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Expectation vs. Perspective: A personal experience of completing transition from high school to community

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Date December 10, 2012

Expectation vs. Perspective: A personal experience completing transition from high school to community

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Master of Science
Eastern Kentucky University
Richmond, Kentucky
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for the degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents
and my fiancée for their unwavering support,
and to my sister for inspiring me.

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I would like to thank my major professor, Dr. Dana Howell, for her guidance and patience. I would also like to thank the other committee members, Dr. Mary-Ellen Thompson and Julie Baltisberger, for their comments and assistance over the past two years. I would like to express my thanks to my fiancé, Eric, for his understanding and patience during those times when there was no light at the end of anything. He encouraged me and made me stick with it. I would like to thank the participants of this thesis for sharing their story, and to the members of my family: Bill and Meg Steinman, Wilda Steinman, and Julia Steinman. I would also like to thank my coworkers at Sodexo during the 2012 season for providing me laughter and support while I completed this project.

Abstract:

A challenging transition occurs when students with intellectual disabilities leave high school, yet there is little data in the literature covering this period of secondary transition. The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the perspectives of a young adult with an intellectual disability who completed the secondary transition process, his parent, and a vocational specialist. Data was collected through a semi-structured interview with each of the three participants about their experiences during the secondary transition. Three themes emerged from the data, including “I had no expectations”: Expectations of the parent and transition plan; “He can do all those self-help things”: Goal and skill development to support independence; and “She is my guardian”: Learning how to be an advocate. The results of this study speak to a need for strong advocates for students with intellectual disabilities during secondary transition.

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“Moving from the safe, familiar environment experienced in primary education to the daunting, complex and unfamiliar environment of secondary education is undoubtedly a difficult process, and one during which education systems across the world are at risk of unintentionally creating barriers.”

-Humphrey & Ainscow, 2006

“Story . . . is the portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful.”

- Connelly and Clandinin 2006, 479

“Where there are no jobs and no access, now we are creating it...So when you give kids experiences you move them into spheres of success that they’ve never had, and mostly importantly when they come here and get the skills that they need, they become employees elsewhere”

-Stephen Ritz, founder of the Green Bronx Machine, 2012

Chapter I

The Introduction

As individuals we encounter many periods of transition throughout our lives. The most common transitions include those that are developmental, from infant to toddler, toddler to preschool age, preschool age to school age, school age to pre-teen, pre-teen to teen, teen to young adult, and so on. In addition to our developmental transitions, we also experience occupational transitions. These transitions move from co-occupations with mom and/or dad (infant), to exploratory occupations (toddler), to social occupations (preschool), and then educational occupations (school age) (Myers, personal communication, spring 2012). Eventually occupations transition into life roles that provide meaning and guidance in what area to develop a career, find a spouse, and fulfill a large portion of time.

However, these periods of transition are not always smooth and can lead to distress in the individual. Transition is a stressful time for anyone. Transition is defined by Webster's (2011) as "passage from one state, stage, subject, or place to another." For those who have an intellectual, developmental, and/or cognitive disability, this transition process could lead to more barriers and obstacles for both the student and the parent/guardian.

For individuals with a disability, there are two primary transitions that occur during K-12 education. The first is moving from early intervention (EI) into an academic setting, ex. a child transitions from an EI service model to a public school. This occurs around age 3 (Kardos & White, 2005). The second transition begins in high school, usually beginning at age 14 and ending between ages 18-21, and is primarily attributed to those students who are receiving special education services. Kardos and White (2005) describe the second transition period (aka secondary transition) as a “time in which a special education student is assessed and provided training or intervention for the transition from public education to “adult” life” (p.173). The programming available in the K-12 school systems includes therapies (speech, physical, and occupational) to improve functional ability of a child with a disability. During a child’s time in the school system, parents/guardians become expectant and dependent on the school to provide certain services for their child, such as speech therapy or occupational therapy.

In Kentucky, at the age of 14 students must begin being included in Admissions and Release Committee (ARC) meetings. This is when transition services can start but transition services aren’t usually mandatory until age 16. At age 16, the transition team, comprised of a case manager, the parents, the child, a job coach, special educator, and any other professionals that are named relevant to the child’s success create an Individualized Graduation Plan (IGP) to help steer the child into classes that complement and enhance their vocational skills. However, once their child transitions into the community parents/guardians discover that there are no more automatic guarantees of services (Mandik, 2006). They become the advocate and support system for their child to receive the services they were receiving while in school or other services that may benefit them in community involvement. Parents/guardians also fill a new role as the primary resource for their children for establishing and guiding their child into a worker and volunteer role. Parents/guardians begin to rely on support services that can begin while their child is completing their school career or by third party companies after the child is out of school. These support services can include a job coach (referred to as a vocational specialist in this paper), vocational rehabilitation therapist, or a supported employment specialist.

A vocational specialist is someone who is familiar with the commuity, and assists the student in finding a job in a field where they are interested in working. They may work individually with the student to prepare them for the job, take them shopping for appropriate clothes, and may provide transportation to the job. A vocational specialist can also assist the student in establishing goals to become immersed in the community and at work to help ease any anxiety the student may be feeling. Once at the job site, the vocational specialist may help break the ice between the student and other workers, help the student become accustomed or adapt the working environment for the student to perform to the best of their abilities, and provide the student with support to solve work place disagreements (The Village, n.d).

Secondary transition began being outlined in the 1980's (Repetto & Correa, 1996) and has been influenced by governmental documents (ex. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA). This transition process needs to be influenced by the parents'/guardians' or child's own voice while also accounting for professional viewpoints. There are many components of transition including the involvement of the family, agency, and the institution, formalized planning and implantation of services, future planning for post-school outcomes, and links with post-school services (Repetto & Correa, 1996). As of right now, the literature that is available about secondary transition is told from professional viewpoints (such as Mankey, 2011; Kellems, 2010), but there is not a lot of literature available from the parent/guardian and/or young adult's point of view.

Problem Statement

There is a need to understand the young adult's point of view and to understand their involvement in planning for post high school activities. Does the young adult feel like their opinions are being considered and do they feel like they have control over their future goals? In order to answer these questions more research needs to be identified due to the lack of literature and research that is available right now.

Another problem that may be overlooked is the role of the parent(s)/guardian as well as the vocational specialist. While these individuals have a very important role in the young adult's life, they may lose that importance in planning meetings. It is important to look at the significance of their role during these planning meetings, and to see if they feel as though their opinions and goals for their young adult are incorporated into the plan.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this narrative study is to describe the perspectives of a young adult with an intellectual disability who has completed the transition process, the perspective of his or her parent(s)/guardian, and the perspective of his or her vocational specialist during the transition from high school to the community.

Research Questions

The grand question is: What are the perspectives of a young adult with an intellectual disability who has completed the transition process, his/her parent(s)/guardian, and his/her vocational specialist during the transition process? There are different sub-questions for each participant in the study. These questions are broken down into sections below.

Parent/ guardian questions: " What were the barriers that the parent/guardian encountered during the secondary transition process?" "What were the supports that the parent/guardian encountered during the secondary transition process?" "Did their child meet the transition goals that had been established?"

Young adult questions: "How does the young adult with an intellectual disability describe his or her transition from high school to the community?" "How is the student's life different now that he or she has left high school?"

Vocational specialist questions: "What barriers were encountered when working with this individual?" "What supports were used when working with this individual?" "How did the vocational specialist participate in the transition goal setting process?"

Definitions

Aide- also known as paraprofessional; serves as an assistant to the teacher to help the integrated child learn the lesson

Admissions and release committee (ARC)- determines the placement and evaluation decisions for the young adult throughout their schooling

Cognitive disability- “greater difficulty with one or more types of mental tasks than the average person” (WebAIM, 2012)

Cooperative teachers- where two or more teachers are equal in status located in the same classroom providing instruction in a collaborative manner (Bouck, 2007).

Entitlement- students attending public school are entitled to services as outlined in their IEP

Eligibility- students who transition into community life need to meet criteria in order to receive additional services

General education- classes that are mainstream (Language Arts/English; Math; Science)

Individuals with disabilities education act (IDEA)- public policy that was initially passed in 1975 and amended multiple times with the most recent amendment in 2004 to support states in protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities to meet their goals

Individualized education plan (IEP) – also referred as Individualized Education Program; individualized educational plan that helps parents/guardians and teachers outline goals for students who have disabilities

Individualized graduation plan (IGP)- also referred as Individualized Learning Plan (ILP); individualized graduation plan helps parents/guardians or students identify classes to improve skills for students who are entering the community immediately after high school

Inclusion- placing the child in the least restrictive environment (LRE), usually in a general classroom

Intellectual disability- individual must exhibit at least three factors to qualify for having an intellectual disability. These factors are: “significantly impaired intellectual ability, onset before 18 years of age, and impairment of the adaptive abilities necessary for independent living” (Case-Smith, 2010, p. 169).

Least restrictive environment (LRE)-allows the student to learn in environments that are most beneficial

National longitudinal transition study (NLTS2)-documents the ‘characteristics, experiences, and outcomes’ of youth with disabilities through its examination of issues of secondary education, transition, and post-school outcomes (Bouck, 2010)

Secondary transition- period of moving from high school to community life

Support services- can also be referred to as therapies (speech, occupational, physical); support students in reaching academic and functional goals in community living and/or vocational settings

Special education- classes that incorporate accommodations in learning styles for students to meet graduation requirements

Vocational specialist- also referred to as a job coach; support staff to help prepare the student for entering the work force

Significance of the Study

This study is important to conduct because it provides a new perspective on the secondary transition process from the viewpoint of the young adult who is participating or has recently participated in transition, the benefits and pitfalls the parent(s)/guardian have encountered, and examine the collaborative process needed for the vocational specialist to succeed in meeting the young adults goals as well as obeying the state employment laws. It also provides more research to an area that is lacking by providing unique experiences of individuals who have recently participate in this process. In addition to this, it helps to enlighten occupational therapists on what role they can play during the transition process.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher has experienced the process of transition from a sibling standpoint and is approaching this topic from a new perspective. There are three main biases/assumptions that have been identified by the researcher. They include extreme emotional responses to the story, personal viewpoint, and emotions regarding personal experiences. The researcher has a problem with over identifying with stories which can lead to under-exaggerated or over-exaggerated responses. These extremes can affect the storyteller and can lead to problems in influencing the data from the interviews. Afterward, the researcher may have trouble analyzing the data even after using reflexivity.

Another bias is the researcher’s experience with this process, which she has experienced in a third party way by receiving information about the process from venting parents/guardians about negatives that were encountered throughout the process. The sibling who participated in secondary transition was not an active participant in the process and the researcher is unsure if the sibling was aware of the planning and strategic meetings that went into transitioning her from high school to post- high school plans.

A third bias that was identified is that the researcher will infer personal opinions during the interviews with the vocational specialist and the parent from the stories and experiences which have been shared with her. The researcher tends to choose sides, but this bias will be overcome through pre-reflexivity journaling (where these biases were identified) and through reflexivity journaling (after each interview).

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is the small sample size. The researcher chose to look at a parent/guardian and young adult because the focus is usually on the professionals who are involved in the transition team. Because of this choice, the author did not have the breadth of background knowledge needed to support all the findings that were expected. Another limitation is the duration of the study. If there were a longer time frame, more people who were on the transition team could be involved in this study.

Summary

This chapter provided an introduction to secondary transition, the problem and purpose statement of the thesis and the terms that will be encountered throughout this paper. The researcher outlined their biases and the limitations that may be encountered during the duration of the thesis.

Chapter two will cover the history of secondary transition, tips that can be utilized by both parents and professionals during this time, some public policies that have or that are currently effecting secondary transition and its planning process, the services that are available in the schools, life skills training, and factors that can affect the transition process.

Chapter II

Background

Secondary transition is the time period in which a young adult with a disability moves from high school to community life. This process usually occurs between the ages of 18-21 years, and some young adults can transition from high school to a variety of other options. Some of these options include vocational programs, full-time college student at a university, moving into an employee position, or attending a community college. However, before the 1960's many of these individuals had a dim future without much hope for change (US-OSEP, 2007). Before the passage of any policies, state institutions may have found a child on their steps, and the child could spend the rest of their life there receiving minimal food, clothing, and sometimes even shelter. They were accommodated instead of being assessed, educated, and rehabilitated and were often neglected or ignored (US-OSEP, 2007).

Today, there are nearly 6 million children and youth who receive special education and other related services to meet their needs which are a direct accomplishment of public policy such as IDEA (US-OSEP, 2007). There has been an increase in graduation rates and employment rates among young adults with disabilities (US-OSEP, 2007). This chapter looks at the histories of special education and secondary transition, public policies, services provided in schools, tips for transition, assessments, an overview of intellectual disabilities, and parents involvement.

History of Special Education

The field of special education is young compared to its counterpart, education (Cronis & Ellis, 2000). Due to social, political, legal, and scientific forces there has been controversy and fragmentation between special education and education as well as between professionals and parents of children who have disabilities (Cronis & Ellis, 2000). Prior to the passage of PL. 94-142 (originally passed EHA and then amended to IDEA; described in a later section) children were usually institutionalized, segregated, and were not educated. In the 1960's, Wolfensberger (1972) created the normalization principle. This principle stated that if you were to treat children like typically developing children then they would react in a more typical way (Cronis & Ellis, 2000). This prompted the movement to begin educating individuals with disabilities through PL 94-142 and led to one of the first laws that influenced how special education would be administered.

Many of the first integrated education programs failed due to professionals realizing that their delivery models were no longer effective. Many of the models were accustomed to being able to control the environment to control the behaviors of students and to elicit the most out of them (Cronis & Ellis, 2000). During the 1970's and 1980's, few students were being integrated into generalized classrooms (Cronis & Ellis, 2000). For example, in 1970 where U.S. schools were only educating one in five children with disabilities and there were many other states who still had laws excluding certain disabilities (ex. children who were deaf or blind) (US-OSEP, 2007).

History of Secondary Transition

The program of secondary transition began in the 1980's (Repetto & Correa, 1996) and has been influenced by governmental documents (e.g. IDEA) and more importantly the parents or child's own voice. There are many components of transition including the involvement of the family, agency, and the institution, formalized planning and implantation of services, future planning for post-school outcomes, and links with post-school services (Repetto & Correa, 1996).

Public Policies

There have been public policies that have impacted secondary transition. The initial law influencing secondary transition was called The Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EHA), also PL 94-142, which provided free and appropriate public education to each child with a disability (US-OSEP, 2007). The EHA stated that all "students with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment in which their IEP could be reasonably implemented" (Cronis & Ellis, 2000). There were four purposes of the EHA:

1. To assure that all children with disabilities have available to them…a free appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs
2. To assure that the rights of children with disabilities and their parents…are protected

3. To assist States and localities to provide for the education of all children with disabilities
4. To assess and assure the effectiveness of efforts to educate all children with disabilities (US-OSEP, 2007).

The EHA was amended twice during the 1980's due to a huge national concern for the families of children with disabilities. In 1986, the EHA was amended into PL 99-457 and stipulated that states should provide programing and services to individuals with disabilities from birth (US-OSEP, 2007). The other amendment that occurred during the 1980's occurred in 1983 (EHA-PL 98-1990) and supported two other later amendments that occurred in 1990 (PL 101-476) and 1997 (PL 105-17). One part of the amendment that occurred in 1990 was to change the name of the policy from the EHA to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These three amendments (1983, 1990, and 1997) included transition services from high school to adult living. These mandates required that an IEP must include four areas:

1. Transition plans or procedures for identifying appropriate employment and other post-school adult living objectives for the student
2. Referring the student to appropriate community agencies; and linking the student to available community resources, including job placement and other follow-up services
3. Designate who is responsible for each transition activity.
4. Transition planning should begin at age 14 (US-OSEP, 2007).

IDEA was amended once again in 2004 and became Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), also known as PL 108-446. There are two sections provided on the IDEA website, Part B for ages 3-21 and Part C for birth to 2 (ED, 2011). Upon entering Part B, there are multiple resources related to IDEA and its implementing regulations which were released in August 2006 (ED, 2011). This thesis will focus on Part B, specifically secondary transition and the role that IDEA-2004 holds.

There are ten IDEA-2004 regulations that are addressed in the newest revision for professionals and parents to include during collaborative sessions concerning secondary transition. These include:

1. Adding "further education" of children with disabilities
2. Referring to a "child" instead of a "student"
3. Changing the definition of "transition services"
4. Requiring changes to performance goals and indicators
5. Establishing an exception to requirements for evaluation before a change in eligibility
6. Changing the secondary transition requirements in the IEP
7. Adding a requirement to invite child to IEP team meeting when purpose includes "consideration of postsecondary goals"
8. Adding the development and implementation of transition programs to list of permissible uses of state-level funds under Part B

9. Deleting the requirement that a local education agency (LEA) take other steps if an invited agency does not attend an IEP meeting during which transition services will be discussed
10. Adding a requirement for consent prior to inviting a representative of any participating agency likely to be responsible for provide or paying for transition services to attend a child's IEP team meeting" (ED, 2007).

There is a list located in Appendix A from the IDEA website that has common questions and answers based on secondary transition. These questions cover federal support for secondary transition, what goals must be covered in an IEP, what is the purpose of the summary of the child's academic achievement and functional performance (SOP) , is there a third party that needs to review the SOP, and how can the SOP assist the vocational rehabilitation program (ED, 2011).

