College Students in Animation and Art or Other Technology Disciplines

Laurie Ackles, LMSW, Rochester Institute of Technology
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The Artist

- John Williams, Collage Artist
- JohnWilliamsFineArt.com
HOME ON THE RANGE
18” x 24”
College and Career Readiness
Redefining Readiness

David Conley - University of Oregon
Center for Educational Policy and Leadership

think:
- Problem Formulation
- Research
- Interpretation
- Communication
- Precision/Accuracy

know:
- Structure of Knowledge
- Challenge Level
- Value
- Attribution
- Effort

go:
- Postsecondary Awareness
- Postsecondary Cost
- Matriculation
- Career Awareness
- Role and Identity
- Self-advocacy

act:
- Ownership of Learning
- Learning Techniques

1. Key Cognitive Strategies
2. Key Content Knowledge
3. Key Learning Skills and Techniques
4. Key Transition Knowledge and Skills
Redefining Readiness

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- openness
- curiosity
- analysis
- problem solving
- critical thinking

- Core subjects
- Technical knowledge

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

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- educational system
- career pathways
- college/workforce
- norms and expectations

- Goal setting
- Persistence
- Self-awareness
- Help-seeking
- Time management
- Self-monitoring

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

- Self-Care
  - Stress/Anxiety/Frustration
  - Medication
  - Hygiene
  - Sleep
Key Learning Skills and Techniques

- Academic skills
  - Notetaking
  - Study skills
- Self-Management
  - Focus
  - Initiation
  - Manage time
  - Prioritize and Plan
Key Transition Knowledge and Skills

- Norms/Expectations
  - Classroom
  - Office
- Self-Advocacy
  - Help Seeking Skills
  - Understanding of Self
  - Self-Accommodate
Key Transition Knowledge and Skills

- College and Career Awareness
  - Understanding of requirements
  - Interests
  - Aptitudes
  - Job fit
  - Job prospects
College Support For Students with ASD in Animation and Arts Programs
Standard College Accommodations offered by Disability Services offices

- Extended time on exams
- Distraction-reduced testing environment
- Note-taking assistance
- Textbooks in alternative format
- Adaptive technology
The challenge...
Classroom Comparison

Typical Classroom

- Lecture style
- Traditional seating
- Instructor at front of room
- Clear syllabus with textbook information, schedule, grading procedures, etc.
- Read the text, take notes, take exams, write papers
- May involve some group work or group paper

Studio Classroom

- May include announcements at the beginning about the class session or assignment, and intermittent discussion throughout
- Varied seating which may constantly change
- Instructor moves throughout the room with no set “front of room”
- Syllabus may be vague
- Hands-on and includes instant feedback
- May involve some group work
Challenges Students *May* Face in a Studio Classroom

- Problems with executive functioning (organization, assessing priorities, time management, coping with stress, maintaining motivation)
- Issues understanding assignment/project expectations
- Inflexibility makes changes to assignments distressing
- Low tolerance for frustration while attempting to learn a new concept
- Difficulty problem solving/making decisions

(continued)
Challenges Student *May* Face in a Studio Classroom

- Becoming overwhelmed/over-stimulated easily
- Difficulty seeing other points of view
- Difficulty asking questions, asking for clarification, or asking for help
- Hard time grasping larger context/abstract concepts due to interpreting things literally
Potential Erratic Behavior Triggers

- **Unexpected Changes** (class cancellation, furniture rearrangement, office hours switch, fire drill)
- **Sensory Stimuli** (strong odors, bright colors/busy patterns, uncomfortable seating, loud/distracting noises, room temperature)
One College’s Story...
Scenario:

- The art studio is a chaotic environment. People listen to music, the instructor moves through the room, offering critiques over student shoulders. Students are up and moving all around the studio to clean supplies, get new supplies, etc. A few students are overly sensitive to all of the stimulation. What can be done to help make the environment more accessible to these (and all) students?
Scenario:

- Student has an intense interest in Disney and does not receive any criticism about Disney well. In fact, he doesn’t receive criticism about anything well. He is academically talented, and earns almost a 4.0 each semester. How do you continue to work with him as he progresses through your program?
Scenario:

In one animation class, all students were being critiqued on their most recent work. John, who was very proud of his work and believed it to be the best in the class, received constructive criticism that he found hard to hear. His response was go lie on the floor and do an inchworm dance/movement. The whole class witnessed this and the instructor had to navigate this situation. What would you do to help the student handle constructive criticism?
What did we do?

- Physical space
- Equipment
- Faculty training
- Syllabus/Course redesign
- Life Skills Coaches
- Cross-campus administration/faculty trainings
What have we learned?

- Importance of resiliency
- Addressing the perfection complex
- Faculty are the first line of defense
- Addressing poor executive functioning skills in the classroom is key
- Self-Advocacy so that students can be successfully employed
Job Search Support for Job Seekers with ASD
Many students apply to 70-100 jobs to obtain first co-op
PREPARATION

- EXPLICIT DETAIL
- PRACTICE
- FEEDBACK
- BUILD SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE
- INDIVIDUALIZED
- CONSISTENT AND STEADY
DECODING

- JOB DESCRIPTIONS
- INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
- IDEAL WORK ENVIRONMENT
PRACTICE

- 60 SECOND COMMERCIAL
- INTERVIEWING
- NETWORKING
FEEDBACK

- HANDSHAKE
- BODY LANGUAGE
- DRESS
- MOCK INTERVIEWING
- PORTFOLIO
EXPOSURE

- MEET AND GREETS
- TOURS
- JOB FAIRS
- NETWORKING
- MOCK INTERVIEWING
- ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT
DISCLOSURE

- WHEN?
- WHO?
- HOW?
TRAINING EMPLOYERS

- Recruiting
  - Strengths of Job Seekers with ASD
  - Job titles and descriptions
- Interviewing
  - Avoid hypotheticals
  - Show and tell
TRAINING EMPLOYERS

- Onboarding
  - Mentoring
  - Accommodating
- Managing
  - Communicating
  - Feedback (I notice that...)
- RIT SOS
Hiring on the Spectrum
Employers Guide and Video

HIRING ON THE SPECTRUM