

ACT's Autism Manual for B.C.

Living and Working with Children and Adults with ASD

Chapter 9:

PREPARING FOR THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

Contributed by Vicki Lundine and Catherine Smith, authors of Career Training and Personal Planning for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders – A Practical Resource for Schools



Chapter Contents

Chapter 9: Preparing for the Transition from School to Work

<i>Guidelines for Student Placement in Community Work Placement</i>	9–4
<i>Procedures for Placement of Students with ASD</i>	9–5
<i>Students in Resource Room Placements</i>	9–5
Students with High Functioning Autism (HFA) or Asperger Syndrome (AS)	9–6
<i>The Role of the Parent</i>	9–7
<i>Home and School Collaboration</i>	9–9
<i>Training Opportunities in School</i>	9–10
<i>The Role of the Employer</i>	9–11
<i>Creating a Work-Friendly Environment</i>	9–13
<i>The Role of the Job Coach</i>	9–14
<i>Conclusion</i>	9–16
<i>Additional information</i>	9–16
Personal Planning and Career and Personal Planning	9–16
Individual Education Planning for Students with Special Needs	9–17
References	9–18
Related Websites	9–19

The “Introduction to ACT’s Autism Manual for B.C.” provides valuable context to this chapter. Download at: www.actcommunity.ca/autism-manual.

9 PREPARING FOR THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

For many families who have young children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, one of the greatest challenges is to imagine what support their child will need as they reach adulthood. This is because the impact of autism on a child's development is so variable. By the time their child has reached puberty, however, many parents are focusing on preparing their child for adulthood. Many are acutely aware that social skills are crucial to successfully interacting with others in the community, including the work place. This is the case whether their child is going into a supported employment program or into university!

The information below focuses on how the school can help facilitate the successful inclusion of students with special needs into the workplace. While it has been written by two respected special educators, the information is important for families to understand; it is frequently up to families to advocate within their school districts to ensure that the district is providing resources to prepare students for the transition to adulthood. Of course, parents themselves play a vital role in encouraging behaviors and habits that will support a successful transition. When schools and parents work together as a team, successful transition is much more likely!

The authors of this section are Vicki Lundine and Catherine Smith. Vicki has recently retired after a decade as a career counselor and 20 years as a teacher for the Campbell River School District on Vancouver Island. Her passion and enthusiasm for finding great work experience placements for her students is infectious! Until she retired recently, Catherine was an Educational and Behavioral Consultant for the Provincial Outreach Program for Autism and Related Disorders. As a Learning Assistance Teacher, District Integration Support Teacher and Provincial Consultant, she has worked collaboratively with parents and professionals to support students with ASD for over 20 years.

Vicki Lundine and Catherine Smith are the authors of Career Training and Personal Planning for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders – A Practical Resource for Schools. Published by Jessica Kingsley Press in 2006, this book provides important information for parents and school professionals.

"I would like to stress the importance of a gradual transition from an educational setting into a career."

Temple Grandin

Chapter 12: Guide to Employment for Teens and Adult with Autism in B.C. of this manual provides even more in-depth information about B.C.'s employment system for youth and adults with autism.



Autism
Information
Database

“Like Google for Autism but Better!”

Throughout this chapter you will see AID links that connect to resources:
www.actcommunity.ca/aid-search/

ACT's Autism Information Database (AID) has over 2000 autism-related information and community resources. It is easy to search using keywords and postal codes, which saves time in finding B.C. resources. There are links to excellent international websites on a wide range of topics relevant to children, youth and adults with ASD and their families, which community professionals may also find helpful. ACT's staff has reviewed each of the resources we have included — our focus is on providing practical, useful resources that empower families and communities. Do you have a community resource to recommend for the AID? Go to www.actcommunity.ca/submit-resource/

Although the emphasis on transition from high school to work appears to take place in Grades 10 or 11, in fact, the process begins much earlier than that. Attitudes toward work combined with decisions we make for young children can significantly influence the path they may choose to follow. It is important to recognize that all children, including those with ASD, begin their journey toward the world of work at a very early age. The members of a child's team need to be cognizant that it is important to recognize, record and foster interests, skills and talents the child demonstrates as he or she matures. When students enter middle and high school, the roles and responsibilities of each member of the student's team should clearly foster skills, attitudes and knowledge that will directly influence successful work experiences. Team members can agree to:

