



Bridging School and Work: Evidence-Based Transition Practices for Autistic Students

Virtual Conference

Thursday, April 23, 2026

1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Cost: \$20.00

CEUs: CTLE – Teachers and Administrators

Abstract

Despite decades of policy reform and increased emphasis on competitive integrated employment (CIE), autistic youth continue to experience disproportionately poor post-school employment outcomes. Outcomes are even worse for those with co-occurring intellectual disability, high support needs, or limited access to inclusive education and work-based learning opportunities. Research highlights both promising predictors of employment (e.g., paid work experiences, job development supports, transportation, and supported employment) and persistent gaps between evidence-based practices and services most frequently delivered in schools and vocational rehabilitation systems.

This interactive workshop will draw from our own research working with autistic transition-age youth to develop pathways to successful careers and competitive integrated employment (CIE). Participants of this session will explore practical, strength-based approaches to transition planning and services, including best practices for implementing Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), inclusive academic and transition planning, and community-based employment strategies. This workshop will cover culturally responsive transition practices, rural and under-resourced contexts, and the growing role of technology in job development, training, and ongoing supports. Through case examples, discussion, and applied tools, practitioners will leave with concrete strategies they can implement immediately to improve employment outcomes for autistic youth.

Register at:

nysrcasd.org/events/1622/registrations/new

OPENING COMMENTS

David Meichenbaum, Ph.D.
Clinical Director, The Summit Center's Behavioral Pediatrics Clinic
Co-Director, Western New York Regional Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders

PRESENTERS

Josh Taylor, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Special Education, Washington State University



Dr. Taylor is an Associate Professor of Special Education in the Department of Teaching and Learning at Washington State University. His research focuses on promoting lifelong success for individuals with autism and developmental disabilities through implementation of evidence-based practices in inclusive school, work, and community settings. Dr. Taylor has published over 50 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters related to school, transition, and employment experiences and outcomes of individuals with IDD in addition to clinical experience as a K-12 special educator and autism specialist. He has also provided training and technical assistance at the state and national levels. Dr. Taylor earned a PhD in special education from Virginia Commonwealth University with a focus on research-to-policy implementation, and a Master's in special education from the University of Virginia.

Holly Whittenburg, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Special Education, Washington State University



Dr. Holly Whittenburg is an associate professor of special education and the director of teacher education at Washington State University. She is a former employment specialist, special education teacher, and special education administrator. Dr. Whittenburg has published over 40 articles/book chapters, with an emphasis on employment-related interventions to improve outcomes for transition-age youth and coordinated transition service delivery between schools and vocational rehabilitation agencies. She has conducted research and written about approaches to supporting transition-age autistic youth and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities in work-related social skills development and the transition needs and experiences of youth with disabilities in rural areas. Dr. Whittenburg has served as PI/Co-PI on multiple grants and contracts related to the employment of individuals with disabilities, with external funding totaling over \$6.5 million to date.

Speaker Disclosure: Dr. Taylor and Dr. Whittenburg are being compensated by the WNYRCASD and The Summit Center and have no other financial or nonfinancial disclosures to report.

Learning Objectives

Participants of this workshop will be able to:

1. Identify evidence-based predictors of competitive integrated employment for autistic youth.
2. Apply strength-based, inclusive transition strategies for supporting transition age youth, including those from rural and underserved communities.
3. Select and use research-based tools and approaches to enhance transition planning, career and job development, and sustainable long-term employment supports.

PRESENTATION SCHEDULE

- 1:00 – 1:10 p.m. Opening Comments**
David Meichenbaum, Ph.D.
- 1:10 – 3:00 p.m. Workshop Presentation**
Dr. Josh Taylor and Dr. Holly Whittenburg
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This conference is made possible by a grant from the NYSRCASD. For requests for accommodations/special needs, contact wnyrcasd@thesummitcenter.org or 716-629-3417.

Cancellation Policy: If cancellation is received at least 48 hours prior to the start of the conference, the cost of CEUs will be fully refunded.

CONTINUING EDUCATION



CTLE: The Summit Center is an NYS Department of Education approved provider of CTLE continuing education events for teachers and school administrators. **2.0 learning CEUs will be provided.**

ABOUT

The Summit Center is Western New York's leading provider of services for children and adults with autism and other developmental concerns. Programs include a special education school, pediatric behavioral health clinic, intensive early intervention program, and adult and community programs. Visit TheSummitCenter.org for more information.

The Western New York Regional Center for Autism Spectrums Disorders (WNYRCASD) is a collaborative program of The Summit Center, University at Albany, and The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities. The WNYRCASD is committed to providing information and practical strategies supported by scientific research – commonly referred to as evidence-based practice. Activities consist of workshops and resource materials that provide practical guidance to professionals and parents. For more information, visit TheSummitCenter.org/what-we-do/wny-regional-center-for-autism-spectrum-disorders.