One of the newest and most controversial laws that was passed is No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (PL 107-110). This law was approved in 2002 with the purpose of improving academic achievement for the disadvantaged (ESEA, 2002). This is an important law to mention because of its influence on the IDEA/IDEIA regulations. There are ten requirements that need to be considered for professionals who work in a public school system. These requirements follow:

1. Adding new definitions
    a. Defining what "core academic subjects" are (eg. English/Reading/Language Arts, Math, etc.)

    b. Highly qualified refers to the teachers qualifications. In the newest revision of IDEA/IDEIA, it states that teachers must be highly qualified when working with students.
    c. Scientifically based research must be used in teaching approaches and must meet certain criteria that is outlined in NCLB
    d. The LEA may not use more than 15% of the amount they receive from Part B funding
2. Allowing for use of funds reserved to carry out state-level activities
    a. Supporting development and accommodations for children with disabilities
    b. Providing technical assistance to schools, LEAs, and direct services
3. Allowing the use of funds in school-wide programs
4. Allowing LEAs some flexibility in the use of funds to carry out activities under ESEA
5. Adding requirements for qualifications of special education teachers
6. Requiring performance goals and indicators
    a. Promoting IDEA purpose
    b. Addressing graduation and dropout rates
    c. Aligning with the state's goals, objectives, and standards for children established in that state
7. Requiring reporting
8. Requiring development of alternate assessments

9. Requiring linking records of migratory children among states
10. Providing a special rule for eligibility determination
    a. Labeling a child as having a disability cannot occur if the determining factor is due to a lack of appropriate instruction in the "core subjects" (ED, 2007).

In the Commonwealth of Kentucky, there is a piece of legislature that specifically affects students' transition process. This legislature is called Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) and its goal is to have students successfully "transition from school to work, post-secondary education, the military, or community service" (Harrison, 2008,). This act was an attempt to "equalize funding and dramatically alter the curriculum and governance of schools" as well as to "integrate school finance reform with reforms in the curriculum and school governance" (Hoyt, n.d.).

Services in Schools

There are two documents that can be used in planning adaptations for children with disabilities. These documents are an individualized education program (IEP) and a 504 Plan. These two documents are very similar and have very subtle differences. A 504 Plan is less extensive and allows for the child to receive accommodations in their least restrictive environment (LRE), usually in generalized classrooms (AccessSTEM, 2011). A 504 Plan is also used for individuals who do not meet the qualifications for an IEP, such as a child who has attention deficit disorder (ADD).

An IEP outlines specialized instruction that a child with disabilities needs and is controlled by IDEA for its procedures (AccessSTEM, 2011). An IEP is created through a collaborative process by professionals who work with the child, the parents of the child, and the child (if applicable). There are ten steps that need to be followed when creating, establishing, and maintaining an IEP. The ten steps of creating an IEP follows:

1. Child is identified as possible needing special education and related services
    a. This happens very early in the child's school career, and sometimes even in preschool.
2. Child is evaluated
3. Eligibility is decided by the ARC and is based on certain criteria. The areas for eligibility follow: Autism (ASD), Deaf/Blind, Developmental Delay, Emotional Behavioral Disability, Functional Mental Disability, Hearing Impaired, Mild Mental Disability, Multiple Disabilities, Orthopedically Impaired, Other Health Impaired, Specific Learning Disability, Speech Language, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Visually Impaired (Carlisle Schools, n.d)
4. Child is found eligible for services
5. IEP meeting is scheduled
6. IEP meeting is held and the IEP is written
7. Services are provided

8. Progress is measured and reported to parents
9. IEP is reviewed
10. Child is re-evaluated (LD, 2009).

The IEP is a legal document that outlines information about the child and the educational program designed to meet their unique needs. A sample can be found in Appendix B, Figure 5. Some examples of information that would be found in an IEP includes: their current performance, annual goals, special education, related services, accommodations, participation in state and district-wide tests, needed transition services, and measured progress (NICHCY, 2010). The IEP contains information from the child's evaluation results to determine where their current level of performance is and to help develop goals for future levels of performance.

The IEP team can be comprised of anyone who is applicable to the services outlined in the IEP and who have the most contact to them. Common members of the team include parents, teachers (both regular and special education teachers), the student (if applicable), the school psychologist, a representative from a public agency to provide support or supervision, and any other professionals, including occupational therapists and speech language pathologists (NICHCY, 2010). The initial IEP meeting is held within thirty days of the child being identified. After an IEP is written every member of the team receives a signed copy of the IEP with the date of the next meeting (Hembree, 2007).

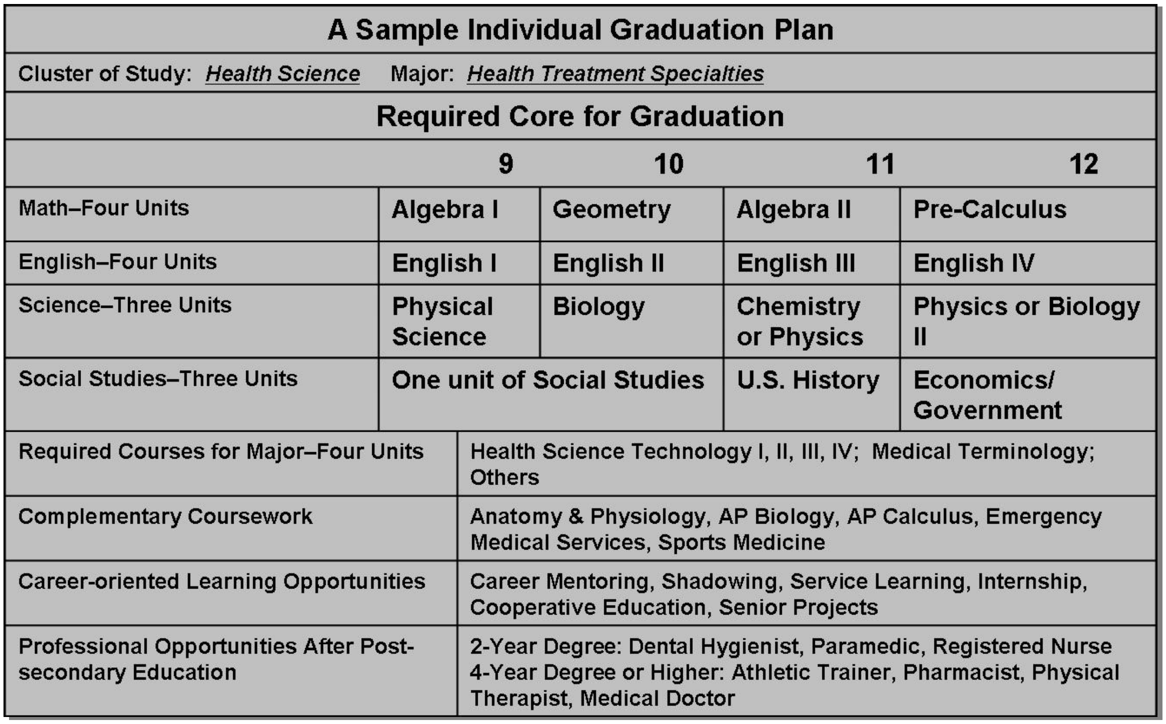
If parents are unsatisfied with their child's IEP, they can either talk to the IEP team about changes they want to make or by requesting a due process hearing and a review from the state educational agency (NLD, 2009). The review from the state educational agency is only applicable if it is outlined by the state. If parents are still unhappy with the state agency's decision the can appeal it in a state or federal court (NLD, 2009).

One of the most common goals that the IEP works toward is placing the child in the least restrictive environment (LRE) where they can successfully achieve their academic goals. With the creation of EHA in 1975, students with disabilities were provided with free and appropriate education. However, more than thirty years after the passage of this law many students with disabilities are still being segregated into different educational settings (Ferri & Connor, 2005). Ferri and Connor (2005) discussed that the 1990's was a decade when the nation's schools became increasingly racially segregated and that as "racial differences were being challenged, dividing students according to 'disability' gained greater acceptance" (p.454). In contrast to Ferri and Connor's (2005) viewpoint of disability segregation increasing, Wolfe and Hall (2003) believe that the amendment of IDEA in 1997 promotes integration in a strong underlying current.

There are two ways in which children with disabilities can participate in LREs. One way is for the child to receive cooperative teaching (co-teaching) between a general education teacher and a special education teacher. Bouck (2007) stated "*co-teaching* as two or more teachers who are equal in status located in the classroom together, working together, and providing instruction” (p.46). However, Bouck (2007) found that co-teaching often ends up being general educators taught the content while special educators served as aides in the classrooms. In certain instances, some students can spend their school days in a general classroom with the assistance of an aide (paraprofessional). The other option for children with disabilities is to spend a majority of their time in a special education classroom and leaving only for classes that they are on level with their general peers.

Individualized Graduation Plan

A child is identified early as having a disability or needing accommodations to achieve their maximum level while they are in school, but children with disabilities need an Individualized Graduation Plan (IGP) or Individualized Learning Plan (ILP). Figure 1 depicts a sample IGP, but these plans differentiate based on the school district.



A Sample Individual Graduation Plan

Cluster of Study: *Health Science* Major: *Health Treatment Specialties*

Required Core for Graduation

	9	10	11	12
Math–Four Units	Algebra I	Geometry	Algebra II	Pre-Calculus
English–Four Units	English I	English II	English III	English IV
Science–Three Units	Physical Science	Biology	Chemistry or Physics	Physics or Biology II
Social Studies–Three Units	One unit of Social Studies		U.S. History	Economics/ Government
Required Courses for Major–Four Units	Health Science Technology I, II, III, IV; Medical Terminology; Others			
Complementary Coursework	Anatomy & Physiology, AP Biology, AP Calculus, Emergency Medical Services, Sports Medicine			
Career-oriented Learning Opportunities	Career Mentoring, Shadowing, Service Learning, Internship, Cooperative Education, Senior Projects			
Professional Opportunities After Post-secondary Education	2-Year Degree: Dental Hygienist, Paramedic, Registered Nurse 4-Year Degree or Higher: Athletic Trainer, Pharmacist, Physical Therapist, Medical Doctor			

Figure 1. A sample individual graduation plan

Source: Giles, A. & Gosnell, H. (n.d).

This plan begins as early as fourteen and outlines ways for the child to complete their degree. Children with disabilities have one of the highest drop-out rates, lower employment, lower rates of independent living, and do not continue to pursue their education (Harrison, 2008). An IGP/ILP must be implemented with students who have disabilities as well as for those who are transferring or who have transferred schools (Harrison, 2008).

Planning for transition involves many steps. The first few steps all include identifying future goals, such as: identifying interests, preferences, needs, as well as possible post-school outcomes (Harrison, 2008). Once these areas are identified, sets of activities are outlined to help the student reach these goals. After these two steps are met, preparation begins with the student and their parents in assuming responsibility for obtaining services in the community. Professionals who are working closely with the family help begin linking the family with opportunities and experiences within their community through business visits/contacting businesses, providing information about further education and training options, and helping them identify adult service providers (Harrison, 2008). A pictorial of the steps can be found in Appendix D, Figure 7.

An IGP/ILP requires that there be an emphasis on career development and that the student must have at least twenty-two credits for high school graduation with a 4-year curricular plan emphasizing career development with specific vocational studies incorporated with their own expectations. When the student reaches the halfway point in high school, the IGP/ILP should start to emphasize the transitional direction for the student to graduate from high school with a diploma. There is a transition stage that is addressed in the IGP/ILP where a joint counseling session with the seniors and needed personnel is held to enhance the transition process (Harrison, 2008). One area that may improve secondary transition is life skills training.

Life Skills Training

In occupational therapy, life skills training is most commonly referred to as ADLs and IADLs. These skills include bathing, eating/feeding, dressing, managing personal finances, maintaining or improving personal health, and many other areas. Life skills training that students with disabilities receive while in school include learning skills/tasks to allow them to live successful, independent, and functioning lives in adulthood (Bouck, 2010; Sheppard & Unsworth, 2011). Researchers have found that the quality and effectiveness of transition impacts the students' implications for lifestyle and quality of life after they leave school (Benz & Halpern, 1987). However, in recent decades there has been a decline in life skills programming and an increase in academic content through literary-based approaches (Bouck, 2010). A reason for the decline in the approach for functional life skills appears to conflict with certain values from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and also because there is a larger push for children with disabilities to be integrated into general educational (Bouck, 2010). Bouck (2010) found four findings concerning the receipt of life skill instruction/training for children with mild and moderate/severe ID. These findings are individuals with mild ID receive little focus on life skills in school while those with moderate/severe ID has more focus on life skills in their special education classroom; a low percentage of individuals with mild ID and moderate/severe ID receive life skills training/therapy after school; the frequency of life skills being receive is higher in individuals with moderate/severe ID; receipt of life skills in school is not related to receipt of life skills after school by either individuals with mild ID or moderate/severe ID; receipt of life skills in school was not related to assessed 'mental skills' as defined by the NLTS2 (Bouck, 2010).

Even though Bouck (2010) found that there is a decrease in life skills programming, Sheppard and Unsworth (2011) believe that these skills/behaviors are needed so that these young adults can obtain a higher level of self-determination. These authors also discovered that a correlation existed between quality of life and the level of self-determination (Sheppard & Unsworth, 2011). In fact, Sheppard & Unsworth

(2011) describe an approach for successful life skills intervention. This approach is Wehmeyer's Functional Theory of Self-Determination (FTSD) and it identifies "behavioral elements of self-determination that include choice and decision making, problem solving, goal setting and attainment, independence, self-management, self-awareness, and self-efficacy" (Sheppard & Unsworth, 2011; Wehmeyer, et.al, 2004). Sheppard and Unsworth (2011) conducted a research investigation in rural Australia using the FTSD as an approach to shape their choices with their assessments. They conducted this research in an educational residential unit (ERU) with thirty-one total participants. They found that there was an increase in "performance in everyday activities related to self/family care, life management, and recreational and leisure activites" and that levels of self-determination increased (Sheppard & Unsworth, 2011).

A similar program was implemented in rural Wisconsin, which utilized a coordinated program instead of basing it off of an approach. A coordinated approach looks to work with secondary education to support transition from high school to community (Klingenberg & Kolb, 2011). This program looked more at the perception from the special educator's point of view rather than a program to implement to help students transition. However, it is still important to look at programs for special educators because they are commonly the implementers of preparing for students to transition from school settings to community life (Klingenberg & Kolb, 2011).

Alternatives to Life Skills

Another option for preparing students for transition is to create and join a transition club. Humphrey and Ainscow (2006) found that: "Failure…to successfully negotiate systemic transitions may initiate or accelerate the gradual disengagement process from school and promote conflict between the youth and the school as an institution". In addition to separating themselves from the demands of the school and their transition it has been found that students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can experience depression and anxiety due to their lack of social activities (Browning, Osborne, & Reed, 2009). By creating a transition club, the mediators of the club address lack of adjustment (both psychological and academic terms), future progress, social participation, and if the students who participated had an easier time transitioning (Humphrey & Ainscow, 2006). These authors conducted this study using students who were transitioning from primary (elementary/ early middle) to secondary (late middle/high school) school, and had students spend 3 days per week at the secondary school and 2 days per week at the primary school over a period of six-weeks (Humphrey & Ainscow, 2006).

The authors found that found five main categories that were identified by students; these are: fear of the unknown, a sense of belonging, navigating the maze, making learning fun, and improvements for all (Humphrey & Ainscow, 2006). Even though this study was geared for younger students, these categories are important to look at for transitioning in older students because they can experience the same findings without being able to articulate or express them as effectively.

Most of the literature that has been reviewed has talked about programming for the student to help them transition from school to community; but it is also to provide programming for professionals so that they can better assist in the transition phase.

Morningstar, Kim, and Clark (2008) developed a personnel preparation program to help professionals (e.g. special education teachers) be better equipped to help students transition. Figure 2 contains the outline of type of program needed for each professional who is involved in the transition process.

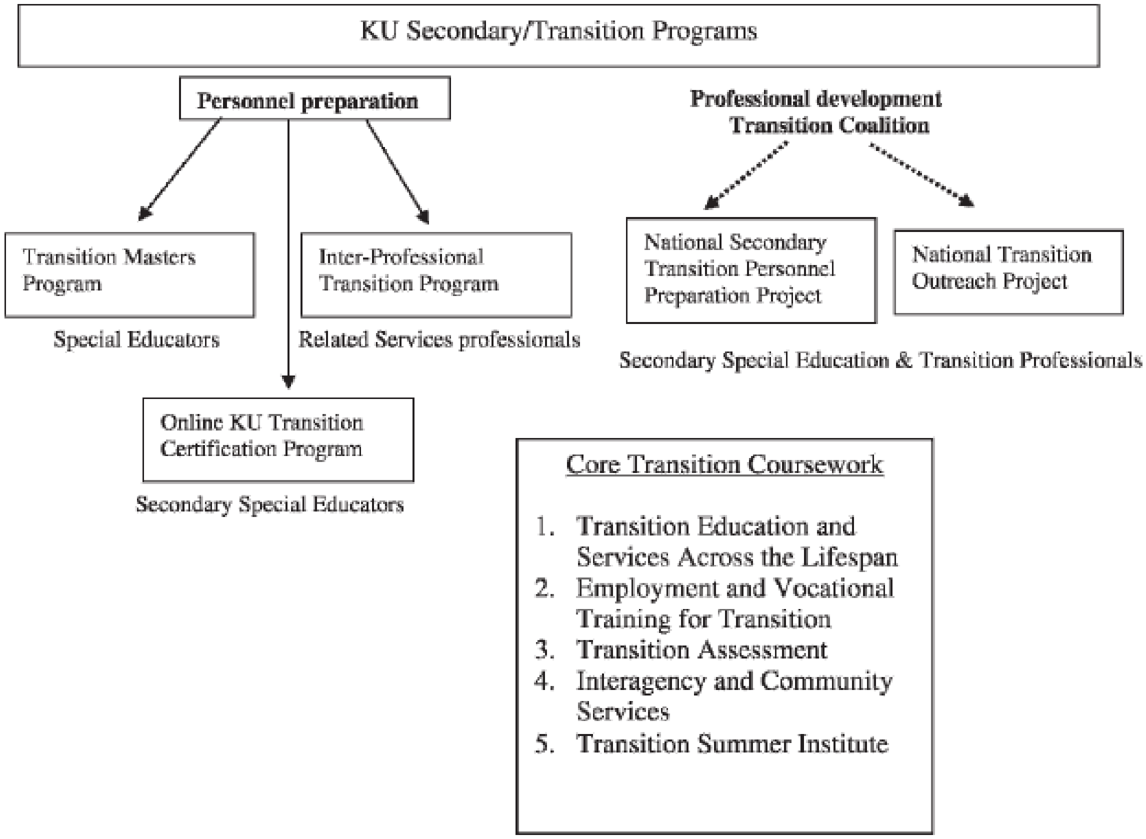


Figure 2. KU secondary/ transition program

Source: Morningstar, M., Kim, K., & Clark, G. (2008).