- Acknowledge a student when he or she completes tasks, whether it is cleaning up a locker or handing in a project.
- Reinforce desired behaviors with praise and perhaps combine this with token economy and/or tangible rewards such as stickers, or preferred activities to help promote an appreciation for responsible behavior.
- Create opportunities for the student to complete routine chores at home and at school to increase skills such as time management, co-operation and accountability.
- Provide positive feedback and constructive criticism so that students learn to accept support in order to improve their performance and appreciate that learning is an on-going process.
- Encourage group projects that foster social communication and cooperation. (Lundine & Smith, 2006)

Fostering the ability to carry out responsibilities independently helps an individual to develop valuable skills and support a healthy work ethic, which can be transferred to job settings.

Parents and guardians remain the primary advocates for their son's/daughter's future, and they play a significant role in the prospective involvement their child may have in the community. As partners in the process, parents can assign meaningful jobs in and around the home and garden to encourage responsibility. They can make their child aware of the types of jobs people do in the environment and how that helps to build a strong, safe community. Parents can invite friends, relatives and neighbours to demonstrate and talk about the type of work they do. They can teach their child to ask questions about the responsibilities these individuals have and why he or she likes the job s/he does. They might even have opportunities for their child to visit a variety of work environments and perhaps participate in one way or another. When we ask the excavator to let Johnny, who loves these machines, "drive the digger," we are giving the child a valuable experience. Setting up environments in and around the home so a child can practice being a truck driver, cook, postman, policeman, fireman, pilot, doctor, carpenter, and, teacher adds to a child's understanding of the role that each of these individuals plays in their lives and the community. It also creates opportunities for exploration.

Parents can investigate possible opportunities that will allow their child to practice work and social skills in neighborhood and community settings such as churches, clubs, volunteer organizations and fund raising drives. Participation encourages self exploration and enhances self confidence. It also helps increase the community's awareness of the skills and abilities the individual has to offer to that community. Participation benefits both the student and the community in defining how they can develop a meaningful relationship.

Career development goals apply to every individual including those with ASD. They include:

- Self-awareness to support finding the right job fit to reflect individual talents and interests
- Self-help and vocational skills
- Career
 - Awareness
 - Planning
 - Exploration
 - Preparation
 - Portfolio

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT PLACEMENT IN COMMUNITY WORK PLACEMENT

Work placements should involve well planned experiences which help a student explore the benefits as well as the challenges that these might present to the individual. In order to provide students with appropriate work placement opportunities, it is important to insure that each student has:

1. An Individual Educational Plan that outlines:
 - a. The goals of the work experience.
 - b. The purpose of the work experience.
 - c. The anticipated outcomes of the work experience.
 - d. How the work experience will be measured in terms of success for the student and the community.
 - e. How the work experience relates to future career plans for the students.
2. An assessment of interests and skills including a description of physical, social and academic abilities.
3. A guarantee that the Special Services Department and/or school will provide the necessary support systems the student requires while on the work experience placement.
4. An agreement from parents/guardians stating they will participate in the process of establishing and supporting an appropriate work experience.
5. An awareness that the student will remain an active participant throughout the process. (Lundine & Smith, 2006)

When all of these prerequisites are fulfilled, the career facilitator will collaborate with the student, parents, teacher, counselor and administrator to make arrangements for an appropriate work experience placement for the student.

PROCEDURES FOR PLACEMENT OF STUDENTS WITH ASD

Students in Resource Room Placements

1. The classroom teacher discusses the programme with the student using the communication system that accommodates a student's comprehension of the process.
2. The individual facilitating the career programs, the Career Facilitator, insures all necessary paperwork is complete throughout the process. Paperwork can involve a resume, log sheets, safety questionnaire, a confidentiality form and evaluation forms.
3. The Career Facilitator then meets with the IEP team to discuss the work experience in more detail.
4. Prior to the work experience, the classroom teacher makes arrangements for a paraprofessional to accompany the student to the workplace, if required.
5. The Career Facilitator makes arrangements for an appropriate work placement and reports back to the classroom teacher and the student.
6. The Career Facilitator takes the student and the paraprofessional, if required, to the placement interview.
7. The Career Facilitator makes visitations to the work site.
8. The Career Facilitator is responsible for thanking the employer on behalf of the school district.

