

A Spectrum of Possibility: Tips for Teachers of College Seeking Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Often times we, as educators, determine students' postsecondary paths early in their educational careers. Because of their diagnosis, behavior, or support needs, students may be pigeonholed into a pathway that may or may not include college. All students should have a chance, if they would like, to experience post-secondary education. As educators, it is our job to help them realize this opportunity.

A teacher can prepare a student for success through empowerment, education, and independence. Each of these elements should be considered early on in a student's educational career. Below are tips for teachers from elementary school through high school.

Teacher tips

	Empowerment	Education	Independence
Elementary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give your students voice by obtaining their feedback about lessons Have students teach each other in class or students at a younger grade Help students explore things that they like and are good at, and use these topics to expand concepts and ideas Teach students to ask for help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set high expectations Inform your students what your expectations are (use visual supports to help reinforce this) Presume competence Provide support only as needed Teach the process of learning, not just the content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin giving students choice early on and teach them how to make a choice Teach problem solving at an early age Discuss outcomes of choices and how problems were solved Teach self-monitoring of behavior and tasks Teach self-care skills
Middle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up opportunities for students to ask others for help –beyond the teacher Have students complete interest surveys Find opportunities at school where students can become involved in extracurricular activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make time to teach social skills Include executive functioning lessons in all of your classes that address impulse control, emotional control, flexible thinking, working memory, organization, planning and prioritizing, self-monitoring, task initiation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fade adult support as soon as possible Use visual supports as needed in place of adult guidance Teach safety skills (at school, in the community, internet) Teach about puberty and healthy relationships before it starts

	Empowerment	Education	Independence
High	Teach self-advocacy skills Go to college fairs Have students identify what colleges to apply to Have students research requirements for desired college (freshman and sophomore year)	Have students match college entrance requirements with current grades, scores, etc. Prepare for the Virginia placement test (or tests needed for colleges outside of VA) Continue to work on strategies to assist with executive functioning	Explore and begin transportation initiatives (driver's education, public transportation, carpooling, etc.) Develop budget that includes costs for transportation, housing, and meals for living on one's own, with family, or in a dorm/apt.

For more information, please see our video series *A Spectrum of Possibility*: centerontransition.org/asd. This four part video series highlights experiences and advice from college students with ASD as well as parents, high school counselors, and college professors. The project was made by Virginia Commonwealth University's Center on Transition Innovations with support from the Virginia Department of Education.

Additional resources

Youthhood Curriculum Guide: youthhood.org/guides/index.asp

Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child, Executive Function Activities for Adolescents: developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Activities-for-Adolescents.pdf

College Executive Function Coaching: beyondbooksmart.com/college-executive-function-coaching