

Differences between Japanese and American School: Identifying differences in education for students with disabilities

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I . Introduction

In the United States, Federal mandates hold schools accountable for student achievement, including those with ASD, in mathematics, language arts, and science (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Additionally, special education law requires that students with disabilities have access to and make progress in the general education curriculum (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). As a result, a push for inclusion for students with disabilities to receive their education within an inclusive classroom has been seen. Yet, long-term outcomes for individuals with disabilities remain grim. For example, individuals with ASD hold the third lowest matriculation rate to college when compared to students with other disabilities and those without disabilities in STEM fields (Wei et al., 2013; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). The prevalence of Autism is rapidly increasing, with as many as 1:100 globally and 1:36 in the United States are diagnosed (Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2023).

It has been noted in Japan, individuals with disabilities hold a relatively higher employment rate than other countries, and specifically, individuals with ASD complete a two-year college or four-year university program at about 18%

higher than those in the United States (Kudo, 2010, Park, Norasakkunkit, & Kashima, 2017; Wei et al. 2013). Providing students with Autism an appropriate inclusive education and postsecondary education opportunities is a growing problem. Possible solutions lay within other countries and how education in the home and school are conducted. For example, Park and colleagues (2017) suggest that better self-regulation, earlier on in life, may lead to better outcomes post-secondary. They further state that better outcomes in education, employment, and community integration may be seen in Japan than the United states and can be attributed to Japanese children having better self-regulation than most Western children. Thus, it is essential to seek to understand why and how other countries that may have better outcomes for children with autism and other disabilities.

Recent estimates suggest that in Japan, the number of students diagnosed with or suspected of having developmental disabilities is substantial; yet, they may have better employment outcomes, therefore, cross-cultural comparisons are especially important for ASD, since cultural differences, socialization in regard to culture, and social activities may impact the perception of symptoms which ultimately impacts transition outcomes (Atherton, et al., 2023; Matson et al. 2017).

Identifying classroom differences and educational outcome differences between the United States and Japan as well as differences in educational environments and instruction could aid in the development and refinement of interventions that support education and inclusive education. Additionally, a there is a stark difference is the push for national standards in Japan along with specialized schools for individuals with disabilities that leads to better outcomes for all students (Wieczorek, 2008). This is a trend that has been noted in the literature for many years.

II . Educational setting in USA

Education in the USA is largely provided by the government through free public education. Funding for education is provided at the federal, state, and local level. School in the US is compulsory beginning with Kindergarten at age five or six. Depending on the state the child resides in they are required to be enrolled in school until the age of 14-18. In some states such as Idaho, the child does not have to be enrolled in school until age 7 and then can disenroll, or drop out of school on their 16th birthday (US, DOJ, 2022). In the United States, each state has the right to determine the age of required and sustained enrollment. Approximately 85% of all students are enrolled in a free public school, about 9% enrolled in private schools with tuition requirements, and about 5.9% of students were enrolled in a homeschooled environment. School years consist of 175-185 days, with an average of 2.5 months of summer vacation in June and July, one-week vacation in the Fall, Winter Holiday break during December and the first few days of January that is usually 2 weeks, and a one-week Spring break. These breaks are intended to allow students time to rest and refocus and transition to

the next semester or trimester of learning.

II-1. Meals Provided by the Government to children in Poverty

Free public schools offer breakfast and lunch and for those students who cannot afford the lunch the option of free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) is available. The FRPL program is divided into categories of low-poverty, mid-low poverty, mid-high poverty, and high-poverty. The low-poverty school is defined as 25% or less of the students are eligible for FRPL and a high poverty school is where more than 75% of students are eligible for FRPL (NCES, 2023). Enrollment in high poverty schools has remained high; in 2021 student enrollment reached 10.5 million students attending a high-poverty school out of the approximate 49.4 million students.

II-2. Education for Students with Disabilities in the United States understanding the Laws

The idea of integration is central to the education of children in the U.S. and can be seen throughout history in disability law, including special education law (U.S. DOJ, 2022). The federal program Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) necessitates a free and appropriate education to each qualified person with a disability. FAPE requires all public-school districts jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or severity of the person's disability to educate students within their home school district. Today, approximately 15% or 7.3 million students were served on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in the United States due to their disability. Services are funded under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2008). Additionally students can be served on a 504 plan which provides accommodations only. During the 2020-21 school year, students served through Section 504 plans represented 19.6% of students

with disability accommodation plans.

