

Supported Education

101

Presented by Tara Donahue, Director of Blueprint Supported Education,
a program of Community Access for the 2024 Alliance Rehabilitation and Recovery Academy



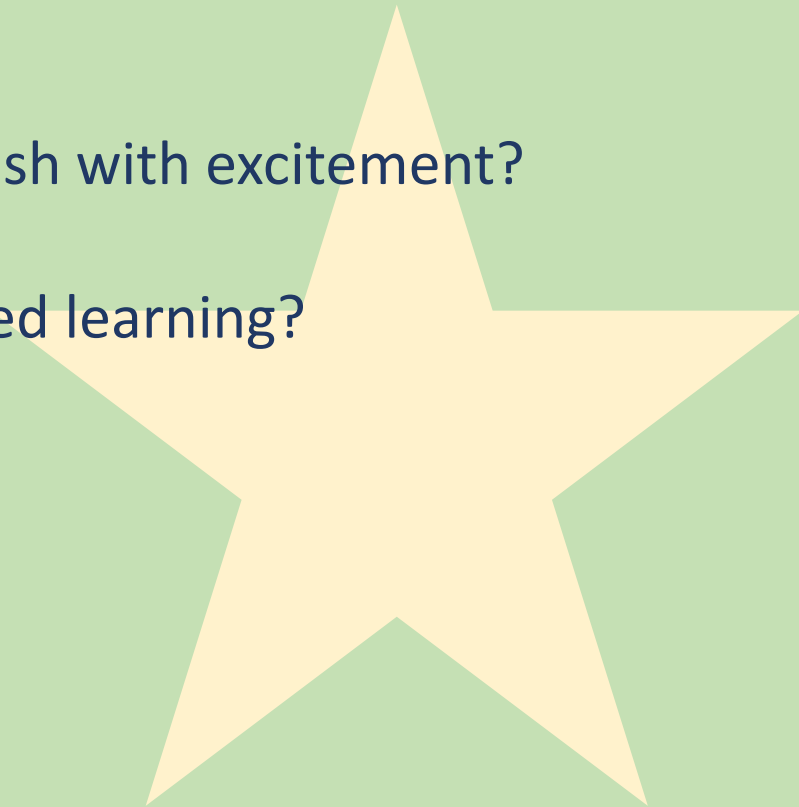
Theme of the hour: nerdiness








What is exciting and beneficial about learning?

What are ways that formal learning environments can clash with excitement?

How can we foster sustained engagement for school-based learning?



Supported Education 101

-  **1. Context:** Why learning and education are important
-  **2. Background:** Why Support Education was developed
-  **3. Support strategies 1, 2 , 3 :** fostering preparation versus readiness
-  **4. Worker considerations:** working alongside, versus for, participants
-  **5. Recap**