Note: Smaller districts may not have a career facilitator; thus, the classroom teacher may collaborate with a counselor or administrator in this process.

Students with High Functioning Autism (HFA) or Asperger Syndrome (AS)

1. The Career Facilitator discusses the Work Experience Programme with the student.
2. The Career Facilitator insures all necessary paperwork is complete throughout the process. Paperwork can involve a resume, log sheets, safety questionnaire, a confidentiality form and evaluation forms.
3. The Career Facilitator meets with the case manager to discuss student supports that may be required, the objectives of the work placement, transportation issues, parent contact, and any other special circumstances.
4. If a paraprofessional is required to accompany the student on the work site, the school will be responsible for arranging this prior to arranging the work experience.
5. The Career Facilitator makes arrangements for an appropriate work placement for the student and relays the information to the case manager. The case manager informs the student and parents.
6. The Career Facilitator accompanies the student, and paraprofessional, if required, to the placement interview with the employer.
7. The Career facilitator makes site visitations.
8. The Career Facilitator is responsible for thanking the employer on behalf of the school district.

THE ROLE OF THE PARENT

Parents play a pivotal role in helping their son or daughter acquire the foundation skills and develop values that will influence his or her success in the community and in the workplace after high school. Parents, as advocates, overcome personal and emotional challenges as they begin the process of ensuring their son or daughter has the necessary supports they will need to remain active participants within the community. Parents are the ones who need to find and recruit the people who diagnose, assess and develop programmes to encourage better communication, enhance social skills and facilitate participation in the community. Parents are the ones who recognize a child's interests, strengths and abilities, as well as the challenges he or she faces. They are the ones who celebrate their child's victories and share success stories to promote greater independence and social mobility, as well as increase awareness, understanding and support from the community.

As the child develops and grows, with proper supports in place, his or her abilities will strengthen, interests may change, and talents will emerge. Parents play an important role in recognizing how these can influence what the future may hold for their child. Parent perspective and intimate knowledge of their son or daughter combined with the insights of the professionals supporting their child can lead to formulating realistic goals for the future. By developing goals built on relevant information that truly reflects the student, the team can "begin with an end in mind." By the time a student enters high school, the members of the team should be equipped to help the student define his or her hopes and dreams for the future. The team can help the student to establish priorities, choose interventions, courses or programs to facilitate realizing those goals. The team will be expected to meet regularly with the student to assess progress and adjust the plan as needed.

Parents have another important role to play in preparing their son or daughter to participate in the world of work. Many students with ASD do not process what information is available to them in their immediate environment. While typical children appear to absorb and respond to accessible information in their environments, the student with ASD may be unaware of that information. Those supporting a child with ASD can help a child acquire greater independence when they apply the caveat, "Never assume he or she has mastered a skill." To insure mastery of skills, the team needs to allocate time to teach the child skills that include observing, experiencing, and responding to his or her environment. Actively teaching these skills and encouraging a child to pay attention to the environment can enhance awareness and personal safety, as well as provide interesting conversation topics. Think about scheduling time to go for walks in the child's local environment, the neighborhood, the park, the mall or the village center. Check to see if

"The family remains the primary Influence, Advocate and Educator in the development of their child's attitudes, standards and values."

Gregg Hill, Campbell River and District Association for Community Living, interview, 2004

your son or daughter notices sounds, visual cues, changes, and patterns along the way. Teach the child to look up and find street lights, crosswalks, signs, cars coming and going, entrances and exits. Insure they learn to recognize safe places and safe people. These skills and abilities can all be transferred to the work site.

Teaching a child how to establish routines provides the child with the opportunity to be a part of the process for organizing his or her participation in helping out. This can include ways for keeping and maintaining an organized and clean living environment be it apartment, home, yard or hallway. This helps a child to foster a respect for maintaining an environment that is clean, safe, and healthy, a value which prospective employers greatly appreciate.