The authors found that the programs infused organizational standards with recommended practices supported by research (Morningstar, et al., 2008). However, the authors found that one of the major downfalls was that the evaluation of the effectiveness of their program was lacking in comprehension which they identified as one of the limitations. Overall, it is important for programs to be geared toward children as well as towards their teachers or the professionals who are involved with their transition process.

Factors affecting Transition

There are five main factors that can affect someone's transition planning. These factors are: potential drop-out, years left in school, the amount of the time it takes the child to acquire, maintain, and generalize skills, need for target instruction on skills typical student may learn simply through observation (Harrison, 2008), and lack of understanding by service providers and other professionals (Cooney, 2002)

Once the transition planning is complete, there are eight components that have been identified as important to transition programming and implementing. These components are: transition, curriculum, employment, leisure/recreation, independent living, instruction, transportation and mobility, and post-secondary education (Klingenberg & Kolb, 2011). For rural settings, transportation is the biggest barrier that can affect the students' ability to participate in field trips, but also affects their ability to participate in leisure/recreation and employment once they are living in the community (Klingenberg & Kolb, 2011). Another barrier that influences the effectiveness of the transition is the funding for transition and its program services (Klingenberg & Kolb, 2011).

Location of the school and the student is very influential on the child's transition process. As previously stated, both professionals and students are affected by the location of the school and the community availability. For students who are in more urban settings, there are more employment, volunteer, and leisure/recreation opportunities for participation in versus those students who live in more rural settings.

Tips for Transition

Transition planning and implementation is all about helping the students in planning and preparing themselves for the rest of the lives once they leave high school. It is important for to use a person-centered approach when working with students who are transitioning from school to community because each case is always different (Mandik, 2006; Orentlicher, 2010). Kellems and Morningstar (2010) found that there are four tips for transition planning. These tips include: organize a transition group that meets once a month, start the transition process early by having realistic transition goals in place by the 9th and 10th grade, use a transition interview with students beginning at age 13, and have your students develop a portfolio (Kellems & Morningstar, 2010). There are four tips for student involvement and these are: student led IEP with a focus on transition goals, have the student create a person-centered plan, recruit students with disabilities who are currently in college, and organize a peer- mentoring group in your high school for students with disabilities (Kellems & Morningstar, 2010).

If the student is not capable of expressing themselves verbally during the planning meeting, there are tips to utilize adaptive equipment and ways to incorporate certain strategies for students to express themselves. The tips for utilizing adaptive equipment include: use a voice-to-text program, use video modeling to teach social skills and work-related skills, use picture technology (for students who are nonreaders), and have your students use a word processor (Kellems & Morningstar, 2010). Four strategies that can be utilized to help students express themselves includes: having students with significant intellectual disabilities create a PowerPoint presentation, students who cannot read can complete “My Goals After School” which is something similar to Boardmaker, use picture instructions to teach household chores, and create a notebook of important paperwork for postsecondary settings (Kellems & Morningstar, 2010).

Assessments

There are three assessments that are named by Kellems and Morningstar (2010) to be used in transition. The three assessments that are named are:

1. Ansell-Casey Lifeskills Assessment for independent living skills
    a. Provides the student’s current level of knowledge and to help target learning opportunities
    b. Can incorporate the family and the other professionals on the transition team when administering this assessment.
2. Create a discovery profile for each student
    a. Observation and work experience can be used identify preferences for each student
    b. Observations take place at school, with their interactions in the community, with their family, and during leisure/recreation activities

3. Use a variety of strategies to gather information
    a. Building rapport with the student
    b. Using surveys, questionnaires, and interviews (example can be found in Appendix C, Figure 6) (Kellems & Morningstar, 2010).

Assessments are used to help professionals guide postsecondary goals and it is a constant ongoing process (Mazzotti, et. al., 2009). Assessments are the starting point for IEP planning as well as transition planning. There are many assessments that can be utilized for transition, and they vary in size, form, and consistency of skills and interests (Mazzoti, et. al, 2009). Please refer to Appendix E, Table 1 for a list of assessments. Many professionals recommend administering a combination that includes both formal and informal assessments (Mazzoti, et. al, 2009). The purpose of assessments during the transition is to assess the student's current level of performance in order to form new performance goals. There is a major problem with finding assessments for transition because there is a very narrow range of assessment areas that are institutionalized (Clark, 1996).

Intellectual Disabilities

There are many terms used by professionals to describe a disability. These terms include mental retardation, developmental disability, cognitive disability, and intellectual disability (CDC, n.d; MedlinePlus, 2012; NICHCY, 2011). Intellectual disability is characterized by limitations in mental functioning (can also be referred to as intellectual functioning) (Medline, 2012; AAIDD, 2012), social skills, and communication

(NICHCY, 2011). Intellectual disabilities can be caused by genetic malformations (abnormal genes that can be inherited, errors when genes combine), can be caused from factors of pregnancy (drug or alcohol use), complications during the birthing process (not receiving enough oxygen during labor), and infections such as measles or meningitis (NICHCY, 2011).

Once a child is born there are multiple signs that a disability may be present. These signs may include: meeting developmental milestones such as sitting up, crawling, or walking, talking at a later age than other children; having difficulty communicating, having problems with memory, struggling with social motions (cues, rules, interactions), struggling with problem solving, seeing consequences in situations or being able to identify consequences before an action is taken, and being able to sequentially arrange thoughts with actions (NICHCY, 2011; CDC, n.d; AAIDD, 2012).

Intellectual disabilities are diagnosed based on the person's ability to intellectually function and to behave in an adaptive manner (NICHCY, 2011). Intellectual functioning is more commonly referred to as intelligence or IQ, and is measured with a test (NICHCY, 2011). Individuals who have intellectual disabilities commonly score around 70, with the highest at 75 (AAIDD, 2012; NICHCY, 2011). For adaptive behavior, professionals can choose certain standardized assessments such as the Diagnostic Adaptive Behavior Scale (AAIDD, 2012) or the ABAS (Pearson, 2008). Results from these standardized tests are easily influenced by the environment including the individual's culture (AAIDD, 2012). Children who have intellectual disabilities can first receive help in early intervention programs, which cater to children who are under 3 years old before children graduate to receiving services from schools through their IEPs (CDC, n.d; NICHCY, 2011).

Parents Involvement

Parents and families have an important role in a student's life as they are the main source of support for major life changes. This is inherently true for students with disabilities who are transitioning from high school to community life. Kellems & Morningstar (2010) identify five tips for families to use when their child is participating in this transition process: use a checklist to assist the student (and parents) for them to follow, provide the parents and/or student with brochures or tip sheets to help identify normal transition experiences with experiences that could cause future unrest, have the parents get involved before the student's 16th birthday, get to know the professionals who are involved with the transition process, and plan for a futures night. Parents can create futures night in the family such as identifying jobs that family members would be interested in exploring or switching too or future nights can take part in the student's class in which the teacher arranges it and parents accompany their student to it to learn about the different options (Kellems & Morningstar, 2010).

Cooney (2002) found a disconnect between families and professionals because both are approaching transition from different viewpoints. Families approach transition in an intimate and connected realm with the student while professionals approach transition from a clinical realm. These approach options cause a chasm between the family, student, and service professionals that are assigned to their case leading to a loss of empowerment as well as ignoring goals that have been identified to help the student achieve some level of adulthood. The study completed by Cooney (2002) found two major themes within parent perspective; these themes include views of the children and promise for the future (p.429-430).

Parents commonly use their children’s strengths and personality traits to describe their child in social as well as academic situations. This holds true for parents who have a child with a disability and serves as a driver for influencing transition planning and implementation. Parents bring goals and opportunities to transition planning meetings hoping to use their strengths and personality as a foundation to build upon for their children leading productive lives as well as applying meaning to what they do (Cooney, 2002). This foundation that they are using also helps to provide and drive hope for new goals and new achievements within the family and the young adult.

Cooney (2002) also found that parents who were unfamiliar with the system that has been established have a more challenged time transitioning their child from the school environment to the community. Parents who don’t know the role of community support agencies in the transition process “complained that they were treated like ‘foreigners’ at transition meetings” (Cooney, 2002, p. 430). Often times the closer transition gets, the more overwhelming it becomes because there are more professionals who are brought in to help with the case (Cooney, 2002).

Summary

This chapter covered quite a lot of material, from the history of special education and the history of secondary transition to how involved the parents are. Many tips were provided to assist and help the reader in their transition planning process and highlighted some of the strengths and weaknesses that literature has found thus far. In the next chapter, there will be a review of the participants, the data collection methods, and how the data was analyzed.

Chapter III

Methods

Overview of Research Design

This is a narrative study looking at the experience of transitioning from high school to community. A narrative study is a type of qualitative research that is focused specifically on exploring the story of someone's life (Creswell, 2007, p. 78). According to Cassell and Symon (2011) there is only one way for researchers to make sense of the social world; this is to navigate through join narratives together and navigate them as one instead of individually (p.636). This type of research is commonly found in studies in the social sciences, such as in the areas of anthropology, sociology, and even psychology as well as in nursing research and occupational therapy.

Narrative studies look at the stories of people who have lived through a certain experience, such as transitioning from high school to community life. There are two main approaches to narrative studies; the first type is differentiating types by analytic strategies and to assist in emphasizing the variety of forms a researcher could choose from (Creswell, 2007). The second approach looks at the different forms that can be found throughout narrative research. These forms include biographical study, autobiography, life history, and oral history (Creswell, 2007).

This study is utilizing a narrative approach because it looks at one or more individuals who have participated in the secondary transition process. A benefit of using narrative study is that each participant can share his or her story. For example, the young adult who will be interviewed will be utilizing an autobiographical approach while their parents could use a life history or analysis of narrative approach. The flexibility of this qualitative approach really provided a lot depth that the researcher felt would be beneficial to this study.

IRB

This research study was submitted to the Eastern Kentucky University IRB committee for review. It went through an expedited review process and was approved by the IRB committee.

Participants

There will be three participants in this study. These individuals are: a young adult with an intellectual disability who has completed the transition process, one of his or her parents, and the vocational specialist that worked with them. Choosing to use an individual with an intellectual disability is important because this population is often excluded from research. To be included in the study, the individual will have completed the transition process from a public school system per an Individualized Graduation Plan, within the last five years, and must be over the age of 18. Parents will be included if they have been actively involved in planning and collaborating with transition team members for the young adult to successfully transition into the community. Inclusion for the vocational specialist includes someone who has worked at least five years in a public school system and who was involved in the transition process. Participants will not be excluded on the basis of gender, ethnic background, or health status.

The participants were recruited by contacting a single-parent with whom the researcher is familiar through volunteer work to see if they are interested in participating in sharing their experiences with transition. This was be done through email or phone contact, and once the parent provides consent to participate they will be asked to contact their vocational specialist to see if they are interested in participating as well. The recruitment script can be found in Appendix F.

Once the researcher had all the verbal consents to participate, the researcher began setting up times and locations for the participants and researcher to meet to review the written consent form and for the interviews to take place. The participant identified a good time and location for the researcher to meet them. The researcher called and reminded them the day before of their interview time, day, and place. Before the interview began, the researcher reviewed the consent (or assent, if applicable) form with the participant verbally to make sure the participant understood fully and it allowed time for any questions to be asked and answered. Upon completing the interview, the participants were provided a copy of the form they signed at the beginning of the interview and were aware that there will be follow-up contact.

Data Collection Methods

Before the interviews began, the researcher advised the participants of the consent/assent forms that are available to protect them; forms can be found in Appendices G, H, I, and J. The parent signed a consent form for themselves as well as a permission form for their child. The young adult signed an assent form that has been reviewed verbally and in the presences of the parent. The vocational specialist also signed a consent form. All of the consent forms were reviewed verbally and the participants were provided a copy of these consent forms once their interview completed.

Data for this project was collected through a semi-structured interview with each of the participants about their experiences during the secondary transition. The interview with the parent and vocational specialist lasted between 60-90 minutes. The young adult interview lasted 30- 60 minutes and may need to be broken into different sections to obtain the most research from the young adult. The interviews were conducted separately and in a comfortable and private area for each participant, at a location of their choice. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. During the interview, the researcher has outlined a script of questions to ask the different participants and took notes on the answers to help create prompts to get more information out of the interview and the participant. This list of questions can be found in Appendix K. There was also a second follow up interview conducted by phone, email, or person for member check for validity.

Data Analysis Methods

The researcher used a blend of narrative and phenomenological approaches when analyzing the data. The data was first transcribed from the interview into a transcript to begin the process of analyzing the data. Once the transcripts were complete, the researcher began to read through all the data. This review of the transcripts provides a basic view of the information and was useful to guide the researcher into finding the meaning from the interviews (Creswell, 2009).

Once the review was complete, the researcher began coding. For this study, the researcher segmented sentences out to begin working on the meaning of the information. All the codes generated used the actual phrases of the participants (also known as in vivo) to provide as much depth and richness possible for the data (Creswell, 2009, p.186). After the codes were generated, the researcher divided them up based on commonalities that emerged. There were fourteen commonalities that emerged from the data which prompted the researcher to take another look at the data to organize it and see what commonalities could be used to form themes. These themes can be found in Chapter 4.

Verification Methods

There are several verification methods that the researcher used to add credibility, transferability, and dependability to the study. The first method was reflexivity immediately after an interview to help establish the point of view of the researcher and to decrease bias throughout the research project. This helped outline any assumptions or biases that the researcher encountered during the interview so that the researcher could prevent carry over in the other interviews.

Another method utilized was member checking through follow up interviews with the participants. Member checking is a way for the researcher to summarize the information that the participant just provided to help the participant analyze their statement and correct or redefine any points they just voiced. Member checking is more effective when there is good rapport with participants because it allows the participant to forget they are being interviewed and puts the participant at ease as though they are having a conversation with a friend or peer.

A third method was to obtain expert review of the data. This is accomplished through meetings to discuss the researcher's reviews of the participants' responses from the interview, helped to organize the response into codes, categories, and themes before passing the transcripts, codes, categories, and themes to someone else for review. Expert reviews help to improve credibility, transferability, and dependability.

Summary

This chapter covered a brief overview of what type of qualitative study the researcher conducted as well as cover approval from the IRB, the participants chosen, the methods used to collect the data and the verification methods used by the researcher to ensure credibility, transferability, and dependability. The next chapter will review the results of the data.

Chapter IV

Results

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim before being coded. The process was described in depth in Chapter 3. The data yielded 292 codes which were organized into 14 different categories. These categories include: job coach, J miscellaneous, graduating/leaving school, family, sports/exercise, job tasks, parent miscellaneous, J strengths and weaknesses, team/transition strength and weakness, job and therapy history, goals (IEP, transition, home, parent), role and expectation of the parent, school history, roles and expectations of school and vocational rehabilitation. Once the categories were established they were reviewed and collapsed further into nine new categories. The categories include strengths of transition, weaknesses of transition, progression through school, expectations of the school and vocational rehabilitation, progression of goals, role of parent, job history, life skills, and support staff.

After the nine categories were generated the researcher reviewed these categories in depth to then organize them into three themes. These themes are: 1.) “I had no expectations”: Expectations of the parent and transition plan; 2.) “He can do all those self-help things”: Goal and skill development to support independence; 3.) “She is my guardian”: Learning how to be an advocate. The statements in these themes represent significant statements from the transcripts. These themes are described below with verbatim quotations provided for support.

Participants

The participants used in this study included a young adult who has completed the transition process, his mother, and an occupational therapist that fills the role of job coach at her school. The young adult, J, is twenty-four years old, graduated within the past five years, and currently holds two jobs. One job is a volunteer position and the other job is a paid position at a movie theater. He lives with his mom and attends an adult day program. He is an active participant in Special Olympics and participates in basketball, softball, soccer, bowling, winter sports, and golf.

His mother is a single-parent who currently works as a financial advisor at a popular financial firm. She is currently working obtaining her doctoral degree and enjoys spending time with her children and grandchildren. The occupational therapist currently works at lab school and is working on her doctorate. The school does not contract out to a vocational rehabilitation agency and so she fills the role of job coach for her students. The rest of the chapter looks at the themes that were discovered.

Theme 1: "I had no expectations": Expectations of the parent and transition plan

We all have expectations whether we label them as expectations or not. In this theme, the expectations that are described include the parent's expectations of the transition plan, team, and of herself, strengths of transition, and weakness of transition.

Parent's Expectations. As stated in the title of this theme, the parent stated that she had no expectations for this process. However, during the interview the parent expressed opinions of what she expected the school district, transition team, and/or vocational rehabilitation professionals to do for her son as well as herself. An example of this opinion is: “I kind of expected that they would help find a job, that they would train him for a particular job” (Parent, 87-88). The parent also expressed that: “I actually expected them to train him a specific job and then find it for him” (Parent: 88-89). J’s mom also expressed concern with the vocational support and their ability to help J learn how to maintain his job. J learned the “professionalism of working, checking your schedule on time, being, how to get to work, how to get home from work, going on break, all those things” (Parent: 117-119) from other sources, but not from the vocational support, which was an expectation of the parent.