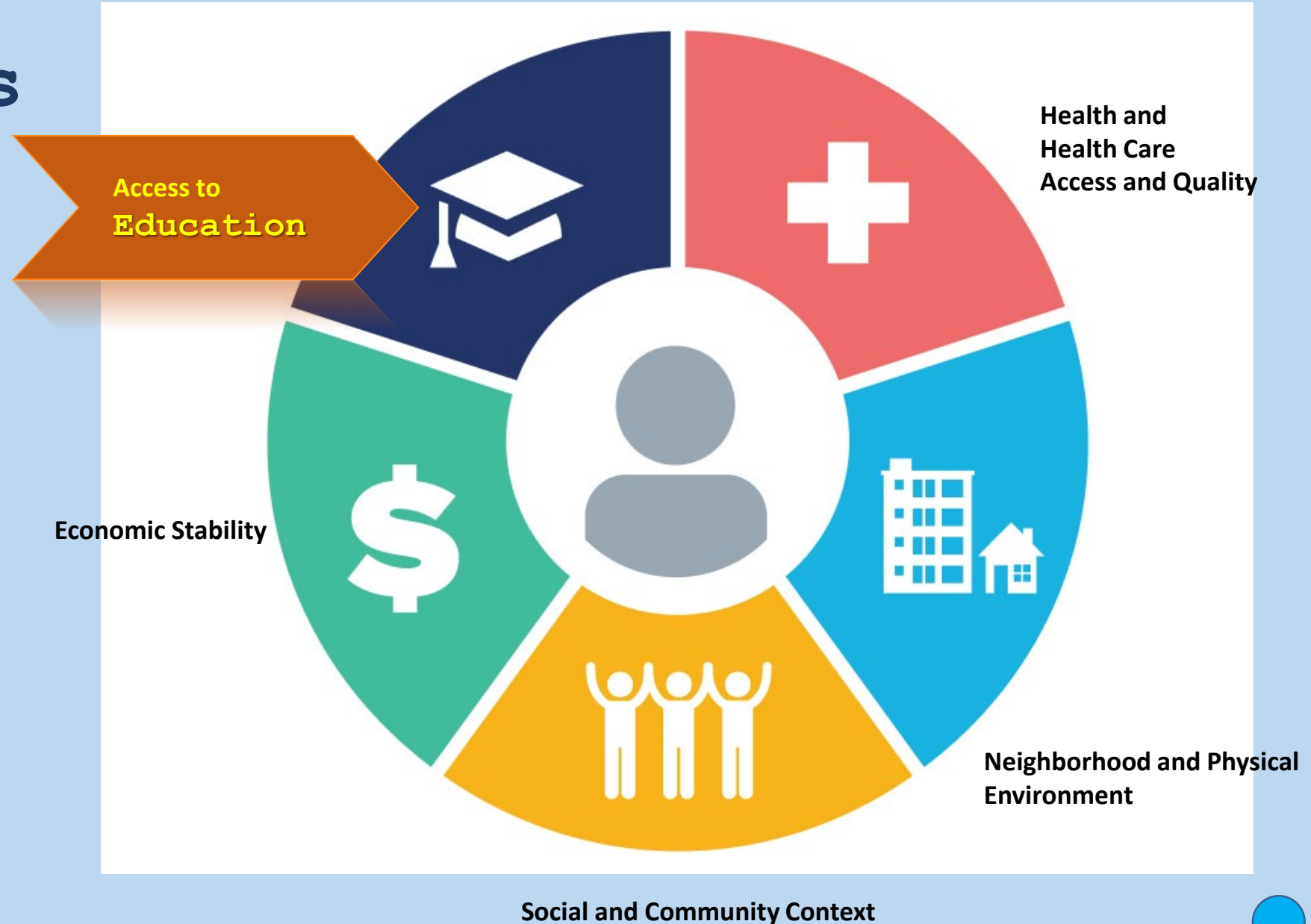
Dimensions of Wellness

Education focuses on dimension of INTELLECT, as well as overlaps with other dimensions



