



Successful Transition From Primary to Secondary School for Students With Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Systematic Literature Review

Mechthild Richter, Maria Popa-Roch, and Céline Clément

Université de Strasbourg, Strasbourg, France

ABSTRACT

The transition from primary to secondary school is a sensitive phase in the life of a child, especially within vulnerable groups such as children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). ASD characteristics, such as the refusal to change or social interaction difficulties, present challenges to the transition not only for the students themselves, but also for their parents and the teachers involved in the transition process. For the literature review, 16 studies focusing on the primary-secondary transition for children with ASD were selected. Based on criteria existing in the literature for students without special needs, the selected articles were analyzed for identifying factors that enable a successful transition for children with ASD. The literature review confirms these criteria to a major extent, but also modifies and adds new criteria, which involve all main stakeholders and the transition preparation. Both are of crucial importance for students with ASD. These new criteria enable the evaluation of the primary-secondary transition of children with ASD and provide starting points for further research in order to better understand and improve the situation of students with ASD in mainstream education settings.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 8 February 2018
Accepted 4 November 2018

KEYWORDS

Autism spectrum disorder;
inclusive education; primary-
secondary school;
stakeholders; transition

In several countries, such as France (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche, translation: Ministry for National Education, Higher Education and Research [MENESR], 2014), Germany (Klemm, 2013), Finland, and Australia (Graham & Jahnukainen, 2011), the number of students with special needs attending a mainstream school has been rising remarkably over the last few decades. However, statistics show that in 2015, up to one-third of primary school students with special needs in French mainstream education either did not start a secondary mainstream education or did not finish it (MENESR, 2017).

Meanwhile, the prevalence rate for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has been rising, mainly due to changes and improvements in the diagnostics (Blumberg et al., 2013; King & Bearman, 2009; Lord & Bishop, 2010). These developments indicate that more and more students with ASD are attending mainstream education.

International research shows that the transition from primary to secondary school is often linked to excitement, but also to stress and anxiety for both students and their parents (Bailey & Baines, 2012; Hanewald, 2013; Mackenzie, McMaugh, & O'Sullivan, 2012). Students with ASD are particularly vulnerable in the transition phase, since they often have problems accepting and dealing with changes in their daily routine (Adreon & Stella, 2001; Humphrey & Lewis, 2008; Jindal-Snape, Douglas, Topping, Kerr, & Smith, 2006). Studies report that it is more likely for students with ASD to face social exclusion, to become victims of bullying, and to have lower academic achievement than their classmates without ASD at the mainstream secondary level (e.g., Evangelou et al., 2008; Foulder-Hughes & Prior, 2014; Mandy et al., 2015; Wainscot, Naylor, Sutcliffe, Tantam, & Williams, 2008). That is why we assume that

the transition from primary to secondary school plays a crucial role in the school career of a child with ASD. While the literature does not define what a successful primary-secondary transition is, Deacy, Jennings, and O'Halloran (2015) underline that transition is a long process, suggesting a transition framework that starts two years before the school change and continues until one year after. In Dann's study (2011), parents report after the first term that the transition is not yet complete.

This leads to the question of how a transition from primary school to secondary school can be successfully conducted with short- and long-term beneficial effects. This implies the need to clearly define what a successful transition actually means. Evangelou et al. (2008) is the only recent study that presents criteria for a successful transition from primary to secondary school. Students with special needs are mentioned in the study, but they are not the main focus. Five aspects for a successful transition were revealed: 1) developing new friendships and improving their self-esteem and confidence, 2) having settled so well in school life that they caused no concerns to their parents, 3) showing an increasing interest in school and school work, 4) getting used to their new routines and school organization with great ease, and 5) experiencing curriculum continuity (ibid.). These criteria served as a guideline for the literature review on students with ASD.

A substantive amount of studies address the transition from primary to secondary school in general. However, when considering the transition for children with ASD, the literature is scarce: the number of studies is low and quite limited in their regional scope. In this article, we seek to develop criteria that describe a successful transition for students ASD and attempt to identify factors influencing the transition, both positively and negatively, based on the existing literature.

Autism spectrum disorder

The term autism spectrum disorder was developed for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) by the American Psychiatric Association (2013). The fifth and newest edition of the DSM published in 2013 characterizes ASD as “[p]ersistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts” and “[r]estricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities” (p. 1). These symptoms must be present in early childhood and cause impairment in significant areas of life.

Children with ASD usually prefer to keep to their daily routine. They have difficulties understanding social conventions, such as how reciprocal friendships work or when it is adequate to talk about a certain topic. In Humphrey and Lewis' (2008) study, students with ASD report that it is difficult for them to understand others' points of view. Gardner et al. (2014) analyzed peer-interaction of students with ASD and observed behaviors such as talking over or interrupting conversation partners. Difficulties in social communication and interaction, as well as repetitive patterns of behavior or restricted interests, remarkably impact the everyday school life and the transition from primary to secondary school (Dillon & Underwood, 2012; Humphrey & Lewis, 2008; Wainscot et al., 2008).

Comorbidities linked to ASD, such as sleeping problems, epilepsy, psychological disorders, and gastrointestinal symptoms, frequently occur (Doshi-Velez, Ge, & Kohane, 2014; Mannion, Leader, & Healy, 2013). Several studies (Adreon & Stella, 2001; Dillon & Underwood, 2012; Makin, Hill, & Pellicano, 2017) also report a high sensitivity to noise, smells, or physical contact. These comorbidities can also have an impact on the students' everyday life at school.

As mentioned before, the prevalence rates for ASD is rising globally (Blumberg et al., 2013; King & Bearman, 2009; Lord & Bishop, 2010). In the United States, it is currently estimated that 1 out of 110 children (1 out of 70 boys and 1 out of 315 girls) is on the spectrum (Lord & Bishop, 2010). In Germany, the prevalence rate among children is unknown, but it is estimated to be 6–7 children out of 1,000, based on international studies (Autismus Deutschland e.V., 2014). Estimates in France are 1 out of 100 children (Secrétariat d'Etat Auprès du Premier Ministre Chargé des Personnes Handicapées, 2017).

The rising prevalence rates, as well as the rising numbers of students with ASD attending mainstream schooling, depict a new phenomenon in society and education. This underlines the need for and importance of understanding what factors contribute to or prevent a successful

transition to secondary schools for children with ASD. This is done by analyzing the existing literature and identifying these factors.