Benefits of Transition. This subcategory originally started off looking at the strengths of the transition process. However, the more analysis that was conducted, the more this area morphed from the strength of transition to the expectations that were met by the transition process and transition team. An example of an expectation that was met by someone on the transition team was: “Starting at an early age helps to prepare the parents and helps direct the child” (Job Coach: 40-41). An example from the parent’s perspective is: “After the movie, I called S.W., who was the person at the school, called her and said ‘We’ve got this job opportunity, I need you to take care of it right away’” (Parent: 173-175). The job coach followed up on the opportunity which the parent mentioned was very helpful because it alleviated stress on her.

Weaknesses of Transition. This subcategory was originally developed as a balance for the previous section. Similarly, as the data analysis continued, this subcategory held less of a negative focus and more of a focus on where the transition process didn’t meet the expectations of the parent and the team member. The job coach voiced that while there were problems in the community such as transportation for students, she also felt that some personality types of the parents played a role a successful transition. An example of not meeting an expectation from the job coach's perspective includes: "Another problem in meeting their transition goal is obtaining transportation to get from place to place" (Job Coach: 62). Some examples are: "[Some] Parents believe students will 'grow out' of a disability and will be normal later in life…Parents have trouble seeing a vision for their child….Lack of support from one of both parents" (Job Coach: 44-45).

The examples provided by the job coach held as much agitation at the transition process as the parent perceived. In fact there was a similar opinion expressed by the parent as well as the job coach. This opinion was: "Not a lot of companies are willing on an employee that has a disability…The biggest barrier is job available, but more importantly just the people that are designed to help" (Parent: 267 & 273). This is supported by the job coach through: "A difficulty in meeting transition goals is when students can do a job but there isn't a paid position available" (Job Coach: 61-62). As parents navigate this time in their lives as well as their child's, they perceive more stressors of the process. The parent expressed that "The job counselor, the transition [team], their workloads are such that they can't really do a whole lot" (Parent: 255). The parent also expressed later in the interview that: "In the school system it was just ineffective because I had to go out and find the job myself eventually" (Parent: 419).

This theme covered some of the noticeable expectations that the parent had concerning the school and the transition process. There was also discussion about some

[1]of the expectations that were and were not met based on the perceptions of the parent and the job coach.

Theme 2: "He can do all those self-help things": Goal and skill development to support independence

This theme reviews the process of developing goals and skills to help transition to an independent life, but it also looks at some of the supports and the deficits that were encountered during this process of development. This theme contains five sub-categories that look at both support as well as development and they include: school progression, progression of goals, job history, life skills, and support staff.

School Progression. Just as the title suggests, this subcategory examines the young adults progression through school, from elementary to middle to high school. During his time in elementary school the parent felt as though he flourished. The parent expressed that during elementary school: "He was mainstreamed or integrated. The teacher didn't assume that he couldn't do things. He got to try all kinds of new things" (Parent: 29-31). During middle school, the parent felt as though her child was pulled "too far into special education and didn't integrate him enough" (Parent: 34) and that he "lost a lot of social skills during his middle school years" (Parent: 35).

When he entered high school "They moved him to a school where the teacher specialized in FMD/FMH*" (Parent: 42). The parent adamantly expressed that her son

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[1] Note: *- FMD/FMH= Functional Mental Disability/ Functional Mental Handicapped

“wasn’t functionally disabled” (Parent: 44) and had concerns about him being placed in an FMD room.

In addition to being placed into a classroom where the teacher specialized in FMD, J “was reading much below what he needed to” (Parent: 48). The parent stated that “If he could read better, he could have a better job” (Parent: 299) and “That limits him in his ability to work, it limits his ability to live independently as well” (Parent: 395). J “was in high school for five years” (Parent: 49) and had “some great experiences through in high school…whether it was in marching band or it was art” (Parent: 62-66). In addition to J having great experiences in music and art, J also worked with the computer teacher who “took a lot of time to start him at the beginning and to not make him progress at the same rate as everybody else did” (Parent: 67-69). Towards the end of high school, J received occupational therapy services as well as music therapy.

Progression of Goals. During the interview the goals that were discussed began as goals for J’s IEP before moving onto goals that were established for transition as well as for goals for independent living. One of the questions during the interview looked at whether or not the IEP goals that were developed by the ARC were adequate to support transition in which the parent vehemently responded with: “No! No. No. No. Not in any way shape or form” (Parent: 290). When prompted about the IEP goals the parent shared that they were “not structured at all around transition” (Parent: 301) and that they were “structured around academics and not around life skills” (Parent: 295).

The parent had very specific life skills that she wanted her son to learn before he graduated or to be working on around the time of graduation. These life skills include “learning to use a checkbook and know how much money he had in his checking account, know where a deposit was made” (Parent: 306) before move to “learning to use an electronic checkbook” (Parent: 363), learning “how to go in and use a computer to sign into work and things like that” (Parent: 307), learning “how to read a bus schedule” (Parent: 304), and learning “how to ride a bus” (Parent: 304). However, the parent expressed that “none of that was ever even discussed” (Parent: 308), and that none of those life skills were influenced by J’s goals for himself. The parent expressed that “his goals were to join the military, to be a doctor, to be an astronaut (till he thought he might fall off the moon), be a pilot, go to Transy” (Parent: 313-315) and that she wanted more realistic goals that “would clearly help him become independent and they just weren’t there” (Parent: 318). Some of J’s goals reading and speech “goals he has accomplished some of them and we just keep making them, broadening them out” (Parent: 340-343). In addition to these goals, J and his parent have developed goals to work on J’s nutrition and physical goals (Parent: 325).

Job History. This section was very interesting during the interviews, transcriptions, and during the data analysis. The parent shared that J’s first job was found through the school and it was working at a grocery store (Parent: 98). This job stemmed from J walking to a neighborhood store and bringing in the carts (Parent: 99). The manager of the grocery store approached J’s parent about hiring J to work since he was technically doing the job of an employee anyway, and the parent re-routed him to talk to the vocational specialist that worked with them prior to graduation. J then got a job bagging groceries and pushing carts at a different grocery store. This second grocery store closed down leaving J unemployed. His current job at a movie theater was found by chance. The parent shared: “He knew a little bit about computers, so he knew enough to run the credit card machine at the [movie theater] which is where he works now” (Parent: 72-74). He also has a “personality that people wanted to deal with” (Parent: 71) and he also “knew the importance of dressing for work” (Parent: 378).

When J was asked about where he worked and about his work history he said that he had only had two jobs, he responded with “[Movie theater] and the VA” (104). He then explained what tasks he does at both the movie theater and the VA. J explained that while he volunteers at the VA he fills envelopes and labels. He also said that does quilting, breakfast, and tours sometimes (J: 60-62). When he works at the [movie theater], he does “tickets, cooking, and um, I do drink…deliver food, I said that one already and um, I love it” (J: 53-55). He works anywhere from three to fifteen hours a week (Parent: 272) which is fine with J and his parent, but if “he had to live like that, he couldn’t get it” (Parent: 270).

Life Skills. During transition, “when we asked about certain life skill type things, they said that those weren’t appropriate for him” (Parent: 296) so a lot of the life skills that J has and exhibits he has obtained through home and through social experiences (Parent: 380). Some of these social experiences include participating in Special Olympics in soccer, bowling, basketball, and softball (J: 112, 114, 121, and 122).

When he isn’t busy working or participating in sports, J has responsibilities at home that include: “cleaning my room, feeding my dog, feeding my fish, and clean the whole house” (J: 131 and 133). He also has wants to “be cooker at the house” and goes to the grocery store with his sister to buy food (J: 158). In addition to being able to do these responsibilities, J has gained some independence due to his sense of schedule (Parent: 212). J uses a form of public transportation to get to his volunteer job and to get to work, and knows that if he isn't picked up to call his mom who will then call the transportation company (J: 57).

Support Staff. As previously mentioned, J had two vocational specialist during his transition from high school to post-high school. J initially worked with S.W during the graduation process before he was transferred over to Employment Solutions Bluegrass Career Services and assigned to work with one of their employees (Parent: 142 and 278). Once J began working with Employment Solutions, his case worker went over "for the first year and half he was out there all the time, checking on him, making sure that he was learning the new things and the interaction making sure the management of the movie theater" (Parent: 281-284). At the beginning of working with J, his case worker would go to the movie theater and help J "learn how to do just the standard, take the menu, hand the menu, take the ticket, rip the ticket, direct them to a theater" (Parent: 143-145).

After J learned the box office needs, his vocational specialist "would go over about once a month and just ask 'Is there anything J needs to learn?" and [he] would be there to help J learn it" (Parent: 148-153). After that, J was established at the movie theater, the company that he works for has adopted the role of a vocational specialist (Parent: 160); "they look at that 'What does J need?' and they bring somebody in from their staff to help him learn it, to stay with him while he does, and when they think he can do it on his own, they let him" (Parent: 157-160).

In addition to the vocational specialist, J also receives Community Living Support (CLS) services through a grant that he is on (Parent: 347). These CLS workers are through an agency that the parent has chosen and that offers assistance and companionship while working with J to meet his goals. An example of J and his CLS worker follows: "My CLS picking me up at 11 o'clock taking me to gym, work out, go swimming, walk around park, play disc golf and that's it" (J: 110-111).

Theme 3: "She is my guardian": Learning how to be an advocate

During the data analysis, codes kept appearing that had very strong emotional ties to the transition process and to the parent. The quote in the title stems from a quote that J said: "She, well, my mom, I love my mom. She is my guardian" (J: 79). He also alluded to the fact that his mom is his best friend which is a gift when it comes to helping advocate for him and his independence. A quote from his parent supports how important it is to advocate for her child: "and so they put these thoughts in his head that he thinks he's going to do. And I get issues with that because research has shown that when you put unexpected…when you put expectations, unrealistic expectations in their minds kids with down syndrome in particular they suddenly get very depressed when they realize they can't accomplish those things. I think they should spend more time looking at realistic expectations" (Parent: 246-252).

In addition to ensuring that her son has a healthy mental state, she also ensures that he had some of the same skills as his peers. She advocated for her son for five years

(Parent: 48), which was the amount of time that he spent in high school. During these five years, she worked for two years trying to get her son a timer for him to learn how to tell time, and later to be used at work (Parent: 122 and 126). She also advocated for her son to receive occupational therapy as well as music therapy while he was still in high school (Parent: 187 and 194). J's mom then "took legal action against the school system" (Parent: 58) for his reading goals due to her unhappiness with J's progress. Her son received special dispensation for reading tutors (Parent: 59), but she has had to help find reading tutors as well as other things for J (Parent: 356).

Another area of advocacy that J's mom was very involved in was with his vocational transition. J and his mother were the two who found his current job at the movie theater (Parent: 164) and she was the one who initiated the contact with the school (Parent: 95). But the parent "had to stay on her to do it, but my understanding was that it had to be done through her so that he could get all the support that he needed" (Parent: 175-177). She "had to keep calling her. 'Have you done it yet? Have you done it yet? Have you done it yet?' because I didn't want it to go to somebody else" (Parent: 177-179). J got the job, and now J and his mom work on goals that they have developed together to try and progress J toward independence.

Summary

This chapter covered the data analysis process and the results from this analysis. It contained verbatim quotations from the participants, and the next chapter will contain discussion of the themes and implications for future research and practice.

Chapter V

Discussion

Heartland (2011) found that transition should be as smooth as possible with a continuous planning process. However, this study provided a glimpse of how tumultuous and rewarding the transition process can be by looking at the experiences and perspectives of a parent, a young adult and a vocational specialist who were involved in the secondary transition process. These individuals were chosen to help begin to explore these three roles due to the lack of research and their importance during the process of transition. As mentioned in a previous chapter, there is literature available for professional viewpoints such as for an occupational therapist (Mankey, 2011) or a teacher/facilitator (Kellems, 2010), but limited research on the parent's or even the student's perspective.

Theme 1: "I had no expectations"

Parental expectations begin at a very young age. As toddlers, we thrive on our parent's reactions to the behaviors that we exhibit (Kiel & Buss, 2010). For example, if a child throws food or has a tantrum, the way that parent reacts subsequently affects the child's next moves in whether or not he throws more food or whether he learns to regulate his emotions. As we age, there is less emphasis put on the reactions of our parents, but rather the reactions of our friends. For individuals with disabilities, they have a continuous response to their parent's reactions and to the expectations that have been set by the parent, and eventually by the teacher.

Doren, Gau, and Lindstrom (2012) found that parent expectations for their child predicted the child's level of autonomy and that their autonomy level predicted success level of post-secondary outcomes. In this study, the data showed that the level of independence J has was not from any academic goals but instead from work that he and his parent complete at home in order to make J more independent. The parent expressed that J was able to do self-help tasks due to her expectations of J being independent. The parent's expectations for J influenced his level of autonomy in self-help tasks.

The data from this study suggested that the parent not only had expectations for her child to meet, but also had expectations for the school and the district on behalf of her child. Rubie-Davis, Peterson, Irving, Widdowson, and Dixon (2010) found that the parents, specifically mothers, had expectations for school employees that were greatest in the areas of assistance, fairness, and competence towards all students. This study ties into the current research in that the mother felt as though the child was being treated unfairly because he was pulled too far into special education and not mainstreamed enough. She also felt as though assistance for her child was inadequate due to the fact that it took her two years of advocating for her son to receive a timer and she also had to take legal action against the school for her son to receive reading assistance. The mother also felt like the teacher was at a disadvantage when working with her son due to her specialization in FMD as opposed to a specialization in Down syndrome like a previous teacher.

In some instances in this study, these expectations were met (such as when the job coach followed up on J's job opportunity) and other times they were not (such as when the parent discussed the workload of the transition team). In addition to the parent's expectations for the school, she had expectations for the job coach which were unclear as to whether or not they were met. The parent mentioned that having someone else there to arrange the job and the supports needed for J to succeed was helpful, but she felt as though her expectations were not met because the job coach reacted more reactively instead of proactively and being receptive to the needs of the child (Parent: 131).

The expectations of the job coach and the young adult are important to take into consideration as well. The job coach has the expectation to find a job for the young adult and get them trained for it. For every case that vocational rehabilitation receives, they get $4,000 (Parent: 257) for the success of the case. If the case is unsuccessful, then they are losing money and are providing a disservice for the young adult's expectations. The young adult has expectations of obtaining a job and being able to be independent similar to that of other students. When that doesn't happen, students can become depressed and anxious which affects their quality life and can lead to future mental health problems (Browning, Osborne, & Reed, 2009).

Theme 2: "He could do all those self-help things"

This theme really looked at J's autonomy and the path that was taken to establish this autonomy. Schoonover (2007) stated "education, strong emotional support, enriching opportunities, and positive social interactions with peers and adults are key ingredients of independence and quality of life” (p. 129). Burkhart (2002) supported this belief by stating that “children have an ‘inborn drive to discover and learn’ that motivates them to understand the world around them, strive for independence and sense of self, and connect socially with others” (p.1). Rimkute, Hirvonen, Tolvanen, Aunola, and Nurmi (2012) discussed that one of the most important contexts for a child to develop is within their family. This context assists the child in setting expectations and goals, and through social interactions, support from his parent, and modifications J was able to overcome some of the parent’s areas of concern and learn a sense of autonomy.

One of the major concerns of the parent was that her child had been pulled too far into special education which resulted in lack of integration into mainstream classes (Parent: 34) and which would affect his ability to learn off social cues and interactions. Trent-Kratz (2009) discussed that state achievement tests can create barriers for students with intellectual disabilities which affect their placement in general education (p.11). Idol (2006) found that inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular classroom was not academically detrimental and that test scores actually improved over a period of four years. Based on research, it indicates that state testing could potentially be the barrier that prevents integration, even though it is a false assumption that inclusion has adverse effects.

Another concern that the parent expressed was that J lost some social skills and some independent abilities once he was pulled too far into special education. Hughes, et. al (2011) recognize that for students with intellectual disabilities they may have limited skills to interact with teachers and peers effectively and struggle with appropriate responses to social stimuli (p. 46). Freeman and Alkin (2000) and Hughes, et. al (2011) discussed that inclusion is important for students with disabilities by using peer modeling and exposure as two major methods for inclusion due to their interaction with peers. However, Hughes et. al (2011) discovered through observation in a high school that students in general education and their peers with intellectual disabilities scarcely participated in engagement with each other and that inclusion efforts seemed scarce (p.47). Chisholm (2009) found that some students who had good verbal communication and who were in special education felt as though they were not listened to enough and that because of that some of the education experiences were frustrating. Winkle and Cobb (2010) support that for someone to feel as though they are independent and have a good quality of life, they need to be involved in the process of setting their own goals and in helping to plan transitions.

Another area that was covered under this theme was life skills of the young adult. The parent stated that many of the life skills J has and exhibits are from work that they completed at home. This is supported by the literature that demonstrates that many life skills programs are no longer being practiced and there is a focus on academics instead (Bouck, 2010). Bouck (2010) also stated that many students with disabilities are being included in general education which negates the research that was found by Hughes, et. al (2011). In Michigan when students reach the age of 18, they are moved into a transitional program that lasts for three years and that focuses primarily on life skills and leisure activities (Tutsch, personal communication, fall 2012).

A fifth area that was revealed under this theme was the support staff for J. This included vocational rehabilitation and community living supports (CLS) which are both services available to individuals with disabilities who require them. In order to qualify for these services, J and his mom had to provide documentation of his disability to establish eligibility for accommodations and services as stated by Section 504 (Orentlicher, 2007). Vocational rehabilitation "refers to the provision of some type of service to enhance the employability of an individual who has been limited by a disabling physical condition" (Elliot & Leung, 2004, p. 320). Elliot and Leung discuss that federal support has been a constant support behind vocational rehabilitation, and that it was initiated by the Smith-Fess Act of 1920. Orentlicher (2007) writes that vocational rehabilitation is now housed under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) and that this act has five components for employment. These components are: "streamlining employment services through a one-stop service delivery system; empowering job seekers through information and access to training resources; providing universal access to core services; ensuring a strong role for local workforce agencies and the private sector; and improving youth programs" (Orentlicher, 2007, p.189).

