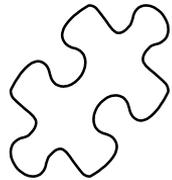


**Inclusive Space
for Students
with Autism
Spectrum
Disorder**



North Carolina State University
Team Leader: Hannah Finkelstein
Winn Decker
Kendall Del Rio
Francesqa Santos

SETTING SOME **NORMS**

Before we delve in, let's get on the same page!

Person First Language

“People with disabilities are – first and foremost – people who have individual abilities, interests and needs.”

Example: **Students with Autism**, not Autistic Students

Autism Acceptance Perspective

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a variation in human diversity to be accommodated and embraced, rather than cured.



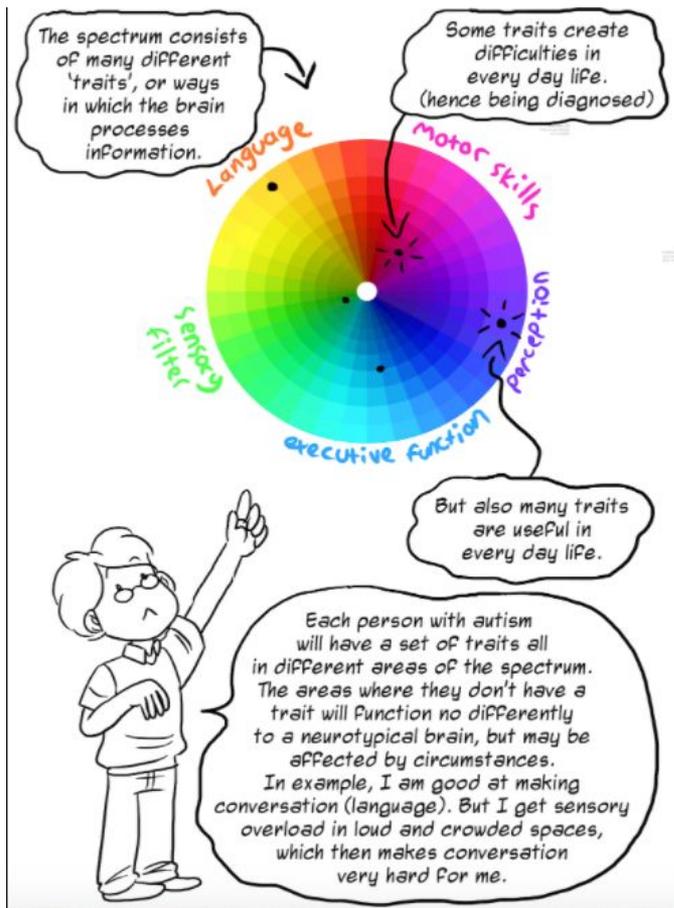
WHAT IS ASD?

“Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges.”

Some characteristics of a person on the Autism Spectrum may include:

- ▶ Lack of Eye Contact with Others
- ▶ Lack of Interest in Communicating with Others
- ▶ Difficulty Interpreting Others Feelings or Body Language
- ▶ Tendency to Repeat Actions Over and Over
- ▶ Challenge in Adapting to Changes in Routine
- ▶ Unusual Responses to Sounds, Smells, Tastes, or Noises

WHAT IS THE SPECTRUM?



WHO IS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM?

- ▶ According to the CDC (2014) diagnosis increased from 1 in 150 in 2000 to **1 in 68** in the US.
- ▶ The prevalence of autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) increased **290%** over the last 12 years (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012).
- ▶ In 2011, **.7 to 1.9%** of enrolled college and university students met the diagnosis for Autism Spectrum Disorder. (White, Ollendick, & Bray, 2011)

INCREASING DEMAND

- ▶ Post-secondary education is a goal for more than **4 out of 5** secondary school students with disabilities (Cameto, Levine, & Wagner, 2004).
- ▶ **17%** of all students attending higher education programs in the United States are now identified as having a disability (National Council on Disability, 2000).

LIMITED RESOURCES

- ▶ Students transition from fuller support services offered through *IDEA* legislation in secondary education, to postsecondary services offered under the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*.
- ▶ Under ADA, students are **suddenly** expected to **self-identify as a person with a disability** and individually request **specific accommodations paired to their needs** (Stodden, Jones, & Chang, 2002).
- ▶ Postsecondary institutions offer resources to students based on their type of disability as well as the interpretation of the concept of “**reasonableness**” (Stodden, Jones, & Chang, 2002).
- ▶ This concept of “reasonableness” allows a great amount of variation between institutions as well as a **minimalist approach** to accommodation.
- ▶ Students on the autism spectrum regularly note **loneliness, roommate issues, feelings of isolation, and depression** in their college experience (Gelbar, Shefyck, & Reichow, 2015).

