note changes as soon as possible

Other things that help me:

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R·I·T | STUDENT AFFAIRS Spectrum Support Program

College Readiness Survey **Parent** Questionnaire

This questionnaire will serve as a starting point for discussion about supports and services at RIT.

MY STUDENT…	Really True	Somewhat True	Not True
Tends to get frustrated and give up when things get difficult			
Usually asks for help when they run into difficulties or problems			
Has significant difficulty persisting to complete things they have started			
Usually feels comfortable seeking out resources			
Has significant difficulty exerting self-control over their behaviors or actions			
Usually asks for clarification when they don't understand something			
Requires monitoring so gaming doesn't interfere with their ability to meet responsibilities (personal or academic)			
Manages their own medication refills			
Requires monitoring so computer use doesn't interfere with their ability to meet responsibilities (personal or academic)			
Is usually able to effectively manage stress			
Often relies on prompts or reminders from others to complete homework/projects in a timely fashion			
Can usually put aside preferred activities in order to begin academic tasks (without prompting or reminders from others)			
Tends to overreact to problems, disappointments or failures			
Is usually able to ignore distractions to complete academic tasks (without prompting or reminders from others)			
Often rely on others to remind them to take daily medications or treatments			
Maintains a healthy sleep/wake routine			
Tend to give up easily on tasks that are boring or frustrating			
Maintains healthy hygiene routines (without prompting or reminders from others)			
Often needs multiple breaks to complete an assignment or task			
Is ready for the challenges of college			
Has a tendency to procrastinate that often impacts the quality of their work or their ability to complete tasks on time			
Knows what they want to get out of their college experience			
Often becomes overwhelmed with stress/anxiety that is hard to control			

STUDENT NAME: ANTICIPATED COLLEGE START: 20____

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College Readiness Survey **Student** Questionnaire

Students should complete this survey independently, without parent input. Be as truthful as you can. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. This will serve as a starting point for discussion about supports and services at RIT.

	Really True	Somewhat True	Not True
I easily get frustrated and give up when things get difficult			
I usually ask for help when I run into difficulties or problems			
I have significant difficulty persisting to complete things I have started			
I usually feel comfortable seeking out resources			
I have significant difficulty exerting self-control over my behaviors or actions			
I usually ask for clarification when I don't understand something			
Gaming often interferes with my ability to meet my responsibilities (personal or academic)			
I manage my own medication refills			
Computer use often interferes with my ability to meet my responsibilities (personal or academic)			
I am usually able to effectively manage my stress			
I often rely on prompts or reminders from others to complete homework/projects in a timely fashion			
I can usually put aside preferred activities in order to begin academic tasks			
I tend to overreact to problems, disappointments or failures			
I am usually able to ignore distractions to complete academic tasks (without prompting or reminders from others)			
I often rely on others (parents) to remind me to take daily medications or treatments			
I keep a healthy sleep/wake routine			
I tend to give up easily on tasks that are boring or frustrating			
I maintain healthy hygiene routines (without prompting or reminders from others)			
I often need multiple breaks to complete an assignment or task			
I feel ready for the challenges college			
My tendency to procrastinate often impacts the quality of my work or my ability to complete tasks on time			
I know what I want to get out of my college experience			
I often become overwhelmed with stress/anxiety that is hard to control			

STUDENT NAME: ANTICIPATED COLLEGE START: 20____