Social Determinants of Health

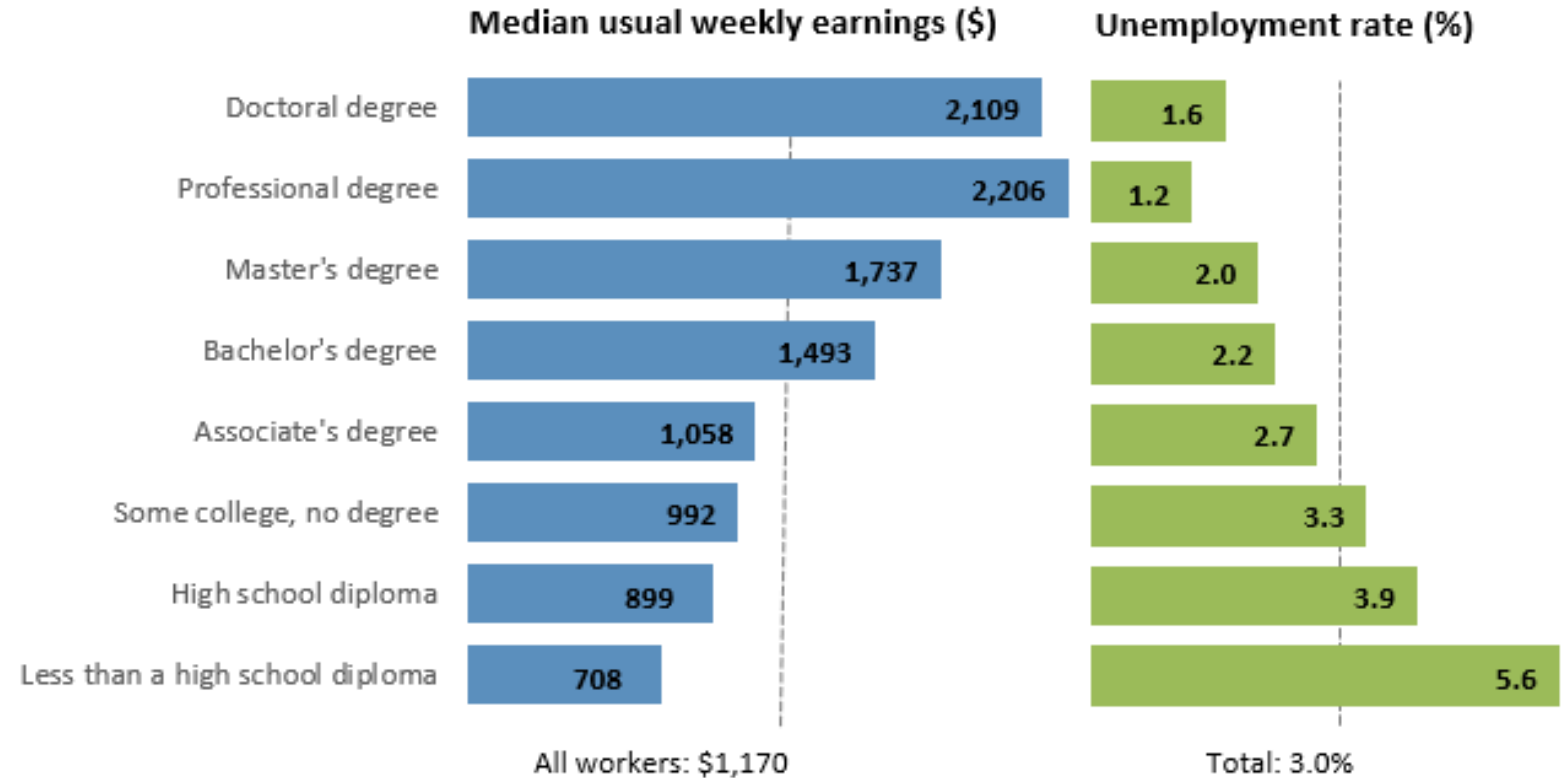
Access to Education, the quality of that education, and degree level a person earns, is one of the determinants of overall health, and engages



Education as a pathway to employment

Consistently, the higher a person's degree, the higher their access is to job opportunities, and benefits that can come with employment

Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment, 2023



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.



Defining Supported Education (SEd)

Supported Education is a recovery-oriented practice that supports adult students to manage mental health challenges *and* persist education.

Supported Education operates from the premise that mental health challenges do not preclude a successful education.



Development of Supported Education as a Recovery Practice

- SEd was developed in the 1980s at Boston University specifically for the support of young adult with serious mental illness who wanted attend and complete college.
- SEd is subset of Supported Employment (SE) and present remains a “promising practice.”
- Both SEd and SE Utilize
 - A psychiatric rehabilitation approach: Choose, Get, Keep.
 - Individualized-services
 - Strengths-based planning focused on skill-building
- SEd
 - Focuses on longer-term career trajectory
 - Holistic focus and investment in personal growth



Settings for Adult Education support in NY

1. *Supported Education Programs*: Blueprint is an example of a stand-alone Supported Education program; we are one of two in NYC
2. *Education Support* is an HBCS and CORE Medicaid billable service.
3. *Embedded in other community-based mental health rehabilitation programs* such as PROS and Clubhouses, whether in-house groups, or linkage to community-based schools
4. Some school offer supplementary education support services through student learning centers or as part of Disability Services
5. Other ways?



