

# Assessing and Supporting Lifelong Skills

*Invited Presentation*

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# Agenda

- Values when supporting individuals with Developmental Disabilities
- Importance of Continuity from Preschool through age 21
- Critical Skills Targets to Consider
- Evidence-based approaches to assess critical skills throughout the lifespan
- Q & A

# Values when Supporting Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

- Goals for Independence
- Lifelong self-advocacy
- Generalized health and safety awareness
- Meaningful academic progress
- Incorporating the “dream”, while considering reality
  - Examining expectations and appropriateness

# What are Functional Life Skills?

- Essential skills that are needed for everyday living
- Skills needed to live independently
- Skills needed at home, school, and in the community
- Life Skills
- Academic Functional Skills
- Community-Based Learning
- Social Skills

# The list of skills goes on and on...

- making the bed, performing bathroom routines, getting dressed, making meals, communicating, self-care, leisure and recreational skills, shopping, laundry, paying bills, taking medication...

# Why Are Life Skills Important?

- Safety
- Self Esteem
- Healthier Lives
- Independence
- Self Advocacy
- Self Regulation

# Importance of Continuity from Preschool - age 21

- Ensuring the development of solid foundational skills
- Ability to follow a continuum of goals and objectives
  - Ensuring mastery along the way
- Prevention of skills regression
- Staff and parents more likely to be on the “same page” throughout the years

# Common difficulties due to lack of continuity?

- “Shakey foundational skills”
- Lack of adequate preparation with an eye toward the future
- Goals/objectives/skills targets don’t logically flow from one year to the next
- Stagnant or inappropriate goals and complacent programming

# **Our Focus: Critical Skills**



# Critical Skills

- Communicating wants and needs to access reinforcers, needed/preferred items, etc.
- Gaining others' attention appropriately
- Asking for and accepting help
- Waiting
- Accepting "no"
- Accepting removal/ending of an activity
- Transitioning
- Turn-taking
- Sharing
- Completing previously acquired tasks

(adapted from McGreevy, P., Fry, T., & Cornwall, C. (2012). *Essential for Living*. Orlando: McGreevy)

# Critical Skills

- Following directions and tolerating assistance related to health and safety
  - getting washed, moving to or staying in a safe location, avoiding dangerous situations / stimuli, wearing appropriate clothing, taking medication)
  - directions may include stay here, walk with me, move back, don't touch
- Daily living skills: eating, drinking, feeding, mobility, sleeping, avoiding harmful substances, toileting, engaging in leisure activities

(adapted from McGreevy, P., Fry, T., & Cornwall, C. (2012). *Essential for Living*. Orlando: McGreevy)

# Critical Skills

- Managing frustration safely and calmly (accepting feedback, a store is closed, preferred item not available, unexpected loud noises)
- Following a schedule

(adapted from McGreevy, P., Fry, T., & Cornwall, C. (2012). *Essential for Living*. Orlando: McGreevy)

# Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Outcomes

- A recent study reported in the American Journal of Public Health followed 750 youngsters in 4 diverse U.S. communities from 1991, when they were in kindergarten, until they were 25 years old.
  - They found “statistically significant associations between measured social-emotional skills in kindergarten and key young adult outcomes across multiple domains of education, employment, criminal activity, substance use, and mental health.”

Damon E. Jones, Mark Greenberg, and Max Crowley. (2015). Early Social-Emotional Functioning and Public Health: The Relationship Between Kindergarten Social Competence and Future Wellness. American Journal of Public Health.

Read More: <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2015.302630>

# Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Outcomes

- Powerful Evidence Supporting the Impact of Enhancing Students' SEL
  - SEL can have a positive impact on **school climate** and **promote academic, social, and emotional benefits for students.**
  - Social and emotional skills are critical to being a good student, citizen, and worker.

[www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/outcomes](http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/outcomes)

# Critical SEL Skills

- Understanding social cues
- Perspective taking and empathy (e.g., Theory of Mind)
- Eye contact
- Answering questions
- Turn-taking in conversation
- Organization and sequencing skills
- Concentration to stay on topic
- Social / Pragmatic language
- Receptive / Expressive Language
- Problem-solving & Common-sense reasoning
- Friendship making
- Self-control & Anger management
- Appropriate expression of feelings and needs
- Emotional Regulation

# Critical skills for Independence

- Think about what tasks you (as the parent/guardian/educator) do routinely.
- Help the young adult to become increasingly more observant/aware so that they can gradually take on these tasks
- Examples of routine household chores that require SEL through self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making (*social problem-solving*)
  - Checking for light bulbs that are out, determining the correct bulbs, purchasing them and replacing them
  - Checking for what food items are running low, what items other family members would like, make a list, shop for them, unpack and store the items.