Not only is it critical that we teach a child to notice what is in the immediate environment, but learning to listen to the sounds in their environment is another vital skill we can help to promote. In addition to teaching a child how to listen to sounds and words so they can interact with others, the team should be aware that the ability to listen is also a safety skill. The game “Listening Lotto” is a favorite for young children. Detecting, identifying and locating the source of sounds, as well as explaining what they mean, can help alleviate stress and anxiety for most children. Emphasizing the positive reasons why there may be jarring sounds in the environment may help diminish fears. Explain that the ambulance uses the siren so drivers can move to the side to keep everyone safe. The siren has to be loud because some people may be listening to their radios or iPods. Teach children who have sensitive hearing how to cope with these intrusions by putting their hands over their ears. If the problem is more involved, check with a professional for solutions. Teach children to listen for the sounds that they may hear at crosswalks. Teach them to identify commercial vehicles and the sounds they use to warn pedestrians when they are backing up. If there is construction taking place in the community, stop and listen to the sounds and try to identify the tools being used. Talk about how to be safe when construction is going on. Revisit the site and watch it evolve. Students who recognize sounds can learn how to respond safely to them if necessary.

The home is a rich environment to foster life skills as well as social skills that will support increased participation in the greater community. Establish joint attention, practice joint activity routines, teach manners and social conventions that are respected in the community, encourage your child to participate in the smooth running of a household. With attention and practice, parents can help insure their child has opportunities to acquire and refine these skills as he or she matures. Everyday tasks such as taking out the garbage, cleaning one's room, putting dishes in the dishwasher, learning to use a washer and dryer, setting the table, washing windows, cutting the grass,

and recycling are all jobs that have to be done. When the child with ASD contributes to the smooth running of a place, everyone benefits. Begin early to insure that the child attends to personal hygiene as this is an area that can be difficult to address if left to chance. Maintaining good personal hygiene habits can significantly influence social connections in the workplace. These skills help the child with ASD learn how to establish routines, increase independence, acquire self help skills, promote a good work ethic and develop a positive attitude.

Families who live in areas where there is access to public transportation can help their son or daughter learn to use the system so that, eventually, they may be able to get to and from the work site comfortably.

Career training and personal planning are lifelong pursuits which begin in the home and expand to the school and community.

HOME AND SCHOOL COLLABORATION

Collaboration between parents and the school team is essential to develop an effective IEP that will direct responsible curriculum as well as career training programs and work experiences. Skills being taught at school can be supported by the family and skills the family is working on can be practiced at school.

When each person clearly understands his or her role as a member of the child's team, respect for the specialty that each person brings to the group is enhanced. As the school recognizes the parent is the expert on their child, parents can appreciate the individual expertise each school and district team member brings to the table. Each person adds a different lens to the strengths a student demonstrates which can be applied in a work experience.

Collaboration allows the team to focus on the most important skills a student requires in order to participate either partially or fully in the world of work. By prioritizing skills the student is learning, the team can determine how they will be taught and what reinforcements will encourage generalization. The skills should be clearly and objectively stated with scheduled practice so they can be monitored and reviewed regularly. As the skills become an intrinsic part of a student's repertoire, new skills can be introduced. Once again, it is important to emphasize that the team establish clear goals which reflect career planning, exploration, preparation and participation to insure that the designated curriculum remains dynamic and relevant as well as an integral part of the student's program. Developing a communication system so that team members can be kept abreast of a student's experiences and progress in the different environments is recommended.

Parents and caregivers as well as the student can learn to record the student's participation in work experiences and community activities by using technology such as a digital camera. The student can establish a folder and maintain a record of his or her role or roles in the events and activities in which they participate. These can be documented in a portable format such as an album, or they can be put into a PowerPoint format and burned onto a CD. Photos can be emailed to parents or to a teacher. The student can be taught to reference and reflect on his or her experiences. This reflection can help the student to begin to understand what he or she would like to do after graduation. Celebrating student accomplishments can help both the team and the student recognize what that student enjoys doing and in which environments he or she is successful and most comfortable. These photo journals can be very empowering when establishing long-term goals.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES IN SCHOOL

For students who require intense training to learn skills, school can be a fertile environment for increasing a student's ability to initiate and perform meaningful jobs. Jobs should be chosen to support the goals of the IEP. These functional jobs can begin in an elementary setting as meaningful activities can significantly influence the acquisition of skills. For example, consider Graham, a student who is learning *waiting, one-to-one correlation, telling time, calendar, temporal concepts, sorting money, hygiene skills, food safety, following directions, greetings* and *giving compliments*.