Method

For this literature review, articles were selected from scientific databases (ERIC, Elsevier, and Web of Sciences) and Google Scholar. These databases are important, well-known, and established in the field of education. We started using keywords, such as autism, transition, primary, secondary, inclusive education, and integrative education, in different combinations and in German, English, and French – all in free text search. This was followed by a more elaborate search (e.g., the detailed search terms for the Web of Sciences were: ((autism* AND trans* AND (primary school OR elementary school) AND (secondary school OR middle school OR high school))). A snowball search using the bibliographies of the 12 resulting articles completed the search. The search was conducted in June 2018. Sixteen scientific articles were selected based on the following criteria: 1) they focused exclusively on students with ASD, 2) they dealt with the transition from a primary school to a secondary school, and 3) they included research on the situation after the school change. We excluded studies that 1) focused on other school transitions, 2) dealt with the primary-secondary transition in general, 3) treated students with special needs as a homogeneous group, and 4) included diagnoses other than ASD. The severity of the ASD was not considered as a specific criterion, since the details on the diagnosis or severity were not given in most of the studies. Finally, all articles taken into consideration were published in English after 2000, reflecting the current situation in specific countries (e.g., Australia, Ireland, USA; cf. Table 1). This is especially important since the development concerning inclusive education of students with ASD is quite a recent issue in many countries.

The criteria proposed by Evangelou et al. (2008) and presented above were used as a guideline for this literature review. They served as a lens through which the selected articles were read. In order to systematize the literature, a concept matrix (Webster & Watson, 2002) was created. The concept matrix is a tool to systematically structure the literature around concepts. It is a simple table that lists the articles on one axis and the emerging concepts on the other axis. Ticking the box when an article covers a certain concept provides a good overview of which concepts are common and crucial to each topic.

Results

Each of Evangelou et al.'s (2008) criteria presented above has been considered as one concept. New concepts that emerged from the literature review but were not covered by Evangelou et al. (2008) were added (cf. Table 2).

The different concepts were analyzed using the selected articles. The results drawn from this analysis are formulated into modified and extended criteria for a successful transition from primary to secondary school for students with ASD.

A well-planned, child-centered, and inclusive transition process

The first concept that emerges in nearly all studies is transition planning. Transition planning includes the decision process for choosing which school the student is going to attend and what type of schooling is preferred. It also means transition activities, such as school visits or open days. A strong focus lies on the different stakeholders and their participation in the transition planning process.

The most important decision families have to make is probably whether their child should attend mainstream education or be schooled in a specialized institution. For example, in France, students with special needs are enrolled either in ordinary classes or in specialized classes that are part of ordinary school. Students who are not considered eligible for mainstream classes, or Unité Localisée pour l'Inclusion Scolaire ([ULIS] special education classroom for students with special needs in



Table 1. Article selection.

Authors, Year	Region	Objective	Sample	Research Methods	Main Results
Cremin et al. (2017)	Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the transition to and early experience of secondary school from the perspective of parents Explore the views and experiences of key stakeholders regarding inclusion into secondary phase schooling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semi-structured interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical and emotional support for parents is beneficial Unanimous opinions on strategies Transition experience of students with ASD similar to those without Preparation, training, and communication necessary Formal and consistent structure of the transition process necessary Framework for education departments, agencies, and schools
Dann (2011)	England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best practice in relation to the planning, process, and strategies that support the transition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 students with ASD 6 parents 18 staff members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semi-structured interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual solutions are necessary Parents' knowledge is useful Schools need to have knowledge about ASD
Deacy et al. (2015)	Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues and concerns of parents during the transition Key factors for a successful transfer experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 52 graduates of the Post Graduate Certificate/Diploma in SEN (ASD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key to good transition: knowing the student, communication with and by all involved, recognizing challenges, making adjustments Importance of social integration Informal conversations about school important
Dillon and Underwood (2012)	United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiences of key stakeholders in regard to the transition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-transition: 9 parents Post-transition: 6 parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semi-structured focus group interviews In-depth interviews SDQ Diaries Semi-structured interviews Focus group discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition expectations negative, transition experiences positive Importance of information, transition activities, and support Need to promote social inclusion by: knowing students, understanding/accommodating needs, support for and communication with parents, vigilance to social vulnerability Elimination of delays in decision-making and of school exclusion Long-term, strategic decision-making Communication with all involved Full range of provision Professional resource and time available for transition
Fortuna (2014)	England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent perspectives of children with ASD who are transitioning from primary to secondary school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 students with ASD after transition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-transfer: questionnaire Post-transfer: group interviews, single interviews PSSM Case studies based on interviews Differentiated interview Interview schedule with open and closed questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition expectations negative, transition experiences positive Importance of information, transition activities, and support Need to promote social inclusion by: knowing students, understanding/accommodating needs, support for and communication with parents, vigilance to social vulnerability Elimination of delays in decision-making and of school exclusion Long-term, strategic decision-making Communication with all involved Full range of provision Professional resource and time available for transition
Hamilton and Wilkinson (2016)	New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students' experience during the transition to secondary school Students' expectations and experiences of secondary school Students' and parents' views of the support Expand the existing research base Gain a greater understanding of how students with ASD become part of a new academic and social community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-transfer: questionnaire Post-transfer: group interviews, single interviews PSSM Case studies based on interviews Differentiated interview Interview schedule with open and closed questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition expectations negative, transition experiences positive Importance of information, transition activities, and support Need to promote social inclusion by: knowing students, understanding/accommodating needs, support for and communication with parents, vigilance to social vulnerability Elimination of delays in decision-making and of school exclusion Long-term, strategic decision-making Communication with all involved Full range of provision Professional resource and time available for transition
Hannah and Topping (2013)	Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions of stakeholders with regard to current arrangements to support the transition Perceptions of stakeholders with regard to development of practice for the effective transition Differences between stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 male students with ASD Age: 11;3–12;4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-transfer: questionnaire Post-transfer: group interviews, single interviews PSSM Case studies based on interviews Differentiated interview Interview schedule with open and closed questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition expectations negative, transition experiences positive Importance of information, transition activities, and support Need to promote social inclusion by: knowing students, understanding/accommodating needs, support for and communication with parents, vigilance to social vulnerability Elimination of delays in decision-making and of school exclusion Long-term, strategic decision-making Communication with all involved Full range of provision Professional resource and time available for transition
Hebron (2017)	England, Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions of stakeholders with regard to current arrangements to support the transition Perceptions of stakeholders with regard to development of practice for the effective transition Differences between stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 28 students with ASD 21 typically developing students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-transfer: questionnaire Post-transfer: group interviews, single interviews PSSM Case studies based on interviews Differentiated interview Interview schedule with open and closed questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition expectations negative, transition experiences positive Importance of information, transition activities, and support Need to promote social inclusion by: knowing students, understanding/accommodating needs, support for and communication with parents, vigilance to social vulnerability Elimination of delays in decision-making and of school exclusion Long-term, strategic decision-making Communication with all involved Full range of provision Professional resource and time available for transition
Jindal-Snape et al. (2006)	Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions of stakeholders with regard to current arrangements to support the transition Perceptions of stakeholders with regard to development of practice for the effective transition Differences between stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 children/young people with ASD about to make the transition Age: 12–13 Child, parent(s)/carer(s), primary school or communication support unit head teacher, other professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-transfer: questionnaire Post-transfer: group interviews, single interviews PSSM Case studies based on interviews Differentiated interview Interview schedule with open and closed questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition expectations negative, transition experiences positive Importance of information, transition activities, and support Need to promote social inclusion by: knowing students, understanding/accommodating needs, support for and communication with parents, vigilance to social vulnerability Elimination of delays in decision-making and of school exclusion Long-term, strategic decision-making Communication with all involved Full range of provision Professional resource and time available for transition

(Continued)



Table 1. (Continued).