# Personal Safety

- Dating: Is he/she ready?
  - Boundaries/Personal Space
  - Respect
  - Appropriate Touching
  - Knowing to say "NO"
  - Affection
  - Intimacy and Sex
- Red Flags
  - Safety Circle
  - Privacy



# Personal Safety

- Community Safety
- Pick a skill to target and begin to develop the teaching steps
  - Not getting into a car with a stranger
  - Saying “No” at school or on a date
  - Asking for help/directions
- Teach using social scripts, modeling and role play techniques
- Skills to be acquired, generalized and maintained
- Teaching personal safety is a lifelong goal

# Personal Safety

- Who is in the safety circle:
  - Choose family members, school personnel or mentors with individual's input
  - Roles of members clearly identified
  - Visual cue (card) with names, photos and contact information of members
  - Cell phone (program name and numbers)
  - Calling 911
  - Script/narrative how to communicate the problem
  - Keep visual representation of script (easily accessible)
  - Practice the script
  - Role Play

# Internet Safety

- Teen savvy / Tech savvy parent (positive use of technology)
- Prepare your teaching technique
- Set limits, establish rules for use and make clear boundaries
  - Collaborate to make a schedule-place in clear view
- Keep computers in public spaces around the house
- Supervise all accounts
- Create teachable moments
  - Cyberbullying

# Feelings Identification

- Feelings vocabulary
- Matching feelings vocabulary to facial expressions and pictured situations
- Recognizing and labeling one's own feelings
- Recognizing and labeling someone else's feelings (empathy, perspective-taking)

# Functional Communication

- *Functional Communication*
  - Making wants & needs known appropriately (asking for preferred item, refusing preferred item, asking for a break)
  - Conversation skills
    - commenting, asking and answering questions, eye contact, body language

This is a critical area for assessment and development of skills!

# Impulse Control & Staying Calm (Anger Management)

- Maintain personal space
- Acceptance of no and waiting
- Calm hands and body
- Inside/soft voice
- Noticing when there is a problem
  - Asking for help
  - Accepting help

# Social Skills in the Workplace and Community

- Greetings and good-byes
- Reciprocal conversation
- Appropriate manners (please, thank you, eye contact, personal space, minimizing stereotypy)
- Accepting feedback, compliments, correction, suggestions, and differences of opinion
- Asking for help or when confused
- Turn-taking and waiting
- Being assertive (“please leave me alone”)
- Arriving on time, answering cell phone, making calls
- Organization skills, work completion, staying focused

# Evidence-based Approaches to Assess Critical Skills throughout the lifespan



# Identification of Strengths and Needs



# Skill Steps

- **Step 1** – identify what the individual can and cannot do (i.e., skill acquisition)
- **Step 2** – intervene to teach areas of skill deficit (**discuss, demonstrate** and have the person “do” or practice the skill)
- **Step 3** – work toward generalization and fluency

# Broad-Based Skills Assessment

- Independence with various types of prompts versus skill targeted
  - Avoiding over prompting and delaying skills progression
  - Don't be afraid to take a step back to solidify a skill
- Assessing levels of support needed academically and functionally
  - Attention, focus, task completion
- Reinforcer and preference assessment
  - Thinking beyond the behavior plan to generalizable opportunities and naturally occurring R+

# Early Assessment

- Early work toward curriculum and goals
  - The Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program (**VB-MAPP**)
  - Battelle Developmental Inventory – 2nd Edition (**BDI-2**)
  - Informal measures, structured behavioral observation

# Assessment of Adaptive Functioning

- Adaptive Behavior Assessment System® — Third Edition (**ABAS-3**)
- Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, Third Edition (**Vineland-3**)
- **AFLS™** - The Assessment of Functional Living Skills (Partington)
- Scales of Independent Behavior-Revised (**SIB-R**)
- Informal measures
  - Community-based Skills Assessment (CSA)
  - Safety evaluation

# Assessment of Adaptive Functioning

- **Adaptive Behavior Assessment System® — Second Edition (ABAS-3)**
  - Ages 0-89
  - Includes current American Association of Intellectual Disabilities (AAID) guidelines for evaluating the three general areas of adaptive behavior (Conceptual, Social, Practical)
  - Assesses 11 adaptive skills areas Helps determine how individual responds to daily demands to assist with treatment & training goal planning
  - Determine eligibility for services and Social Security benefits
  - Helps assess capability of adults to live independently