Each morning during *math*, he leaves the class at 9:50 am. He approaches the teacher holding a card with a symbol for coffee on it. He has to *wait* for her to turn to him in order to hand the card to her. She smiles and nods and Graham leaves the classroom accompanied by his Educational Assistant. They go to the staff room and Graham *follows a task analysis*, which indicates the steps he needs to perform to make a pot of coffee. He begins by *washing his hands, organizing* the needed equipment, *counting* scoops into the coffee maker, filling the coffee pot with water and so on. He turns the coffee on and then retrieves the can which has the coffee fund in it. He then *sorts* the coins and *counts* how many in each group, with assistance. He *records* the information on a form, and on a separate form he *writes the date and the amount*. He then takes the money to the secretary in the office. He *initiates a greeting* to which the secretary responds. He then hands the money and the form to the secretary along with the total amount for the day. He *practices giving a compliment* to the secretary, she responds and *says goodbye*. Graham says goodbye and comments on whether he will see her *tomorrow* or whether it will be a *weekend or a non-attendance day*.

The italicized words reflect the skills that Graham is working on. While he has one-on-one support to learn these skills in the classroom, creating opportunities that allow him to practice these skills in functional settings reinforces the concepts he is learning and supports generalization beyond the classroom.

When students are doing a job, it is critical that the adults supporting the student treat this as a process for helping to develop real job skills that will be transferred either to the group home, on a work site or in the community. As such, a protocol should be established for each member of the school staff as to the role they will assume in supporting the process. All staff members should understand that the student is engaging in a work experience and should be treated accordingly. For example, the secretary was briefed before Graham began to drop off the money as to the skills she would be helping him master in the interactions she would have with him. Staff members who may have been in the teachers' lounge when Graham was working were aware that they could support his social skills development by exchanging short greetings with Graham and thanking him for the coffee, but they also understood that it was important not to distract him from his learning.

The team must review the IEP to insure that it reflects the skills the student is learning.

- Prioritize which skills the student needs to acquire.
- Define the student's independent and instructional levels.
- Design the process that will support skills acquisition.
- Create a system for collecting data and determining success.
- Determine when to terminate the activity.
- Plan where and how the learned skills can be maintained and generalized.

THE ROLE OF THE EMPLOYER

In order for students to succeed on a worksite, an atmosphere that reflects an acceptance of diversity is critical. The Career Facilitator has a pivotal role in helping to foster this as he or she supports the employer. Unfortunately, when a student with challenges applies for a job, some employers may first notice an individual's disabilities rather than his or her abilities. That is why it is important to create a process whereby the Career Facilitator can support the employer as well as the student in achieving positive work experiences.

The Career Facilitator has attended the IEP meeting, met with the student and has a clear understanding of the type of work the student can perform, the environment best suited to that student and the potential jobs that may benefit that student. The Career Facilitator also begins to know employers in the district and recognizes which steps need to be taken to insure the employer has the information he or she will require in order to insure success on the job. Once employers understand their role in supporting individuals on work experiences, they also begin to recognize the benefits in providing these opportunities to these students. The employer may ask the Career Facilitator to provide the staff with some information which will insure that the work experience supports the skills that the student is learning.

Next, the employer receives the student's resume which he or she reviews. The student is given an appointment to meet the employer and an interview ensues. At this time, the employer explains the job expectation to the student: when the job begins and ends, arrival time, break times, appropriate personal appearance and dress, safety issues, as well as the specific tasks the student will be performing.

When the student is on the job, the employer will assist in defining the jobs the student will learn. If the student requires step-by-step job cards or task analyses for the different jobs he or she will be expected to do, it will be important to insure that the job coach is trained in this. The employer is also responsible in supporting an inclusive environment, monitoring the student's progress, insuring that responsibilities match the student's abilities, considering increasing responsibilities if the student demonstrates continued success with initial duties, demonstrating the importance of the job in the community, and evaluating the work experience.