An IEP is a formal document that includes specific learning and behavioral goals for students with disabilities. An outline of modified curricular supports in addition to accommodations are described in an IEP. A 504 plan is different from an IEP in that it is a formal document that includes accommodations (e.g. preferential seating, notes provided, a scribe, typing instead of handwritten documents) that will help the child with a disability succeed. A 504 does not detail out a modified individual program to help the students succeed. Thus, Accommodations are an alteration of environment, curriculum format, or equipment that allows an individual with a disability to gain access to content and/or complete assigned tasks differently. While modifications are a different set of curricular materials or change to the content delivered. In some schools an estimated 20-30% of students are served on a 504 plan which provides accommodations only which is larger than the number of students on an IEP. Students served on an IEP or 504 continue to increase in the United States Public School System.

Specific Learning disabilities make up the largest number of students served at 34.2% of those with a disability, followed by 17.9% with a Speech and Language Impairment, 16.4% served under Other Health Impairment (e.g. ADHD), 12% identified with Autism, 6% with an Intellectual Disability, and 4.8% with an Emotional Disturbance, and 7.8% served in other categories (e.g. Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Blind). There are many children with intellectual disabilities enrolled in the school, and that educational practices for these children are often not adequate (Okyere et al., 2019). Schools are required to provide education in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) which requires education for students with disabilities is provided alongside general education peers as

much as possible. The goal of the LRE was to help students reach their full potential.

The LRE is supposed to support integration and inclusion which is the practice of educating and including people with disabilities in settings where they can participate with peers who do not have disabilities. In regard to special education law, integration is defined as educating students with and without disabilities together. The primary special education law Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) requires that students with disabilities be educated in the most integrated, least restrictive environment for those students. A continuum of services is provided to include the least restrictive setting in the general education classroom to the most restrictive setting such as private schools and institutions that are fee-based for students with the most restrictive needs.

Interpretations of the LRE does not refer to the specific needs a student with a disability requires to thrive in their educational setting. "The IDEA requires only a "basic floor of opportunity," not that schools "maximize" a child's educational potential. p.1" The basic opportunity to learn may be the least restrictive environment available in which the child can learn. The interpretation of FAPE based on the *Rowley Case* suggests that schools only need to provide a bare minimum of services; this leaves many children with disabilities learning in a general education setting because the instruction can provide an opportunity for the child to learn. Considering a basic interpretation of FAPE schools do not need to meet the child's every need to thrive. The discrepancy between academic gains for children with disabilities and typically developing children continues to widen. One of the bigger problems leading to the gap between students with a disability and those without can be seen in the lack of curriculum

consistency and uniformity across all of the United States.

II-3. Curriculum Inconsistency in the USA

In regard to variability across the USA, decisions in regard to curricular materials, funding, teaching, and educational policies, locally elected school board members, school districts, and individual states make those decisions. Educational standards and standardized-testing decisions are made by the states through acts of their legislatures and governors, along with their state departments of education. A national trend has been seen in regard to developing National Curriculum Standards and voluntary national standards for Mathematics, Science, and History have been developed while other subjects currently do not have national standards. Essentially, standards used for student performance are left to the individual states and local authorities such as school boards.

The United States does not have a mandated set of standards or curriculum that is disseminated to all children. The United States has developed a set of *Common Core Standards*; however, only 41 out of the 50 states have adopted this standard. Within these *Common Core Standards*, States have authority to modify the standards to meet state specific needs.

In Japan, the same standards apply across the whole country and each prefecture. This means that if a child begins school in Hokkaido and they transfer to a school in Tokyo, they will be receiving the same curriculum materials to meet the national standards. Contradictory to that, a child may begin a school in Texas and transfer to Idaho and the curriculum, standards, and educational model for delivery may be starkly different. This lack of continuity in education, lack of shared adopted curriculum and standards

naturally differentiates the quality of and quantity of education children receive.

