The Road to Success for Individuals with Learning Disabilities

The Parent Perspective
Thames Academy
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Consultation and Education Department presenters
Roberta J. Goldberg, PhD., Director
Andrea Lombardi, Sr. Educational Consultant
Dr. Marianne Frostig
65 years supporting children who struggle with learning
Frostig Center

- Frostig School
  - Support students with learning disabilities

- Research Department
  - Conduct cutting edge research

- Community Outreach Department
  - Provide professional development and consultation services
Vanessa
a former student

“I never thought I would get very far in life. But look at me now. I didn’t do too bad, did I?”
How can parents best help their children with learning differences - AND how can students with learning differences - find that road to success?

– Set up for success

– Foster development of attributes that lead to adult success
Road to Success
Jason’s view
Mark’s view
Research Study

Frostig 20-Year Longitudinal Study: Success Attributes
What is success?

A Multidimensional View

• Educational attainment
• Employment status
• Social relationships
• Psychological health
• Family relationships
• Life satisfaction
Data Points

*LD, IQ>85, no sensory deficits or emotional disturbance*
20 Year Quantitative Results

- Approximately half successful
- Little movement between groups
- Success attributes best predictor of success
Word Splash Activity

perseverance  academic achievement  patience

empathetic  use of coping strategies  independence

ethnicity  socio-economic status  gender

IQ  proactive  self awareness

creativity  set goals  tolerance

grades  support system  confidence
Word Splash

• Scan Word splash
• Underline those attributes you believe support success
• Circle ____
Success Attributes

• Self-Awareness
• Proactivity
• Perseverance
• Goal-Setting
• Use of Support Systems
• Emotional Coping Strategies
Self-Awareness

- Open and specific about their difficulties
- Accept their disabilities
- Compartmentalize their LD
- Recognize their talents
- “Match” jobs with abilities
Proactivity

• Engaged actively in the world
• Believe in their power to control destiny
• Make decisions and act upon them
• Take responsibility for action
Perseverance

• Show ability to persevere
• Learn from hardships
• Demonstrate flexibility (know when to quit)
Goal Setting

• Set specific goals
• Cover multiple domains
• Recognize step-by-step process
• Make realistic & attainable goals
Support Systems

• Build relations with supporters who help shape lives
• Actively seek support of others who hold clear expectations for them
Coping Strategies

• Recognize stress triggers of disability
• Develop effective means of coping with stress of disability
• Demonstrate positive and hopeful outlook
Success Attributes

- Self-Awareness
- Proactivity
- Perseverance
- Goal-Setting
- Support Systems
- Emotional Coping Strategies
Research Articles


Research Considerations

• Not intended to undermine the importance of developing academic skills
• Intention is to emphasize the importance of developing success attributes
• Fostering the success attributes is one of the ways that parents, teachers, and counselors can help
• Requires exercise, practice, and review
Reflect and Share

• Choose one Success Attribute and review the components of that attribute:
  – Self-Awareness, Proactivity, Perseverance, Goal-Setting, Use of Support Systems, Emotional Coping Strategies

• Reflect on your own strengths/challenges with regard to that attribute:
  – Circle your strengths & underline your non-strengths

• Share one strength/one challenge with a family member/s or neighbor
Success Attributes

Share the vision … Spread the word
Share the Vision: **Frostig School**

- Explicitly teach Success Attributes: Social Skills, Transition Classes, Frostig Beyond
- Emphasis strengths and interests: Electives, Clubs, Project Based Learning, Academic Fair
- Infuse within school culture & “Teachable Moments”
The Success Attributes at Frostig School

**Explicit Instruction**
Goal: To introduce and develop an understanding of these concepts
- SA Vocabulary
- Lecture and discussion
- Journaling
- Visual presentations
- Group projects
- Disability research project
- Disability rights education

**Experiential Learning**
Goal: To provide an opportunity to practice these skills

**On Campus:**
- Junior workstations
- Print shop
- Student store / Fly By
- In-the-moment feedback
- Role plays and mock interviews
- Leadership council

**Off Campus:**
- Field trips
- Dual enrollment
- Internships
- Volunteer opportunities
Spread the Word: *Frostig Center*

- Frostig Summer *Institutes*
- *Professional Development* seminars
- *Community* Presentations
- Local, National, International *Conferences*
Current Study Supports Classroom Instruction

• Teaching Kids Social Skills Pays Off in Grades (Liz Goodwin, Yahoo News 2-7-2011)

A comprehensive analysis of 33 studies found….