Authors, Year	Region	Objective	Sample	Research Methods	Main Results
Makin et al. (2017)	England	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential differences between two groups in terms of pre-transition cognitive and behavioral characteristics, post-transition success, experiences of transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15 students with ASD• Parents• Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SRS• Sensory Profile• SCAS for Parents• EPPSE• Face-to-face semi-structured interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mainly negative experiences of transition due to systemic and school barriers• Support for families important• Children's voice important• Timely decisions by administration• Knowing students and his/her needs
Mandy et al. (2015)	England	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feasibility and acceptability of STEP-ASD• STEP-ASD's effectiveness for reducing behavioral and emotional problems at school• Investigate whether any teacher-reported effects generalized beyond school• Change and continuity for children with autism spectrum disorder transitioning in mainstream education from primary to secondary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 37 children diagnosed with ASD• Public mainstream school• Mean age: 11.47, IQ: 85.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SDQ• SCDC• WISC IV• Post-transition monitoring interview• ADOS• WISC IV• SDQ• Beck Youth Inventories• Vineland-II• SPVS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• STEP-ASD is a useful program, impacts the transition• Often partially implemented• May be effective for reducing emotional and behavioral problems• at school• Children with ASD likely to have significant support needs• Risk of peer victimization not higher than in primary school
Mandy et al. (2016)	England	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Change and continuity for children with autism spectrum disorder transitioning in mainstream education from primary to secondary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 28 students diagnosed with Asperger, ASD, or pervasive development disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ADOS• WISC IV• SDQ• Beck Youth Inventories• Vineland-II• SPVS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children with ASD likely to have significant support needs• Risk of peer victimization not higher than in primary school
Peters and Brooks (2016)	United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utilize parental perspectives to explore the experiences of students with AS/HFA at secondary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 17 parents of children with ASD at secondary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Survey with open and closed questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transition success is multifactorial• Requires: pre-transition preparation, knowing the student, training for teachers
Stoner et al. (2007)	United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents' experiences and concerns related to the transition• Facilitators and barriers to transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 parents: biological parent of a child with ASD, married• Child with ASD enrolled in the public school system at preschool/primary school level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multiple interviews• Observations• Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recommendation for facilitating successful transition: communication with parents, consistent use of transition strategies, allowing time, form that follows the student through yearly transitions, assisting parents
Tobin et al. (2012)	Great Britain	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experiences of parents of children with ASD during the transition• Parents' hopes/concerns regarding transition, problems they encountered, coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7 parents of children with ASD	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus group discussions• Follow-up telephone interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Importance of preparation, communication and coping skills• Professionals should work with schools and support parents
Tso and Strnadová (2016)	Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents' experiences with the process of the transition with a particular focus on home-school collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15 parents of children with ASD	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of transition support for parents• Lack of student involvement in decision-making• Home-school-collaboration is important

Table 2. Concept matrix.

	Criteria provided by Evangelou et al. (2008)					New criteria that emerged from the literature		
	Developing new friendships and improving their self-esteem and confidence	Showing an increased interest in school and school work	Getting used to new routines and school organization with great ease	Experiencing curriculum continuity	Having settled in so well in school life that they caused no concerns to their parents	Transition planning	Student teacher relationship	Teachers' well-being
Cremn et al. (2017)	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dann (2011)	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Deacy et al. (2015)	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dillon and Underwood (2012)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Fortuna (2014)	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Hamilton and Wilkinson (2016)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Hannah and Topping (2013)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hebron (2017)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jindal-Snape et al. (2006)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Makin et al. (2017)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Mandy et al. (2015)				✓	✓	✓		✓
Mandy et al. (2016)	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
Peters and Brooks (2016)	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Stoner et al. (2007)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tobin et al. (2012)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tso and Strnadová (2016)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

mainstream schools), attend socio-medical institutions. The issue of separate schooling is also crucial in the international literature discussed in this article. Parents are in a constant struggle between adequately responding to their child's needs and not excluding him/her from the mainstream society (Tobin et al., 2012). They often have the impression that the schools are not well enough prepared in order to welcome and integrate their children with ASD (Stoner, Angell, House, & Bock, 2007; Tobin et al., 2012; Tso & Strnadová, 2016). Parents sometimes lack information on the different schools and what kind of transition support can be provided. This can have diverse negative consequences: parents choose a specialized institution, although they actually prefer a mainstream setting or they are very anxious in regard to the transition and worried when their child is at school (Dillon & Underwood, 2012; Hamilton & Wilkinson, 2016; Makin et al., 2017).

An inclusive transition process has to take into account the voice of all stakeholders. The children's voice often goes unheard, according to recent studies (Deacy et al., 2015; Makin et al., 2017; Tso & Strnadová, 2016). According to the literature, a close collaboration between students, parents, primary school teachers, secondary school teachers, and other staff involved would be ideal. Nevertheless, this is not often the case, due to time constraints, lack of trust, or administrative struggles (Deacy et al., 2015; Dillon & Underwood, 2012; Hamilton & Wilkinson, 2016; Hebron, 2017; Jindal-Snape et al., 2006; Makin et al., 2017; Stoner et al., 2007; Tso & Strnadová, 2016).

Throughout the different studies, various transition activities are identified and evaluated. These include visits to the secondary school, open days, meetings with future teachers, etc. Most schools seem to offer this kind of activity, which is generally viewed as helpful (Cremin, Healy, & Gordon, 2017; Dann, 2011; Deacy et al., 2015; Hannah & Topping, 2013; Hebron, 2017). Studies focusing on the parents' perceptions show that a single visit to the secondary school or a single meeting with a future teacher is often not perceived as sufficient. Rather, it takes several meetings or visits in order for the children to feel comfortable discovering the school and getting to know the staff (Deacy et al., 2015; Hebron, 2017; Jindal-Snape et al., 2006; Peters & Brooks, 2016; Stoner et al., 2007; Tso & Strnadová, 2016). Tobin et al. (2012) also mention that open days were not seen as adequate for children with ASD. Some families report that their children had the opportunity to discover the school building when no-one else was there; others had individual school tours with teachers (Hebron, 2017; Tso & Strnadová, 2016).

In case of sensory issues, which students with ASD often face, more challenging measures may be necessary. Secondary schools can be very noisy due to the large number of students; smells and narrowness can become problematic for students with ASD (Tobin et al., 2012). For example, a school day in France can last until the late afternoon, thus sensory issues can become very stressful throughout the day. Headphones or an isolated workplace could cancel out noise, some students could use a silent room when everything becomes too much for them, extra time for classroom changes could allow students to avoid noisy and crowded corridors (Cremin et al., 2017; Dann, 2011; Dillon & Underwood, 2012; Makin et al., 2017). If sensory issues are known, they can be dealt with before problems arise.

