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# Personal Reflections from ePortfolio: AHRC New York City

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by Sarah Kuptsin

## My Picture



## Wordle

Happy  
Curious Baker  
Traveler Reader Adventurous  
Determined Motivated Bilingual

## My Biography: What I Am Bringing to AHRC New York City

My Name is Sarah, I am a junior here at Pace University. I am a commuter student from Long Island, NY. I completed community services in high school by working at a senior citizen day center. When I got to college I was offered a part time job to work at another senior citizen day center. My job was to teach the elderly how to use a computer. Both experiences were challenging but fun. I enjoyed teaching the seniors as well as learning from them. Patience is key to working with others and I feel I have mastered that trait. Helping others is something I really like to do.

### Critique (on Professor Questions) of 1/28/14

#### Critique 1

[www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org) is focused at helping parents as well as others understand what autism is. On this website people can donate money to further autism research as well as attend autism events. There are also helpful tips on what applications to use on a tablet.

<http://autism-society.org> This website is one of the leading autism science and advocacy organizations. This site also has information on what autism is. They have a list of apps that they feel will assist parents in getting their children to be more social. A parent can become a member to get updates in the research as well as technology.

[www.autismhwy.com](http://www.autismhwy.com) this website is parent and kid friendly. There are interactive games for children. There are also ample amounts of information for parents. This website was started by a mother who has a son with autism. There is also a forum where parents are able to interact with each other.

#### Critique 2

App 1: Touch Chat HD: Is an application that allows individuals with autism to talk. There are images and sounds. Everything necessary to form a sentence.

App 2: First Then Visual Schedule HD –This application allows individuals to keep to a set schedule. Pictures are used as a guide. A picture to get dressed followed by a picture to get food.

App 3 : AutisMate- This application gives a lot of how-to videos. There will be an image of a kitchen. The individual can click on the faucet and it will show a video on how to turn the faucet on and off. This is a very interactive app.

#### Critique 3

Stephan Hawking uses a voice synthesizer to communicate. He also has a tablet attached to his wheelchair where he can form sentences on it. The program he uses is EZ key. He uses his cheek as a cursor to use the computer. The infrared light is how the cheek and computer connect.

<http://www.hawking.org.uk/the-computer.html>

<http://science.howstuffworks.com/dictionary/famous-scientists/physicists/10-cool-things-stephen-hawking.htm>

### **Critique (on Professor Questions) of 2/4/14**

What happened to Avonte Oquendo was very tragic and scary. Could a tracking device have prevented this? His passing has sparked this question. Parents may agree with the tracking device because they will know where their child is at all times. These tracking devices can be worn as bracelet. This bracelets would help to put parents minds at ease

### **Blog (on Partner and Project) of 2/11/14**

Today I met Christopher from AHRC. He is a nice guy who enjoys using the computer as well as listening to music. He is a big Bruno Mars fan and like Marc Anthony as well. Chirs watched Bruno mars perform at the super bowl halftime show. I learned today that he is graduating and is going to start looking for jobs. He was not shy at all and was very talkative. It was a great and productive hour. I cannot wait to get to know Christopher a bit better. 😊

### **Critique of 2/18/14**

With the invention of tablets we now have the ability to create more. The tablet is so versatile and especially useful for individuals with autism. Certain programs give them a voice and a way to communicate with people. Tablets are even having the capability to create music. Certain apps let you play the piano or guitar. Fox news did a segment on ipads being used as instruments back in 2012. The Ipad helped the student with communication problems. The students had fun playing music and creating.

Below is the link to the article.

<http://www.foxnews.com/scitech/2012/07/05/autistic-students-perform-ipad-band-concert-in-new-york-to-grateful-ears/>

### **Critique of 2/25/14**

This is a very difficult topic to resolve. It definitely has to be resolved. It is a fact that jobs that hire individuals with disabilities get a tax break. This incentive is not fair for the individual. I also recently saw a new segment on a workplace that only hires individuals with disabilities. They do not accept the tax break that is offered. They want to show that disabled individuals are capable of doing the same job as non-disabled people. To go back to the question you asked I feel that people need to have more faith and let individuals part take in the work place.