– ‘Teaching kids social and emotional skills leads to an average 11 percentile-point gain in their academic performance over six months compared to students who didn’t receive the same instruction.’
LIFE SUCCESS: A Parent Guide

LIFE SUCCESS
FOR CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES
- A PARENT GUIDE-
www.LDsuccess.org

• Checklists & Activities
  – Parents
  – Child
Self-Awareness Checklist

• My child is … I am
  – Aware of academic strengths & weaknesses
  – Aware of non-academic strengths & weaknesses
  – Aware of special talents & abilities
  – Aware of feelings, opinions & values
  – Able to match activities to strengths
  – Able to understand and accept learning disability/difficulties
  – Able to ‘compartmentalize’ LD
  – Able to use compensatory strategies to compensate
Self-Awareness Activities

• **High-Low**
  – Review day sharing best and worst part of day and give reasons

• **Say It Like It Is**
  – Share thoughts/opinions as you watch TV/videos or the news, read a book or newspaper, review family events

• **Sum of My Parts**
  - Share strengths and weaknesses, talents and interests and add to family vocabulary

• **We all Have Our Stuff**
  – Encourage open discussions about difficulties and help your child set realistic goals for success
Support Systems Checklist

• My child is … I am
  – Aware of when help/support is needed
  – Able to request help/support when needed
  – Aware of support persons to seek out for support
  – Aware of laws to help persons with learning differences
Support Systems Activities

- **North Star**
  - Help identify child’s support systems (list of family/school/community persons)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Community</th>
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- **Be Prepared**
  - Obtain & share federal laws pertaining to your child’s specific LD
Support System Exercise

• Reflection
  – Currently, who is a ‘support person’ for you? In what ways do they support you? How do you ask them for help?

• Conversation
  – Family member/s or neighbors
    • Share your ‘support person’
    • Discuss how you ask for help at home, at school/work, and in the community
Perseverance Checklist

- My child can … *I am able to*
  - Understand the benefits of perseverance
  - Keep working at tasks despite difficulties
  - Deal with obstacles/setbacks
  - Adjust to change
  - Understand when to quit
Perseverance Activities

• **Tales of Perseverance**
  – Share events where perseverance has been demonstrated including obstacles faced & resulting outcomes

• **‘Me Too’ Tells**
  – Share times when persevered including obstacles faced & resulting outcomes

• **Caught You**
  – Acknowledge and give praise for persevering behavior & attitude

• **Try Something New**
  – Provide challenging experiences & activities; resist the urge to ‘rescue’
Coping Strategies Checklist

• My child is … *I am*
  – Aware of how emotional reactions affect behavior
  – Aware of situations that cause stress, frustration and emotional upset
  – Able to/has developed strategies for avoiding or reducing stress
  – Able to recognize the onset of stress
  – Able to seek outside help support when needed
Coping Strategies Activities

• **ID It**
  – Discuss/anticipate possible RED FLAGS, the ‘stressors’ and ‘releasers’

• **Use It**
  – Use words that identify feelings (*angry, proud, disappointed, defeated, frustrated, impatient*)

• **Get Help**
  – Talk about the *RED FLAGS* - when help is needed – AND attach to *who* to go to for help, and *how* to ask for help
Coping Strategies Exercise

- **Reflection**
  - Currently, what is your greatest ‘stressor’ at work/school
    - Record on note section across from this slide

- **Conversation**
  - Family member/s or neighbors
    - Share your ‘stressors’
    - Brainstorm ways to deal/cope
Proactivity Checklist

• My child is … *I am*
  – Able to make decisions and act on those decisions
  – Able to accept responsibility for personal decisions
  – Able to evaluate decisions & learn from them
  – Assertive & stands up for self
  – Self confident
Proactivity Activities

• What Would You Do?
  – Present risky situations & help brainstorm solutions:
    ➢ You find out that a friend is going to meet someone that they have just met over the internet. She wants you to keep it a secret. What do you do?

