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## Promoting Academic and Social Well-being for Young Adults with ASD towards Post-secondary Education and Employment

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# Promoting Academic and Social Well-being for Young Adults with ASD towards Post-secondary Education and Employment

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## BACKGROUND

**1 in 45 adults** in the USA are diagnosed with ASD, with nearly 70% considering or pursuing higher education (Dietz et al., 2020; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). Challenges include struggles with socialization and communication, resulting in poor academic performance and limited employment prospects. The lack of inclusive services in post-secondary education exacerbates these challenges, adversely affecting their educational and professional outcomes.

## PROBLEM

Lack of inclusive services focused on socialization and engagement for students with ASD in PSE resulting in decreased academic performance, retention rates, and future employment opportunities (Nelson et al., 2023; Andersen, 2019; Harn et al., 2019).

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this capstone project was to develop and implement a socialization and engagement program for young adults with ASD in post-secondary education and career pursuits (Nelson et al., 2023; Andersen, 2019; Harn et al., 2019).



## METHODS

Recruited young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) enrolled in vocational training site receiving:

- ✓ **4 Students** in Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)
- ✓ **8 Non-student Job Seekers** in Pre-Vocational
- ✓ **2 Job Seekers** in Supported Employment Services

### Objectives:

1. Enhance participants' professional communication skills, focusing on phone etiquette and email proficiency to foster respectful interactions with supervisors and professors.
2. Equip participants to recognize workplace norms and enhance self-advocacy skills, facilitating appropriate interactions in diverse professional environments.



### Theoretical Frameworks:

1. Occupational Adaptation Model (OAM)
2. Person-Environment-Occupation-Performance (PEOP) model

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

### Social Engagement for College & Work Preparedness

**Program Design:** enhancing professional communication skills, understanding workplace norms, and fostering self-advocacy implemented around a boardgame.

### Sessions Content:

- **Interactive Boardgame:** Interactive learning in guided discussions on self-advocacy, social skills, and professional communication.
- **Guided Practice:** Instructor guide participants through exercises and role-playing scenarios to reinforce lesson concepts and ensure comprehension.

### Program Eval from Staff:

- ✓ **Engagement & Clarity:** High participant engagement with clear, relatable instructions.
- ✓ **Adaptability:** Sessions adjusted for individual needs with rephrased questions and prompts when needed.
- ✓ **Future Modifications:** Simplify reading levels and add more relatable examples.

## FOR THE FUTURE

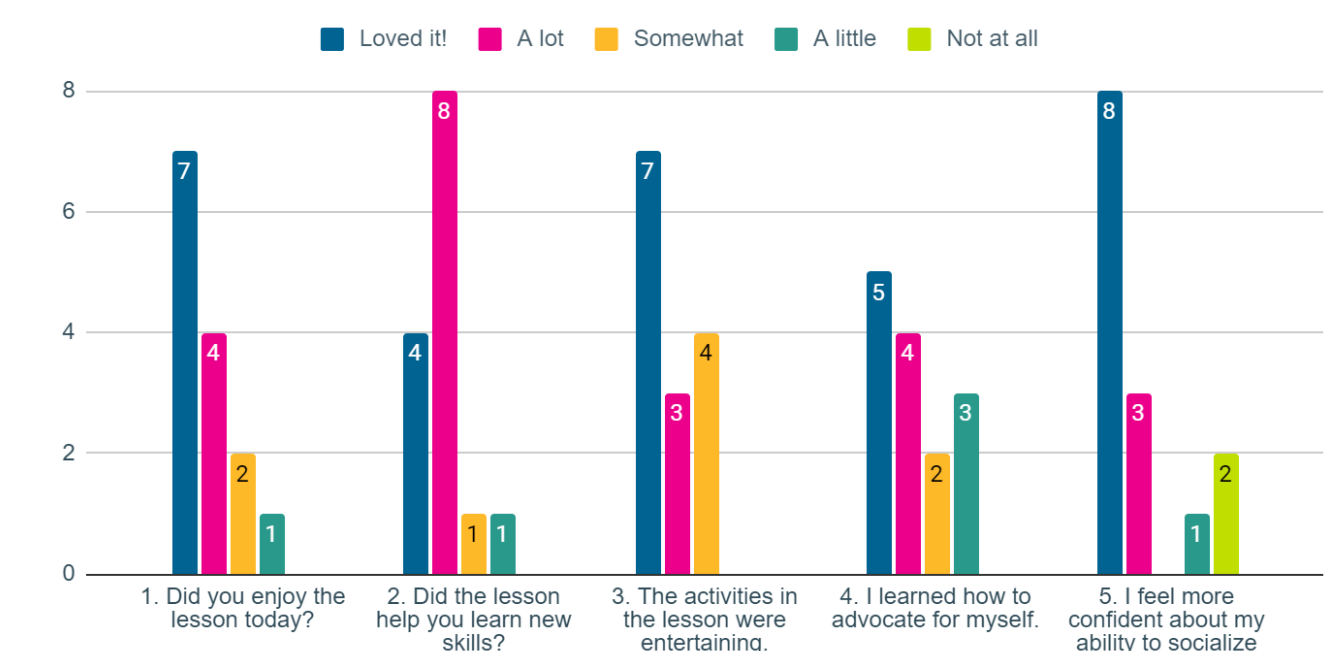
- Program has been implemented as part of the college transition curriculum in partnership with Puzzle Pieces and Owensboro Community & Technical College.
- Conduct research on the effectiveness of the program.
- Implementation of the program at other centers serving the population.