In general, all stakeholders involved should be able to express their concerns and ideas during the transition planning process. Since the spectrum of autism disorders is broad, students with ASD are an extremely heterogeneous group. Fortuna (2014) determines that there is no approach to a successful transition from primary to secondary school that suits all students. Therefore, transition activities individually tailored to the student's needs and abilities are highly recommended (Deacy et al., 2015; Dillon & Underwood, 2012; Stoner et al., 2007; Tobin et al., 2012). In order to cater to these high demands, the transition process has to be planned early with a long-term goal targeted by all stakeholders.

Being an equal member of the class

According to Evangelou et al. (2008), the first criterion for successful transition is: "Developing new friendships and improving their self-esteem and confidence" (p.16). Friendship and social inclusion

are one of the biggest concerns students with ASD and their parents express with respect to the transition. Several studies show that peer relationships are more important for the students than academic or organizational concerns (Fortuna, 2014; Hebron, 2017; Makin et al., 2017).

Students in general, whether they are on the spectrum or not, wish to have friends in secondary school, but the social difficulties, such as understanding social conventions, often encountered by students with ASD, make friendships more complicated. The different studies show that some students are very concerned about losing their friends from primary school who do not attend the same secondary school (Hannah & Topping, 2013; Makin et al., 2017). Others did not manage to establish reciprocal peer relationships while in primary school and either hope for an improvement at secondary school or are anxious about upcoming conflicts (Dillon & Underwood, 2012). After the transition, the picture does not change much: some students manage to make friends, others do not. The studies show that the qualities of friendships differ enormously in terms of equality and reciprocity. Making friends is hard work for many students with ASD (Dillon & Underwood, 2012; Makin et al., 2017; Peters & Brooks, 2016).

For some students with ASD, this leads to an increased identity struggle during secondary school. The students perceive themselves as being different and see that as a source for the problems they face (Makin et al., 2017). “Fitting in” is a big wish for many students with ASD (Cremin et al., 2017; Hamilton & Wilkinson, 2016; Tso & Strnadová, 2016). Self-esteem and confidence are closely linked to peer relationships, as shown by Evangelou et al. (2008).

The concerns regarding integration and being an equal member of the class are legitimate. Many studies (Dann, 2011; Evangelou et al., 2008; Mandy et al., 2015) see students with ASD as more likely to become socially excluded or even bullied. It especially affects students who do not manage to make friends, who are socially isolated and therefore more vulnerable (Dillon & Underwood, 2012; Evangelou et al., 2008). It is a vicious circle, since inclusion and being part of a group of friends could protect them from bullying and isolation (Dillon & Underwood, 2012). Some students have already experienced bullying during primary school. According to Mandy et al. (2016), being bullied in primary school does not mean a higher chance of being bullied during secondary school. Nevertheless, Dillon and Underwood (2012) detected that students who are bullied at the beginning of secondary school are still being bullied after the first term.

This section showed that good peer relationships are useful and necessary for a smooth and successful transition. Nevertheless, research shows that students with ASD have more difficulties making friends and are more likely to be excluded or bullied. Bullying is a major barrier to a successful transition and students with special needs are more likely to become victims (Evangelou et al., 2008). This is alarming and shows that parents and teachers have to consider social issues before, during, and after the transition. Social support seems essential here in order for the students to experience a successful transition.

Academic achievement

Surprisingly, academic achievement is a concept that seems to be less relevant for both students and parents. Studies on the transition to secondary school show that students often begin with a high level of motivation, but then experience a decline in grades at the beginning of secondary school (Jindal-Snape et al., 2006). Students are concerned with the academic demands of secondary school prior to the transition. They are afraid of not being able to cope with the new learning situation and are worried about a big increase in homework or stricter teachers (Hannah & Topping, 2013; Peters & Brooks, 2016).

Parents share this concern and are worried that academic and social problems will mutually determine and influence each other (Tobin et al., 2012). The French Ministry of Education (MEN, 2011) published guidelines for the transition from primary to secondary school. These mainly focus on academic and organizational aspects and less on social ones. This example from France

underlines a certain discrepancy between schools or teachers on the one hand focusing on academic issues, and students and parents on the other hand worrying about social aspects.

This shows, in line with the previous section, that social concerns are greater among the students than academic concerns. This also seems to be true for some parents, who state that their primary concerns are not centered on the academic achievements of their child, but rather on social or administrative aspects (Peters & Brooks, 2016).

Student-teacher relationship

The teachers, as key stakeholders, play an important role before, during, and after the phase of transition. If the preparation did not include them, the secondary school teachers only come into play after the actual transition, when the student has already started secondary school, even though the participation of teachers in the transition process could have reduced anxiety (Hebron, 2017; Jindal-Snape et al., 2006).

Many students with ASD are concerned about the number of teachers they will have to work with while in secondary school; parents express similar worries (Hamilton & Wilkinson, 2016; Tso & Strnadová, 2016). Indeed, this means a significant change from primary school, where one teacher teaches several subjects and spends a significant amount of time with the same group of students while in secondary school; instead, different teachers are responsible for the different subjects. If students with ASD are not able to establish positive relationships with many teachers, misunderstandings or increased stress could be a result (Dillon & Underwood, 2012).

It becomes clear that a good understanding of ASD and some experiences with students with ASD are useful in different ways: it increases parents' and students' trust, helps teachers plan their lessons accordingly, and gives teachers more confidence and self-efficacy (Tobin et al., 2012; Tso & Strnadová, 2016). A wrong understanding or lack of knowledge, in contrast, can lead to frustration on all sides. Students who are afraid of a teacher may refuse to go to school, parents may become worried, and teachers may misunderstand ASD-specific behavior and interpret it as opposing behavior or the result of bad parenting (Dillon & Underwood, 2012; Tobin et al., 2012).

In general, this means that teachers are an important part of the support network of a student with ASD. Even though many students with ASD do well in academics, they need teachers as reference people they can talk to in case of problems (Dann, 2011; Fortuna, 2014; Makin et al., 2017; Stoner et al., 2007). Furthermore, a good teacher-student relationship is beneficial in order to avoid misunderstandings and frustration on both sides.

Reference persons

Besides the teachers, all other staff members (such as aides, social workers, and school nurses) who are in regular contact with the students are important. Dillon and Underwood (2012) point out that one staff member who does not adequately deal with or understand ASD is enough to reverse the student's well-being at school. Fortuna (2014) explains that secondary school staff spends less time with the students and, therefore, sometimes do not detect social problems that students may have. The relationship to reference people among the school's staff is as important as the student-teacher-relationship, which means that a good understanding and handling of ASD is crucial (Deacy et al., 2015; Dillon & Underwood, 2012; Fortuna, 2014; Hebron, 2017; Makin et al., 2017; Tobin et al., 2012).

The school staff serves as a network that provides access, support, and protection for students with ASD if needed. Unstructured times, such as the lunch break, are often difficult for students with ASD, especially when they are more isolated (Deacy et al., 2015; Peters & Brooks, 2016). Particularly in countries such as France, where all-day schooling is usual (extracurricular activities take place in the afternoon at school; OECD, 2014), staff members who are accessible outside of lessons are important.

