Use Your Words

Self Advocacy, Higher Education, & Academic Support Centers

Introduction

Colleen McCluskey, AAS, BS
- Educator (English, Middle & High School)
- Special Needs & Mental Health Advocate
- Graduate Assistant Director (Center For Writing Excellence)
- ASD Individual (Asperger’s Syndrome)

Who Are We?

Betty McCluskey, MS LPC
- Licensed Professional Counselor
- Special Needs & Mental Health Advocate
- Mother & Spouse Of ASD Individuals

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**Research**

- Review of Literature
- Best Practice References
- Sample Resources List

**Overview**

- Self Advocacy
- Academic Support Differences
  - High School
  - College
- Academic Support Centers
- Writing Centers
  - Attributes & Misconceptions
  - Session Structure

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50,000 kids with autism will exit high school each year in the United States.

Half a million youth will enter adulthood by 2025.

- 50,000 kids with autism will exit high school each year in the United States.

- Students with autism seeking help at writing centers and other academic assistance spaces will, most likely, decline to disclose their condition to their tutors.

- Half a million youth will enter adulthood by 2025.

Debra Moore

April Mann
Like most people, people with autism clam up and sometimes feel the need to resolve our problems alone. It was not until my college years that I realized no person could be their own island. We have to rely on others to succeed. College teaches many features of life and among them is the significance of teamwork.

J.D. Kraus

We may not be able to prepare the future for our children ... But we can at least prepare our children for the future.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

How Academic Assistance Differs In Post Secondary Learning Environments

• Self Advocacy
  ○ Learning how to speak up for oneself.
  ○ Making one’s own decisions about life.
  ○ Learning to find and utilize information.
  ○ Knowing one’s rights and responsibilities.
  ○ Problem solving, listening and learning.
  ○ Reaching out to others when one needs help.
Fostering Self Advocacy

- Treat each question seriously and answer it as such.
- Use each “teachable moment” when it appears.
- Teach with kindness and understanding.
- Mentor your child as long as feasible.
- Assume that everything you teach will be a life skill.
- Teach your child to advocate for themselves appropriately.
High School

- Individualized Education Programs (IEP)
- 504 Plans
- Student Support Team
  - Case Manager (IEP Only)
  - Instructors
  - Paraprofessionals
  - Other Professionals
  - Students & Family
- Individual Instruction (Pull Out)
- Alternative Education

Parents and professionals need to focus on skills related to independence and being able to manage the basics of daily life...

Otherwise, many of them end up in their dorm rooms playing video games, quit going to classes and end up failing.

Mark Klinger

Real Life Skills

- Recommended Teachable Skills
  - Get your child doing household and personal care tasks on their own.
  - Get your child used to having and using an independent organizational aid.
    - Digital Calendar, Daily Planner
  - Teach your child to know how to ask for help.
  - Develop healthy habits.
  - Make sure your child’s mood is stable.
Kids have to be able to self advocate and they have to know how to go up to their professor after class or how to schedule a meeting for later.

It’s critical, because when ASD kids get behind in a class, they’re embarrassed and they stop going. They have too much anxiety to go back once they’ve missed a couple of days.

College

- Disability Services Office
- Professor Interaction
- Self Disclosure
- Self Advocacy
- Private Tutoring
- Casual Study Groups
- Academic Assistance Spaces (AAS)
  - Writing Centers
  - Mathematics Labs
  - Discipline Specific AAS

Academic Assistance Spaces

- An Academic Assistance Space can be broadly defined as any university sponsored out of class learning environment for students in select courses.

- The staff can...
  - Review and discuss important concepts.
  - Develop appropriate strategies for studying.
  - Prepare for exams in peer led sessions.
  - Facilitate formal group study with classmates.

Writing Centers

Writing Centers As An AAS Example & Staple Resource For ASD Students
Writing Center Attributes

● Attributes Of Writing Centers
  ○ Writing centers exist in a variety of shapes, sizes, and settings.
  ○ Part of a writing program or learning center and serve the entire school.
  ○ Tutorials are offered in a one-to-one setting.
  ○ Tutors are coaches and collaborators, not teachers.

○ Each student’s individual needs are the focus of the tutorial.
○ Experimentation and practice are encouraged.
○ Writers work on writing from a variety of courses.
○ Tutee “drives” session; Self advocates.