### **Blog 2/25/18**

Today during class I learned that Christopher is going to be an uncle! He is very excited and cannot wait to play with him. Christopher is very shy and has trouble speaking in front of a large audience. I will try to work on his stage fright while at the same time working on mine. We started working on our project today, the topic is day in a life of a teacher. I'm trying to encourage Chris to ask his teacher about his daily routine. The trouble I am having is that Chris thinks he is automatically going to have a teaching job. He thinks that this project is like a job interview.

### Critique of 3/4

It is not right that kids in wheelchairs and crutches cannot access the second floor library easily. I'm a bit confused on how it is difficult because I have seen a student in a wheelchair on second floor in the collaborative room. Do the elevator need to be requested for students to use to get to the second floor? If this is such a problem than I would suggest letting those elevators run full time. There is no reason those elevators are not being utilized. A petition should definitely be started to have access to those elevators. It is very frustrating for student in wheelchair or crutches to have to rely on someone else to help them. If for some reason the elevators won't work than a ramp should be built to access the second floor. A ramp should have been built the way the library was built it is insensitive to people with medical problems that rely on wheel chairs.

### Blog 3/11/14

**Today during class Chris finally started asking me questions! I was so happy because it let me know that he was interested in what the project was. He wanted to know when it is do and what the topic is about. I went over the assignment with him and we officialy are set on 'a day in a life of a teacher' What is next is to figure out what grade chris want to follow. He suggested highschool student but i feel elementary students are more fun to work with. It is ultimatly his deession so we will see next week. Once again we listened to bruno mars on youtube. I'm trying to think of a way to incorprate music into the final assignment.**

## **MID TERM**

I started reading The Reason I Jump by Naoki Higashida and I could not put it down. I started reading it on the subway and missed my stop because I was into the book. It was a very eye-opening read. It made me really understand what autism is and give me an idea of what it is like. What I took away from the book is that individuals with autism are just like you and me. They have thoughts and dreams and ideas. I started reading this book before I met my AHRC partner. The book had valuable information to help me interact with my partner.

I am a very timid person when I first meet people, so I could only imagine what my partner felt. I was scared as well because I have never spent time a significant amount of time with an individual with autism. My partners name is Christopher and I have the honor of hanging out and working with him this semester. At the moment I first met Christopher he seemed shy and quite. He sat down at the computer and kept to himself. Day one I did not know how to approach him. In the book The Reason I

Jump, Naoki states that people with autism do not like being babied. They rather people speak in a normal tone (Higashida 28). This stuck with me when I first started talking with Christopher. I realized that if I ask Chris questions he will answer them. He did not seem too interested in finding out more about me. He never asked me one question about things or myself I liked to do. Just recently he started to ask me questions in regard to our assignment but very few.

Some of the topics that Naoki address in the book I feel do not apply to Chris. Chris does not repeat questions he answers them directly. He listens when I ask him to turn down music in the class. When you get to know Chris and ask him he right questions he is very sociable and loves to talk. I feel the same way when I get to know someone for the first time. Through talking to Chris I found out we enjoy the same artists and comedians. On day one of meeting him I learned that he loves Bruno Mars, which is his favorite musician of all time. We may have listened to his whole album during class together. I also learned that Christopher is going to become an uncle for the second time. He is very excited to meet his new nephew and play with him. Christopher is very kind hearted I can tell because he wanted to create a mix CD for his secret valentine in February. He just wanted to make his valentine happy. He also has a good sense of humor. We watched a comedian in class and both of could not stop laughing. It was great to see him smiling. Christopher is a graduating this year, which means he will be working towards getting a job.

Our end of semester project is based on future jobs. Christopher has stated that he would like to be a teacher. I am trying to gear his focus to what teachers do and how they teach. When we research information he thinks that the articles are job applications. He feels that if I print out the information it will get him a job. I am struggling in explaining to him that this is just information about what a teacher does day to day. In our most recent class Chris understood that there is going to be a project at the end of the semester that we will be presenting. He has difficulty presenting as do I. I'd like for use to chose a grade (pre K- 12) to focus on, as well as choose a method of presenting this assignment. I feel that if I show bravery and present I will give him the confidence to present as well. The faster we finish the assignment the more time I can help him get comfortable with the class so he can present in front of them. I am looking forward to the rest of the semester and learning more about Christopher. Chirstopher has taught me to be open minded and understanding. I cannot wait to learn more from him during the rest of this semester.