### Program Evaluation:

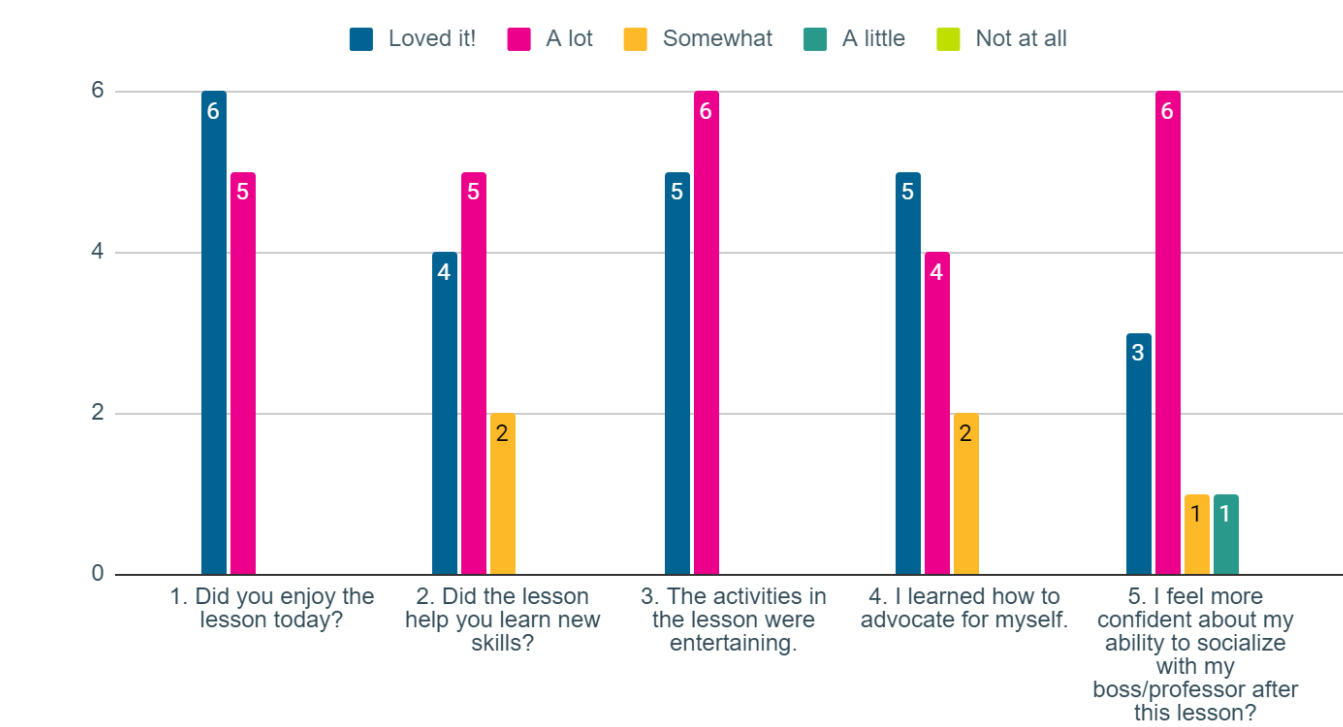
- ✓ Exit Survey: participant self-reported perspective of lesson and feedback
- ✓ Feedback Survey by Staff: evaluate student researcher program implementation and session outcomes

### Overview of Findings:

SESSION 1: Interpersonal Skills for College and Work



SESSION 2: Foundations for College and Work



SESSION 3: Navigating Professional Interaction