Community living supports (CLS) are individuals who are hired through an agency to provide social support to families with members who have a disability. They are also known as respite workers and are paid through services the member is receiving as well as through the agency they work with. There is a slight difference between CLS and respite and this is: "CLS workers provide training or assistance to an individual in the areas of shopping, household care, and taking part in the community" while respite is "A time of rest or relief for those persons normally caring for an individual. This service is only available to an individual living in a family home residence" (KY Div. of Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities, 2011). As mentioned in Chapter 4, J's CLS worker will pick him up and take him to activities that work on his physical health, which involve participating in community activities.

Theme 3: "She is my guardian"

This theme relates to the mother standing up for her son's goals and aspirations and ultimately demanding accommodations for him to be successful post-graduation. Many of the advocacy statements that were discovered during analysis had a very negative connotation "We had to fight for that" or "We fought for two years" almost providing a picture of a struggle that never ends. Mynear (personal communication, summer 2012) said "Parents spend so much time fighting with the school that you can't help but fight in all other aspects". Mason (2009) supports this with many of the parents at a support group gathering shared stories about their frustration, loss and grief.

The Balanced Mind Foundation (2011) states that there are two viewpoints to advocacy: the school's and the parent's. They say that the for school advocates it is most commonly a term used for a "person who has training and specific knowledge to assist families as they navigate through special education screening, evaluation, placement, and any future decisions related to special education programs" (Balanced Mind Foundation, 2011). For parental advocacy they state that parents are the first teacher that a child recognizes and they are the primary decision maker when it comes to their child's safety, health, and educational needs. They also mentions that it takes time to develop an understanding of the process and that it involves learning the legal rights your child has and how to identify resources to help meet your child's needs.

Implications for Clinicians

This case was an exemplary one, in which the young adult had a strong advocate working with them. Not all cases are like this and each case is individualistic in itself. One of the areas that was previously discussed was the inclusion of the young adult in the general education and the parent's perspective about her child's inclusion. According to Gelzheiser, McLane, Meyers, and Pruzek (1998) the administrators, educators, and internal review committees are assigned to define how students with intellectual disabilities experience educational inclusion. Trent-Kratz (2009) mention that caregivers are experts about their children and the ARC can use them as resources to better understand the student or can use them as an assistant to their child if they are able to advocate for themselves.

What is an occupational therapist's role in the transition process? According to Mankey (2011) and Gangl, Neufeld, and Berg (2011) occupational therapists feel as though they have a role to play in secondary transition, but some therapists have admitted to having minimal and inconsistent levels of involvement with "possible limitations of collaboration and communication between professionals and supports the notion that therapists in the schools tend to consider their interventions as remedial, task-oriented, and specialized versus a more holistic, person-centered model" (p. 355). Orentlicher and Michaels (2004), Orentlicher (2010), Mandik (2006), Winkle and Cobb

(2010), and Gibson et. al (2010) support that as occupational therapists, we are trained to work with person-centered practices which are strengths to be utilized during transition planning and services.

Myers (personal communication, fall 2012) discussed adopting a more collaborative approach with the parent's to develop a stronger relationship and outcome for the transition of their child. In addition Myers (personal communication, fall 2012) suggests using an ecological approach that has the child as the focal point with the supports growing out from them. A depiction of this ecological model can be found in Figure 3 and is based on Myers interpretation of Rous, Hallam, Harbin, McCormick, and Jung (2007)'s research.

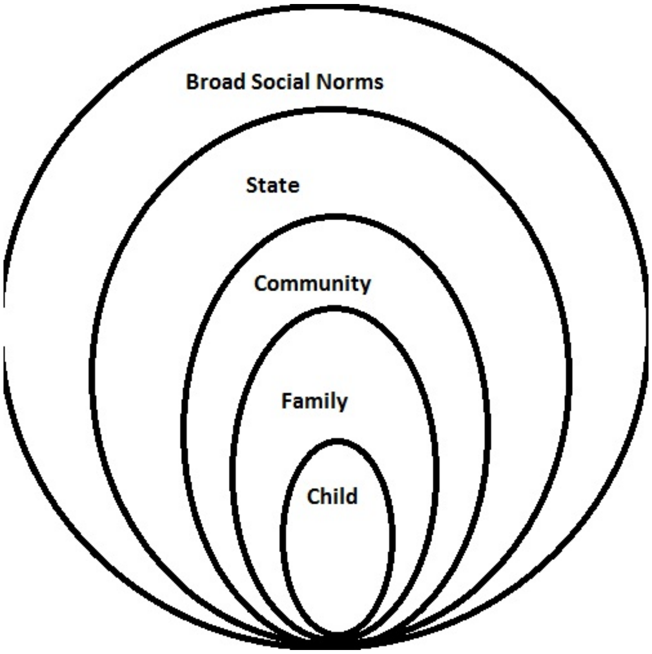

Figure 3. Ecological model

Adapted by Myers, C. (2012) from Rous, et. al (2007)

Another model that is discussed is from Orentlicher and Michaels (2004) utilizing a new model to be used in transition services. This model focuses more on the individual and ways to build up their skills for a successful transition and also helping set them up for future successes. Figure 4 depicts the model described.

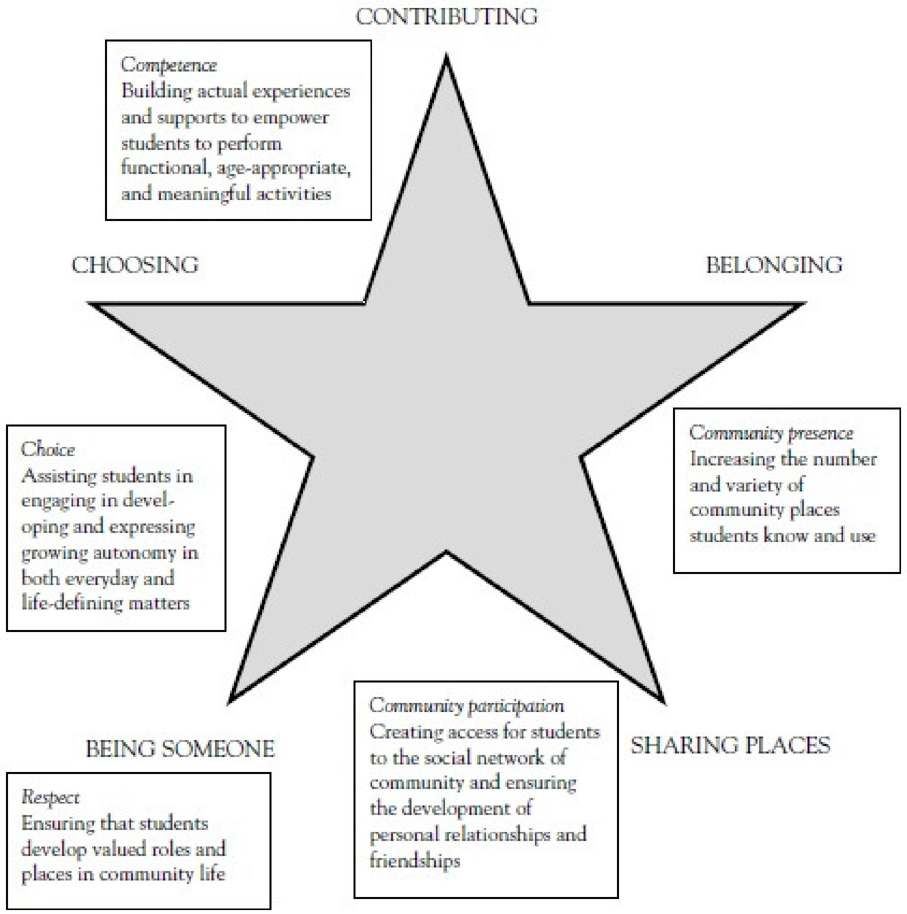

FIGURE 1. The Star of Valued Experiences (Mount and O'Brien, 2002) and essential transition accomplishments (O'Brien, 1984; 1987).

Figure 4. Star of valued experiences

Source: Orentlicher & Michaels (2004)

In addition to using this model, AOTA (2008) has published a FAQ about transition. In this document they outlined some examples of how occupational therapists can participate in transition planning and services. Some examples include: promoting self-advocacy skills, provide job carving or job coaching, and facilitate development of social communication skills and peer relationships (AOTA, 2008, p. 2). These examples can support the five points of the model that was previously mentioned. All of these models can be applied to the findings because they provide a more holistic approach to transition and our role. As occupational therapists, we thrive on utilizing the skills of our clients to help enable them to reach their goals. By having the child identify opportunities that are available on different levels, provides a sense of pride in their choices and allows therapists to work with them towards these opportunities.

Future Research

Some areas that can be examined for future research includes having a follow up for students who have graduated to see if transition goals were applicable or not, using a larger sample size to compare each families' transition experiences, interviewing families from different states to compare school systems, including other members of the transition team to provide a more holistic view of the transition process, and to include transition assessments that identify transition needs as well as to take into account the needs of the parent and the child. To see a list of assessments that can be used, refer to Chapter 2.

Limitations

Prior to the interviews, there were some limitations mentioned in Chapter 1. These limitations included the sample size and the duration of time for the study to take place in. Since completing the interviews and analyzing the data, there have been several other limitations identified. One of the limitations that have been identified is that the vocational specialist that was interviewed was not employed by a vocational rehabilitation center and was filling of vocational specialist for her school system. The individual that was used works as a full-time occupational therapist which resulted in the student's participating in Customized Employment (see Appendix L and Appendix M, Table 2 for more information on types of Customized Employment). Systematic Instruction, or a similar program where students can explore and learn certain tasks or find jobs that can be carved to their skill set specifications (ODEP, n.d).

A second limitation is that the vocational specialist who was interviewed works in a different type of school system than what J graduated from. J completed his education in a public school system, and the vocational specialist works in a private school. This school is associated with a university, and is also classified as a public school where they receive funds from the state, but charge tuition for their students. They encompass all ages, from pre-school to high school in one building separated by wings. There are no special education rooms specifically, while children still receive the education that they need through aides, and one on one learning sessions with teachers. The occupational therapist that works there is only licensed as such, but has attended many employment workshops where she then utilizes these techniques with students, but she is not a certified vocational specialist.

Another limitation that was discovered was a discrepancy between the mother's story and the young adult's story. The researcher speculates that this discrepancy existed due to the lack of vocabulary that the young adult has which affects his ability to communicate all aspects of experiences he may have. In addition to a lack of communication, there may be an association problem in which J doesn't associate his first two jobs as jobs but rather as items or assignments for school.

Conclusion

In closing, this chapter discussed the results, the implications for clinicians, suggestions for future research, and the limitations of this study. This study used a qualitative method and analysis to review the expectations and perspectives of a parent, a young adult, and a vocational specialist during the transition process and reviewed their stories.

Overall this thesis has looked at the history of special education and secondary transition as well as exploring the areas (ex. Life skill training) of literature associated with this transition time. It has covered the methods that were chosen by the researcher as well as how the data was analyzed and verified. It reviewed the interpretations of the data based on the researcher's perspective, before summarizing the implications for future research and the role that occupational therapy can play in secondary transition.

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Appendix A:

IDEA questions and answers

Questions and Answers

On Secondary Transition

Revised September 2011
(New Section B)

Regulations for Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) were published in the Federal Register on August 14, 2006, and became effective on October 13, 2006. Additional regulations were published on December 1, 2008 and became effective on December 31, 2008. Since publication of the regulations, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) in the U.S. Department of Education (Department) has received requests for clarification of some of these regulations. This is one of a series of question and answer (Q&A) documents prepared by OSERS to address some of the most important issues raised by requests for clarification on a variety of high-interest topics. Each Q&A document will be updated to add new questions and answers as important issues arise or to amend existing questions and answers as needed.

OSERS issues this Q&A document to provide State educational agencies (SEAs), local educational agencies (LEAs), parents, advocacy organizations, and other interested parties with information regarding secondary transition for students with disabilities. This Q&A document represents the Department's current thinking on this topic. It does not create or confer any rights for or on any person. This guidance does not impose any requirements beyond those required under applicable law and regulations. This Q&A document supersedes the Department's guidance, entitled: Questions and Answers on Secondary Transition, Revised June, 2009.

The IDEA and its implementing regulations continue to address transition services for children with disabilities. Transition services may be special education, if provided as specially designed instruction, or a related service, if required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education. See 34 CFR §300.43(b). The term "transition services" means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that: (a) is designed to be within a results-oriented process that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation; (b) is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests; and (c) includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. See 20 U.S.C. 1401(34) and 34 CFR §300.43(a).

Generally, the questions, and corresponding answers, presented in this Q&A document required interpretation of the IDEA and its implementing regulations and the answers are not simply a restatement of the statutory or regulatory requirements. The responses presented in this document generally are informal guidance representing the interpretation of the Department of the applicable statutory or regulatory requirements in the context of the specific facts presented and are not legally binding. The Q&As in this document are not intended to be a replacement for careful study of the IDEA and its implementing regulations. The IDEA, its implementing regulations, and other important documents related to the IDEA and the regulations are found at http://idea.ed.gov.

If you are interested in commenting on this guidance, please email your comments to OSERSguidancecomments@ed.gov and include Secondary Transition in the subject of your email or write us at the following address: Ruth Ryder, U.S. Department of Education, Potomac Center Plaza, 550 12th Street, SW, room 4108, Washington, DC 20202.

Table of Contents

A. Federal Activities

Authority: The requirements for transition services are found in the regulations at 34 CFR §§300.43 and 300.320(b).

Question A-1: Are there activities at the Federal level to support secondary transition services?

Answer: Yes. There are State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) indicators that address secondary transition. In the SPP/APR, a State is required to set measurable and rigorous targets and annually report data on: graduation rates; competitive employment rates; postsecondary school enrollment rates; and percent of eligible IEPs that contain the required secondary transition elements. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) funds three centers to provide technical assistance for the collection and analysis of data for these indicators: the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC); the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD); and the National Post-School Outcomes Center (NPSO). Additionally, OSEP is involved in collaborative activities with other Federal agencies with a focus on improving the academic and functional achievement of students with disabilities. These collaborative activities include the Matrix-Mapping Federal Resources for Technical Assistance and Information Services; the Interagency Committee on Disability Research/Interagency Subcommittee on Employment; the Federal Partners in Transition Workgroup; and the Youth Vision Federal Collaborative Partnership. The agencies involved in these and other activities include the Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, Transportation, Justice, Housing and Urban Development, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

B. Individualized Education Program (IEP) Goals for Postsecondary Transition

Authority: The requirements for the content of the IEP related to transition services are found in 34 CFR §300.320(b).

Question B-1: Must an IEP include measurable postsecondary goals in each of the areas of training, education, employment, and independent living skills? Are there any circumstances in which goals for training and education can be combined?

Answer: The Under 34 CFR §300.320(b)(1), the IEP for each child with a disability, must, beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team, and updated annually thereafter, include (1) appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills; and (2) the transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals. The Department explained in the Analysis of Comments and Changes section of the preamble of the August 2006 final Part B regulations that "…the Act requires a child's IEP to include measurable postsecondary goals in the areas of training, education, **and** employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills. Therefore, the only area in which postsecondary goals are not required in the IEP is in the area of independent living skills…. It is up to the child's IEP Team to determine whether IEP goals related to the development of independent living skills are appropriate and necessary for the child to receive FAPE." [Emphasis added] 71 Fed. Reg. 46668 (Aug. 14, 2006).

Regarding postsecondary goals related to training and education, the IDEA and its implementing regulations do not define the terms "training" and "education." However, the areas of training and education can reasonably be interpreted as overlapping in certain instances. In determining whether postsecondary goals in the areas of training and education overlap, the IEP Team must consider the unique needs of each individual student with a disability, in light of his or her plans after leaving high school. If the IEP Team determines that separate postsecondary goals in the areas of training and education would not result in the need for distinct skills for the student after leaving high school, the IEP Team can combine the training and education goals of the student into one or more postsecondary goals addressing those areas. For example, for a student whose postsecondary goal is teacher certification, any program providing teacher certification would include education as well as training. Similarly, a student with a disability who enrolls in a postsecondary program in engineering would be obtaining both education and occupational training in the program. The same is true for students with disabilities enrolled in programs for doctors, lawyers, accountants, technologists, physical therapists, medical technicians, mechanics, computer programmers, etc. Thus, in some instances, it would be permissible for the IEP to include a combined postsecondary goal or goals in the areas of training and education to address a student's postsecondary plans, if determined appropriate by the IEP Team. This guidance, however, is not intended to prohibit the IEP Team from developing separate postsecondary goals in the areas related to training and education in a student's IEP, if deemed appropriate by the IEP Team, in light of the student's postsecondary plans.

On the other hand, because employment is a distinct activity from the areas related to training and education, each student's IEP must include a separate postsecondary goal in the area of employment

C. Summary of Performance (SOP)

Authority: The requirements for the SOP are found in the regulations at 34 CFR §300.305(e)(3).

Question C-1: What is the purpose of the SOP, “a summary of the child’s academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child’s postsecondary goals”?

Answer: The purpose of the SOP is to provide the child with a summary of the child’s academic achievement and functional performance in order to assist the child to transition beyond high school.

Question C-2: What information is required and what information would be helpful to include in the SOP?

Answer: The SOP must include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting his or her postsecondary goals. The IDEA does not otherwise specify the information that must be included in the SOP; rather, State and local officials have the flexibility to determine the appropriate content to be included in a child’s SOP, based on the child’s individual needs and postsecondary goals.

Question C-3: Does a general educational development credential (GED) or alternate diploma trigger the creation of an SOP?