In some communities, employers who have become committed to the program are actively encouraging other employers to join them. One group of businesspersons initiated breakfast meetings and then invited other employers in the community to join them to hear about the benefits of actively supporting these individuals. The idea caught on and facilitated more work experiences for more students in the community.

The connection between school and the community becomes central in making the work experience successful for the student, the employer, and anyone else who is involved, including co-workers and customers.

CREATING A WORK-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

Honesty, communication and safety are critical on the work site.

Successful work experiences rely on a number of factors that have to be considered. The openness on the part of the school when recruiting employers is essential. Confidentiality remains very important. However, the employer needs to understand the challenges they may encounter during the student's work experience. For example, the student is: in a wheel chair and requires more space, is deaf, is blind, is non-verbal, has allergies, requires multiple trials to learn tasks, needs routines, requires pre-warning for fire or earthquake drills, or requires warnings when changes are about to take place. The employer must feel empowered and supported when he or she assumes the responsibility of a work experience student. There can be no surprises that might compromise this partnership. The employer is contributing his time and possibly the time of other staff members to accommodate this opportunity.

Students with ASD encounter significant challenges in the area of communication. This, in fact, is one of the defining features of the diagnosis. Communication is very complex and presents differently in different individuals. Many students have difficulty processing new information so it is important that they have access to visual information to help them perform their jobs successfully. The team must insure that appropriate communication supports are available at the work site to facilitate success. Visual supports include pictures, symbols or words. Visual supports may involve: job cards, colour coding, boundary markers, step-by-step procedures, checklists, timers, pre-recorded videos of the tasks, role-plays before going to the job, and photo journals of others on the job. For students who have difficulty engaging in casual conversations, cue cards or scripts may support interactions during break times. The career facilitator can also teach the staff how to interact with the student by modeling.

To insure safety on the worksite, the Career Facilitator must first go to the worksite and determine if it is safe for the student. Then, the Career Facilitator must meet with the employer to define what the student will be doing so that employer expectations meet student safety needs. Next, the student tours the job site to observe and identify safety concerns.

Back in the classroom, the student can be taught routines that will insure that the student can work safely in the work environment. The student can also learn to recognize safety hazards and communicate how to respond to these. To help increase student awareness of safety procedures on the job site, opportunities for discussion, role playing, watching videos and practicing safety procedures can be established by the classroom teacher. Visual sup-

ports for safety in the school should parallel those the student will encounter on the job site.

On the job site, safety posters, signs and procedures should be clearly displayed, and students should be shown where they are. They should also become familiar with the staff member who can help them in case a problem arises.

THE ROLE OF THE JOB COACH

The main job of a job coach involves shadowing the student and facilitating a successful experience for the student, as well as the employer and the employees on the site. The job coach supports the student in mastering the skills he or she is learning, as well as helping to determine when the student is ready to assume new responsibilities on the job. That support sometimes means insuring that the student has opportunities to complete tasks independently even if, initially, it takes a little longer to complete the assigned task.

The job coach is expected to:

- Always appear professional.
- Demonstrate respect at all times for the student as a responsible young adult.
- Take a back seat when going on an interview with the work experience teacher or career facilitator.
- Remain unobtrusive in the workplace.
- Cue, monitor safety, provide support only as required, and remain as discrete as possible.
- Help the student learn the layout of the site.
- Teach the student to “see” what else can be done to help maintain the work site. For example: if a chair is misplaced, the student puts it where it belongs; if there is litter on the floor, the student places it in the garbage.
- Provide positive feedback and redirection as needed.
- Attend the worksite with the tools required to support the student and maintain accurate records of the student’s progress such as clipboard, pen, skills reporting sheets, task analysis forms, notepaper to record any

environmental or safety issues that may need to be addressed or reinforced in the classroom.

- Be respectful of the employment opportunity and the individuals who are working on the site.
- Keep in mind that conversations on the job should be limited to the assigned tasks.
- Support student and staff interactions if coffee breaks with staff are involved.
- Model teaching techniques for business staff.

