

This is Me: Impact of an Electronic Secondary Transition Tool on Novel Adults' Knowledge of Students with Developmental Disabilities' Support Strategies and Interests

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A Quick Look

This article examines how an electronic tool helps transition-aged high school students with communication disorders self-advocate. Using this tool, students were able to create and customize This is Me (TiME) stories to self-advocate for support. Researchers compared adults' knowledge of students before and after viewing students' stories.

Knowledge about students' strengths and needs is often lost as students move across K-12 settings. Without this knowledge, school and transition professionals may not know how best to support students across school or work settings. The researchers wanted to see how student stories can help adults learn about students' interests and needs.

TiME stories are electronically created using pictures and videos on iOS-based tools (i.e. Apple devices). In this article, high-school students with moderate to severe disabilities with identified communication challenges created stories. Each student was paired with a school staff member they did not know. Next, educational teams worked with students to create a customized list of strategies based on their needs. Students then developed and rehearsed TiME stories to share their strengths and interests and to show adults how they communicate, manage behavior, or problem-solve.

Key Findings

The study found that the school staff learned more quality information about students after viewing the stories they created and shared. Researchers suggest that students with communication challenges can learn strategies to advocate for support from the process of creating, rehearsing, and sharing their stories.

Putting It Into Practice

The authors offer the following considerations for practices.

1. TiME stories offer students a chance to directly teach others about their needs. In the workplace, this means students can advocate for job support or share personal information on their own instead of through a job coach or employment provider.
2. Simple, everyday technologies help students who need extra support with communication become key players in making and sharing their stories.

Where To Go from Here?

While this study shows how TiME stories can help increase student advocacy with school staff, it does not address other settings, such as the workplace. The researchers suggest future studies where students are partnered with adult employment personnel to improve communication for workplace success. Finally, making and sharing stories offers a new tool using electronic technology to support student self-advocacy and promote self-determination.