Answer: No. A public agency, pursuant to 34 CFR §300.305(e)(3), must provide a child whose eligibility for services under Part B of the IDEA terminates due to graduation from secondary school with a regular diploma, or due to exceeding the age of eligibility for a free appropriate public education (FAPE) under State law, with a summary of the child's academic achievement and functional performance. This Part B requirement does not apply to the group of children who leave secondary school with a GED credential or alternate diploma and whose eligibility for services under Part B has not terminated. See 34 CFR §300.102(a)(3)(iv), which clarifies that a regular high school diploma does not include alternate degrees, such as a GED credential.

Public agencies are not required to provide an SOP for students who leave secondary school with a GED credential or alternate diploma; however, there is nothing in the IDEA or the Part B regulations that would prevent a State from doing so. If a State establishes a policy or practice requiring LEAs to provide an SOP to students with disabilities who leave high school with a GED credential or an alternate diploma, we recommend that, to avoid any confusion, the LEA notify the student and his or her parents that the student's eligibility for FAPE under Part B does not terminate until the student is awarded a regular high school diploma or the student exceeds the age of eligibility for FAPE under State law, whichever occurs first. States that require their LEAs to provide children who leave secondary school with a GED credential or alternate diploma with an SOP must comply with 34 CFR §300.199. Each State, under 34 CFR §300.199(a)(1), must ensure that any State rules, regulations, and policies conform to the purposes of Part B. Further, 34 CFR §300.199(a)(2) requires States to identify in writing to OSEP and to their LEAs any State-imposed requirement that is not required by Part B of the IDEA or the implementing regulations, such as one requiring their LEAs to provide children who leave secondary school with a GED or credential or alternate diploma with an SOP.

Question C-4: Is a public agency required to include in the SOP the documentation necessary to determine a student's eligibility for the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services program and/or accommodations in institutions of higher education?

Answer: No. Section 614(c)(5) of the IDEA does not require the LEA to include in the SOP the documentation necessary to determine a child's eligibility for another program or service, such as the State VR Services program, or the child's need for accommodations in college or in other postsecondary educational settings. However, the SOP may include information that may assist another program to determine a student's eligibility for services or accommodations. For example, section 102(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires the State VR Services program to use information submitted by education officials to assist in making eligibility determinations for students with disabilities. The SOP is one of the educational records that may be used to provide information to determine a student’s eligibility for VR services.

A postsecondary student who has identified him or herself as an individual with a disability and has requested academic adjustments, auxiliary aids or modifications of policies, practices or procedures from an institution of postsecondary education may, consistent with an institution’s documentation requirements, provide the institution with the SOP as part of the documentation to be used by the institution to determine whether the student has an impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, as defined under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504) and/or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and requires academic adjustments as defined in the Section 504 regulations at 34 CFR §104.44. Institutions may set their own requirements for documentation so long as they are reasonable and comply with Section 504 and the ADA.

Question C-5: How can the SOP assist the VR Services program in the provision of transition services to eligible VR students with disabilities?

Answer: In addition to providing information that may be used to determine a student’s eligibility for VR services, the SOP serves as a functional document that provides the VR Services program with information describing a student’s vocational, employment, academic and personal achievements as well as vocational and employment supports needed by the student.

If determined to be eligible to receive VR services, the student, with the assistance of a VR counselor, develops an individualized plan for employment (IPE) to achieve a specific employment outcome. An SOP may facilitate the development of a meaningful IPE by providing information that describes the student’s secondary and postsecondary goals, career interests, levels of academic performance, need for reasonable accommodations for work, and the functional levels of the student’s social and independent living skills, at the time of completion of secondary education.

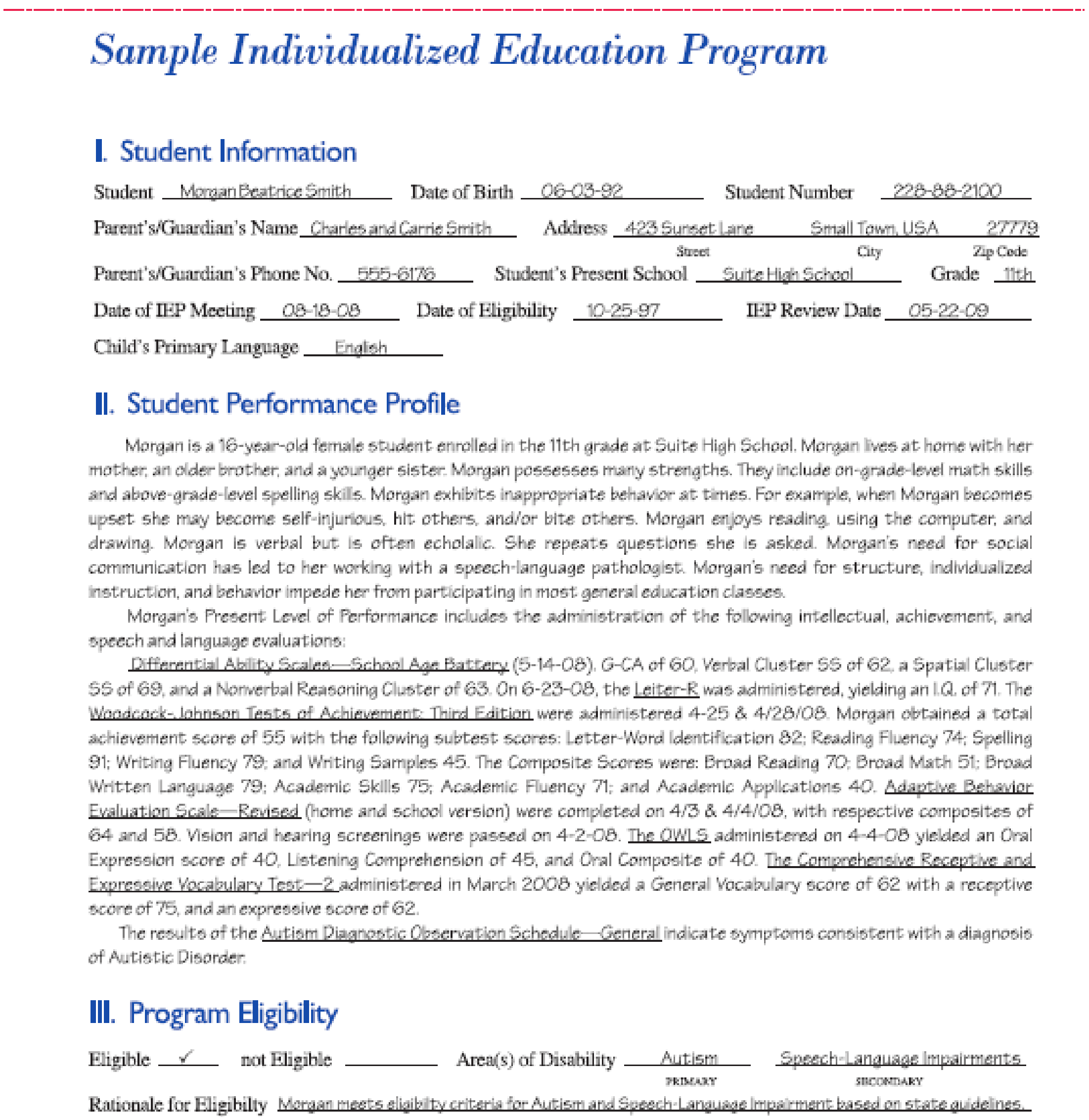
In general, an SOP that informs the State VR Services program of the student’s academic and vocational functional performance

	may minimize delays in the transition service delivery system and better prepare the student for a successful career.

Source: ED (2011).

Appendix B:

Sample IEP



Sample Individualized Education Program

I. Student Information

Student Morgan Beatrice Smith Date of Birth 06-03-92 Student Number 228-88-2100

Parent's/Guardian's Name Charles and Carrie Smith Address 423 Sunset Lane Small Town, USA 27779

Street City Zip Code

Parent's/Guardian's Phone No. 555-6176 Student's Present School Suite High School Grade 11th

Date of IEP Meeting 08-18-08 Date of Eligibility 10-25-97 IEP Review Date 05-22-09

Child's Primary Language English

II. Student Performance Profile

Morgan is a 16-year-old female student enrolled in the 11th grade at Suite High School. Morgan lives at home with her mother, an older brother, and a younger sister. Morgan possesses many strengths. They include on-grade-level math skills and above-grade-level spelling skills. Morgan exhibits inappropriate behavior at times. For example, when Morgan becomes upset she may become self-injurious, hit others, and/or bite others. Morgan enjoys reading, using the computer, and drawing. Morgan is verbal but is often echolalic. She repeats questions she is asked. Morgan's need for social communication has led to her working with a speech-language pathologist. Morgan's need for structure, individualized instruction, and behavior impede her from participating in most general education classes.

Morgan's Present Level of Performance includes the administration of the following intellectual, achievement, and speech and language evaluations:

Differential Ability Scales—School Age Battery (5-14-08), G-CA of 60, Verbal Cluster SS of 62, a Spatial Cluster SS of 69, and a Nonverbal Reasoning Cluster of 63. On 6-23-08, the Leiter-R was administered, yielding an I.Q. of 71. The Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement: Third Edition were administered 4-25 & 4/28/08. Morgan obtained a total achievement score of 55 with the following subtest scores: Letter-Word Identification 82; Reading Fluency 74; Spelling 91; Writing Fluency 79; and Writing Samples 45. The Composite Scores were: Broad Reading 70; Broad Math 51; Broad Written Language 79; Academic Skills 75; Academic Fluency 71; and Academic Applications 40. Adaptive Behavior Evaluation Scale—Revised (home and school version) were completed on 4/3 & 4/4/08, with respective composites of 64 and 58. Vision and hearing screenings were passed on 4-2-08. The OWLS administered on 4-4-08 yielded an Oral Expression score of 40, Listening Comprehension of 45, and Oral Composite of 40. The Comprehensive Receptive and Expressive Vocabulary Test—2 administered in March 2008 yielded a General Vocabulary score of 62 with a receptive score of 75, and an expressive score of 62.

The results of the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule—General indicate symptoms consistent with a diagnosis of Autistic Disorder.

III. Program Eligibility

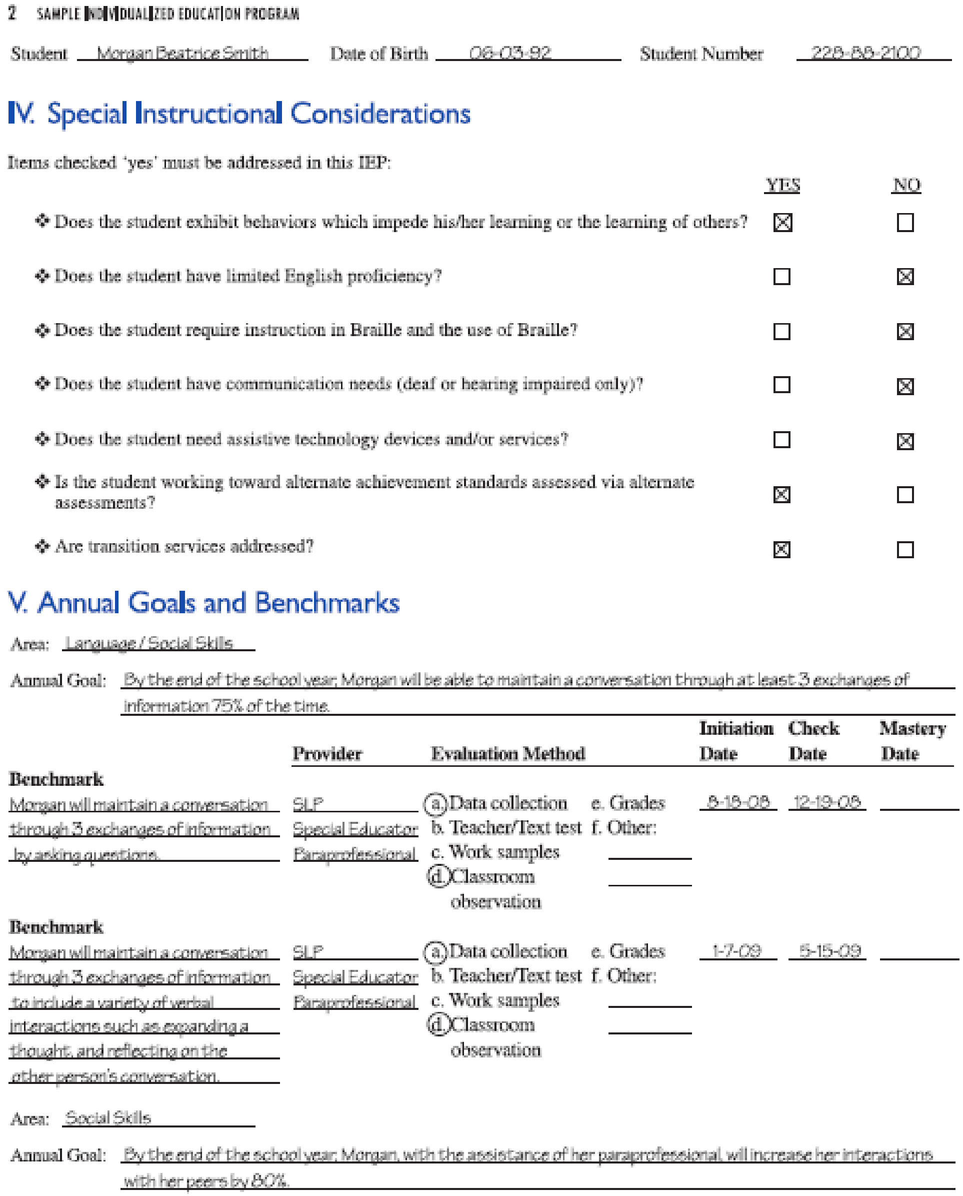
Eligible ✓ not Eligible ______ Area(s) of Disability Autism Speech-Language Impairments

PRIMARY SECONDARY

Rationale for Eligibilty Morgan meets eligibility criteria for Autism and Speech-Language Impairment based on state guidelines.

Figure 5. Sample individualized education program

Source: Gargiulo (n.d.)



2 SAMPLE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

Student Morgan Beatrice Smith Date of Birth 06-03-92 Student Number 228-88-2100

IV. Special Instructional Considerations

Items checked 'yes' must be addressed in this IEP:

	YES	NO
❖ Does the student exhibit behaviors which impede his/her learning or the learning of others?	☒	☐
❖ Does the student have limited English proficiency?	☐	☒
❖ Does the student require instruction in Braille and the use of Braille?	☐	☒
❖ Does the student have communication needs (deaf or hearing impaired only)?	☐	☒
❖ Does the student need assistive technology devices and/or services?	☐	☒
❖ Is the student working toward alternate achievement standards assessed via alternate assessments?	☒	☐
❖ Are transition services addressed?	☒	☐

V. Annual Goals and Benchmarks

Area: Language / Social Skills

Annual Goal: By the end of the school year, Morgan will be able to maintain a conversation through at least 3 exchanges of information 75% of the time.

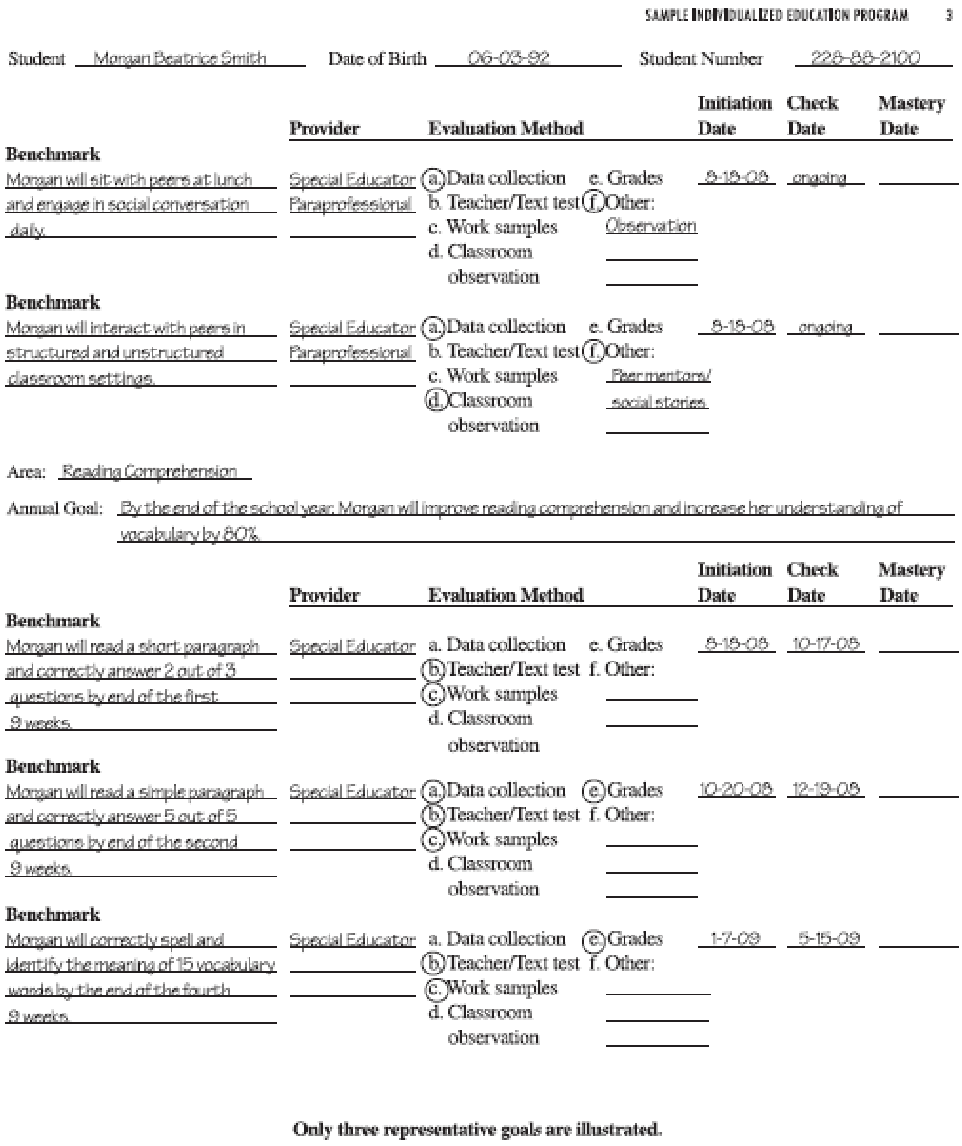
Benchmark	Provider	Evaluation Method	Initiation Date	Check Date	Mastery Date
Morgan will maintain a conversation through 3 exchanges of information by asking questions.	SLP Special Educator Paraprofessional	[✓ a.] Data collection b. Teacher/Text test c. Work samples [✓ d.] Classroom observation e. Grades f. Other:	8-18-08	12-19-08	
Morgan will maintain a conversation through 3 exchanges of information to include a variety of verbal interactions such as expanding a thought, and reflecting on the other person's conversation.	SLP Special Educator Paraprofessional	[✓ a.] Data collection b. Teacher/Text test c. Work samples [✓ d.] Classroom observation e. Grades f. Other:	1-7-09	5-15-09	

Area: Social Skills

Annual Goal: By the end of the school year, Morgan, with the assistance of her paraprofessional, will increase her interactions with her peers by 80%.

