

## Success Story

A young man in Tennessee started his own business following the heaviest part of the pandemic. Ashton Gilbert (21) has autism. His employment services were put on hold when Covid-19 hit. His parents recognized a need to keep him busy and productive. They realized that he could do small jobs, such as taking cardboard away to be recycled. What was meant to be activity to get Ashton out of the house soon turned into a career.

Ashton founded the company UnBoxed in 2021. He picks up cardboard boxes from individual homes and small businesses to be taken for recycling. Ashton's prices vary based on volume and breakdown service add-ons.



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## Assessment: An Easy Way (pt. 2)

Last month we began talking about easy ways to do transition assessments. We have also talked in the past about doing transition assessments as bell ringer activities. This month we will share more about how those first ten minutes of class can be used for transition assessment.

There are two concerns most people have when they consider doing assessments as bell ringers. First is the selection of the assessment, specifically in relation to how long it takes to complete. Second is whether or not they can use the assessment if the IEP is months away. The first concern is rather simple to solve. We need to be comfortable with not completing an assessment in one sitting. If you can have a student complete just one section of an assessment per class period then it is a success. There may be other points in the year in which the assessment you choose can be completed in one sitting. The key is to plan to use bell ringers for transition assessments on a regular, routine basis and not sporadically.

The second concern can be answered through differentiated instruction. In other words, we have

some students working on one assessment, while those with an IEP due within the month are completing a more detailed assessment. Why would we do this? Because the more detailed assessment is going to inform our long-term goals which can change somewhat often (i.e., a student may frequently change what they want to study in college every few months, or go back and forth about wanting to go to college). The other assessments we do inform us as to what skills and proficiency levels are students are at to inform our yearly goals and services.

So how might this look in real life? First, you could give students assessments on self-determination. Depending on the number and length of the assessments, this could take anywhere from a day to an entire week (mostly likely at least a couple days, depending on how quick and truthful your students are). Then, as the year goes by, you can give shorter assessments that are targeted to specific areas or to awareness (the ME! Scale is a great tool to used repeatedly). Assessments may be paused when you do other assessments, such as the RI, MI, or Reading Plus. A math problem or reading question may also serve as a good formative assessment. Inventories and questionnaires, such as the FPI, can be used as needed. Using the district planning form can help you make more detailed plans.

## Success Story (cont.)

Ashton's parents say that starting this business has been the best thing that could have happened for their son. He now lives independently with his own source of income; something they never thought would happen so soon. Running the business can be stressful at times, Ashton says. However, his parents make a good support team, and having the career has even improved Ashton's mental health.

This is a fantastic example of how thinking outside the box (pun intended) can lead to wonderful outcomes for students with disabilities. Yes, Ashton needs some support running the business. But that did not deter him or his support team from taking action.

We can all learn from this success story. How can students be more successful? What can they do if given the proper supports? How can we involve families and create support teams? As we think more about how to make these things happen for our students, we can see success stories like this happen in our own neighborhoods more often.



## Video Modeling & Video Prompting for Life Skills

An evidence-based intervention that promotes independence, helps families, and increases engagement.

We are all about using evidence-based interventions to help students make progress and reach goals. One such intervention, shown to work for life skills, behavior, and some academic skills, is video modeling.

Video modeling (and its many forms) is designed to teach individuals how to complete tasks or gain skills through watching a video of the target being done correctly (either in one continuous shot or broken into segments). The practice of video modeling follows closely with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory of learning. Think back to a time when you needed to learn how to do something or make something. Maybe you went to YouTube, watched a video (or followed along), and then completed your task. You used video modeling. But video modeling (VM) is much more than just letting our students watch YouTube videos in class. Here is how you can use this

intervention effectively for your students.

First is selecting which students can best use VM. Students need to be able to attend to the video, manipulate the controls of the playback device, and have the motor ability to complete the task.

The second is like the first, which is selecting the types of tasks a student can learn from video modeling. Some students are more suited for basic functional life skills and not higher-level tasks such as calculating a tip at a restaurant.

Once the first two considerations are resolved, you can begin to think about the type of VM to do. The main type of VM is where the student watches a peer complete the task. It is important to think about who the student considers a peer. A peer may be a similar age student for some, but could be an adult for others (as is sometimes the

case for students with autism).

Another form of VM is "video self-modeling (VSM)," where the student watches a video of themselves completing the task. This can be tricky to record, takes more time to create videos, and not all students like watching themselves. However, it can be helpful when dealing with learned helplessness or the belief of not being able to do something right.

The third type is video prompting (VP). This can look just like VM or VSM with the difference being smaller chunks of videos in sequential order. If a student has trouble with memory or the core video is too long and complicated, video prompting is a good option. The student can watch segments and complete one step at a time until the task is complete. For more info on VM, VSM, or VP please reach out to us and we can help.



## Transition Activities: Examples (7-8)

Sometimes it can be hard to think of activities to do in the classroom that can serve as transition service minutes. Activities and lesson plans span a wide range. We will provide a couple of examples of activities for middle school. However, the important thing is for you to think outside the box and within it. What transition skills are being directly or indirectly taught by the things you already do in your classroom? If you are having trouble discerning what counts and what doesn't, let us know and we will be glad to help.

### Activity 1. Goal Setting.

Work with each student to set a goal or list of goals. This can be a target score on the MI/RI or a test, an end of term grade, or a communication or social skill goal. Once the goal is identified, work with the student to identify any barriers to the goal, small goals that lead to the main objective, timelines, strategies, etc. Then help the student monitor progress or evaluate the result. This can be done for one student or with the whole class. Students learn goal setting, time management, self-reflection, and other needed skills.

### Activity 2. Mock Job Interviews.

Have students (individually or groups) represent different industries or specific jobs. Students research qualifications, tasks, etc. to prepare to interview of a job in that industry. You can have students create resumes complete with an education and job history section. Then, students do mock job interviews with the teacher (or with other students for a more advanced approach). This activity teaches writing, time management, research, reading comprehension, and communication skills, as well as fits with two post-school outcomes.

## Differing Opinions

"Changes or interruptions to a routine can be highly anxiety-provoking. One of the reasons for this is that many adults with autism have become routine-dependent as they were brought up with strict routines, where any changes were clearly signalled well in advance. Although this was done because professionals initially thought it would benefit children with autism and help them to make sense of the world, it has been found to be disabling for people with autism in the long run—because the world is not routine, daily life is not able to be routine. External events intrude into and interrupt the routines that may have been created. People who have grown up with these strict routines therefore struggle to have coping strategies or resilience for managing change."

-Purkis, Goodall, & Nugent, 2016

## This Month's Classroom Tip

**Q: How Do I Get Students to Pick a Career or Education Path When Their Answer is "I Don't Know?"**

A: If we had a solid answer to this question then we would be rich. In other words, there is no magic answer, but we will try our best to give some helpful tips.

First, use the resources available to you. Our school counselors do wonderful things with CCA. They have great programs, assessments, and resources. Feel free to use them in your transition assessments, as they are there for all students (even the ones with IEPs).

Second, consider broadening your scope and work in increments. We can ask questions about types of employment and education that don't narrow down to specific career choices (good for those just starting the transition planning process). We can then build on these broad ideas as the years go on. We can also use specific assessments that help students refine their interests and give them a list of options. This may be through a questionnaire, career or education surveys, or aptitude tests. The key here is to use tools available to us instead of us just asking the student questions.