Responsibilities:

- Model desired behaviors.
- Dress appropriately.
- Respond only when the student needs assistance or the placement officer requires more detailed information.
- Have a clear understanding of the job and the workplace.
- Understand the goals and objects to be met by the student in the workplace.
- Understand and assist in creating task analysis for the student.
- Report daily on student progress, quantity and quality of assigned tasks, time spent completing tasks, number and type of cues required to complete the task, further training required, self-help skills required, and social skills progress.
- Debrief with the student and designated teacher in appropriate environments.
- Be prepared to videotape or take digital photos of the student in the workplace when proper forms are completed. (Lundine & Smith, 2006)

CONCLUSION

Charles Hart states, “The major goals of special education, like that of regular education should be to prepare the student for life after graduation, an adult life with optimal opportunities for free choices, self-determination and integration.” (Charles Hart, 1989) It is therefore incumbent on all of us to recognize that we need to be aware of the work opportunities that await our students with ASD in the communities where they reside. We also have to realize that these opportunities need to be explored, fostered and supported. It does take a village to raise a child, and the teams that work with a plan in a collaborative manner have the greatest chance of seeing their children or students remain full participants in an inclusive environment.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Personal Planning and Career and Personal Planning

In British Columbia, the Personal Planning (K–7) and Career and Personal Planning (8–12) curriculums are required areas of study. These curriculums are designed to have students set learning goals, develop plans to achieve them and study topics that promote career and personal development. Students study topics that promote personal health and human development, as well as selected topics in business and consumer education. A main objective is to encourage students to take increased responsibility for their learning. These curriculums recognize that emotional and social development are as important as academic achievement and intellectual and physical skills.

In the primary years, the emphasis is on activities related to students developing safety and health skills, setting goals, making decisions, communication and developing an understanding of their own strengths and interests.



In the intermediate and graduation years, the development of personal and career plans becomes more formalized. By Grade 9, students must develop a Student Learning Plan in which they begin to identify their desired career and personal goals and explore plans to realize those goals. The Student Learning Plan can be used for communication between the home and school. Students develop and regularly update their Student Learning Plans with guidance from teachers and parents.

In grades 11 and 12, students must take Career and Personal Planning, which focuses on the Planning Process (including the development and maintenance of Student Learning Plans), Personal Planning, and Career Development (including 30 hours of work experience). Students successfully completing this area of study receive four credits toward graduation. (www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/capp/capptoc.htm)

Individual Education Planning for Students with Special Needs

What is an IEP? An IEP is a written plan, developed for a student, which describes the program modifications and/or adaptations for the student and the services that are to be provided. It serves as a tool for collaborative planning among the school, the parents, the student (where appropriate) and, as necessary, school district personnel, other ministries and/or community agencies. See AID Resource

<p>The IEP is:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A concise and usable document which summarizes the plan for the student’s education program. • A tool to assist teachers in monitoring and communicating student growth. • A plan developed, implemented, and monitored by school staff in consultation with others involved with the student. • A flexible, working document with meaning for all contributors. • An ongoing record to ensure continuity in programming.
<p>The IEP is not:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Written in stone.” • A daily plan, or a description of everything that will be taught to one student. • A means to monitor the effectiveness of teachers. • A report card (however, the report card should comment on progress towards IEP goals).

See AID Resource www.actcommunity.ca/resource/2043/.

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Related Websites

1. The Provincial Outreach Program for Autism and Related Disorders (POPARD) is an important Ministry of Education service that provides training and support to both public and private schools in British Columbia. See www.autismoutreach.ca.
2. Special Education Technology – British Columbia (SET-BC) is a Ministry of Education program that works in partnership with all BC school districts, including Group 1 and 2 independent schools. SET-BC helps districts to provide AT services for students with physical disabilities, visual impairments, dependent or multiple handicaps, or autism spectrum disorders. SET-BC lends AT to districts and provides consultation, training and support for students and educators in the use of these technologies. See AID Resource www.actcommunity.ca/resource/1263/.
3. THEO BC is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to offering a selection of employment-related programs, courses, continuing education, leisure activities, and supported education services. See www.opendoorgroup.org/.
4. The Government of British Columbia's Ministry of Social Development and Housing website provides information on adult services for Persons With Disabilities (PWD) benefits. See AID Resource www.actcommunity.ca/resource/1268/.
5. Triumph Vocational Services creates opportunities for people with disabilities in British Columbia to develop skills, increase independence and participate in the workplace. See www.wcgservices.com/get-to-know-us/.

