

# ASD Students' Perceptions of the Optimal Practices that Aid their Transition to Highschool

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**Background:** Many structural changes are associated with a transition to highschool, such as novel settings, curricula, peers and teachers. These changes may increase stress during this life period. In addition, students must cope with different changes. Such a life period, which is considered difficult for most teenagers (Lohaus, Elben, Ball, & Klein-Hessing, 2004), can be even more challenging for students with an ASD (Hannah & Topping, 2012).

**Objectives:** The aim of this study is to identify the optimal practices that aid the transition to highschool according to students. This study also explores whether there is a significant difference between main stream students and ASD students in regards to such perceptions.

**Methods:** Fourteen 6th graders integrated in regular classroom (2 girls and 12 boys) with ASD were selected to be part of group 1. Fourteen other main stream students were then matched to students from group 1 according to age and gender. The participants were asked whether the intervention services highlighted in the scientific literature was helpful or not. A non-parametric test (McNemar) was designed to determine whether a change of binary state would yield statistical significance between both groups ( $p < 0,05$ ).

**Results:** There are no significant differences between the two groups. As there are no differences, the results will be specific to ASD students' perception. The most useful practice for students with ASD ( $n=13$ ) in aiding their transition is to be informed about who their teachers will be.

Also, 86 % ( $n=12$ ) wish to : learn strategies to relax; to have a friend for dinnertime; to know where their locker is and how to open it; to have the opportunity to share their issues with an adult; to visit the school; and to know someone in their classes. Being informed on how much time they should devote to their homework and knowing emergency strategies was also deemed useful for 79 % ( $n=11$ ) of the respondents. In addition, having a map of the school, a cellphone, a resource teacher, and a place where they can use their strategies with privacy was identified as helpful for 71 % ( $n=10$ ) of students.

**Conclusions:** As there is no difference between the two groups, students with ASD in regular classroom should not be treated differently than their peers. However, specific attention should be paid to practices concerning the school setting.

Indeed, visiting the school, having access to their future locker and meeting their future teachers should be methods adopted for every student. Also, the curricula and functional information of the school (homework, dinnertime, schedule, textbooks, remedial courses, etc.) should be presented to the future students. As shown by the results, students with ASD attending regular classes and following the regular program seem to cope well with their integration in the regular program.

## References:

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