



Promoting Community Inclusion and Participation for Autistic Individuals

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Introduction

A person's community participation is driven by their sensory, communication, and social/behavioral factors. Increasing awareness of factors impacting participation also promotes health, wellness, and engagement for all people.

Autism-friendly environments are compatible with the unique sensory, communication, and social/behavioral differences associated with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Much of ASD research has focused on "biology, brain function and cognition;" however, according to Autism Policy Practice (2019), individuals with ASD "would prefer more research on aspects of day-to-day living, such as improving services and developing programs to enhance individuals' life skills."¹

A holistic sensory, communication and social/behavioral approach to community inclusion can minimize distress often accompanying participation for people with ASD.²

Identifying typical sensory, communication, and social struggles while conducting event and venue audits can enhance participation and engagement in community life.

What Guides Us

- Creating an innovative, sustainable approach to promoting community participation for students, schools, and venues impacted by ASD.
- Involving individuals with ASD in research about ASD.
- Empowering individuals with ASD with self-advocacy skills.
- Promoting self-guided learning during transition planning.

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What We Do: Tools, Activities, and Curriculum



- Setup: Phone chest strap used to walk through community areas and record for sensory, communication, and social factors.



- Video compilation: depicts the parking lot, entrance, crowds, ticket booth, staff, sounds, signage, lighting, activities, seating options, restrooms, exits.

Visual: What do you see?

- My first thought about this video is ...
- I see _____.
- When I see _____, I feel _____.
- The lights are _____.
- The place looks _____.

- Pre-audit practice: After students with ASD watch the community video, they use sentence stems to practice completing an audit. They be will familiarized with the factors.

VISUAL

Photo 1: How the place is organized, the lighting, or a person who works there.

- Look for: storage, decorations, displays
- Look for: fluorescent or natural, shadows, brightness
- Look for: uniforms, name tags

- **PhotoVoice:** Students with ASD can also take photos as a way to reflect, share, and record their sensory, communication, and social experiences.



Curriculum for Individuals with ASD

Self-Awareness:

- Individuals gain awareness of their sensory, communication, and social/behavioral factors.

Self-Care:

- Individuals identify strategies to meet their unique needs in order to promote overall health and wellbeing.

Self-Advocacy:

- Individuals learn to advocate for personal, unique needs to be met by communicating needs to others.



Social Skills Training Group Program: UC Davis MIND Institute

Curriculum for Community Partners

Venue/Event Awareness:

- Partners learn about their sensory, communication, and social/behavioral factors.

Community-Care:

- Partners identify sensory, communication and social factors of their venue or event that may impact people with ASD.

Community-Advocacy:

- Partners develop strategies to accommodate factors impacting people with ASD. Partners may team with other community agencies.

Methods

Phase 1: The Listening Summer

- Interviews with individuals with ASD and community partners

Phase 2: Curriculum Design and Implementation

- Designing THECB CCRS-informed goals into curriculum for public high school students in transition planning

Phase 3: Piloting the Program

- Beta-testing the curriculum with clients at My Possibilities and community partners

Future steps:

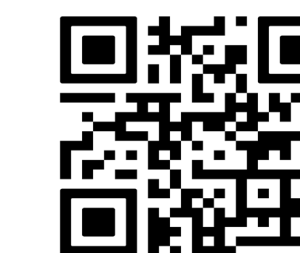
- Moving the program into public high school transition planning curriculum

Anticipated Outcomes

- Individuals with ASD are included in the research process to provide insight on factors impacting them.
- Self-awareness of individual factors leads to self-care and self-advocacy, encourages confidence, and improves community participation for individuals with ASD.
- Community partners gain understanding of factors influencing people with ASD to support social participation, improving accessibility and attendance.
- Develop a replicable tool for consistent autism-friendly environments in multiple venues and events.

References and Resources

Scan these QR codes with your phone camera.



THECB CCRS



References and Resources



Methods