II-4. Current Detriments and Outcomes of Inclusion

One of the biggest challenges the United States is facing is supporting inclusive education due to educational reforms and education provided in an inclusive setting rather than a self-contained or special education classroom or school (Smith & Tyler, 2011). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 and revised in 2015 as *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) outlined rules for educating children with disabilities in the general education classroom. The ESSA emphasized the need to more clearly articulate the demands of a school teacher within the K-12 system (ESSA, 2015). Many teachers state they are underprepared, not equipped with the necessary resources, or lack time to focus on the diverse needs of students with disabilities. As early as 2010, as many as 80% of children with disabilities received their education in a general education setting (Smith & Tyler, 2011). A push for inclusion left children with disabilities inadequately prepared due to teachers' unpreparedness.

II-5. Results of Inconsistent Curriculum and Challenges with Inclusion

Results from the public education system have yielded roughly 79% of US adults being literate with 21% illiterate. The average American adult reads at about a 7th-8th grade reading level. Variability in curricular materials, standards, and implementation may account for the differences in reading proficiency across each state. For example, about 67% of students in Idaho were not reading proficiently and about 73% of students in Virginia were not reading proficiently. The

average across the United States is about 66% of students are not reading proficiently.

II-6. Variables Impacting Low Reading and Academic Proficiency

Variables such as immigrant numbers, second language learners, disability, and poverty all affect the reading proficiency of the students in the United States. For example, about 2.5% or 1.1 million students were experiencing homelessness in the 2021-2022 school year (NCES, 2021). In the 2019-2020 school year approximately 246,350 students were homeless compared to Idaho's 7,835; however, the number of homeless students is representative of the state's population. California has about 39.24 million people and Idaho has about 1.9 million. The overall differences in the setup and standards may have an impact on the success of children with Autism and other disabilities in Japan.

Children with Autism experience grim outcomes and hold lower employment rates, lower matriculation rates to college, lower independent living skills and rates, and are more likely to be disenfranchised from their communities (Barker et al., 2023; Wei et al., 2013).

III. Educational Setting in Japan

Education is compulsory for all students grades one through nine. The school year includes 210 days from April 1st to March 31st. Students are given a summer and winter break. School boards can add up to 30 days for school festivals, athletic meets, and ceremonies with nonacademic educational objectives, especially those encouraging cooperation and school spirit. Whereas school spirit days, festivals, athletics and school activities are held during the academic year and day during instructional time with no additional days added.

However, outside festivals, activities, and athletics can and do occur during the evening and weekends. In Japan many teachers coach on the weekends and they are required to be on campus during the summer vacation often occurring in August.

Japan has a 99% literacy rate and continues to score among the top countries on literacy and numeracy rates among adults (OECD, 2013). Japan is known for its high-quality basic education provided to children in grades one through nine. When compared to the United States, more students in Japan go onto college than children from the United States. Additionally, some experts suggest that the average high school student in Japan graduates with the same level of education as the average student completing two years of college (Wieczorek, 2008). Moreover, SPICE, (2023) stated that over 95% of Japanese students graduate high school. In America about 89% of students graduate from high school. Japanese students matriculate to college at higher rates than American students; on average 80.6% of students in Japan go on to college or university while 61.8% of students go onto a two or four-year college or university in the United States. "Some Japanese education specialists estimate that the average Japanese high school graduate has obtained about the same level of education as the average American after two years of college" (Wieczorek, 2008 p.101).

III-1. National Standards for Education of General and Special Education

One distinct difference between the United States and Japan is that there is a set of National Standards and a curriculum for students with and without disabilities. Based on the School Education Act, the Japanese national government sets the national curriculum standards for elementary,

secondary and special needs schools in order to maintain definite levels of education and ensure equal quality education for all. National curriculum standards are revised every 10 years. The national government body that publishes the national curriculum standards is the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT, 2023).

Additionally, in 2007, Japan started the Tokubetsushienkyouiku (Education for Students with Special Needs). The goal of this new system was to meet the individual needs of children with disabilities, similar to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (currently called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA) in the U. S. In 2006, Japanese education scholar Kazuhiko Ueno (2006) stated that Japan lagged behind the U.S. by 30 years in its program for children with disabilities and in an effort to remediate the deficit a plan of action was put into place to support greater community inclusion and education in schools. The guiding principles of Japan's education system are guided by statements in the Japanese Constitution that directs equal educational opportunity to the student's ability: "The Japanese Constitution sets forth the basic national educational policy, as follows: "All people shall have the right to receive an equal education corresponding to their ability, as provided by law. The people shall be obligated to have all boys and girls under their protection receive ordinary education as provided for by law. Such compulsory education shall be free." (Article 26).

