AI and Transition:
A Dissertation Study on

Using GenAI for Career Exploration for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

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The Catalysts

- The “I don’t know.”
- The career mismatch
- Traditional transition assessments and exploration
- Rural layers
  - Limited exposure to careers

The Catalysts

- Career choices are often shaped by:
  - What students have seen
  - Who they know
  - Available transportation
  - Opportunities adults make accessible

Meanwhile...

! Emerging technologies, such as GenAI, may support transition planning.

! No experimental research exists on the instructional sequence of GenAI, especially for career exploration or students with disabilities.

! **Teaching students how to use GenAI, including ethical practices, may foster independence in their adult lives.**

Research Objective

To evaluate the effects of a task-analyzed instructional sequence on student prompting of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) for career exploration for transition-aged students with disabilities

Research Questions (Paraphrased)

? Could students learn a sequence for identifying, comparing, and reflecting on careers?

? Could they improve the quality of their prompts?

? Did the students and their teacher view this as a useful and acceptable way to explore careers?

Methodology

Study Design:
- Single case
  - Multiple probe across participants, three tiers

Setting:
- Rural high school
- Grades 9-12
- Resource setting

Participants:

Teacher:
- Certified special education teacher
- Technology skills
- Engaged in transition work

Students:
- Transition-aged students with an intellectual disability (MMD)
- Regular attendance
- Met baseline criteria

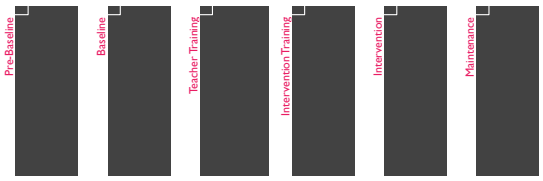
Methodology

Materials:
- Pathfinder GPT (Custom GPT)
- Graphic Organizers

Intervention (IV)
- Series of 3, 30-min lessons
  1. Introduction to GenAI
  2. Prompting Basics
  3. Applying GenAI

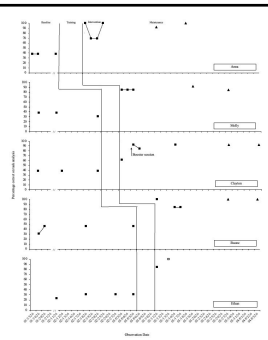
Data Collection
- Direct observation: Audio, video, screen recording (Zoom)
  - Task Analysis (DV 1)
  - Rubric (DV 2)
- Social validity
  - Students: Children's Intervention Rating Profile (CIRP)
  - Teacher: Intervention Rating Profile (IRP-15)

Procedures



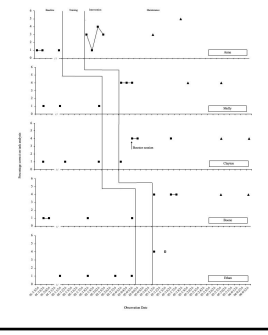
Results

Task Analysis



Results

Rubric



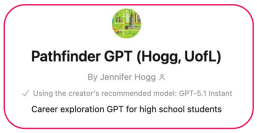
Results

Social Validity

Participant	CIRP[a]			IRP-15[b]		
	Pre	Post	Δ	Pre	Post	Δ
Anna	26	37	11			
Molly	42	42	0			
Clayton	42	42	0			
Boone	42	42	0			
Ethan	30	41	11			
Mrs. Mitchell				82	89	7

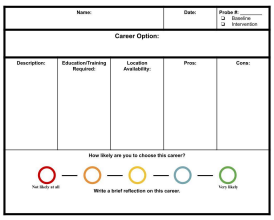
Note. CIRP = *Children's Intervention Rating Profile* (Witt & Elliott, 1985); IRP-15 = *Intervention Rating Profile* (Witt & Elliott, 1985).
[a]CIRP scores (student) range from 7–42, with higher scores indicating higher social validity. [b]IRP-15 scores (adult) range from 15–90, with higher scores indicating higher social validity.





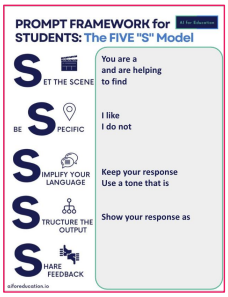
Resources

Pathfinder GPT



Resources

Graphic Organizer
Digital or Paper-Based



Resources

Prompt Sentence Starters

Teaching the Use of GenAI

Series of 3, 30-min lessons

- Lesson 1: Introduction to GenAI
- Lesson 2: Prompting Basics
- Lesson 3: Applying GenAI







The Power of Teaching

In baseline, students

- asked vague or incomplete questions
- accepted the first answer without evaluation
- copy/pasted the output without reading
- struggled to connect to career information
- missed opportunities to ask follow-up questions

More Product-Focused

The Power of Teaching

After instruction, students

- generated more purposeful and efficient prompts
- asked follow-up questions
- compared career options
- made connections between careers and personal preferences
- used AI-generated information more responsibly

More Process-Focused

Findings and Practical Application

- Explicit instruction in the use of GenAI is essential for access and use for students with intellectual disabilities.
- AI can expand career exploration opportunities in rural settings.
- Prompt engineering is a critical digital literacy skill and should be taught to help students be good users of GenAI.
- Custom GPTs can increase structure, safety, access, and independence.
- Teacher development is a key to effective GenAI implementation.

Suggestions for Implementation

Embed into:

- Transition courses/work
- Utilize during resource time
- Increase AI-literacy through technology courses/work
- Self-Determination Instruction
- Compare careers against personal interests.
- Student-led ARCs
- Transition portfolios

Cautions

- AI outputs may contain hallucinations.
  - Verify information.
- Privacy matters.
  - Teach students to omit personally identifiable information.
- Students need prompting instruction.
  - Don't assume they know how to ask effective questions.

Cautions (Continued)

- Student need instruction in consuming information.
  - Watch out for copying/pasting without synthesis (human-in-the-loop.
- AI doesn't replace transition assessments.
  - It enhances it.

??????? Questions ???????

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