# Assessment of Adaptive Functioning

- **Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, Second Edition (Vineland-3)**
  - Ages 0-90
  - 4 Domains: Communication, Daily Living Skills, Socialization, and Motor Skills
  - Optional 4<sup>th</sup> Domain: Maladaptive Behavior
  - Used in educational and clinical diagnostic evaluations of developmental delays
  - Used for progress monitoring and for program planning

# Assessment of Adaptive Functioning

- **AFLS™ - The Assessment of Functional Living Skills**
  - Over 700 useful daily living skills in 31 functional skill areas
  - Functional, Adaptive, Self-help, Practical Life skills to maximize independence
  - Appropriate for children, adolescents, and adults in Home, School, and Community settings

# Assessment of Adaptive Functioning

- **Scales of Independent Behavior-Revised (SIB-R)**

- Age 3 months to 80 years
- measure of adaptive and problem behavior
- assesses functional independence and adaptive functioning across settings: school, home, workplace, and community

# Assessment of Essential Skills

- **Essential for Living (EFL)** - Patrick McGreevy, Ph.D., BCBA-D
  - Comprehensive Functional Skills Curriculum, Assessment, Skill-tracking Instrument, and Professional Practitioner's Handbook used for Children and Adults with Moderate-to-Severe Disabilities
  - Essential Eight Skills
  - Composed of 3,000 functional skills.
    - First three domains contain 1,900 Speaking and Listening Skills.
    - Remaining four domains contain 1,100 Daily Living, Leisure, Vocational, Functional Academic, Tolerating, and Component Skills.

# Assessment of Vocational Skills and Preferences

- Importance of integrating choice and preference to overall well-being and satisfaction
  - Benefits of “matched jobs”
  - Improvements in performance
- Ongoing Motivational Assessment

# Assessment of Social Emotional Learning

- Importance of language/speech/pragmatics assessment
  - Clinical Assessment of Pragmatics (CAPs)
- Informal and Observational data probes
  - Assessment of generalization and motivation

# Evidence-based Approaches to Teach Skills toward Mastery and Plan for Generalization



# How to accomplish this in Education/Daily Programming?

- Identify and agree upon these critical / essential skills
- Assess each individual's ability to demonstrate each of these skills
- Assess personal preferences for skills and tasks
- Select and target specific skills for intensive teaching
- Revise the IEP/Support Plan accordingly

# How to accomplish this in Education / Daily Programming?

- Teach via an intensive teaching approach
- Monitor progress via data collection and analysis (e.g., daily/weekly data, mand/request data sheet, skills tracking, probe data sheet, task analysis)
- Teach:
  - to mastery
  - to increase generalization across situations/settings
  - to maintain skills
- Ensure that the “team” is in agreement

# Skills Training: Involves a Systematic Approach

- Teach individuals to become effective **observational** learners
- Use **role play** and invite practice to improve skill potential
- Provide **continuous feedback** about the child's performance
- Help develop methods of **self-reinforcement**
- Develop means for the individual to **transfer** training to the real world

# ABA-Based Teaching Methods

- Direct Instruction – personalized system
- Natural Environment Teaching (NET)
- Incidental Teaching
- Functional Communication Training (FCT)
- In-vivo Modeling
- Multiple Exemplar Training
- Generalization & Fluency Training

# ABA-Based Strategies

- Antecedent based interventions
- Desensitization
- Self monitoring & reinforcement
- Problem solving
- Prompt hierarchy
  - most to least
  - least to most
- Prompts & prompt fading
  - Visual prompts e.g., cue cards

# ABA-Based Strategies

- Positive reinforcement
- Differential reinforcement
- Extinction e.g., planned ignoring
- Instructions & rules
- Modeling & imitation
- Shaping
- Behavioral rehearsal
- Utilize client preferences!

