



Recommendations and Research to Support Students on the Autism Spectrum

The University of Akron
Team Leader: Dina Daltorio,
Group Members: Lindsey Dever, and
Megan Vermillion



Assumption of Institution

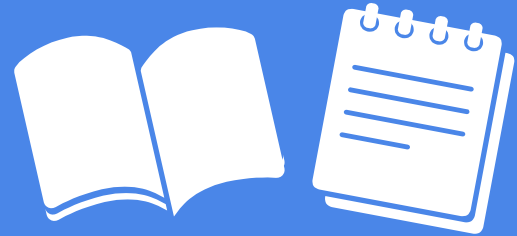
To provide more accurate and relevant information for this study, the information within this presentation is shaped with the following assumptions of the institution:

- Public,
- Residential Institution (~30,000 students)
- Urban setting



Relevant Statutes that Impact Higher Education

- The Higher Education Opportunity Act “HEOA”
- American with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act





Cognitive and Moral Development Theories

We need to examine the development of how students grow cognitively and intellectually, including how they interpret the world around them. We will examine the way people think but not what they think.

Disability Support Services in Higher Education Institutions



- Ensures equal access and opportunity
- Provide accommodations and services for student success
- Provide services for students with disabilities, assistance to faculty and staff on how to effectively work with students, provide support to campus on creating an accessible environment
- Provide information and recommendations on disability-related issues

(HEATH Resource Center at the National Youth Transitions Center)



Student Task Force Initiative

- Establish a task force with a group of student who are on the autism spectrum
- Facilitate discussion about support services, needs of students, and ways to implement useful programs
- Consider inviting representatives from the following organizations:
 - Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)
 - Think College: College Options for People with Intellectual Disabilities
 - US Autism and Asperger's Association (USAAA)
 - Association for Higher Education and Disability



Faculty

Strategies to Support Student with Autism
(Altwood, 2007)

- “Make directions clear and provide step by step instructions in written format
- Ask student to repeat instructions to verify comprehension
- Ask for another student to volunteer to be a ‘mentor’ (assisting with organization, turning in assignments, navigating social situations)
- Allow for student to have short breaks if necessary – pacing is sometimes calming for people with ASD
- Allow delivery of assignments in different formats such as electronically
- Extend deadlines to allow for challenges in organization, time management, and processing
- Provide students with the option to work in a group or independently if they feel uncomfortable in a group work setting
- Provide visual supports to promote understanding”

(as cited in The George Washington University)



Faculty

How to Identify Students with Autism

- Attributes
 - Student with High Functioning Autism (HFA) typically are logical, attentive to detail, thrive on routine and clear expectations (Attwood, 2007).
- Communication
 - Lack social skills, excessive talking or limited speaking, repetitive speech (Wenzel & Rowley, 2010)
- Theory of Mind
 - Student are challenged to recognize and understand thoughts, intentions, beliefs and desires of others (Dillon, 2007)
- Executive Functions (EF)
 - Challenged with organizational skills, timelines, and deadlines
- Central Coherence
 - Student struggle to see the big picture but rather focus on small, unimportant details (Attwood, 2007)
- Tics
 - Facial emotions, twitching

(as cited in The George Washington University)



Student Activities

- Create a chapter of “Autism Speaks U” on campus
 - “Launched in 2008, Autism Speaks U is a program designed to support college students in their awareness, advocacy and fundraising efforts for Autism Speaks” (Autism Speaks, 2017)
- Educate students by holding events and fundraisers
- Create and participate in awareness weeks
- Partner with organizations and educate their members on Autism



Residential Life

Living Learning Community (LLC)

- One residential hall dedicated for students with autism or any other-abled student interested in the living learning environment
- Students can opt into living in residential living arrangements
 - Opting into LLC can be done on a student's application to the university
 - Students can opt into single or double rooms
- Special education students serve as Residence Assistants (RAs) within living learning community
 - Provides Special Education majors with practical application of major
 - RAs additionally serve as peer mentors for residents to aid with socialization, academics, etc.
- Residential hall has Sensory Room available for students in the central location of living



Health Services

Sensory Room

- Located in recreational facilities to provide a safe space for students to get away from sensory overload that is in a facility not directly associated with stigma (i.e. counseling center, health center, etc.)
- Sensory room is available for any student of interest
- Common items within sensory room may include:
 - Weighted vests/blankets
 - Airwalker (cocoon) swings
 - Sound machine
 - A colored screen projector
 - Art area
 - Bubble mirror
- Employs occupational therapists and provides internship opportunities for students to gain practical experience related to major





Budget Proposal

Expenses	Estimated Cost
Personnel Costs	28,000
Supplies	10,000
Operational	5,000
Other	5,000
Total	48,000



Campus campaign



Campaigns such as Autism Awareness Day and Light it up Blue can be celebrated on April 2nd to promote education to campus

Conclusion

Key takeaways of suggestions for this case study:

- Administrators may not be affected by autism, in such, a student task force should be created to provide perspective of needs
- Training faculty members to best understand key traits of autism and how to best aid students to succeed
- “Autism U” chapter on campus to provide education and awareness campaigns
- Living-Learning community for students with autism and other students who opt in is available
 - RAs are special education majors and serve as social/peer mentors
- Creation of Sensory Room located in neutral location available
 - Provides student employment opportunities for occupational therapy students



References

Attwood, T. (2007). The complete guide to asperger syndrome. Philadelphia, Pa: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. Dillon, M. R. (2007). Creating Supports for College Students with Asperger Syndrome through Collaboration. College Student Journal, 41(2), 499-504.

HEATH Resource Center at the National Youth Transitions Center (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.heath.gwu.edu/accommodations>

The George Washington University (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.heath.gwu.edu/students-autism-college-classroom>