

Introduction

- Transition to Employment**
- Individuals with IDD face considerable challenges in obtaining long-term competitive employment (Butterworth et al., 2014; Harnett et al., 2011)
 - Employment rate:
 - Individuals with disabilities = 19.1%
 - Individuals without disabilities = 63.7 %

Project SEARCH (PS)

- A one-year, multi-partner school-to-work transition program for students with IDD
- Three intensive internship rotations, and customized job-related assistance

Current Study

- Study the impact of two intervention programs (ASSET and EPASS) on work-related social skills and employment readiness for students attending Project SEARCH
- Assistive Soft Skills & Employment Training (ASSET)**
 - 30 sessions that prepare students for employment by honing work-related social skills (aka. soft skills) like communication & teamwork in a supportive setting
- Employment Preparation & Skills Support (EPASS)**
 - 30 sessions that empower students to find and keep meaningful jobs through coaching for skills like goal setting, interviewing, and workplace success.

Method

Phase 1

- 15 sites across Michigan be randomly assigned into treatment and control groups
- TX: 50 interns in PS+ASSET-EPASS (7 sites)
- TAU: 52 interns in PS as usual (8 sites)
- Pre-assessments (Time 1) completed prior to assignment
- ASSET completed Fall 2019
- All sites completed Time 2 assessments, COVID shut down the project
- Examined changes in soft skills from Time 1 to Time 2

Phase 2

- 6 sites re-enrolled
- 33 interns in PS+ASSET-EPASS (5 sites)
- 8 interns in PS as usual (1 site)
- Intervention groups completed ASSET Fall 2022 and EPASS Spring 2023
- Assessments completed pre-intervention (T1), post-ASSET (T2), and post-EPASS (T3)

Sample Questions

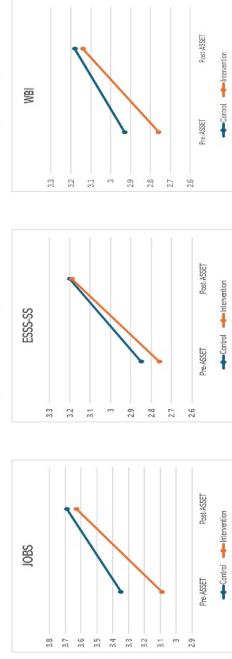
Measures	Purpose
Job Observation and Behavior Scale (JOBS)	(a) Evaluate the quality of job performance; (b) Assess the need for supports; (c) Compare the quality of performance to coworkers performing the same competitive job
Work Behavior Inventory (WBI)	(a) Assess work performance and work behaviors (b) Social skills, cooperativeness, work habits, work quality, and personal presentation.
Employment Success: Soft Skills (ESSS)	(a) Work-related social skills in work-settings.
	"When having a conversation with coworkers and supervisors, they talk about work appropriate topics without sharing things that are too personal."

Participant Demographics

Phase 1	PS (n=57)		PS + AE (n=83)		t/χ²	p
	M(SD)	Range	M(SD)	Range		
Age	20.1 (2.6)	15-25	19.4 (2.0)	17-25	1.8	0.08
Gender	N	%	N	%	0.03	0.87
	Male	37	64.9	55	66.3	
Race/Ethnicity	N	%	N	%	1.6	0.46
	Female	20	34.5	28	33.7	
Disability type	N	%	N	%	1.1	0.77
	White	40	70.2	54	65.1	
Employment	N	%	N	%	2.9	0.09
	Non-White	15	25.9	28	33.7	
Disability type	N	%	N	%	1.1	0.77
	Multiple	2	3.5	1	1.2	
Disability type	N	%	N	%	1.1	0.77
	Neurodiverse (ASD/ADHD)	14	24.6	27	32.5	
Disability type	N	%	N	%	1.1	0.77
	Intellectual disability	27	47.4	36	43.4	
Disability type	N	%	N	%	1.1	0.77
	Learning disability	7	12.3	8	9.6	
Disability type	N	%	N	%	1.1	0.77
	Others	9	15.8	12	14.5	
Disability type	N	%	N	%	1.1	0.77
	Current/prv wk	47	82.5	58	69.9	
Disability type	N	%	N	%	1.1	0.77
	No prvs work	10	17.5	25	30.1	

Results: Phase 1 & Phase 2 (ASSET Only)

Effectiveness outcomes	Project SEARCH only group (n=57)		Project SEARCH + ASSET (n=83)		p	Effect size (η²)
	Pre mean (SE)	Post mean (SE)	Pre mean (SE)	Post mean (SE)		
JOBS Total Score	3.35 (.07)	3.69 (.08)	3.09 (.06)	3.63 (.07)	4.01	.03
Work-required daily living activities-support	3.61 (.08)	3.88 (.09)	3.36 (.07)	3.93 (.08)	8.53	.06
WBI Total Score	2.93 (.06)	3.18 (.07)	2.76 (.05)	3.14 (.06)	2.27	.02
Personal presentation	3.15 (.55)	3.28 (.58)	2.91 (.48)	3.27 (.48)	7.44	.05
ES-SS Total Score	2.83 (.51)	3.19 (.49)	2.78 (.45)	3.21 (.47)	1.07	.01



Discussion

Conclusions

- ASSET & EPASS appear to be compatible with the Project SEARCH program
- Feasible and well-liked by the classroom teachers
- ASSET shows efficacy improving work-related skills (e.g., personal presentation) and reducing support needs (e.g., work-related daily living activities)
- EPASS displays a trend in improving employment readiness

Limitations

- Interventions were conducted across different Project SEARCH sites
- This study was not fully powered. Need future studies with fully powered trials
- Participants' baseline scores varied across the control and intervention groups, requiring careful interpretation of the results
- Measures might not be sensitive to change
- The majority of participants were White
- Phase 2 only included 1 control site, limiting analyses and comparisons

Future Directions

- Compare outcomes of Project SEARCH social skills curriculum to ASSET
- Examine the impact on employment and if there are differences across classrooms/teachers

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*References available upon request. For questions, please email STRIDE Center at STRIDE@msu.edu