To sum up, this means everybody in school should have access to training on ASD and information about the student with ASD, not just the teachers (Cremin et al., 2017; Dann, 2011; Dillon & Underwood, 2012). This is why all school staff involved should be part of the transition process in order to get to know the student and to negotiate their role in both the child's transition and his everyday life at school (Deacy et al., 2015; Fortuna, 2014; Tobin et al., 2012). When teachers primarily focus on academics, other school staff becomes important for non-academic affairs, such as social interaction difficulties.

Navigating in the school building

Secondary schools are often much bigger than primary schools and frequent classroom changes are normal. Due to these changes, many students (with or without ASD) are afraid of getting lost and being late for class. They are aware that more independence and self-organization is required and they are not sure if they can cope with it (Dann, 2011; Deacy et al., 2015; Hannah & Topping, 2013). Like typically developing students, many students with ASD adapt very fast and do not have any problems after the first few weeks. However, some are overwhelmed by the organizational demands (Makin et al., 2017).

In several studies, students mention aids, such as maps or pictures of the school, that they received either beforehand or when they entered secondary school. There are also visual timetables to illustrate their daily structure, and diaries and planners to help them organize themselves (Hamilton & Wilkinson, 2016; Hebron, 2017; Makin et al., 2017; Stoner et al., 2007; Tobin et al., 2012; Tso & Strnadová, 2016).

In short, the navigation in the school building is a concern for many students with ASD before the transition. Although most of them adapt easily, others may need individual measures in order to feel more secure and manage navigation on their own or with support.

Cooperation and organization of team work

This section concerns both the cooperation of the primary and the secondary school, and also the cooperation between the different staff members within the secondary school level. Most stakeholders see the cooperation between primary and secondary schools as essential, while at the same time acknowledging the lack of it (Deacy et al., 2015; Hebron, 2017; Jindal-Snape et al., 2006). The main purpose of this cooperation seems to be the exchange of information about the student with ASD. Some remain skeptical about this issue, preferring a fresh start for the student with ASD instead of prejudices that could undermine the relationship between staff and student (Deacy et al., 2015; Jindal-Snape et al., 2006). In most cases, passing on information from primary to secondary school is considered useful in order to take certain measures for the student's school life (Dann, 2011; Deacy et al., 2015; Dillon & Underwood, 2012; Hebron, 2017; Jindal-Snape et al., 2006; Stoner et al., 2007). In Makin et al.'s (2017) study, teachers from both types of school are aware of the differences between primary and secondary school. However, Evangelou et al. (2008) criticize schools for often not knowing enough about each other's work. This leads to a lack of continuity, which is unfavorable for students with ASD.

Different studies suggest the value of having some kind of communication document that follows the student through his school career. In the United States, for example, every student with special needs has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), which is reviewed regularly. In the study performed by Deacy et al. (2015), parents do not agree on whether the IEP should transition with their children or not. In other countries, there is no formal document such as the IEP, which means there is no formalized passing on of information (Tso & Strnadová, 2016). In France, Le Livret Personnel de Compétences ([LPC] translation: personal competency booklet) and the Projet Personnalisée de Scolarisation ([PPS] translation: individual schooling project) follow the student

through his school career. The latter one is only used for students with any kinds of diagnosed special needs (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2011, 2016).

Besides information about the student, cooperation between both schools could enhance the academic and structural continuity in order to ease the transition of children having difficulties with changes in their daily routines (Jindal-Snape et al., 2006; Makin et al., 2017). Tso and Strnadová (2016) argue for a clear division of roles and responsibilities among all stakeholders involved. This does not end with the student entering secondary school. Hebron (2017) points out that a transition plan conceived with all participating stakeholders proved to be a useful instrument for teachers and parents in her study if this plan is used consistently and passed on to relevant staff.

To sum up, cooperation between primary and secondary school is vital for a successful transition and has to take place before, during, and after the actual transition. This can ensure curriculum continuity, which Evangelou et al. (2008) name as an important factor for a successful transition. Tobin et al. (2012) also underline the importance of continuity, not only in academic terms, but also in terms of support and communication. Makin et al. (2017) stress the importance of organizational continuity. When the student has entered secondary school, all relevant staff has to be included in this cooperation in order to work as a team that can provide consistent support and continuity for the student in transition. In France, this means regular and constructive communication and collaboration between teachers, school assistants, overseers, and, if involved, the ULIS-coordinator. As an educational team, they can provide stability and orientation for the student with ASD at the new school.

Teachers' well-being

It seems that it is mainly parents who claim to have good contact with the school; however, teachers also benefit from a good teacher-parent-relationship (Hebron, 2017; Stoner et al., 2007). In order to avoid "power struggles" (Tso & Strnadová, 2016) between teachers and parents, it is useful to start a collaborative relationship before the transition.

In several studies (Dillon & Underwood, 2012; Hamilton & Wilkinson, 2016; Hebron, 2017; Peters & Brooks, 2016), parents report a lack of expertise in dealing with students with ASD among teachers. In some cases, this shortfall might be the result of a biased perception by skeptical parents. But there are teachers admitting that they have difficulties: secondary school teachers in Jindal-Snape et al.'s (2006) study are willing to receive training in order to better understand autism, to be able to react to autistic behavior, and to integrate it in their lesson preparation.

If teachers do not feel sufficiently trained, it can have a serious impact: they probably do not understand the student's behavior and the relationship to the child and his parents is strained, which in turn leads to a lack of trust among the parents and frustration on the teacher's side (Tobin et al., 2012; Tso & Strnadová, 2016). Many teachers have the impression that parents' expectations are not realistic and they need considerable emotional support that the schools cannot offer (Hebron, 2017; Tobin et al., 2012). A positive attitude toward teaching a student with ASD or a heterogeneous group are important and can be enhanced by adequately preparing teachers for their task (Dann, 2011; Jindal-Snape et al., 2006).

To sum up, in order to strengthen the teachers' well-being during the transition process, they should have access to adequate training or measures of staff development. They should be part of the transition process from the beginning in order to enable mutual trust and a good working relationship with the parents. Parents and teachers working together provide a consistent support network for the student in transition.

Parenting

Parents are the link between the student and the new school. They facilitate the transition process and are highly emotionally involved. According to Evangelou et al. (2008), students have experienced

a successful transition when they have settled in so well “that they cause ... no concern to their parents” (p. 16).

Since transition experiences differ a lot, it is not surprising that parents in the different studies value and assess their role differently. Several studies (Dillon & Underwood, 2012; Makin et al., 2017; Stoner et al., 2007) underline that parents put their children’s well-being in the center of their activities concerning the transition. They play different roles as protectors, interpreters, “firefighters,” and animators, all at the same time. Parents often feel they have to fight a lot in order to make themselves heard and be accepted as partners in the transition process by the schools (Hamilton & Wilkinson, 2016; Tobin et al., 2012). In Dillon and Underwood’s (2012) study, parents reported being contacted by the school whenever the schools did not know how to deal with the child and expected them to come and pick up the child. In other cases, the opposite is true: parents feel ignored or not taken seriously (Makin et al., 2017; Tobin et al., 2012; Tso & Strnadová, 2016). Studies show that parents have valuable knowledge about their children, which is very useful for the schools (Dillon & Underwood, 2012; Fortuna, 2014; Hannah & Topping, 2013).