Figure 5 (continued). Sample individualized education program

Source: Gargiulo (n.d.)



SAMPLE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM 3

Student Morgan Beatrice Smith Date of Birth 06-03-92 Student Number 228-88-2100

Benchmark	Provider	Evaluation Method	Initiation Date	Check Date	Mastery Date
Morgan will sit with peers at lunch and engage in social conversation daily.	Special Educator Paraprofessional	[✓ a. Data collection] b. Teacher/Text test c. Work samples d. Classroom observation e. Grades [✓ f. Other:] Observation	8-18-08	ongoing	
Morgan will interact with peers in structured and unstructured classroom settings.	Special Educator Paraprofessional	[✓ a. Data collection] b. Teacher/Text test c. Work samples [✓ d. Classroom observation] e. Grades [✓ f. Other:] Peer mentors/ social stories	8-18-08	ongoing	

Area: Reading Comprehension

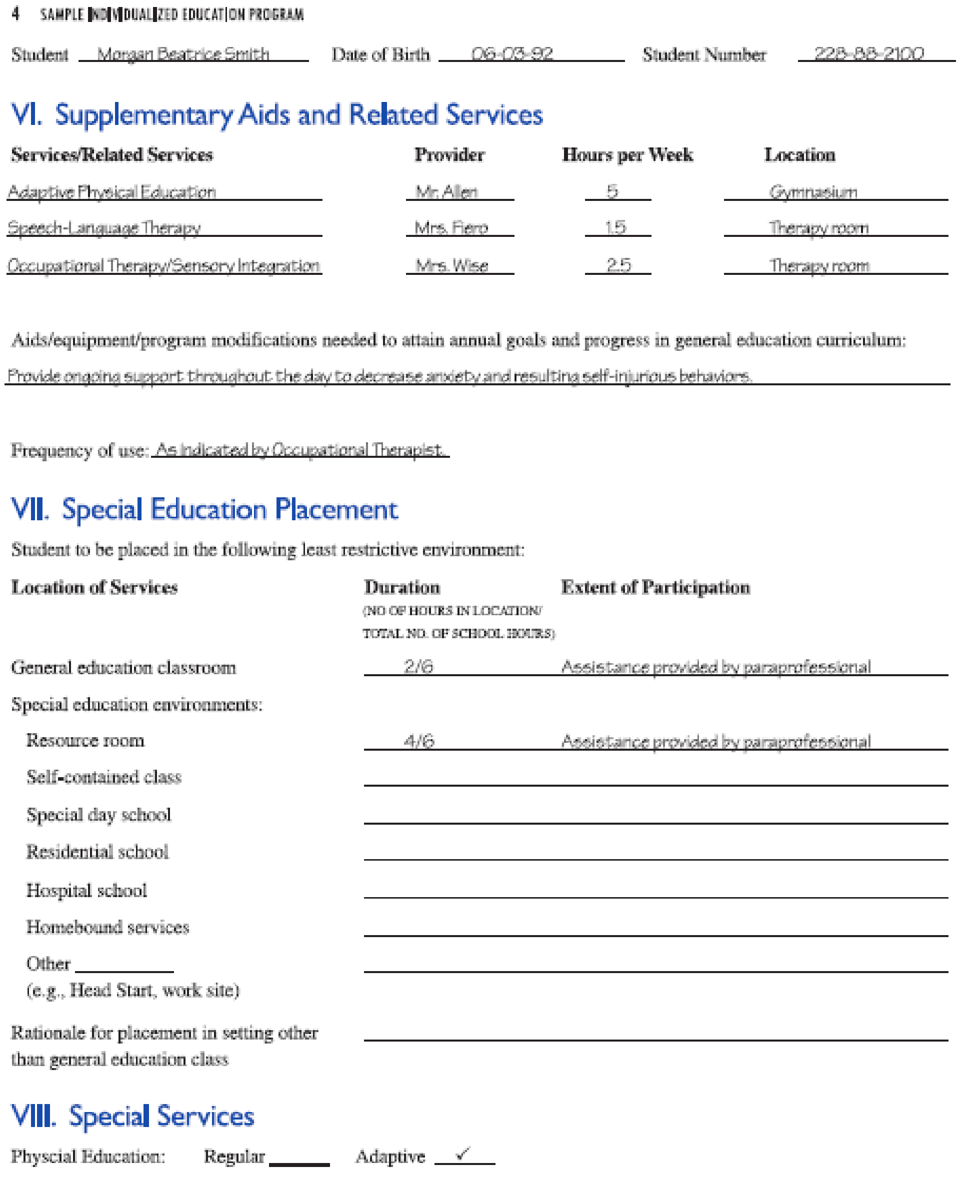
Annual Goal: By the end of the school year, Morgan will improve reading comprehension and increase her understanding of vocabulary by 80%.

Benchmark	Provider	Evaluation Method	Initiation Date	Check Date	Mastery Date
Morgan will read a short paragraph and correctly answer 2 out of 3 questions by end of the first 9 weeks.	Special Educator	a. Data collection [✓ b. Teacher/Text test] [✓ c. Work samples] d. Classroom observation e. Grades f. Other:	8-18-08	10-17-08	
Morgan will read a simple paragraph and correctly answer 5 out of 5 questions by end of the second 9 weeks.	Special Educator	[✓ a. Data collection] [✓ b. Teacher/Text test] [✓ c. Work samples] d. Classroom observation [✓ e. Grades] f. Other:	10-20-08	12-19-08	
Morgan will correctly spell and identify the meaning of 15 vocabulary words by the end of the fourth 9 weeks.	Special Educator	a. Data collection [✓ b. Teacher/Text test] [✓ c. Work samples] d. Classroom observation [✓ e. Grades] f. Other:	1-7-09	5-15-09	

Only three representative goals are illustrated.

Figure 5 (continued). Sample individualized education program

Source: Gargiulo (n.d.)



4 SAMPLE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

Student Morgan Beatrice Smith Date of Birth 06-03-92 Student Number 228-88-2100

VI. Supplementary Aids and Related Services

Services/Related Services	Provider	Hours per Week	Location
Adaptive Physical Education	Mr. Allen	5	Gymnasium
Speech-Language Therapy	Mrs. Fiero	1.5	Therapy room
Occupational Therapy/Sensory Integration	Mrs. Wise	2.5	Therapy room

Aids/equipment/program modifications needed to attain annual goals and progress in general education curriculum:

Provide ongoing support throughout the day to decrease anxiety and resulting self-injurious behaviors.

Frequency of use: As indicated by Occupational Therapist.

VII. Special Education Placement

Student to be placed in the following least restrictive environment:

Location of Services	Duration (NO OF HOURS IN LOCATION/ TOTAL NO. OF SCHOOL HOURS)	Extent of Participation
General education classroom	2/6	Assistance provided by paraprofessional
Special education environments:		
Resource room	4/6	Assistance provided by paraprofessional
Self-contained class		
Special day school		
Residential school		
Hospital school		
Homebound services		
Other ______ (e.g., Head Start, work site)		
Rationale for placement in setting other than general education class		

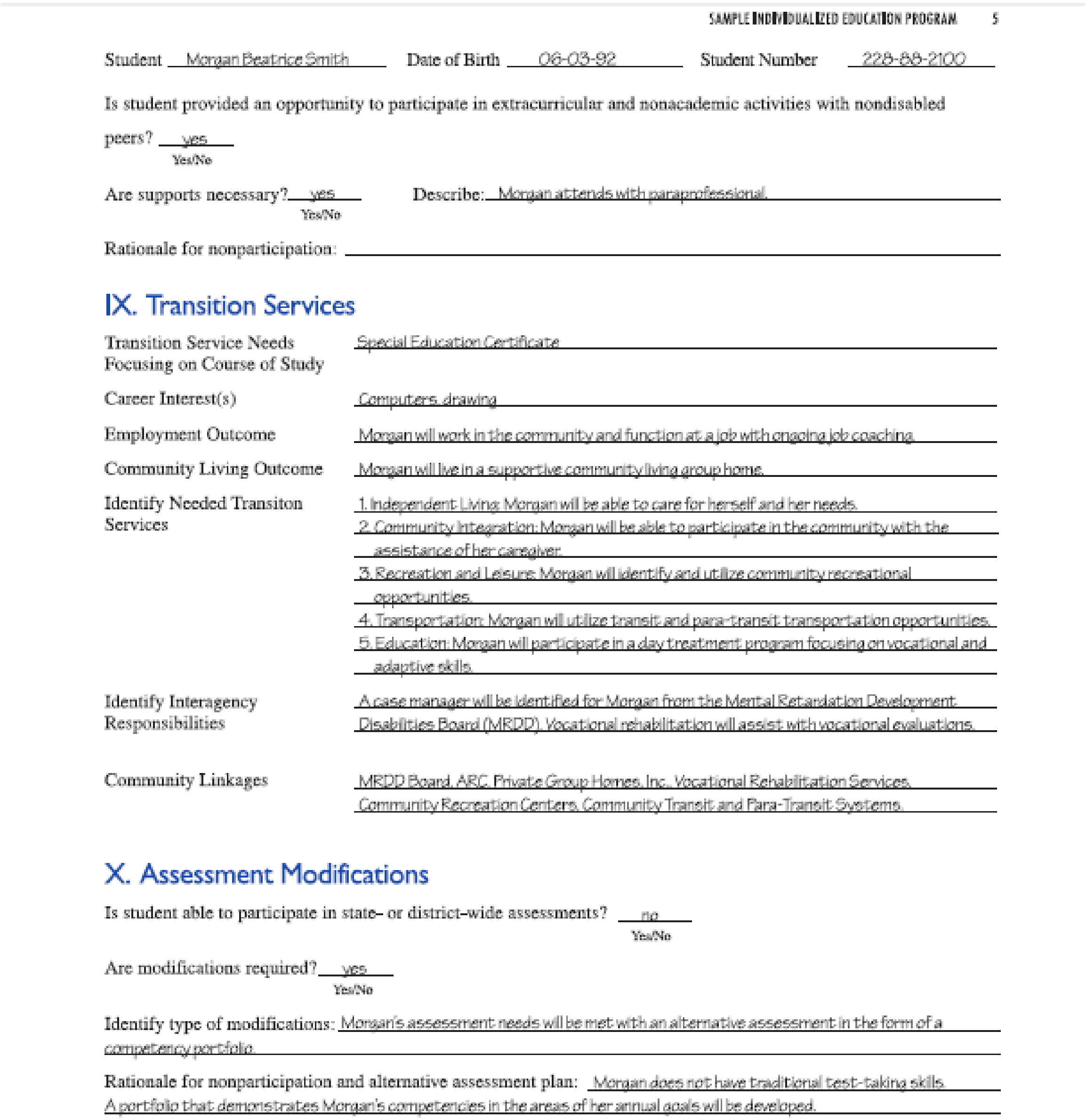
VIII. Special Services

Physcial Education: Regular ______ Adaptive ✓

Transportation: Regular ______ Special ✓ Not Applicable ______

Figure 5 (continued). Sample individualized education program

Source: Gargiulo (n.d.)



SAMPLE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM 5

Student Morgan Beatrice Smith Date of Birth 06-03-92 Student Number 228-88-2100

Is student provided an opportunity to participate in extracurricular and nonacademic activities with nondisabled peers? yes (Yes/No)

Are supports necessary? yes (Yes/No) Describe: Morgan attends with paraprofessional.

Rationale for nonparticipation:

IX. Transition Services

Transition Service Needs Focusing on Course of Study	Special Education Certificate
Career Interest(s)	Computers, drawing
Employment Outcome	Morgan will work in the community and function at a job with ongoing job coaching.
Community Living Outcome	Morgan will live in a supportive community living group home.
Identify Needed Transiton Services	1. Independent Living: Morgan will be able to care for herself and her needs. 2. Community Integration: Morgan will be able to participate in the community with the assistance of her caregiver. 3. Recreation and Leisure: Morgan will identify and utilize community recreational opportunities. 4. Transportation: Morgan will utilize transit and para-transit transportation opportunities. 5. Education: Morgan will participate in a day treatment program focusing on vocational and adaptive skills.
Identify Interagency Responsibilities	A case manager will be identified for Morgan from the Mental Retardation Development Disabilities Board (MRDD). Vocational rehabilitation will assist with vocational evaluations.
Community Linkages	MRDD Board, ARC, Private Group Homes, Inc., Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Community Recreation Centers, Community Transit and Para-Transit Systems.

X. Assessment Modifications

Is student able to participate in state- or district-wide assessments? no (Yes/No)

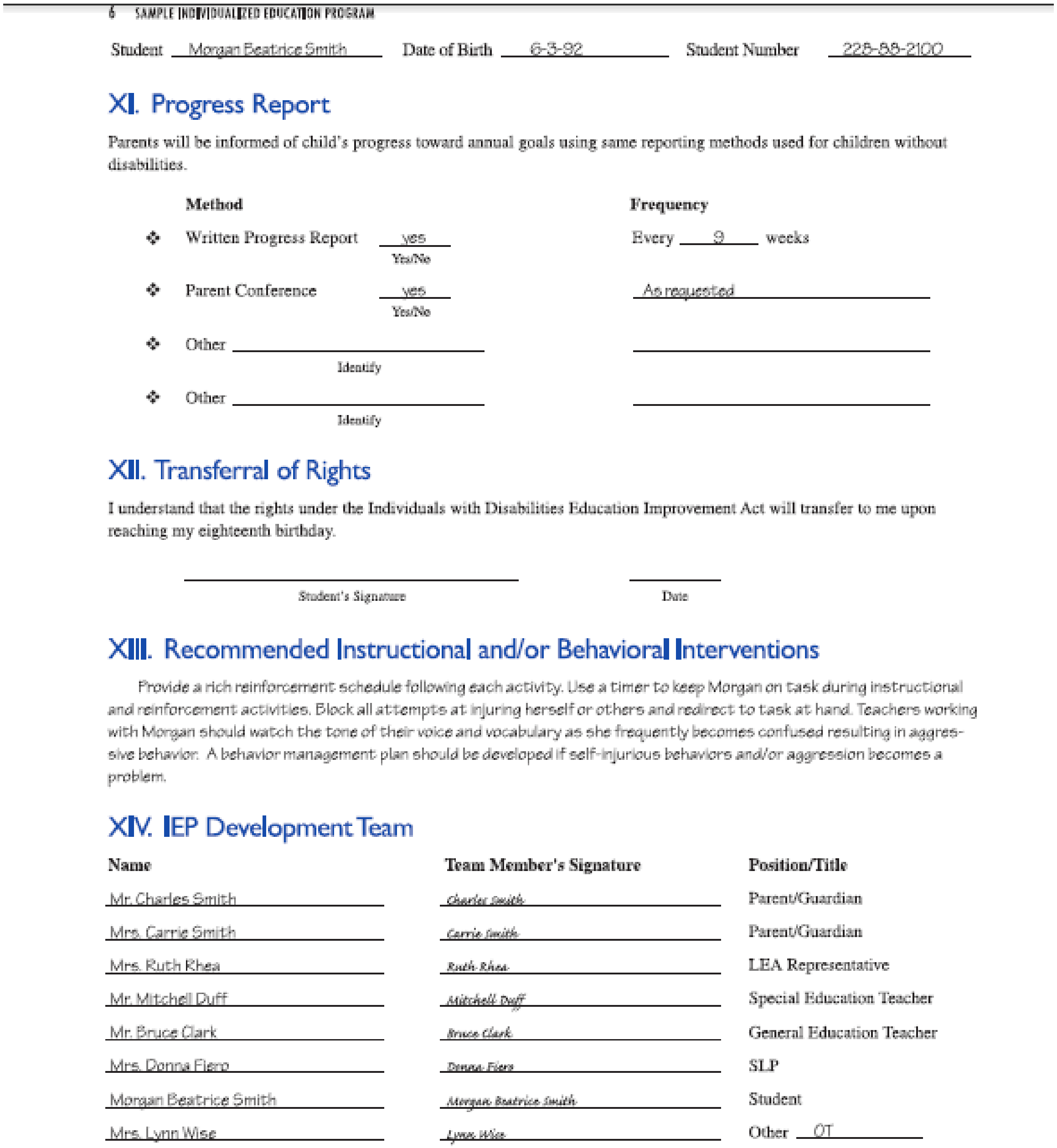
Are modifications required? yes (Yes/No)

Identify type of modifications: Morgan's assessment needs will be met with an alternative assessment in the form of a competency portfolio.

Rationale for nonparticipation and alternative assessment plan: Morgan does not have traditional test-taking skills. A portfolio that demonstrates Morgan's competencies in the areas of her annual goals will be developed.

Figure 5 (continued). Sample individualized education program

Source: Gargiulo (n.d.)