    ➢ Your friend is hurting his self and has sworn you to secrecy. You are really worried about him. What do you do?

• Write It Down
  -- Ask child to record decisions made & results of those decisions
Goal Setting Checklist

• My child can … I am able to
  – Set academic goals and non-academic goals
  – Prioritize goals
  – Recognize when a goal is realistic
  – Develop steps for reaching goals
  – Understand short term & long term goals
  – Find alternative ways to reach goal when faced with obstacle
  – Understand the need to work with others
Goal Setting Activities

• **Family Goal**
  – Agree on weekly goal, determine steps to achieve goal & each family members’ responsibility – *record goal/steps and review at end of week*

• **Step Up to Success**
  – Develop goals for family members to achieve – *record goal, steps, time frame, met/not*

• **Make It Real**
  – Determine if goals were realistic/non-realistic and share reflections

• **Do For, Do With, Cheer On**
  – Identify a goal, break into steps & ask child to compile & complete a ‘to do’ list
Set a Goal

• Goal ______________________________________

• Steps 1. ____________________________________
  2. __________________________________________
  3. __________________________________________

• Support People ______________________________

• Proactivity/Resources _________________________

• Perseverance/Coping Strategies _________________________

• Time frame _________________________________

• Reflections ___________________________________
Road to Success: Success Attributes

- Self-Awareness
- Proactivity
- Perseverance
- Goal-Setting
- Support Systems
- Emotional Coping Strategies
Current Research
Supporting Success Attributes


• **Student Voices: A Study of Young Adults with Learning and Attention Issues** (National Center for Learning Disabilities 2015)
  – **Key Takeaways**
    • Tended to see the positive in situations
    • Didn’t give up, even when things got hard or obstacles got in their way
    • Being resourceful and showed perseverance
    • Making decisions and taking action
Current Research
Supporting Success Attributes


“It is important for adults with LD to know how to navigate effectively in adult domains. Therefore, the processes of self-advocacy becomes of utmost importance. They need to know who they are, how LD affects them in a variety of adult settings, and how to compensate for any deficiencies. Moreover, they should be able to discuss their specific challenges and collaborate on compensatory actions and accommodations with friends, family, and employers to experience success……social supports are important for successful adjustment in the variety of adult domains.”
Conclusion

Parents and students often concentrate their efforts primarily on academic and educational areas, paying little attention to the development of success attributes….

Small Steps        Big Change
Fostering Development of Success Attributes

Requires understanding, practice, making connections, and a mindset… that is not fixed but fluid
Aware of parent’s sacrifices...

My mom was the one to come in and talk to teachers, principals…she was always the one to take me around and stay there with me. I can imagine it was, at times, stressful for her, but I never felt it.

My father really cared. He wanted me to have the best. And I did. He made sure of that. He always gave me the self confidence and self-esteem that I lacked in myself. He made me feel that I was able to do anything I wanted to do.
Road to Success
Parents Impact

For a few more years, YOU are the ‘designated driver’ on your child’s road to success
Your Choices

Ultimately, YOU are your own driver. Your hard work and choices determine the road you take.

Take that road that leads to success
Begin tonight: Set a **Success Attributes Goal**

- Goal ______________________________________
- Steps 1. _____________________________________
  2. ____________________________________________
  3. ____________________________________________
- Proactivity/Resources __________________________
- Perseverance/Coping Strategies _________________
- Time frame __________________________________
- Reflections __________________________________