#### Final Thoughts:

This book was a really good read. I purchased it to my kindle and I do not regret buying this book it is very informative and interesting.

#### Critique of 3/25

Individuals with disabilities may have difficulties traveling by plane due to the intense process of checking into the airport. The whole experience is unpleasant to anybody and can be especially uncomfortable for individuals with autism. Going through security is process that requires you to stand in a lot of line sometimes 3 or more. These lines are very fast or very slow depending on the time.

Patience's is key to these line and for individuals with Disabilities it may be a little harder to stand on line. U.S department of transportations has now required for all airport to follow specific guidelines for individuals with disabilities. I do not feel that Chris and I would have any trouble traveling because he is capable of walking on his own. He is also very calm and seems to be patient person. For people who need wheel chair access it is advised to call two hours in advance to make necessary arrangements to travel in the air port. The airport we would use to travel would be JFK. Jfk has a separate security line just for people with disabilities. it is advised to call 72 hours prior to flying to be briefed on what to expect during the security check.

### **Blog 3/25**

We finally decided the direction of the project! Chris and I decided to create a lesson plan and teach the class. In the three minutes we have Chris will get to live out his dream of being a teacher. I spoke to the teacher that supervises them and she felt it was a great idea. She said that Chris is always talking about being a teacher. I hope he will enjoy the experiance. Chris has a hard time presenting infront of people because he is shy. I told him that if we can get the project done early than we can practice presenting. I feel if we practice than Chris will be more prepared and less nervous on the big day. I'm excited to get to help Chris live out his dream.

### **Film Festival**

I really enjoyed the first film The Interviewer. I thought it was very funny and witty. It clearly teached us that you cannot judge anyone based on their appearance. I really symthosed with the interview because I too was nervous and didn't know how to behave with my student. Than as we got to know each other I became more comfortable. I also feel like Chris has warmed up to me as well. The movie was also empowering the the interview stood up for the individual interviewing him. There was no need for the boss to yell at him. The boss must have felt really uncomfutable when he realized that The Individual was capable of conducting.

### **Critique of 4/1**

When Owen was born he showed typical signs of a growing boy. He was able to hold his own cup to drink and he was able to communicate with his parents. On his third Birthday everything changed. He became silent and stopped talking. No eye contact and the only word he would say is juice. After a long time of zero communication Owen showed his first signs of communication. He was watching a Disney movie with his family and repeated this phrase from the Little Mermaid "juicervose" What Owen was trying to say was "just your voice." Owen was showing understanding of the song and was communicating with his family. Owen showed persistence by playing back the song and trying to repeat the phrase. I think Owen is very innovative with his way of communicating with others. Using Disney films to communicate works for owen. What if it may work for others.

## **Blog 4/1**

Chris and I listened to Marc Anthony today. He said that over the weekend he was playing with his nephew. He also shared that he received his graduation pictures in the mail. Listening to Marc Anthony I learned that Chris has a good sense of rhythm and like to sing. He was banging on the table as if it was drums and he was able to keep up with the tempo. It was a very fun. In regards to the project we have formed our lesson plan. Next class we hope to get more information on our topic. As soon as that is done we will practice presenting for the presentation.

## **critique of 4/22**

Thinking before you speak is an unspoken rule that people don't tend to follow. Of course it is not a mandatory rule. People don't get in trouble if they don't follow it. In certain situations there are repercussions for not. Nobody is 100 percent perfect and will mess up but that is their lesson to learn. A perfect example of this would be about the Louis from the AHRC day center. He is wheelchair bound and uses an app on his iPad to speak. To be more independent he wanted to travel from his house in the Bronx to the day center in downtown Manhattan using public transportation. People told him not to do this because it's dangerous and a difficult task. People didn't think that he would be capable of completing such a difficult task. One day he took public transportation and made it to the day center in one piece. He taped the whole trip, which took 2 hours. People were shocked. It is important to not underestimate people.

The article posted explains the biased perception of how those without disabilities act around those who do have disabilities. People without disabilities tend to point out people's disabilities. This is a wrong way to approach anybody. This is done unconsciously but that's should not be an excuse.