Range of Ages

Transition Age Adults (18-30)

- Focus on maintaining status and identity as student
- Connecting with campus-based interest groups
- May be able to take on student loans
- Flexibility to explore multiple interests
- Transitioning responsibilities, particularly around asking for support in a school setting

Adults 30 - 55

- Rebuild identity as learner and student
- Integrate school with other roles and obligations (e.g., care-giver, employee)
- Acclimate to school technologies
- Career-focused goals
- May not be able to take on student loans
- If used to social service setting, coaching around school capacity and expectations for adults with mental health struggles

Adults 60+

- All factors of 30-55
- Motivations for learning may differ.
- For careers: examination of length of degree to employment goal
- Adapting to level of computer integration
- Adapting to learning pace as an older adult.



Engaging in school processes as part of wellness

Supported Education fosters access through . . .

- Context and capacity-building through frustration (encouraging action)
- Planning during urgency (encouraging pause, and paced approaches)
- School research and/or awareness of school admissions process
- Financial commitment: research/review options; student aid and debt management
- Accommodations: rights, research, requests, usage
- Appeals and withdrawal processes: academic, medical, recent or past semesters
- Support-network and resource development
- Skill development: pairing hesitations/barriers with ideas and planning



Particularly when it comes to education, it is important for a person to define their own goals, and how it fits into their own definition of a meaningful life.



I want to focus on learning.
I want to go back to school.



For all the reasons to go to school...

- Earn a degree
- Finish something started
- Proof of self
- Want to be a student again
- Love of learning
- Expand mind
- Get a career



Hesitations are real and valid..

- Don't know how to get started / get started then stop
- No sure where to turn to for support
- Struggle with confidence for being a student
- Sustaining motivation is challenging
- Concerns about mental health at school
- Unsure who and how to ask for help
- Talk myself out of things



Step 1#

Assessment / Self-Assessment

PREPAREDNESS vs READINESS

SEd encourages preparing as a state of action, rather than a “ready” state which is not sustainable when factors change around us.



Conversation exercise:
Validate and explore statements/generalized answers

Statement	Exploration
I want to go to school	
I want to be a student/I love being a student	
When I fail a test, I get depressed	
When a teacher calls on me, I get anxious	
I can't concentrate in class	



On paper, explore participant's learning and school goals in ways that

1. are re-visitible (because conversations and thoughts evaporate and cycle)
2. encourage dynamic thinking
3. Prompt curiosity for research



Preparing for School

Is now the right time to re-enroll in an education program?

This worksheet is designed to empower you to think though, and make, informed decisions.

These are my reasons for going back to school →

This is what really holds my attention now →

Write down subjects, activities, skills that interest you.

This is who is cheering me on →

Write down people who you know, or know of – such as ancestors, historical or religious figures, or even fictional characters – who you will think of when you need inspiration or motivation.



**Where I
have
been**

Thinking back to subjects,
activities, and skills, associated
with school that I took pride
in, **these are things that I
liked about school in the past:**

**These were some
challenges** with school
or schoolwork:

**These are things I
wish I had paid more
attention to** that
would have helped
me with school:

**Outside
the
classroom**

**Inside
the
classroom**



**What
I have
going on
these
days**

**Thinking about my
current routines and
responsibilities,**
adding school may
impact me in the
following ways:

**Thinking about the
overall time I might
need to invest in school
before I graduate,** these
are things I should
consider when re-
starting school:

**These are my financial
responsibilities,** which I
should keep in mind if I
go back to school:

**Outside
the
classroom**

**Inside the
classroom**



School takes a lot of independence and commitment. Thinking about school-related responsibilities, circle the skills that you want to improve, and make notes on anything missing:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading (a lot) | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing essays | <input type="checkbox"/> Making mistakes/needing improvement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creating routines | <input type="checkbox"/> Note-taking | <input type="checkbox"/> Following assignment requirements |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Class participation | <input type="checkbox"/> Managing boredom | <input type="checkbox"/> Managing frustration with challenges |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listening in class | <input type="checkbox"/> Group projects | <input type="checkbox"/> Asking questions and for support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Class attendance | <input type="checkbox"/> Talking with classmates | <input type="checkbox"/> Being surprised by myself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Studying | <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing about myself | <input type="checkbox"/> Tuition/school-related expenses |

Computer literacy is a big part of education. Checking/writing emails regularly is a minimum requirement for all schools. **These are computer literacy skills that I think I should prepare for:**

- Email attachments and forwarding
- Downloading and uploading
- Organization of files and folders
- Formatting text (e.g. bold, italic, centering text, creating headers, page numbers)
- Internet research
- Typing programs such as Microsoft Office and Google Docs



Is now the right time for school?