# Real life practice

- If you want to help an individual learn to read a train schedule and successfully ride the train, then teach this skill, model it, and have the individual practice it with faded coaching in the real-life situation
- Other situations:
  - Food shopping, clothes shopping, going to post office and bank, doing laundry, scheduling appointments, physician and counseling appointments

# Independence is the Key

- Remember the goal is for the individual to be independent and apply strategies to reach his/her goals
- Include methods on how to self-evaluate, make adjustments, monitor progress, and review the plan to see if it was a success
- Remember to keep instructions simple, use visual cues, model instruction, practice, repeat, and reinforce

# Successful Social Problem-Solving

- Teach individual to more independently Problem-Solve so they have a “tool-box” to bring to social situations (Selbst & Gordon, 2012)
- Include **Social Stories™** (Gray, 2000; Wang & Spillane, 2009)
- **Incorporate Video Modeling & Video Self-modeling**
  - (meta-analyses by Bellini & Akullian, 2007; Wang & Spillane, 2009)

# Problem-Solving Situations

- Problem-Solving situations
  - *Finding items* - if individual doesn't have their wallet, phone, school bag, work uniform, preferred items, etc. he/she needs to find the item or ask for help finding the item.
  - *Opening/reaching high items* - if an individual needs an item opened or fixed, he/she needs to figure out a way to access or fix item (safely) or ask for help from an instructor
  - *Seeking help if lost or confused*

# Self-Advocacy

- Knowing you have a disability
- Being able to explain your disability
- Assertively stating/requesting what assistance you need
- Accessing resources effectively

# Targeted Social Behaviors

- Non-contextual vocalizations
  - Self talk
  - Self singing
- Talking loudly in various public settings
  - Library
  - Movie Theatre, etc.

# Skills Taught

- Problem Solving
- Transportation Training
- Employment related tasks
- Internship related tasks
- Volunteer related tasks
- Post-secondary education related tasks

# Skills Taught

- Use of social media
- Use of iPhone, text and email
- Social greetings
- Establishing & maintaining relationships
- Safety
- Self-Advocacy
- Public Speaking

# How do we know our interventions are working?



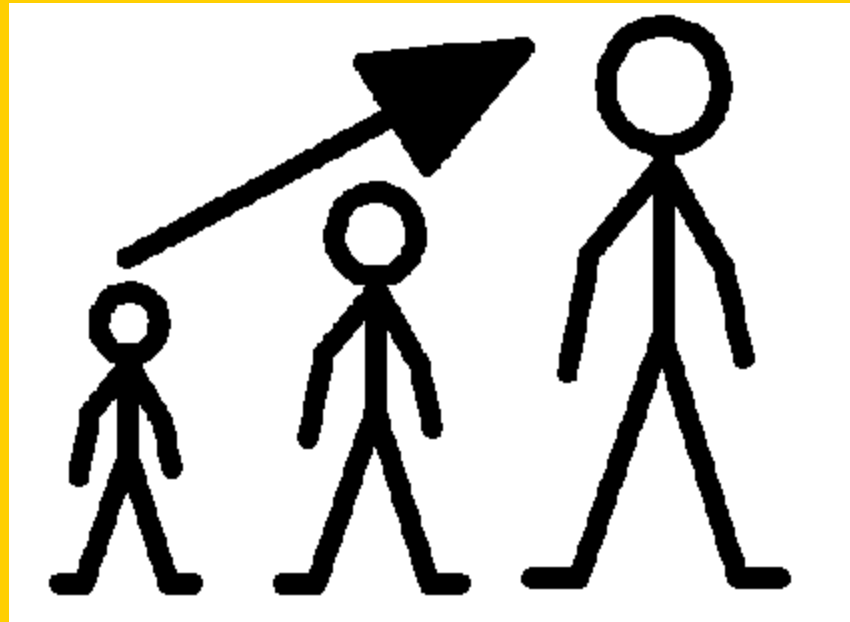
# Monitoring Progress

- Descriptive Data
- Permanent Product Data
- Behavioral Checklists
  - Targeted social behaviors
- Task Analyses
- Probe data - first response *or* per opportunity
- Ongoing preference assessments

# Monitoring Progress

- *Measure skills prior to, throughout, and following intervention (i.e., data collection to monitor progress)*
  - ***Social Skills Scorecard / Rating Form*** for lunch and recess
  - ***Behavior Scorecard*** throughout the day
  - ***Probe Data for IEP objectives:*** the first response of the day is recorded (+, -); If the skill is prompted (-) then it is re-taught throughout the day but no additional data are recorded until the following day
    - Example: did child greet another peer appropriately upon the first opportunity when he/she saw another familiar child?  
Yes (+) or No (-)
- *Routine assessments for Generalization and Maintenance*