III-2. Special Needs Education in Japan

Special Needs Education is education for students with disabilities, in consideration of their individual educational needs, which aims at full development of their capabilities and at their

independence and social participation. Special Needs Education is carried out in various forms, including resource rooms and special classes of which both are in regular schools, not specific for education of children with disabilities. Japan also has special schools named "Schools for Special Needs Education" which include schools specifically tailored and designed for 1) children with autism and intellectual disabilities, 2) children with intellectual disabilities, and 3) children with physical disabilities and developmental delays. Children with autism without intellectual disability are not eligible for special needs schools. Based on the national curriculum, Curriculum delivered in Schools for Special Needs Education is often designed and delivered using thematic instruction and with the intention of including functional skills. One example is the travel training program teaching students to navigate their community safely. During the travel training program students are taught functional mathematics and reading skills such as calculating a train route, budgeting skills for the route fares, reading maps and directional signs, along with time management. A thematic instructional approach is taken to embed core academic skills into functional curricular materials during travel training. Core curriculum delivery takes place within the special needs education schools and reflects a functional approach.

III-3. Inclusive Education in Japan

Japan has made the decision to aim at forming an inclusive education system for building a convivial society. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology's (known as Monbukagakusho, MEXT) final report submitted by the Advisory Council on Future Directions of Special Education in the 21st Century; stated that to be in line with

the government policy for enhancing normalization in society a life-long support system would be developed with the cooperation and collaboration of every societal sector to promote autonomy and participation in all aspects of the society for individuals with disabilities. MEXT oversees a multitude of internal study groups regarding the methods of education. Through these studies they provide guidance, advice, and funding to the prefectural governments based on research from the National Council on Education Reforms. Guidance from MEXT is followed by the schools using the national standards and curriculum or funding can be reduced. The MEXT reviews textbooks used in Japanese education with the intent of ensuring they are neutral in their points of view and include correct information according to grade levels. Schools in Japan also have the ability to use supplemental materials and texts that are not directly approved by MEXT.

Ⅲ-4. Government Funded Special Needs Schools in Japan

Currently in Japan about one thousand special needs education schools are in operation and funded by the government. These include schools such as those specific to children with Autism, intellectual disability (include Autism), Deaf, blindness, physical disabilities, and health impaired. Essentially, children with Autism are educated alongside peers of similar ability and diagnosis. This design allows schools to specialize in the support, treatment, and interventions needed to help a child with Autism be successful. Some of the supports include sensory rooms, assistive technology, modified environment to include more subtle lighting, and smaller class sizes with additional adult teachers or support staff. Additionally, there are a set of standards specific to individuals with disabilities; thus, the need to

provide the general education curriculum is modified or replaced to meet the needs of the student. Student education for children with disabilities is highly individualized to meet the needs of the child. Specific curricular materials are created for the child to meet their individual needs and set goals. The stark contrast between the educational settings, standards, materials and government funded special needs schools may account for better outcomes seen in Japan.

Ⅲ-5. Inclusion in Japan

Inclusive educational practices through an exchange of collaborative learning activities take place. For example, students from general education schools are partnered with students from special education schools so they can collaborate on cultural activities, school events such as welcome ceremonies. Inclusive education is supported through remote support consultation to Japanese schools overseas. Inclusive education in the intellectual disability education programs is supported through joint learning in each subject with general education schools. While inclusion in the United States is provided by putting the child with a disability into the general education classroom and relying on the general education teacher to have the knowledge and skill needed to modify the curriculum or create unique learning materials for the child. Many teachers feel underprepared to teach children with disabilities (Smith & Tyler, 2011). Additionally, in Japan, there is a system in place in which children with developmental disabilities and other difficulties who are enrolled in regular classes receive special support in resource rooms for several hours a week depending on their difficulties.

IV. Identifying Similarities and differences

While there are many similarities between US schools and Japanese Schools such as compulsory education requirements. In the US, students must attend until the state they live in releases the requirement which can be from 14-18 years. While in Japan compulsory education begins in first grade with many parents opting to send their child to preschool and kindergarten and compulsory education is mandated until completion of the ninth grade. Students who have completed the nine years of school move onto upper secondary school which is completed in three years (MEXT, 2023).