- I want more preparation time before I begin applying
- This is the right time for me to start applying to school



Step #2

What's next for learning? School or self-paced learning?

Weigh options: model informed decision-making

	Benefits / Pro	Drawbacks / Con
Choice A Apply to school		
Choice B Wait		



Self-paced learning

- Brainstorm ideas/topics of interest; keep a central list
- Research study resources; locations
- Encourage notetaking organization
- Utilize online resources for group/guided viewing, and individual use

Online resources

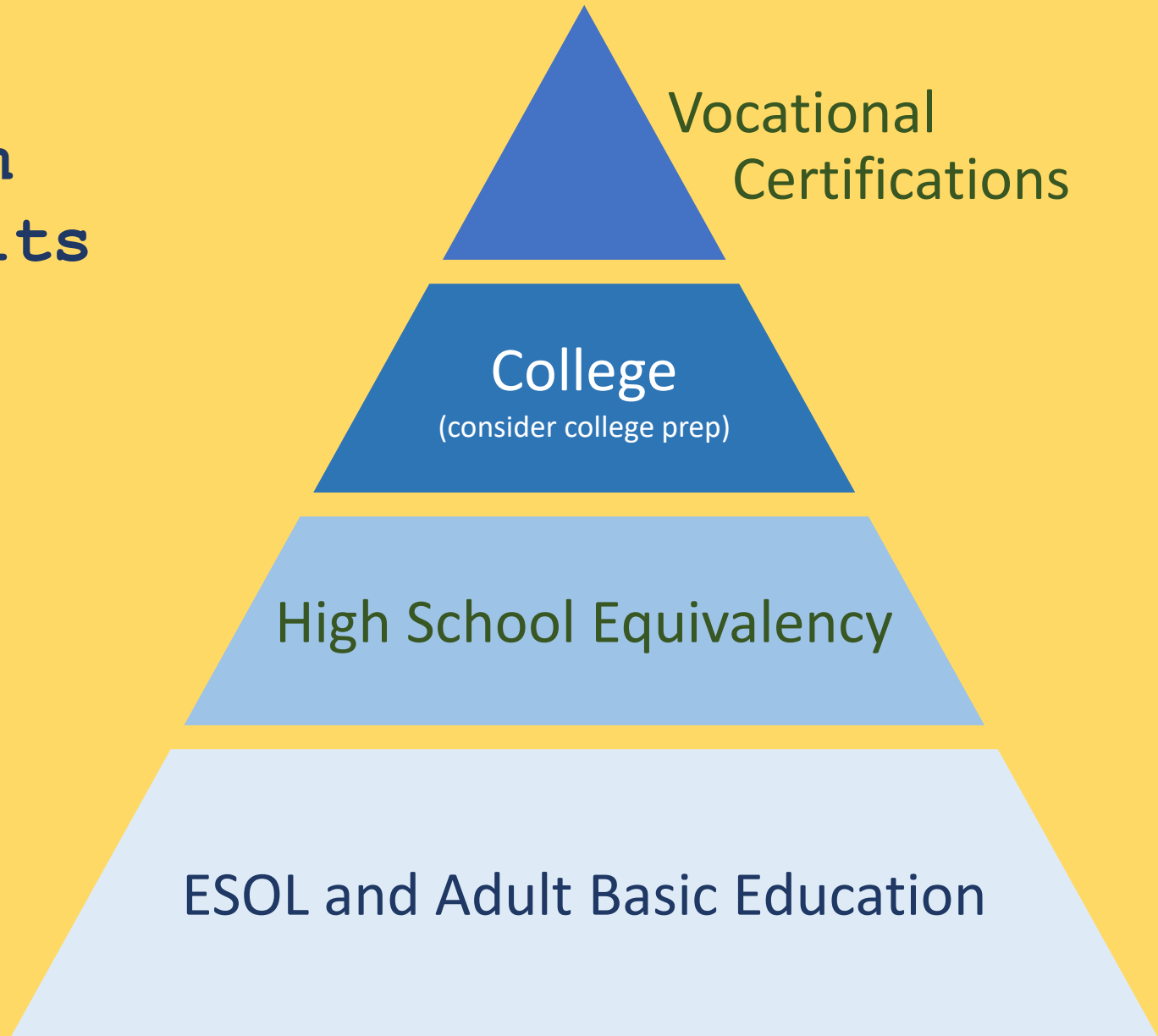
YouTube; <https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/>, Khan Academy; Coursera; LinkedIn Learning (free some libraries)