# Transition Time



# Pre-K → Elementary → Middle → Highschool

- Assessing novel expectations for independence (independence/self advocacy skills)
- Assessing growing/changing needs of individual as they age (functional skills)
- Assessing changes in social and behavioral expectations (SEL and language skills)
- Are the services and level of service delivery meeting the current needs?
  - Appropriate and updated evaluation of skills during each transition period

# **Beyond the School Setting:** Transitioning from the final academic years to adulthood



# Post-Secondary Education

- Accommodations, Modifications & Supports
- Moving from school-based programming to 504 Plan
  - Most post-secondary programs have a department to ensure there is compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-325) of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
  - Need for continued individualization and updated as skills and goals for the individual change

# Transitioning to Adulthood

- Typically requires success in the areas of:
  - Social Relationships & Behavior Control
  - Community Living (daily living skills)
    - Shopping, cooking, cleaning, safety, making & keeping appointments
  - Finances (budgeting, check-writing, math skills)
  - Self-Advocacy
  - Safety
  - Education
  - Employment

# Employment

- **Rates of unemployment for post-secondary individuals with ASD ranges from 75%-97%** (Cathy Pratt, Autism Society of Wisconsin; Brenda Smith Myles, San Diego Autism Society; Herman T. Fishbein, Ed.D., University of Miami Center).
- **More than 50% of those who gain employment lose jobs soon after being employed.**

# Employment

## Factors associated with unemployment

- Ability to work independently (arrive on time, complete work correctly)
- Social communication
- Executive functioning (attention, planning and organization)
- Functional academic skills
- Daily living skills

# Successful Employment

- Vocational skills
- Social skills
- Job coaching
- Day Programs / Day Treatment-Habilitation
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Opportunities
  - Volunteer Opportunities
  - Internships (paid or unpaid)
  - Job Sampling / Matching

# Roles and Responsibilities for Professors, Job Coach, Assistant

- This should be derived collaboratively among the “team”
- Responsibilities are multifaceted

# Roles and Responsibilities of Employer/Coach may include

- Supervision of individual: safety first
- Knowledgeable of goals, objectives
- Knowledgeable of accommodations, modifications and supports
- Knowledgeable of the schedule and prompting to facilitate transitions
- Prompt levels
- Shadow by supporting & guiding, not hovering

# Successful Skill Building

- Increase frequency of intervention (e.g., daily)
- Increase duration (e.g., entire year)
- Use a systematic and consistent approach
- Train to fluency
- Include peers who can serve as positive models
- Prepare for novel situations
- Develop interventions for challenging behavior
- Collaboration and Communication among staff, family members, and any private providers
- Use of visuals
- Schedules to improve organization and performance

# Keep Moving Forward



# Transition Resources

- Transition Tool Kit: A guide to assist families on the journey from adolescence to adulthood (Autism Speaks, 201);  
[http://www.autismspeaks.org/docs/family\\_services\\_docs/transition.pdf](http://www.autismspeaks.org/docs/family_services_docs/transition.pdf)
- Transition Planning Individualized Education Program (IEP) Packet;  
<http://www.autismnj.org/document.doc?id=45>

# Related Resources

## ***Developing Self-Advocacy Skills: An Integral Aspect of Transition Planning***

Asperger's Association of New England

[www.aane.org/asperger\\_resources/articles/teens/developing\\_self\\_advocacy\\_skills.html](http://www.aane.org/asperger_resources/articles/teens/developing_self_advocacy_skills.html)

## ***Opening Doors to Self-Determination Skills: Planning for Life After High School – A Handbook for Students, School Counselors, Teachers & Parents***

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

[www.dpi.state.wi.us/sped/transition.html](http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/sped/transition.html)

## ***Learning the Skills of Self-Advocacy and Disclosure***

[www.autism.com/ind\\_learning\\_self\\_advocacy.asp](http://www.autism.com/ind_learning_self_advocacy.asp)

## ***Helping Your Child to Help Him/Herself: Beginning Self-Advocacy***

by Stephen Shore

[autismasperger.net/writings\\_self\\_advocacy.htm](http://autismasperger.net/writings_self_advocacy.htm)

## ***The Autism Transition Guide: Planning the Journey from School to Adult Life***

by Carolyn Thorwarth Bruey, Psy.D. & and Mary Beth Urban, M.Ed.

# Related Resources

Bal, V. H., Kim, S. H., Cheong, D., & Lord, C. (2015). Daily living skills in individuals with autism spectrum disorder from 2 to 21 years of age. *Autism, 19*(7), 774–784.

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