



A Piece of the Puzzle

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Understanding Autism

According to Autism Speaks:

Autism is a spectrum disorder characterized by challenges with verbal and nonverbal communication, social interaction, and repetitive behaviors. Autism can also be associated with intellectual disability, difficulty with motor coordination, attention span, and physical health issues (e.g. sleep dysfunction and gastrointestinal disturbances).

The Different Pieces of the Autism Spectrum

- **Autistic Disorder:** *(also called "classic" autism)* This is what most people think of when they hear the term "autism." People with autistic disorder usually have significant language delays, social and communication challenges, and unusual behaviors and interests. Many people with autistic disorder also have intellectual disability.
- **Asperger Syndrome:** People with Asperger syndrome tend to have milder symptoms than those with autistic disorder. They might have social challenges and unusual behaviors and interests; however, they typically do not have problems with language or intellectual disability.
- **Pervasive Developmental Disorder: Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS; also called "atypical autism")** People who meet some of the criteria for autistic disorder or Asperger syndrome, but not all, may be diagnosed with PDD-NOS. People with PDD-NOS usually have fewer and milder symptoms than those with autistic disorder. The symptoms might cause only social and communication challenges.

Signs of Autism

- trouble relating to others or lack of interest in other people at all
- avoid eye contact and want to be alone
- trouble understanding other people's feelings or talking about personal feelings
- appear to be unaware when other people talk to them but respond to other sounds
- very interested in people, but not know how to talk, play, or relate to them
- repeat or echo words or phrases said to them, or repeat words or phrases in place of normal language (echolalia)
- trouble expressing their needs using typical words or motions
- repeat actions over and over again
- trouble adapting when a routine changes
- unusual reactions to the way things smell, taste, look, feel, or sound
- lose skills they once had (for instance, stop saying words they were using)

Bringing the Pieces Together

At Sawyer University we have just under 5,000 undergraduate students, of these all first year students reside in on campus housing

62% of our Faculty are involved in 2 or more organizations as advisors and have reported that they are invested in ALL student success

53% of our Faculty participate in various Professional Development opportunities related to best teaching practices, and the ever changing student population

What do those SU Faculty Involvement Statistics Mean to A Piece of the Puzzle?

- Our Faculty has already established a baseline interest in these types of programs and are highly likely to embrace a project such as A Piece of the Puzzle
- 33% of projects fail because of a lack of involvement (Capterra Management)
- We know that 53% of our SU Faculty actively seek out programs similar to A Piece of the Puzzle

A Piece of the Puzzle Overview

- Why there is a need for such a program at SU?
- Theory behind the Pieces
- Program Mission
- Implementation
- Explanation of A Piece of the Puzzle Program
 - RLC
 - Classroom
 - Outside of the Classroom
- Budget

Why does Sawyer University need The Piece of the Puzzle?

- 57.5% of Students with Autism continue to Post-Secondary Study (Autism Society of Indiana)
- 1 in 68 children, 1 in 42 males, and 1 in 189 females have Autism (Centers for Disease Control, 2014)
- We have already identified 11 students at SU on the Autism Spectrum through preexisting Disability Service requests
 - These students are in need of additional assistance, we assume there are numerous other cases which have not reported due to a lack of services

Schlossberg's Transition Theory

Schlossberg defined a transition as any event, or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles. It is important to note that perception plays a key role in transitions as an event, or non-event, meets the definition of a transition only if it is so defined by the individual experiencing it. In order to understand the meaning that a transition has for a particular individual, the type, context, and impact of the transition must be considered.(UNT-HSC)

Puzzle's Mission Based Off Schlossberg's Theory

With the implementation of A Piece of the Puzzle at Sawyer University we intend to assist students on the Autism Spectrum by providing individualized transition, academic, and social support through a program that embodies inclusion, understanding, and mentorship.