Schools/classroom programs for adults pursuing formal education

Support

- development of questions
- plan calls and self-introduction
- coach research strategies and organization of findings



Step #3

Choose/Get/Keep for school goals

CHOOSE	<u>Undecided</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Researching schools/options- Weighing options- Still deciding if they want to go to school
GET	<u>Applying</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Chose a school/schools- Taking application steps- Preparing for school commitments- Researching school-specific resources
KEEP	<u>In school</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- managing commitments (in and out of school)- class attendance- developing / practicing study skills- navigating social settings / asking for help- managing mental health



	What's going on	Worker Support	Participant Responsibilities
CHOOSE (Undecided)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Researching schools/options - Weighing options - Still deciding if they want to go to school 		
GET (Applying)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chose a school/schools - Taking application steps - Preparing for school commitments - Researching school-specific resources 		
KEEP (in school)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - managing commitments - class attendance - developing / practicing study skills - navigating social settings / asking for help - managing mental health 		



PLANNING is SEd's biggest tool

Blueprint steps ahead of time so you can move into action

Examples of things we plan

- Task follow-up: calendaring when and anticipating/writing down potential self-advocacy points/questions
- Study plans: a series of minimums
- Breakdowns and chunking larger projects / assignments / study sessions
- Resources to turn to: online tutorials, search questions
- Asking for help (even in SEd meetings):
 - o First, what independent steps can be taken?
 - o Second, during outreach, describe those steps and the specific support needed



ADA Accommodations

Fostering awareness of legal “disability” rights for people with mental health diagnosis

- Available at accredited colleges, VOC programs, and for GED, through the Accessibility/Disability Office.
- **Accommodations** are modifications, or adjustments, to the tasks, environment or the way things are usually done that enable individuals with disabilities to have an equal opportunity to participate in an academic program.
- Accommodations modify the “how”, not the “what” of the program. E.g. a test must still be taken, and testing accommodations can allow longer test time, or a private room.
- Accommodations are based on the barrier that student is experiencing, support research of potential accommodations
- **NY-based colleges: increased FA through ADA Part-Time TAP**



ADA Requirements

Student must request support & provide proof of need (less is more)

Student must present documentation (usually a form) of “disability” of Office of Disability Services

- Must be from a professional licensed to diagnose
- Must be from past year, and resubmitted each year (needs change as people recover)
- Must specify limitations to function at school. ADA covers learning as a “major life function” – Diagnosis alone is not enough to secure an accommodation.
E.g. Due to anxiety during testing, double time and a separate testing room are requested
- STUDENTS DO NOT NEED A PSYCHO-SOCIAL or similarly extensive write-up.



Academic Wellness Planning (modelled off WRAP)