ECONOMIC IMPERATIVE

- ▶ In order to stay competitive internationally in degree attainment in higher education, colleges will need to reach out to new populations of students in order to increase the number of degrees obtained by **1 million** a year (Tierney, 2011).
- ▶ With higher numbers of students enrolling with a history of individual learning plans, colleges need to offer **specialized support** to these students if rates of degree attainment are to increase.

BARRIERS FRAMEWORK

- ▶ Gorgan (2015) studied the barriers students with ASD faced when entering college
- ▶ Divided these into three categories: Transition, Academic Achievement, Social Skills
- ▶ These barriers can be overcome by Universal Design for Learning
- ▶ Biggest challenge is getting faculty to buy into and understand working with and supporting students on the spectrum

3 TYPES OF BARRIERS

Transition

- ▶ 1st year classes that cater only to students without disabilities
- ▶ Life tasks such as goal setting, peer connections, independence

Academic

- ▶ Fear due to disclosure to faculty
- ▶ Current classroom practices alienate ASD students

Social

- ▶ New social interactions in unfamiliar settings
- ▶ Social difficulties known to be both troublesome and anxiety provoking

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

- ▶ Ken Gobbo and Solvegi Shmulsky's (2016) Autism Acceptance Perspective
- ▶ Jennifer Gibson's (2006) Disability Identity Development Model
- ▶ Jennifer Katz's (2013) Three-block Model of Universal Design for Learning

GOBBO & SHMULSKY: **AUTISM ACCEPTANCE PERSPECTIVE**

- Defines autism as a variation in normal human diversity to be accommodated and embraced rather than a condition that must be cured
- View is rooted in the perspective of disability as a social construction rather than an inherent, immutable, and broken part of a person
 - Does not deny individual differences
 - Highlights that the social environment causes stigma
- A related concept is neurodiversity
 - Notion that learning differences are cognitive variants with strengths that contribute to the evolution of technology and culture rather than checklists of deficits that define a disorder
 - Specific aspect of the broader neurodiversity movement a movement started by autism advocates and used in social justice efforts for a range of neuro-based differences
- Ableism is the central difficulty for neurodiverse individuals
 - Effects of ableism are both internal and external
 - Overt examples include bullying, exclusion, hate language, and direct discrimination as well as well-intentioned "help" that does not respect the autonomy of persons with disabilities
 - Subtler manifestations of ableism include stereotypes, prejudicial attitudes, and unquestioned societal conventions that dis-privilege autistics
 - The gap will be reduced when mainstream culture accommodates the different ways that autistic people function socially

GIBSON'S DISABILITY IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Passive Awareness: person does not identify with the disability and may try to keep it a secret



Realization: the person may face their condition directly and experience negative feelings about it



Acceptance: the person embraces their differentness

Three Block Model of Universal Design for Learning

Systems & Structures

Inclusive Policy – No “Except!”
 Administrators with expertise/vision
 Distributed Leadership
 Professional Development
 Staffing for collaborative practice
 Team planning time,
 Scheduling in cohorts/teams
 Resource / EA allocations to
 classrooms / cohorts,
 Co-planning / teaching /assessing
 Budgeting changed from segregated
 practices/funding allocations
 Assistive technology
 Multi-levelled resources

Instructional Practice

- Integrated Curriculum
- Student Choice
- Flexible Groupings / Co-operative Learning
- Differentiated Instruction
- Differentiated Assessment
- Assessment for learning / Class Profiles / Strategic Teaching
- Technology
- Discipline Based Inquiry
- Meta-Cognition – Assessment as learning
- Understanding by Design / Essential Understandings
- Social & Academic Inclusion of Students with Exceptionalities

Social & Emotional Learning: Developing Compassionate Classroom Communities

- Respecting Diversity Program (RD)
- Developing Self-Concept
 - Awareness of and pride in strengths and challenges
 - Sense of belonging
 - Goal setting and planning
 - Leadership skills / opportunities
- Valuing Diversity
 - Awareness of the strengths and challenges of others
 - Valuing of diverse contributions to community
 - Sense of collective responsibility for well-being, achievement of all
 - Empathy, Perspective taking, Compassion
- Democratic Classroom Management
 - Collective problem solving, recognition of rights and responsibilities
 - Promotion of Independent learning, student choice & empowerment, leadership
 - Increase in student engagement, ownership



DISABILITY SERVICES OFFICE (DSO) LOUNGE



SPACE & RESOURCES

- ▶ There is an under-utilized conference room that measures 24ft by 16ft just outside of the DSO Caseworkers' Offices.
- ▶ The Disability Services Office is sufficiently staffed and coordinators are able and willing to take on additional programming responsibilities.
- ▶ The Wednesday Workshop Programs are currently being offered through the counseling center and the facilitator has agreed to move programming into the DSO Lounge space.