The more accessible teachers are to parents, the greater the satisfaction with the school (Hebron, 2017; Tobin et al., 2012). In order to avoid parents either being ignored or in constant alert, the level of communication must be discussed. Furthermore, expectations concerning the different stakeholders’ involvement should be negotiated in order to avoid power struggles and disappointment (Tobin et al., 2012; Tso & Strnadová, 2016).

Summarized, several studies (Dillon & Underwood, 2012; Fortuna, 2014; Hamilton & Wilkinson, 2016; Makin et al., 2017; Tobin et al., 2012) show that the parents’ well-being is challenged during their child’s transition from primary to secondary school. There is a high level of stress, frustration, and anxiety linked to the transition (ibid.). This is not beneficial for the child, the transition, or the parents themselves. It is common that parents are anxious about this phase in the life of their child; however, parents of children with ASD seem to be affected even more. This stress level can be reduced, as previous research has shown, by starting the transition process on time and involving the parents as equal partners.

Discussion and implications

The transition from primary to secondary school is a major event in a child’s school career. The literature has identified students with ASD as a vulnerable group regarding this transition. This is due to the characteristics of ASD, such as the refusal to change or social interaction difficulties, that pose challenges to the transition. In order to understand their situation better, it is necessary to define what a successful transition from primary to secondary school means for students with ASD.

Evangelou et al. (2008) developed criteria in order to describe and measure a successful transition in general. These are, to a major extent, congruent with the findings from the literature review focusing on students with ASD. Most issues that are of concern for typically developing students are of similar concern for students with ASD. However, it is obvious that ASD brings its own challenges, meaning that several aspects mentioned in the literature on transition in general do not have the same importance for students with ASD or have not been researched sufficiently yet. In a study by Van Rens, Haelermans, Groot, and van Den Maassen Brink (2018), criteria such as gender, social status, or ethnicity are identified as influential indicators for a successful transition of typically developing students. Gender is not considered a factor in the selected articles since the prevalence of ASD is much higher among boys than girls (Lord & Bishop, 2010). Social status and ethnicity are also factors that are not considered in the studies on children with ASD. Therefore, some criteria have to be adapted and modified in order to correspond with students with ASD.

The first criteria in Evangelou et al.’s (2008) study is the students “developing new friendships and improving their self-esteem and confidence.” This goes together with the concept of respected membership in the class that was revealed from the literature review (cf. Table 3).

Table 3. New criteria for a successful transition from primary to secondary school for children with ASD.

A well-planned, child-centered transition process involving all key stakeholders has been applied when:

- The student is a respected member of the class.
 - Academic achievement continues at the same level or slightly lower.
 - The student and its teachers have a positive relationship with each other.
 - The student knows the new school building and its reference persons well.
 - Cooperation and teamwork organization ensure continuity in the learning process.
 - Teachers feel self-efficient and satisfied in their daily work.
 - Parents are familiar with the school and its staff and see it as a good place for their child.
-

The second one, “having settled in so well in school life that they caused no concerns to their parents,” is aimed at parents. Therefore, it is similar to the criteria of parents’ well-being in the literature review (cf. Table 3). Since the literature review shows that parents of children with ASD are highly involved in the transition process and have to deal with the school directly (Dillon & Underwood, 2012; Stoner et al., 2007; Tobin et al., 2012; Tso & Strnadová, 2016), this criterion could be modified in order to adapt it to the reality of parents of children with ASD. As such, it would be “Parents are familiar with the school and its staff and see it as a good place for their child” (cf. Table 3). This is important due to students and parents’ high levels of anxiety, revealed in the literature, and is crucial to home-school collaborations (Dann, 2011; Tso & Strnadová, 2016).

“Showing an increased interest in school and school work” is the third point in Evangelou et al. (2008, p. 16). This has not really been an issue in the selected studies since the social aspects were seen as more important by many than the academic aspects (Hamilton & Wilkinson, 2016; Makin et al., 2017). Still, academic achievement has a role to play in the transition from primary to secondary school. “Academic achievement continues at the same level or slightly lower” (cf. Table 3) is a less distinct criterion, but more realistically reflects the reality of students with ASD who are in transition.

Students “getting used to new routines and school organization with great ease” has been a major issue for all stakeholders. It goes together with students knowing how to navigate in the new school building and knowing their reference persons and how to find them. Expecting “great ease” is probably too much to ask from students with ASD who are more likely to encounter difficulties due to ASD (Adreon & Stella, 2001; Hamilton & Wilkinson, 2016; Hannah & Topping, 2013; Hebron, 2017; Makin et al., 2017; Tobin et al., 2012). If they manage to get to know the building well and establish good relationships with their reference persons, that is already a substantial success (cf. Table 3).

The last criterion in Evangelou et al. (2008) is “experiencing curriculum continuity,” which has also been an important topic in the literature review. This mainly targets primary and secondary schools that should work together in order to enable curriculum continuity, and also the teamwork between the different staff members at the secondary school level. Therefore, a reformulation may make this factor more distinct: “Cooperation and teamwork organization ensure continuity in the learning process” (cf. Table 3).

Other issues that became apparent in the literature review were not addressed by Evangelou et al. (2008), such as the overarching topic “transition planning.” Transition planning has enormous importance for the transition of students with ASD. An early start, the involvement of all stakeholders, and a plan that leads all stakeholders through the transition phase are essential, as the different studies have shown.

Another issue underlined by the literature on students with ASD is the student-teacher relationship and the well-being of teachers in their job. The literature review has shown that students with ASD need more support in order to effectively manage the transition phase. Therefore, teachers play an important role. A positive student-teacher relationship is beneficial for a smooth transition (Dann, 2011; Hebron, 2017; Stoner et al., 2007; Tso & Strnadová, 2016) and should be added to the list of criteria.

Some studies (Jindal-Snape et al., 2006; Tobin et al., 2012; Tso & Strnadová, 2016) revealed that teachers do not feel sufficiently prepared to meet the expectations of parents and students. There is often a lack of knowledge about ASD or a lack of experience with students with ASD. This can lead

to difficult student-teacher relationships and cause stress and frustration to parents and the teachers themselves (Adreon & Stella, 2001; Flavier & Clément, 2014; Stoner et al., 2007; Tobin et al., 2012; Tso & Strnadová, 2016). When evaluating a successful transition process, teachers have to be considered as criterion, too. They should feel self-efficient and satisfied in their daily work in order to support the student during the transition (cf. Table 3). The teachers' perspectives and the role of academic aspects during the transition were missing in the article selection, which has to be considered as a weakness. However, a recent French study shows that teachers working with students with ASD have a higher risk of burn-out (Boujut, Popa-Roch, Palomares, Dean, & Cappe, 2017). The literature review has shown that teachers are important stakeholders in the school life of a child with ASD. In further research, their role should be better considered.

