Challenges and Successes of students with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Post Secondary Education

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D - Diagnosed with autism
A - Advocating for autism awareness
V - Value the needs for Quality Education
I - Independent to break barriers around the world
D - Determined to save the lives of families who have autistic children

Introduction

According to the center for disease control, the prevalence of autism is currently estimated at 1 in 59 child-births, 1 in 37 males and 1 in 151 females. It is estimated that less than 20% of students with ASD graduate with a bachelor's degree after 5 years post high school, 34% after 7 years. It is imperative to look for and find the kinds of supports that are necessary for students with learning and behavioral challenges of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to succeed.

Child Births

Post HS
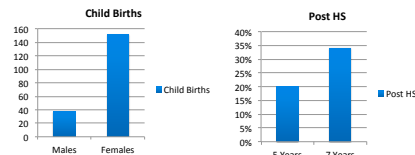
Research Question: Can ASD students overcome challenges in postsecondary education and succeed?
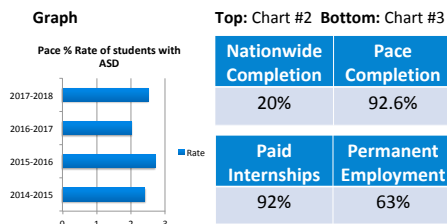
Hypothesis: Students with ASD can overcome challenges in Post Secondary education and succeed.

Statistics (2018)

Graph: Pace offers a comprehensive support system for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
Chart #2: Nationwide, the average rate of completion in Post Secondary Education for students with ASD and learning differences. Comparatively, with comprehensive support at Pace University, the completion rate over a four-year period.
Chart #3: Shows how paid internships and employment for students with ASD and learning differences who attend the comprehensive support program Pace University.

Graph

Pace % Rate of students with ASD

- 2017-2018
- 2016-2017
- 2015-2016
- 2014-2015

Rate

Top: Chart #2 **Bottom:** Chart #3

Nationwide Completion	Pace Completion
20%	92.6%

Paid Internships	Permanent Employment
92%	63%

Methodology

Unit #1 – Characteristics of the Spectrum
Having the difficulty to communicate effectively through dialogue conversations, adapt to changes, comprehend the feelings of others and managing sensitivity.
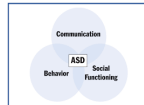
Fig. #1 Russell, Nadine (Dentistry Today., 2014)

Unit #2 – Challenges of Educational Experience
Navigating a successful transition to post secondary education adjusting to less structured environments, managing executive functioning skills, following a tentative schedule, living in a new space, advocating for accommodations.

Fig. #2 Fallahi, Carolyn (Activity., 2019)

Unit #3 – Specific Areas of Need
Transition from high school to college for strategies for students to obtain comprehensive support to develop executive functioning skills, become socially interactive, be comfortable in large settings.

Fig. #3 (College Autism Spectrum., 2019)

Unit #4 – Comprehensive Support
Comprehensive Support programs include academic coaches, a career counselor, educational coordinator, social worker, social coordinator, and housing coordinator.

Fig. #4 Fisher, Kim (Griffin Bariatrics., 2019)

Unit #5 – Findings
Post Secondary institutions are experiencing a growth of students with ASD. Currently, nationwide, 1.9% of students with ASD attend colleges and universities and this population is growing. There is an 80% incompletion rate at most colleges without support systems.

Unit #6 – Biology of the Brain
The autistic brain is different from the neuro-typical brain, the synapsis and neuro-connections in the brain are neurologically different.

Fig. #5 Hughes, Virginia (Spectrum., 2012)

Unit #7 – Theory of Mind
It is difficult for people with autism to process what others think that are different from their thoughts. There are strategies for training people with ASD to be aware of different perspectives of others.

Fig. #6 Thompson, Brittany (Psychology Today., 2017)

Unit #8 – Success Rates
Quantitative – Course Grades and GPA's
Qualitative – Social and emotional adjustments. Offer a comprehensive view of students' growth.

Fig. #7 Craddock, Samantha (123RF., 2019)

Unit #9 – Institutions for Support
When I was in Vermont for a summit conference, I discovered programs that have a mission to help students with ASD in Post-Secondary Education reach independence. More and more colleges are developing support systems for students with ASD.

Unit #10 – UN: Assistive Technologies
Individuals with ASD who need assistive technologies for learning are unable to receive them globally. Four values embody the Human Rights Conventions: *Equality and equity, Inclusion & Transparency, Employment, and Education.*

Fig. #8 Gutteres, Antonio (United Nations., 2019)

Unit #11 – Reciprocity Workshops
Reciprocity workshops are new initiatives to help students with ASD become interactive and learn to converse with others on a variety of topics.
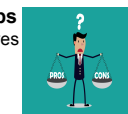
Fig. #9 Campbell, Kim (Blue Ocean., 2017)

Unit #12 – Rights and Responsibilities
Higher education services are offered differently. All students have a right to supports under the American Disabilities Act, but are responsible to fulfill the the same requirements as all students.
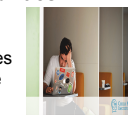
Fig. #10 (Child Mind Institute., 2019)

Fig. #11 McNarma, Troy (Medium., 2012)

Fig. #12 Sustainable Development(United Nations., 2018)

Conclusion

Students with ASD attending post secondary education can, as we have shown be successful academically, socially, gain independence and self-sustenance as adults. The detection and diagnosis of autism is on the rise. Early intervention promises potential for more students to be enrolled in post-secondary education. Current statistics from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Institute of Health (NIH) indicate a less than average graduation rate for ASD students. Employment rates for those who do graduate are less than 20 percent specifically in their post-secondary areas of study. With social training and employment ready workshops for students with ASD, there is a promise to increase employment and independence.

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