In addition to the requirements of education, each country provides a guideline or standards for curricular delivery. While Japan has national standards, the United States has a set of *Common Core Standards* that states can choose to adopt, common standards are used across all of Japan. While standards are used in both countries, the inconsistency with standards used across the entire United States leave students with possible gaps in education, lower standards for core subjects, and inequality across the Nation. In Japan all students receive the same standards, same curricular materials and the content provided aims to provide a balanced education for all students. Another contrast includes the specialization of classes earlier for students. In Japan students are encouraged to take classes in their area of employment interest in the high school grades and students in the United States do not often take classes in their area of employment interest until the third year of a four-year college or university education. For children who have severe disabilities, their education is suited to their individual educational needs and

goals and continues until they complete the nine years of compulsory education.

IV-1. Seclusion Challenges in Both Countries

Private schools and institutions that only accept students with disabilities increases restrictiveness decreasing integration which means that the students do not have opportunities to interact with nondisabled peers in elective classes, extracurricular activities, or lunch. Inclusive opportunities are often limited by staff shortages, logistics, scheduling, and lack of training for general education teachers (Schoger, 2006). Some school in the United States use a reverse inclusion model which means the students without disabilities spend time within the special education class. Schoger (2006) used a reverse inclusion process and found positive results noting that the students involved in the program improved their communication and met their annual communication IEP goals.

Special Needs Schools in Japan use reverse inclusion to provide opportunities such as social activities, festivals, welcome back ceremonies, and after school functioning as an inclusive group. The use of reverse inclusion provides students in Japan the opportunity to receive focused instruction to meet their individual needs while also allowing for time to interact with non-disabled peers. More emphasis is put on functional skills and learning to interact and live within their community as a productive member than on academic skills that may never be mastered as often seen in the United States.

IV-2. Functional Skills and Schools in Japan and the US

In Japan, special needs schools' programs of study are designed for each child to meet their individual educational goals within the broader

National Standards for Special Needs Schools. Much of the education in a special needs school has an emphasis on inclusion of functional and practical living skills that will help the child be successful post K-12. For example, children are taught how to use the public transportation system to reach destinations such as a place of employment, home, shopping centers, and community activities. All students have opportunities to learn how to stay away from home and develop independent skills such as cooking, cleaning, and using traditional bathhouses/onsen. Independent living skills are taught from the preschool age through high school graduation. Skills are scaffolded so students have support from staff, prompts, visual reminders, and task analysis all at the preschool through early years programs. These supports are removed systematically allowing the child to become more independent as they age. Schools are equipped with appliances to support home living on a daily basis. Additionally, Japanese schools teach community interaction and behaviors through traditional and functional academics.

In America, children with disabilities are taught academic skills such as reading, writing, and mathematics in either the general classroom, resource room, or their self-contained developmental learning program. Content instruction in core areas (math, reading, writing, science, and history) are taught through the high school curriculum either using modified curriculum or core curriculum with accommodations for those that do not need modifications. Functional skills such as clearing, community engagement, travel training, and employment skills are largely taught in the last year or two of high school, but most often taught in the post-secondary transition program for students aged 18-21.

Differences in functional skills education can be

a large contributor to the better outcomes seen in Japan for those with disabilities when compared to the United States. A proactive approach that begins at the first stages of education, continuing through high school graduation provides exposure to the needed skills for independent living, employment, and community involvement rather than a reactive approach post K-12. Japanese children learn how to: cook, clean, grow a garden, socialize within their community, seek employment and sustain employment, and navigate their community independently using public transportation beginning before the age of five. The early exposure helps to teach foundational skills that can be developed through their compulsory education. Whereas, many American children with disabilities only get this level of exposure to functional skills through outside agencies or at home until they reach the transition age.