Table 3 summarizes the results of the literature review by providing both the criteria of Evangelou et al. (2008) and the modified and added criteria for a transition from primary to secondary school for children with ASD.

In order to measure the success of a transition from primary to secondary school for students with ASD, it is necessary to have a measuring tool. The above listed criteria can serve as a basis to develop research instruments in order to give substantive and objective insight about the success of a transition from primary to secondary school for a child with ASD and for the other stakeholders. It can moreover identify enabling factors as well as obstacles that the stakeholders can potentially face during the time of transition. Since the criteria include the perspectives of all main stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, and other school staff), they give a holistic image of the complex situation from different perspectives. The literature review has shown that it is easier for typically developing students to meet these criteria, whereas they pose difficulties to students with ASD. Nevertheless, the challenges during the transition are the same for all students, which means the criteria could also probably be used for the transition of children without ASD. Furthermore, these criteria allow the evaluation of existing transition programs such as the STEP-ASD (Mandy et al., 2015). In addition, new tools could be created based on the criteria.

There is a need for more studies on the primary-secondary transition of children with ASD using bigger samples, different research methods and expanding to different regions (Fortuna, 2014; Hannah & Topping, 2013; Humphrey & Lewis, 2008; Makin et al., 2017). Fortuna (2014) and Hannah and Topping (2013) stress the need of both longitudinal studies and large-scale studies including all stakeholders involved. In fact, several studies were qualitative studies with very small samples (e.g., Dillon & Underwood, 2012: $N = 12$; Hamilton & Wilkinson, 2016: $N = 5$; Hannah & Topping, 2013: $N = 9$). Quantitative data from a bigger sample could provide a larger image of the situation in this very same context. The criteria allow for such studies and also for comparative studies between different education systems, which is especially interesting since all of the selected studies focus on only one geographical region (e.g., Ireland, England, New Zealand). We can assume that students with ASD in France have similar experiences compared to students in the UK, but due to the differences between the education systems, there might also be differences.

The rising number of children with special needs in mainstream schools in many countries leads to new phenomena and situations. The assessment of the transition from primary to secondary school for children with ASD is a new phenomenon in France and other countries, which until now had remained unknown and, to some extent, neglected. The literature shows that there is a need for understanding and efficiently handling this phase of the school career. This could result in implications for educational policies or changes in the educational system in order to better support students with ASD during their transition to secondary school.

In short, this literature review developed criteria for a successful transition from primary to secondary school for children with ASD based on the existing literature. These criteria show that a long-term systematic approach to the transition, which includes the perspective of all stakeholders, is necessary. Based on these criteria, new research instruments can be developed and can facilitate further research on the primary-secondary transition.

Limitations

The selected criteria offer the perspectives of children, parents, and teachers on the transition from primary to secondary school. However, it has been shown that the transition process is very complex and involves even more stakeholders. These additional stakeholders, such as school aides, nurses, and therapists, are only marginally reflected in the criteria.

Literature reviews on a general student population, like Van Rens et al. (2018), consider criteria such as social status or ethnicity. Depending on national legislation, these types of data may be difficult for researchers to access. They have been neglected in the selected studies; as we know from educational research that these criteria may have an impact on educational careers in general, however, one can assume that they also have an impact on the transition.

Furthermore, the major part of the selected studies has been done in English-speaking industrialized countries, mainly the UK. These countries share a history of education policies, values, and systems that is particular. Other areas of the world are less or not at all reflected in the selected studies, which only allows for a limited perspective on the subject.

Conclusion

The literature has shown that there is a lack of studies that provide longitudinal data on large samples in different education systems. The results could inform schools, families, and education policymakers about how to improve the transition from primary to secondary school for students with ASD in mainstream education settings.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by the Initiative d'Excellence and the GIS Education et Formation [GIS-E&F-2017#1].

References

- Adreon, D., & Stella, J. (2001). Transition to middle and high school: Increasing the success of students with Asperger syndrome. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 36(5), 266–271. doi:10.1177/105345120103600502
- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Autism spectrum disorder*. Retrieved from <http://www.dsm5.org/Documents/Autism%20Spectrum%20Disorder%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>.
- Autismus Deutschland e.V. (2014). *Was ist autismus?: Informationen und angebote des Bundesverbandes autismus Deutschland e.V.* Retrieved from <https://www.autismus.de/was-ist-autismus.html>.
- Bailey, S., & Baines, E. (2012). The impact of risk and resiliency factors on the adjustment of children after the transition from primary to secondary school. *Educational & Child Psychology*, 29(1), 47–63.
- Blumberg, S. J., Bramlett, M. D., Kogan, M. D., Schieve, L. A., Jones, J. R., & Lu, M. C. (2013). Changes in prevalence of parent-reported autism spectrum disorder in school-aged U.S. children: 2007 to 2011–2012. *National Health Statistics Reports*, 65, 1–11.
- Boujut, E., Popa-Roch, M., Palomares, E.-A., Dean, A., & Cappe, E. (2017). Self-efficacy and burnout in teachers of students with autism spectrum disorder. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 36, 8–20. doi:10.1016/j.rasd.2017.01.002
- Cremin, K., Healy, O., & Gordon, M. (2017). Parental perceptions on the transition to secondary school for their child with autism. *Advances in Autism*, 3(2), 87–99. doi:10.1108/AIA-09-2016-0024
- Dann, R. (2011). Secondary transition experiences for pupils with autistic spectrum conditions (ASCs). *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 27(3), 293–312. doi:10.1080/02667363.2011.603534
- Deacy, E., Jennings, F., & O'Halloran, A. (2015). Transition of students with autistic spectrum disorders from primary to post-primary school: A framework for success. *Support for Learning*, 30(4), 292–304. doi:10.1111/1467-9604.12102