DSO LOUNGE OUTCOMES

Transition Outcomes ●

- ▶ Students will engage in **intentional programming** related to transition issues.
- ▶ Students will interact on campus with trained staff who understand and utilize the **Autism Acceptance Perspective**.
- ▶ Students will connect in spaces that help to **promote involvement and retention** at the institution.

Academic Outcomes ●

- ▶ The student experience will be improved through **intervention with faculty and academic advisors**.
- ▶ Students will have the ability to complete academic work in a **universally accessible space**.
- ▶ Students will gain the **self advocacy and assertiveness skills** necessary to have reasonable classroom accommodations.

Social Outcomes ●

- ▶ Students will integrate and **connect** in a formative and developmental space.
- ▶ Students will engage in **facilitated social events**.
- ▶ Students on the Autism Spectrum will partake in programming to continue to facilitate **identity development as a person**.

DSO LOUNGE PROGRAMMING CALENDAR

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| <p>10am - 12pm Drop In Hours</p> <p> </p> | <p>1-2pm Mentor Meetup</p> <p> </p> | <p>12-1pm Wednesday Workshop</p> <p> </p> | <p>1-2pm Mentor Meetup</p> <p> </p> | <p>10am-12pm Drop In Hours</p> <p> </p> |
| <p>3-5pm ASD Affinity Space</p> <p> </p> | <p>5-6pm Faculty Training</p> <p></p> | <p>2-4pm Silent Study Space</p> <p></p> | <p>5-6pm Advisor and Counselor Training</p> <p></p> | <p>3-5pm Speaker Series and Q&A</p> <p> </p> |

● Transition Programming

1. Mentor Program with Upperclass Students involved in DSO Lounge Programming
2. Wednesday Workshop Series covering:
 - a. Navigating Relationships and Communication
 - b. Time Management
 - c. Task Analysis
 - d. Goal Setting
 - e. Study Skills
 - f. Assertiveness Training



Academic Programming

1. Silent Study Hours

*5 sets of noise cancelling headphones available for checkout are needed for those sensitive to sound.

2. Faculty Training Series

- a. Mandatory Training for First Year Seminar Instructors

3. Academic Advisor and Counselor Training informed by current research and best practices



Social

Programming

1. Weekly Drop In Hours
2. ASD Affinity Space
3. Invited Speakers who are on the Autism Spectrum
 - a. Lydia X Z Brown, Blogger
 - b. John Elder Robison, Author
 - c. Donna Williams, Singer

WHAT WILL IT COST?

| Item | Cost | Reason |
|---|--|--|
| Lounge Furniture: Couch (1x) Chair (4x) Bean Bag (2x) Table (2x) Storage Bins (4x) | Total: \$1,170 \$500 x 1= \$500 \$100 x 4= \$400 \$50 x 2= \$100 \$75 x 2 = \$150 \$5 x 4= \$20 | This space we are using was originally a conference area, so we must purchase furniture to make the room more inviting |
| Rolling White Board (4x) | \$100 x 4= \$400 | For class work or privacy |
| Folding Partitions (4x) | \$25 x 4= \$100 | For privacy or individual space |
| Speaker Series (3-5x) | \$10,000 | Key component of social programs |
| Noise Cancelling Headphones (5x) | \$30 x 5= \$150 | For focus and |
| Fidget Toys and Weighted Blankets (50x) | \$10 x 50 = \$500 | Keeps restless fingers busy, bodies relaxed and minds focused |

The total cost of this project is approximately \$12,500. The majority of this funding will come from the redistribution of student fees as all students will benefit from a more inclusive community. We also hope to find a benefactor to endow the program and name the lounge after.



LYDIA X Z BROWN
BLOGGER





MARKETING FOR THE DSO LOUNGE

All DSO Case Managers will share DSO Lounge Resources with their students.

Advertising for the DSO Lounge will be distributed widely across campus through flyers, social media, and electronic billboards on campus.





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