## **critique of 4/29**

I have recently visited Disney world and I can't first hand say that the disability access is exactly the same as the fast pass access. Under the Fast pass rules you schedule all the rides you'd like to go on for the day. It is impossible for the rides to be scheduled back to back because the park is big and one needs time to get from one place to another. That being said once I arrived at my scheduled time there was still some wait time. I arrived to the haunted house at my time assigned and I had to wait a few moments to enter the actual waiting area. I had to wait because the Disney worker kindly asked for us to allow a disabled individual in front of us. I had no trouble waiting. I don't agree with the lawsuit because I feel the Disability pass just like the fast pass is a good way to control crowds and lines. Lines without these passes are unbearable in the heat. I understand that kids are eager to get on rides, but individuals with disabilities and kids without disabilities through similar tantrums. This in a way teaches patients. You cannot get everything you'd like instantly. Disney is a very chaotic place and parents of individuals with disabilities should account for that. In regards to the wait time to obtain a disabilities pass I believe is Disney's problem and they should do a better job at servicing customers at a timely manner. I also waited a long time to get my ticket.



## blog 4/29

Chris and I worked on our project yesterday. We decided to create a prezi presentation. More aesthetically pleasing and it will save paper. We rehearsed what to say because Chris cannot read. He did have trouble remembering what he had to say. I fear that during the presentation he won't remember what to say. Aside from the project Chris shared with me that he got new sneakers. They are from Nike and they glow in the dark. I also learned that he doesn't like when people stomp on the ground when they walk. Towards the end of class we listened to some Marc Anthony Music. we watched his performance at the billboard music awards.

## Blog 5/6

**Today in Class Chris and I worked on our project. We are doing a prezi presentation! I am very excited to show the class what Chris and I have been working on. I gave him a print out of what we each of us have to say so he can practice at home. Chris is very excited because he is graduating next week. We listened to music this week again. I'm going to miss our little music sessions. That is all he can talk about. This class really.**

## **Final!**

Going into this class I really did not know what to expect. I had never had in depth interactions with individuals with autism. To individuals who I knew were autistic, I was sympathetic but tried to keep my distance. I never sat down to try and get to know one. As I mentioned in previous blog posts there were a few kids in my high school who were autistic. I was nice to them and sometimes spoke to them but I never really got to know them. This class really opened my eyes to autism. The article we would have to critique each week were really informative. I was very anxious to meet my partner. I did not know what to expect from him.

Christopher was my partner for the whole semester. He was a part of this program before and I felt like he wanted his old partner back. As weeks went by that quickly changed. Our first meeting was very awkward and new. I did not know what to say and Chris was very quiet. I could tell he was excited he was just waiting for me to ask the right questions. The first day in a soft tone he asked me if we could listen to Bruno Mars. I immediately said yes because that was something we had in common we both like Bruno Mars. The following week he started to open up more and more and I started to find out more information. It was like putting together a puzzle. He is a man of few words but when he talk it means a lot. I found out he has siblings and he is an uncle. Chris expressed to me that he want to hang out with his friend and do stuff but he cannot. This Pace and AHRC collaboration real gave him the feeling that he was hanging out amongst friends. I am glad I was able to make it enjoyable.

Our project topic was jobs for the future. Chris is graduating this June. He expressed his interest in becoming a teacher. He likes to be helpful. He also said during a class that he would like to work for the MTA likes his brother. I feel that Chris is capable of having a job where he interacts with people directly. He is very friendly and does not shy from expressing himself. Our project was on the topic of basketball. That is his favorite sport to watch so we decided it would be right to teach the class about

it. We picked the topic of the Black Fives, which was an African American basketball team. We chose this topic because it was an exhibit at the historical society center. He took pictures of the exhibit, which we put on the presentation. During the making of our project I learned that Chris likes music. Not just listening to it but Dancing and singing. That is something we shared every class. We would dance and sing it was a mini party.

I hope Chris enjoyed his time with me. I took away from this experience that individuals with autism deserve a chance. They should not be written out of society for being different. Each student that I met in this program was so special and each one different and talented. One girl was a very good at drawing animations! Another student was so knowledgeable about the solar system.

My overall experience was wonderful. Every week I would share I would come home and share my day with my family. If I could I would do it all over again honestly. I have a newfound respect for individuals with autism. They are just trying to survive this crazy world like everybody else. Thank you for this class Professor Lawler. I will definitely remember it.

## Certificate

Couldn't post Picture because I never received one 😞