○ Available for students at all levels of writing proficiency.
○ Focus on creating a safe and nurturing environment.
○ Spaces for students to improve overall writing skills.
○ Cooperative, dialogue based tutoring sessions.

Writing Center Misconceptions

● Misconceptions Of Writing Centers
  ○ The main focus of a writing center is on drill and practice.
  ○ Writing centers only “repair” spelling, grammar, and other mechanics.
  ○ Writing centers are “the grammar and drill center, the fix-it shop, or the first aid station.”
**Writing Center Misconceptions**

- **Misconceptions Of Writing Centers**
  - Writing centers are strictly remedial.
  - Writing centers are places where “bad” writers go to have their “bad” writing “fixed”.
  - Students bringing their work in will be harshly judged on its quality.

In a **writing center** the object is to make sure that **writers**, and not necessarily their **texts**, are what get changed by instruction.

Our job is to produce **better writers**, not **better writing**.

Stephen M. North

Like most people, **people with autism** clam up and sometimes feel the need to **resolve** our problems alone. It was not until my **college** years that I realized no person could be their own **island**.

We have to **rely on others to succeed**. College teaches **many features of life** and among them is the significance of **teamwork**.

J.D. Kraus

By teaching **students with autism** effective communication and **writing skills** in a writing center, or other broadly applicable skills in other **academic assistance spaces**, we can help them develop the **communication skills** that foster independence through self advocacy.
Universal Design

- Design of products and environments to be as usable as possible by as many people as possible.
- Consider the needs of the broadest possible range of users from the beginning.
- Includes disability immediately rather than a response or "retrofit" to differences.

Tutoring Sessions

How Does A Writing Center Tutoring Session Work?

Note: All following examples drawn from the University Of Wisconsin Eau Claire Center For Writing Excellence & Common Writing Center Best Practice Models.
Types Of Tutoring Sessions

- **Face To Face Appointments**
  - In Person
  - One On One, Groups, Workshops
  - Scheduled/Walk In

- **Online Appointments**
  - Telephone/Video Chat & Google Drive
  - One On One
  - Scheduled

- **Chat Widget**
  - Online instant Messaging
  - Quick Queries Preferred

Many people with autism prefer to interact with others via the written rather than spoken word and synchronous tutoring can offer some significant advantages, and can function as a less traumatic arena than in person interaction.

This virtual tutoring using instant messaging ... or shared documents connect the tutee and tutor virtually, allowing a student with autism to avoid the stress of social interaction.

Scheduling An Appointment

- Three ways to meet with a (CWE) Writing Assistant ...
  - Set up an appointment online ...
  - Walk in and we may have an spot for you ...
  - You can also make one by calling the office number ...

- Students can also set up an online writing session.

- You can also ask a quick question online using our chat widget!

What To Bring

- What To Bring?
  - Assignment Prompt
  - Any Notes/Handouts
  - Printed Copy
  - Laptop With Assignment/Project
Writing Center Tutoring Session Structure

1. Getting Acquainted
2. Setting An Agenda
3. Assignment Survey
4. Discussion & Revision
5. Address Next Steps

Getting Acquainted

- Get Acquainted
  - Tutor & Tutee Introductions
  - Self Disclosure (if comfortable/applicable)
  - Tutoring Session Introduction/Refresher
- Time Constraints (45 Minutes)
- Session Structure

Setting An Agenda

- Set Agenda
- Review Assignment
- Revision Priorities
  - Examples: Grammar, Sentence Fluency, Citations, Paper Formatting, Register
- Example Questions
  - "What are your main concerns on this assignment?"
  - "Is there anything your professor specifically wanted you to revise?"

Assignment Survey

- Read Draft (or Notes/Ideas)
  - Draft is read aloud
    - Either tutor or tutee can read draft
  - Draft is read in order to "hear tutee's voice on the page"
    - Helpful for students with autism with absent inner speech
**Discussion & Revision**

- **Discuss Draft (Or Notes/Ideas)**
  - Paragraph By Paragraph Discussion
    - Tutor and tutee both discuss areas of paper that can benefit from revision.
    - Tutor and tutee focus on agenda and anything else that "stands out".

**Address Next Steps**

- **Prepare To Take The Next Steps For Paper**
  - Reflection, Final Questions
- **Survey**
- **Tutor Report**
  - Summary
  - Audience
    - Tutor
    - Professor

**Conclusion**

- **Self Advocacy**
- **Academic Support Differences**
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  - College
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- **Writing Centers**
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