IV-3. Teaching Community and Service

A big difference between American and Japanese schools can be seen in the way children are served lunch, eat lunch, and finish the meal. For example, meals served in the schools are served with the support of children assigned each week to help deliver, serve, and clean up the lunch. Lunch is served in the classroom allowing all children to eat together at the same time. Children are served their meal by their peers where they eat at their desk. All children wait to eat together and use traditional language "Itadakimasu" meaning Let's eat together. The practice of serving each other helps children learn how to be service oriented and responsible for the cleanup of the meal. Children eat on reusable dinnerware rather than disposable trays and utensils used in traditional American Schools. Children learn the importance of eating together,

patience, working together to clean up the meal, and service to one another and the community. Children in America eat outside their classroom, often in a cafeteria with several other classes of children. Meals are served by adult staff members and children do not have to wait until all of their classmates are served prior to eating. When children are finished eating in America they throw away their food, plastic or paper plates and utensils while leaving any dishes or table clean up to the cafeteria staff. Counter to this practice in America, children in Japan all work together to serve the meal and clean up after themselves and as a group. Following the lunch meal children in America hurry outside to play for a few minutes; play is largely unstructured and can consist of multiple grades playing together. Japanese children all finish their meal and clean up together and then collectively go outside to play which is also largely unstructured and can include multiple grades.

Traditional values are taught and reinforced through the education system in Japan. Students learn how to support each other and work as a collective group while in America, children do not always eat with their peers, class, or even friends. Lunchtime often consists of large groups of students going through a cafeteria line, getting a plate of food, and then sitting with their class in a designated area or sitting at a table of choice which may not include friends or classmates. Additionally, while children in Japan all wait to eat together, children in America eat on their own timeline and are not required to wait for all their peers to be served. America has a focus on individualism, ideals that allow children to choose their own outfits to wear to school, choose what to eat, when to eat it, and with whom they eat with. American children are often allowed to have colored hair (e.g. pink or green hair dye), piercings,

and while not encouraged, children often wear revealing clothing. Many children are reported to engage in disruptive behavior and attention seeking behavior which has increased over the last 2-3 years. Due to the large amount of student disruption and behavioral conduct, many schools have found it impossible to reform behaviors. About 80% of American schools report an increase in maladaptive disruptive behaviors since the COVID-19 pandemic (NCES, 2023).

Despite the similarities and differences in the education system in Japan, children with Autism ubiquitously struggle; outcomes post-high school are better in Japan than the United States much work still needs to be done (Kudo, 2010, Park, Norasakkunkit, & Kashima, 2017; Wei et al. 2013). In both countries a person with Autism holds the lowest employment rate of all disability categories. In both countries people with Autism have the lowest matriculation rate to college or university and complete at a lower rate than any other disability category.

V. Conclusion and Recommendation

It is important to understand cultural influences as it relates to social opportunities and training, and potential community integration, for children with ASD to better strengthen teacher preparation programs and develop EBI for children with ASD. Although ASD is a universal disorder with strong biological underpinnings that occurs with similar core features, symptom presentation appears to be susceptible to cultural influences (Daley, 2002). Culture has been defined as a shared system of beliefs, behavioral norms, symbolisms, values and reference points that are shared between collective members of a particular society. These values, beliefs, and shared ideas are used to construct a unique worldview and individual identity

(Atherton, et al., 2023). Cross-cultural comparisons become essential because the disorder has common universal characteristics and pedagogy, parental influence, and cultural norms hold the potential to help identify treatments for those with ASD. Consider individuals with ASD and those serving individuals with ASD holding pieces of the puzzle in regard to cultural ideology and how appropriate behaviors, normal development, and societal expectations and interactions are developed. Moreover, cross-cultural comparisons may influence parent/caregiver, teacher, and support personnel reports, diagnosis, and recommended interventions (Daley, 2002; Mandell & Novak, 2005). Culture is a complex and pervasive construct making it difficult to determine the best way to accommodate cultural influence, especially when considering treatment options to support postsecondary transitions such as; socialization, social communication, employment, and community integration (Matson et al. 2017).

There is currently a tremendous gap in research on teaching and learning specific to working with those who have ASD in Japan and the US particularly in the postsecondary transition period. There are ubiquitous challenges when considering transitions to college life and social integration, employment, community integration, and independent living for individuals with ASD and even more so when considering that each culture has a different emphasis on skill development (Atherton, et al., 2023). With the glaring lack of research in postsecondary transitions, as well as teaching and learning in general specific to special needs teacher education preparation, there is a critical need to better understand transition practices, especially for countries that have one of the highest prevalence and successful employment rates for those with ASD in order to work towards better lifelong outcomes for these individuals.

“All people, including people with autism, have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. And yet, people with autism are often subject to stigma and discrimination, including unjust deprivation of health care, education and opportunities to engage and participate in their communities.” World Health Organization, nd

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