To build awareness of responsibilities, vulnerabilities, and plan actions

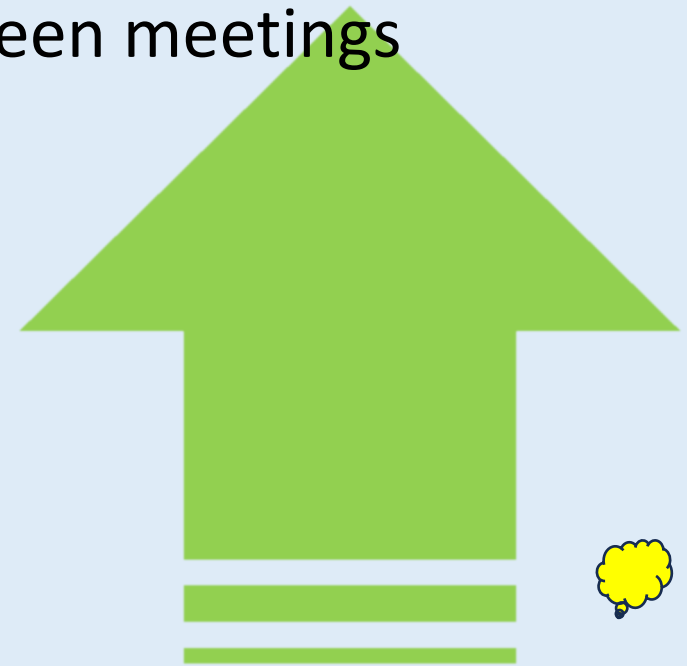
Wellness generally, day-to-day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sleep; meals; social habits; screen time; what is the “north star” or <i>why</i> a person is in school
Wellness as a student	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Class preparation habits• Btwn classes• Larger assignments / projects / papers / exams
Early warning signs + Wellness steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal• Academic
When things are not going	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safety and crisis planning• Notify school (+authorization forms)
Return to school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foster early awareness of withdrawal processes and outcomes through research at the individual school (particularly important for college)



School is ultimately an independent endeavor

Supported Education's role is to

- Coach formulation of questions and how to find answers
- Foster connection to responsibilities/commitments/consequences
- Skill-building: time management, organizations, flexible thinking
- Plan during meetings & encourage step-taking between meetings
- Modelling new or challenging skills
- Framing: toward growth/learning
- Normalizing discomfort
- Encourage curiosity
- Chances to bounce back



Professional considerations

**Dignity of Risk and
the Duty to Care**

**We are fostering
Participant-growth
Mindset**

**Neglect →
Over-Protect
Continuum**





What happens when we

- Do somethings *for* someone
- Have burry support boundaries
(how accessible we are or how frequently we are available)?
- Taking client's frustration personally?
(e.g. bureaucracy fatigue; capacity for technology use (glitches; varying platforms and varying use of that platform); varying communication and academic norms; varying levels of teacher understanding)



Hesitations and frustrations can be a beautiful insights, and a place from which to build support

Hesitation	Supported Education Questions	SEd Framing
Don't know how to get started / get started then stop	Have you started this goal before? What was it like?	SEd can support you to research, plan, and keep up with steps
No sure where to turn to for support	Can you talk about times you have asked for help in school? How that was?	SEd can work with you to identify and connect with school resources, and learn how to use their services; SEd hopes and strives to be a space where it is safe to talk about frustration/doubt struggle and the smallest of successes. We're here to support focus on the next steps
Struggle with confidence for being a student	How has confidence in school come up in the past? Outside of school, is there something you have had to gain confidence in?	Understanding what is expected of you as a student is a big part of the school experience, and it often feels like there are assumptions about what you should already know. SEd can work with you to understand what is expected of you and plan for meeting those requirements.



Hesitations and frustrations can be a beautiful insights, and a place from which to build support (continued)