- Dillon, G., & Underwood, J. (2012). Parental perspectives of youth with autism spectrum disorders transitioning from primary to secondary school in the United Kingdom. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*. doi:10.1177/1088357612441827
- Doshi-Velez, F., Ge, Y., & Kohane, I. (2014). Comorbidity clusters in autism spectrum disorders: An electronic health record time-series analysis. *Pediatrics*, 133(1), e54–63. doi:10.1542/peds.2013-0819
- Evangelou, M., Taggart, B., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., & Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2008). *Effective pre-school, primary and secondary education 3-14 project (EPPSE 3-14): What makes a successful transition from primary to secondary school?* London, England: Institute of Education, University of London.
- Flavier, E., & Clément, C. (2014). Connaissances et besoins de formation des enseignants du second degré concernant les Troubles du spectre de l'autisme. *La Nouvelle Revue De L'adaptation Et De La Scolarisation*, 1, 65.
- Fortuna, R. (2014). The social and emotional functioning of students with an autistic spectrum disorder during the transition between primary and secondary schools. *Support for Learning*, 29(2), 177–191. doi:10.1111/1467-9604.12056
- Foulder-Hughes, L., & Prior, C. (2014). Supporting pupils with DCD and ASD with the transition to secondary school. *Research in Education*, 92(1), 79–92. doi:10.7227/RIE.0011
- Gardner, K. F., Carter, E. W., Gustafson, J. R., Hochman, J. M., Harvey, M. N., Mullins, T. S., & Fan, H. (2014). Effects of peer networks on the social interactions of high school students with autism spectrum disorders. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 39(2), 100–118. doi:10.1177/1540796914544550
- Graham, L. J., & Jahnukainen, M. (2011). Wherefore art thou, inclusion?: Analysing the development of inclusive education in New South Wales, Alberta and Finland. *Journal of Education Policy*, 26(2), 263–288. doi:10.1080/02680939.2010.493230
- Hamilton, C., & Wilkinson, T. (2016). Parent perspectives of children with autism spectrum disorder transitioning from primary to secondary school in New Zealand. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 21(1), 121–132. doi:10.15663/wje.v21i1.196
- Hanewald, R. (2013). Transition between primary and secondary school: Why it is important and how it can be supported. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(1), 62–74. doi:10.14221/ajte.2013v38n1.7
- Hannah, E., & Topping, K. (2013). The transition from primary to secondary school: Perspectives of students with autism spectrum disorder and their parents. *International Journal of Special Education*, 28(1), 145–160.
- Hebron, J. (2017). The transition from primary to secondary school for students with autism spectrum conditions. In C. Little (Ed.), *Supporting social inclusion for students with autism spectrum disorders: Insights from research and practice* (pp. 84–99). London, England and New York, NY: Routledge.
- Humphrey, N., & Lewis, S. (2008). “Make me normal”: The views and experiences of pupils on the autistic spectrum in mainstream secondary schools. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 12(1), 23–46. doi:10.1111/j.1471-3802.2008.00115.x
- Jindal-Snape, D., Douglas, W., Topping, K. J., Kerr, C., & Smith, E. F. (2006). Autistic spectrum disorders and primary-secondary transition. *International Journal of Special Education*, 21(2), 18–31.
- King, M., & Bearman, P. (2009). Diagnostic change and the increased prevalence of autism. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 38(5), 1224–1234. doi:10.1093/ije/dyp261
- Klemm, K. (2013). *Inklusion in Deutschland – Eine bildungsstatistische Analyse*. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung.
- Lord, C., & Bishop, S. L. (2010). Autism spectrum disorders: Diagnosis, prevalence, and services for children and families. *Sharing Child and Youth Development Knowledge*, 24(2), 1–26.
- Mackenzie, E., McMaugh, A., & O'Sullivan, K.-A. (2012). Perceptions of primary to secondary school transitions: Challenge or threat? *Issues in Educational Research*, 22(3), 298–314.
- Makin, C., Hill, V., & Pellicano, E. (2017). The primary-to-secondary school transition for children on the autism spectrum: A multi-informant mixed-methods study. *Autism & Developmental Language Impairments*, 2, 1–18. doi:10.1177/2396941516684834
- Mandy, W., Murin, M., Baykaner, O., Staunton, S., Cobb, R., Hellriegel, J., ... Skuse, D. (2015). Easing the transition to secondary education for children with autism spectrum disorder: An evaluation of the systemic transition in education programme for autism spectrum disorder (STEP-ASD). *Autism: the International Journal of Research and Practice*, 20(5), 580–590. doi:10.1177/1362361315598892
- Mandy, W., Murin, M., Baykaner, O., Staunton, S., Hellriegel, J., Anderson, S., & Skuse, D. (2016). The transition from primary to secondary school in mainstream education for children with autism spectrum disorder. *Autism: the International Journal of Research and Practice*, 20(1), 5–13. doi:10.1177/1362361314562616
- Mannion, A., Leader, G., & Healy, O. (2013). An investigation of comorbid psychological disorders, sleep problems, gastrointestinal symptoms and epilepsy in children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 7(1), 35–42. doi:10.1016/j.rasd.2012.05.002
- Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale. (2011). *Enseignements primaire et secondaire*. Retrieved from http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid25535/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=57155
- Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale. (2016). *Scolarisation des élèves en situation de handicap: Parcours de formation des élèves en situation de handicap dans les établissements scolaires*. Retrieved from http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid285/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=105511

- Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de Recherche. (2014). *L'école inclusive: Une dynamique qui s'amplifie en faveur des élèves et des étudiants en situation de handicap*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid84379/l-ecole-inclusive-une-dynamique-qui-s-amplifie-en-faveur-des-eleves-et-des-etudiants-en-situation-de-handicap.html>
- Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de Recherche. (2017). *Repères & références statistiques: Enseignements formation recherche*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid57096/reperes-et-references-statistiques.html>
- OECD. (2014). *Education at a glance 2014: OECD indicators*. OECD Publishing. doi:10.1787/eag-2014-en
- Peters, R., & Brooks, R. (2016). Parental perspectives on the transition to secondary school for students with Asperger syndrome and high-functioning autism: A pilot survey study. *British Journal of Special Education*, 43(1), 75–91. doi:10.1111/1467-8578.12125
- Secrétariat d'Etat Auprès du Premier Ministre Chargé des Personnes Handicapées. (2017). *Qu'est-ce que l'autisme?* Retrieved from <http://handicap.gouv.fr/focus/l-autisme/qu-est-ce-que-l-autisme/>
- Stoner, J. B., Angell, M. E., House, J. J., & Bock, S. J. (2007). Transitions: Perspectives from parents of young children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities*, 19(1), 23–39. doi:10.1007/s10882-007-9034-z
- Tobin, H., Staunton, S., Mandy, W., Skuse, D., Helligreil, J., Baykaner, O., ... Murin, M. (2012). A qualitative examination of parental experiences of the transition to mainstream secondary school for children with an autism spectrum disorder. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 29(1), 75.
- Tso, M., & Strnadová, I. (2016). Students with autism transitioning from primary to secondary schools: Parents' perspectives and experiences. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 21(4), 389–403. doi:10.1080/13603116.2016.1197324
- Van Rens, M., Haelermans, C., Groot, W., & van Den Maassen Brink, H. (2018). Facilitating a successful transition to secondary school: (How) does it work? A systematic literature review. *Adolescent Research Review*, 3(1), 43–56. doi:10.1007/s40894-017-0063-2
- Wainscot, J., Naylor, P., Sutcliffe, P., Tantam, D., & Williams, J. (2008). Relationships with peers and use of the school environment of mainstream secondary school pupils with Asperger syndrome (high-functioning autism): A case-control study. *International Journal of Psychology and Psychological Therapy*, 8(1), 25–38.
- Webster, J., & Watson, R. (2002). Analyzing the past to prepare for the future: Writing a literature review. *MIS Quarterly*, 26, xiii–xxiii. doi:10.2307/4132319

Copyright of Journal of Research in Childhood Education is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.