Implementation

- Coordinator of A Piece of the Puzzle
 - Profile: An entry level professional with related educational background (masters required) who can motivate, inspire, empathize, and encourage Faculty, Student Workers, and Autistic Students within the program
- College Autism Spectrum Consultant (two graduate assistants)
 - Profile: Students proficient in mentorship, organizational skills, and stress management
- Note Taker (five student workers)
 - Profile: Proficient listening and writing skills

Coordinator of A Piece of the Puzzle's Core Responsibilities

- Promote, and facilitate Faculty Learning Community (FLC) meetings to be held weekly for the first 4 months, then bi-monthly
- Oversee College Autism Spectrum Consultants (CASC) to ensure mission is upheld and assist in Graduate learning
 - Weekly meetings to follow up with students challenges and needs
 - Monthly review of progress
- Oversee Note Takers and ensure notes are proficient, concise, and manage their scheduling
- Meet with Autistic students participating in program monthly at minimum
- Assist with RLC programming, training, and transitions
- Continue to develop and learn about Autism and stay up to date with national foundations programs and research

Core Responsibilities of CASC and Note Takers

CASC Responsibilities

- Assist in transitioning from home to campus life
- Introduce student to appropriate college resources
- Teach stress management, and organizational skills
- Foster social networking by encouraging outside of the classroom involvement
- Goal setting and coaching on social norms, hygiene, and relationship building
- Produce monthly written review to Coordinator of students progress, goals met, challenges, etc.

Note Taker Responsibilities

- Arrive to classes in a timely fashion prepared for note taking
- Format notes to suit individual student need/learning style
- Submit notes to student no later than 8 hours post class, and log copy with Coordinator database
- Maintain 12 hour weekly schedule
- Produce bi-weekly report to students CASC on in class behavior or challenges (to be included in CASC monthly review)

A Piece of the Puzzle in RLC

The Puzzle Piece Residential Learning Community is a residential experience designed to support students who have been diagnosed on the autism spectrum, and also for students who are interested in working with student who are working with disabilities.

- Goals of the RLC
 - Provide an environment for student that allows additional support for independent living skills, academic skills, and social skills.
 - Create a caring a supportive community for students through on-campus living experiences.
- Benefits of the RLC?
 - Interacting and building community with fellow students diagnosed on the autism spectrum.
 - Build a network of peers with a common experience.
 - Peer mentorship with fellow residents in the community.

A Piece of the Puzzle in the Academic Classroom

- Through the formation of a Faculty Learning Community (FLC) the new Coordinator of CASA will promote awareness of Autism students' needs in the classroom
 - Clear, concise directions
 - Use of additional visual aids in lecture
 - Making group projects optional (students can work alone)
 - Use of in-class note takers
 - Extended testing times in secure locations
 - Advanced course registration
 - Best pairing students learning styles with teaching styles

A Piece of the Puzzle Outside of the Classroom

- Peer support and formal instruction that develops self-esteem
- Social skills classes and events to give students the opportunity to enhance social skills development
- Assistance joining clubs, playing intramural sports, and participating in any social, sporting, theater, or special event on campus
- Behavioral plans that target key social skills and peer development goals for individual students
 - Learning the fundamental of relationships (how to form and maintain them)
 - Help reading and responding to social cues

Paying for A Piece of the Puzzle

Position	Cost Breakdown	Annual Cost
Coordinator of A Piece of the Puzzle	Salary: \$38,000 Fringe: \$10,640	\$48,640
CASC (Graduate Assistant)	Stipend: \$1,800 monthly, 10 month contact 2 CASC positions	\$36,000
Note Taker	\$8.00 hourly wage, based off 12 hour work week for 10 month contact 5 positions	\$19,200
		TOTAL: \$103,840

Closing

With the collaboration from the Disability Services, Residence Life, a faculty worker, and an advisor from the Office of Student Activities, and mental health services we have concluded that *A Piece of the Puzzle* will give students living on the autism spectrum the opportunity to not just attend Sawyer University, but to transition smoothly, achieve academic success and build lasting relationships.

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