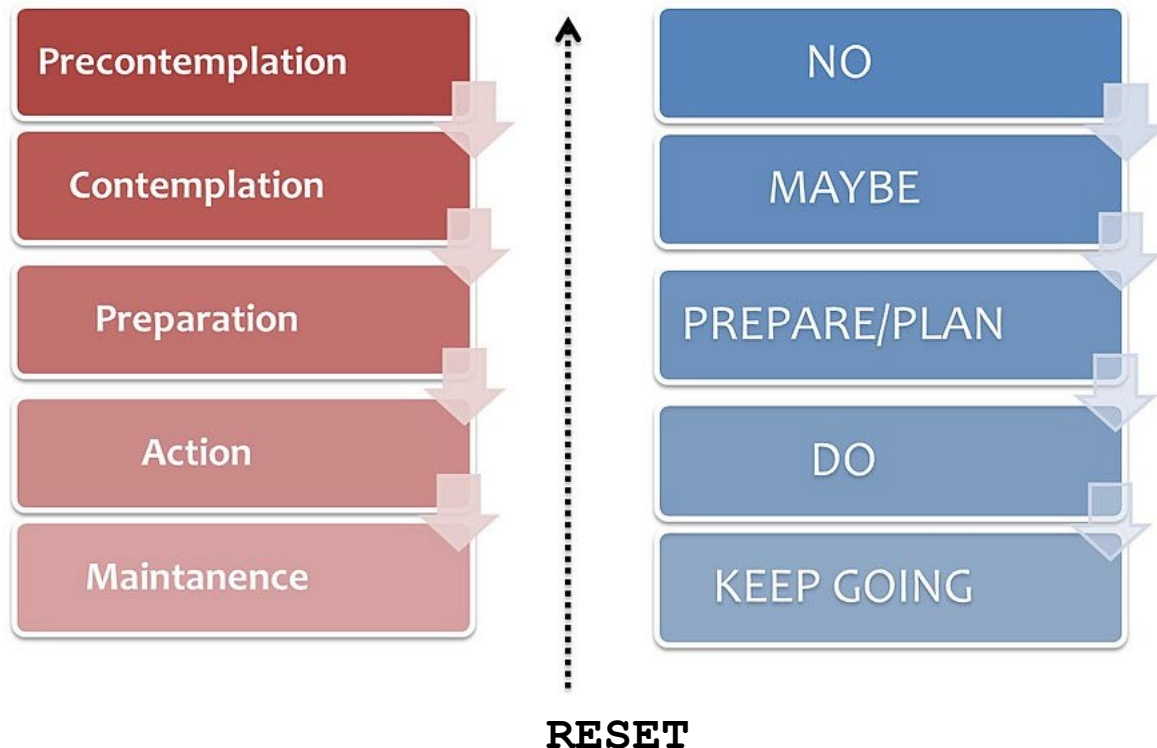
Hesitation	Supported Education Questions	SEd Framing
Sustaining motivation is challenging	Can you talk about a time motivation came up? When did you have it and when did it start to fade?	Motivation is incredibly challenging to sustain, especially when challenging assignments and subject come up.
Concerns about mental health at school	That completely makes sense. How mental health come up for you at school before?	A person's diagnosis is private, and a lot of what we experience – anxiety, depressions, stress – is a shared experience. We get to choose when and how we talk to others about ourselves. It is good to plan ahead for when things are challenging, so that you can in control as much as possible.



Stages of Change

External requirements and internal motivation

Transtheoretical Model Stages of change



External requirements for moving through *Stages of Change* differ based on goal.

Lower

- Deadlines are fluid
- Financial commitment is low
- Often seen in self-paced VOC tracks, and HSE programs
- During application processes

High

- Financial commitment
- During college enrollment ← *rapid & unceasing* deadlines for 3.25/5 month semesters



Provider Best practices

- **Align with the client:** this is about their goal and the goal.
- **Model curiosity:** what are things you want them to be thinking about?
- Use multiple questions and *kind* questions to find out the answer to direct or challenging topics.
- Use language which is mindful of the client
- Share in exploration of curiosity, for forming connections, toward planning for education
- Trauma barrier-informed inquiry
- Conversation which minimizes barriers, is mindful of stigma (external and internalized)
- PREPAREDNESS vs READINESS



Scenario (if there's time)

A participant on your caseload for 6 months – who regularly misses meetings with varying reasons, is late for groups, and regularly leaves during them for a smoke break. They are also kind to other group members and has some insightful things to contribute from time to time.

In passing, they tell you they want to apply for school.

What are your initial thoughts?

What are your some follow up ideas?

I want to go
to school





Recap of SEd

- Exploring personal interests, values, and goals
- Encouraging a person's identity as a student or potential student
- Promoting awareness of academic expectations
- Encouraging connection with other students, campus life
- Balancing school with other responsibilities
- Awareness of accommodations: rights, research, requests, usage
- Planning around school-based, or other trauma
- Planning mental health disclosure
- Planning for and coping with change



Thank you !
Stay curious and nerdy!

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