6 SAMPLE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

Student Morgan Beatrice Smith Date of Birth 6-3-92 Student Number 228-88-2100

XI. Progress Report

Parents will be informed of child's progress toward annual goals using same reporting methods used for children without disabilities.

	Method		Frequency
❖	Written Progress Report	yes Yes/No	Every 9 weeks
❖	Parent Conference	yes Yes/No	As requested
❖	Other Identify		
❖	Other Identify		

XII. Transferral of Rights

I understand that the rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act will transfer to me upon reaching my eighteenth birthday.

Student's Signature Date

XIII. Recommended Instructional and/or Behavioral Interventions

Provide a rich reinforcement schedule following each activity. Use a timer to keep Morgan on task during instructional and reinforcement activities. Block all attempts at injuring herself or others and redirect to task at hand. Teachers working with Morgan should watch the tone of their voice and vocabulary as she frequently becomes confused resulting in aggressive behavior. A behavior management plan should be developed if self-injurious behaviors and/or aggression becomes a problem.

XIV. IEP Development Team

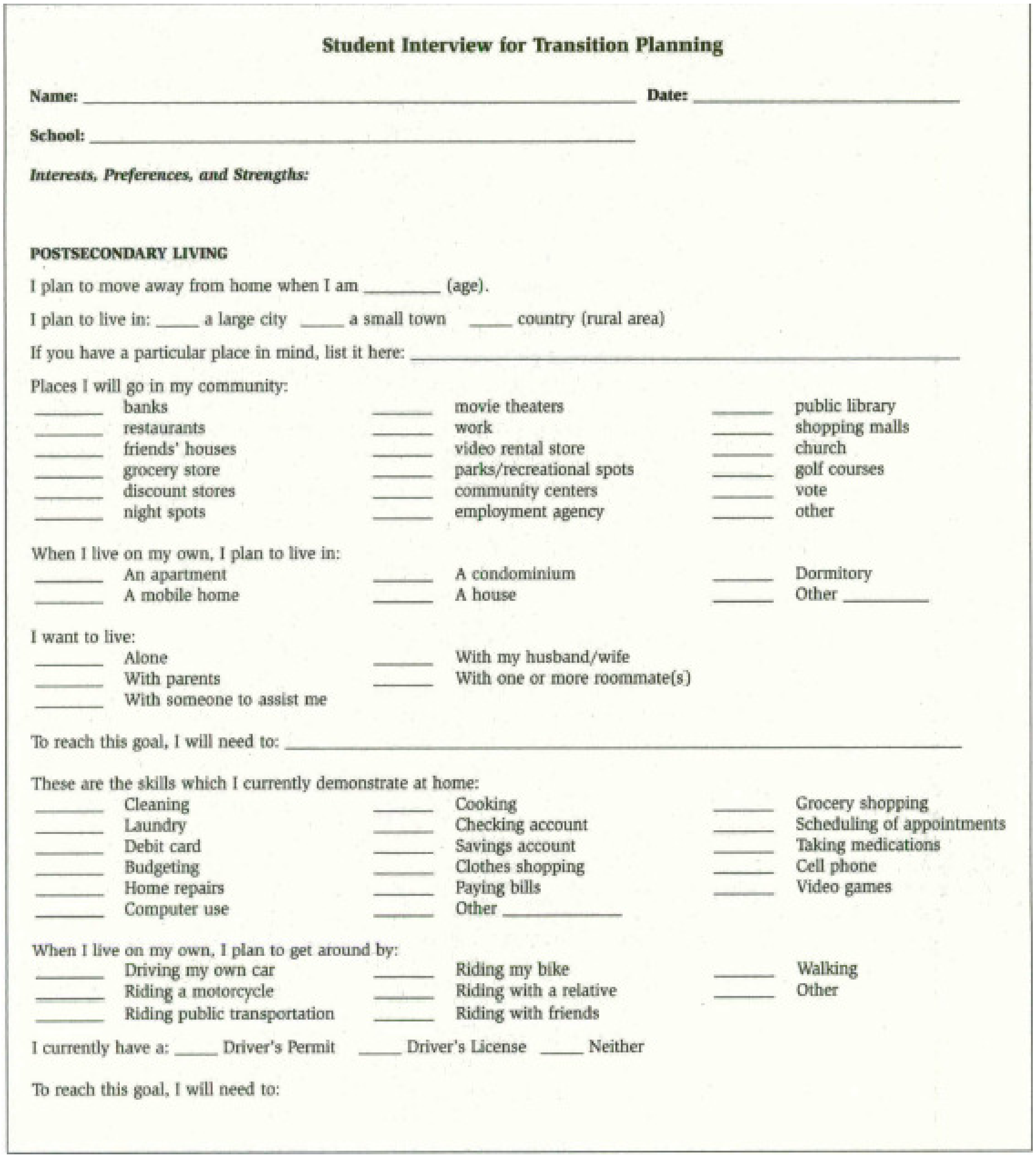
Name	Team Member's Signature	Position/Title
Mr. Charles Smith	Charles Smith	Parent/Guardian
Mrs. Carrie Smith	Carrie Smith	Parent/Guardian
Mrs. Ruth Rhea	Ruth Rhea	LEA Representative
Mr. Mitchell Duff	Mitchell Duff	Special Education Teacher
Mr. Bruce Clark	Bruce Clark	General Education Teacher
Mrs. Donna Fiero	Donna Fiero	SLP
Morgan Beatrice Smith	Morgan Beatrice Smith	Student
Mrs. Lynn Wise	Lynn Wise	Other OT

Figure 5 (continued). Sample individualized education program

Source: Gargiulo (n.d.)

Appendix C:

Sample interview questions



Student Interview for Transition Planning

Name: ______________________________ **Date:** ______________

School: ______________________________

Interests, Preferences, and Strengths:

POSTSECONDARY LIVING

I plan to move away from home when I am ________ (age).

I plan to live in: _____ a large city _____ a small town _____ country (rural area)

If you have a particular place in mind, list it here: ______________________________

Places I will go in my community:

- ________ banks
- ________ restaurants
- ________ friends' houses
- ________ grocery store
- ________ discount stores
- ________ night spots
- ______ movie theaters
- ______ work
- ______ video rental store
- ______ parks/recreational spots
- ______ community centers
- ______ employment agency
- ______ public library
- ______ shopping malls
- ______ church
- ______ golf courses
- ______ vote
- ______ other

When I live on my own, I plan to live in:

- ________ An apartment
- ________ A mobile home
- ______ A condominium
- ______ A house
- ______ Dormitory
- ______ Other __________

I want to live:

- ________ Alone
- ________ With parents
- ________ With someone to assist me
- ______ With my husband/wife
- ______ With one or more roommate(s)

To reach this goal, I will need to: ______________________________

These are the skills which I currently demonstrate at home:

- ________ Cleaning
- ________ Laundry
- ________ Debit card
- ________ Budgeting
- ________ Home repairs
- ________ Computer use
- ______ Cooking
- ______ Checking account
- ______ Savings account
- ______ Clothes shopping
- ______ Paying bills
- ______ Other ______________
- ______ Grocery shopping
- ______ Scheduling of appointments
- ______ Taking medications
- ______ Cell phone
- ______ Video games

When I live on my own, I plan to get around by:

- ________ Driving my own car
- ________ Riding a motorcycle
- ________ Riding public transportation
- ______ Riding my bike
- ______ Riding with a relative
- ______ Riding with friends
- ______ Walking
- ______ Other

I currently have a: _____ Driver's Permit _____ Driver's License _____ Neither

To reach this goal, I will need to:

Figure 6. Student interview for transition planning

Source: Kellems, R. & Morningstar, M. (2010)

Appendix D:

Steps in the transition planning process

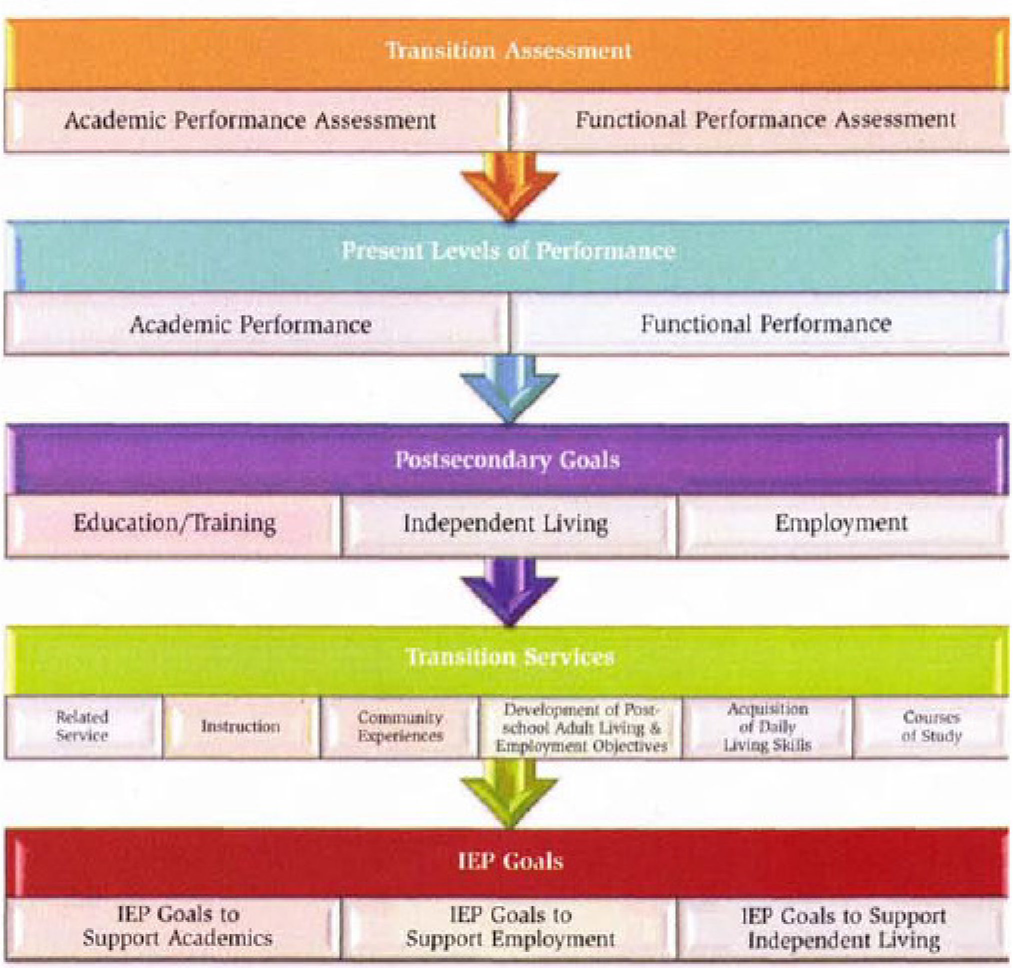


Figure 7. Steps in the transition planning process

Source: Mazzotti, V., Rowe, D., Kelley, K., Test, D., Fowler, C., Kohler, P., & Kortering, L. (2009)

Appendix E:

Table of assessments

Table 1. Table of assessments

Standardized	Informal
Social and Prevocational Information Battery-Revised (SPIB-R)	Ansell-Casey Lifeskills Assessment
Tests for Everyday Living (TEL)	LCCE Performance Battery
Transition Behavior Scale (TBS)	McGill Action Planning System (M.A.P.S)
Life Centered Career Education Knowledge Battery (LCCE)	Functional Assessments (measurement of purposeful behavior)
Quality of Life Questionnaire (QOL-Q)	Situational Assessments (behavioral assessments in real settings)
Quality of School Life Questionnaire (QSL-Q)	Ecological Inventories (Environmental Assessments)
Transition Planning Inventory (TPI)	Task and Activity Analyses

Source: Clark, G. (1996)

Appendix F:

Recruitment method

The participants of this study will be recruited via email or telephone. An example contact email follows below:

Hello *insert name*,

My name is Katherine Steinman and I am conducting research about the transition process from high school to the adult world for students who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities. I am aware that you and your child have just completed this process and was contacting you to see if you would be interested in sharing your experience. If possible, I would also like to hear your child's perspective on this experience and whether they were satisfied with the transition process. In addition to this, I would like to contact your job coach and hear their perspective of the transition process and what barriers and supports they encountered when assisting your child. Please reply to this email or call me whether you are interested in participating in this research project or not.

Sincerely,

Katherine Steinman
Masters of Occupational Therapy Student
(859) 576-7243

Appendix G:

Informed consent for parent

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

You are being invited to take part in a research study about secondary transition. We would like to invite you to participate because of your experience during your child's transition out of high school. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be one of about four people to do so.

Who is doing the study?

The person in charge of this study is Katherine Steinman, a graduate student at Eastern Kentucky University. The researcher is under advisement by Dr. Dana Howell. There may be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to describe the perspectives of a young adult with an intellectual disability who has completed the transition process, his or her parent, and his or her job coach during the transition from high school to the community. By doing this study, we hope to learn the point of view of you, your child, and the job coach you worked with related to the supports and barriers you encountered when establishing transition goals.

Where is the study going to take place and how long will it last?

The research procedures will be conducted at a location convenient to you. The researcher will make sure it is in a comfortable atmosphere that is quiet and private. Each session will take about 60-90 minutes. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is a minimum of 60 minutes and a maximum of 90 minutes once over the next year.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in an interview to obtain information about your experience and role in your child's life during the transition from high school to the adult world. Some of the questions will be asked to establish background information while other questions will examine your role, the supports and barriers you encountered, and your experience as a parent.

Are there reasons why I should not take part in this study?

There are no reasons why you should not take part in this study. The procedures of this study are just like a normal conversation that you may encounter on a daily basis.

What are the possible risks and discomforts?
To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than what you would experience in everyday life.

Will I benefit from taking part in this study?
You may not get any personal benefit from taking part in this study. The researcher is looking for your experience which may or may not benefit you in sharing it.

Do I have to take part in the study?
If you decide to participate in this study it should because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any rights that you would normally have if you decide to not volunteer. If you participate and you change your mind later, you can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

If I don't want to take part in the study, are there other choices?
If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except to not take part in the study.

What will it cost for me to participate?
There are no costs associated with taking part in this study.

Will I receive any payment or reward for taking part in the study?
You will not receive any payment or reward for taking part in this study. It is strictly a volunteer basis for taking part in this study, and the researcher is appreciative of any help is willing to provide.

Who will see the information I give?
Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write up the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about this combined information. You and your child will not be identified in these written materials.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you or your child gave us information, or what that information is. For example, you and your child's name will be kept separate from the information given, and these two things will be stored in different places under lock and key.

What if I have questions?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to participate in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Katherine L Steinman, at (859) 576-7243. If you have any questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the staff in the Division of Sponsored Programs at Eastern Kentucky University at 859-622-3636. We will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

What else do I need to know?
You will be told if any new information is learned which may affect your willingness to continue in this study.

I have thoroughly read this document, understand its contents, have been given an opportunity to have my questions answered, and give permission to participate in this research project.

Signature	Date	Witness Signature	Date

Appendix H:

Parent/Guardian permission form for minor's participation in a research project

Why is my child being invited to take part in this research?

Your child is being invited to take part in a research study about secondary transition. We would like to invite your child to participate because of their experience during the transition process. If your child takes part in this study, he or she will be the only child to do so.

Who is doing the study?

The person in charge of this study is Katherine Steinman, a graduate student at Eastern Kentucky University. The researcher is under advisement by Dr. Dana Howell. There may be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to describe the perspectives of a young adult with an intellectual disability who has completed the transition process, his or her parent, and his or her job coach during the transition from high school to the community. By doing this study, we hope to learn the point of view of you, your child, and the job coach you worked with related to the supports and you encountered when establishing transition goals.

Where is the study going to take place and how long will it last?

The research procedures will be conducted at a location convenient to you and your child. The researcher will make sure it is in a comfortable atmosphere that is quiet and private. Each session will take about 30-60 minutes. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is a minimum of 30 minutes and a maximum of 60 minutes, multiple times over the next year. This is to ensure that the researcher obtains as much data from your child as possible.

What will my child be asked to do?

Your child will be asked to participate in an interview to obtain information about his or her experience transitioning from high school to the community. Some of the questions will be asked to establish background information, such as their favorite activities, where they think their strengths are, and what areas they wish to improve. There are 1-2 questions being posed that will look at their experience with transitioning, and 1-2 questions that examine their life after the transition process.

Your child will be asked for their assent to participate in this research study, and will be provided with a copy of their assent form.

Are there reasons why my child should not take part in this study?

There are no reasons why your child should not take part in this study. The procedures of this study are just like a normal conversation that they may encounter on a daily basis.

What are the possible risks and discomforts?

To the best of our knowledge, the things your child will be doing have no more risk of harm than he or she would experience in everyday life. Some of the questions that are asked may influence your child to ask you questions about goals that he or she would want to establish or that you have established for them.

Will my child benefit from taking part in this study?
Your child will not get any personal benefit from taking part in this study.

Does my child have to take part in the study?
If you decide to allow your child to take part in the study, it should be because your child really wants to volunteer. Your child will not lose any rights he or she would normally have if you choose not to allow him or her to volunteer. If your child participates and either of you change your mind later, your child can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights he or she had before volunteering.

If I don't want my child to take part in the study, are there other choices?
If you do not want your child to be in the study, there are no other choices except to not take part in the study.

What will it cost for my child to participate?
There are no costs associated with taking part in this study.

Will my child receive any payment or reward for taking part in the study?
There are no costs associated with taking part in this study.

Who will see the information my child gives?
Your child's information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write up the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about this combined information. Your child will not be identified in these written materials.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that your child gave us information, or what that information is. For example, your child's name will be kept separate from the information he or she gives, and these two things will be stored in different places under lock and key.

Can my child's taking part in the study end early?
If your child decides to take part in the study, he or she still has the right to decide at any time that he or she no longer wants to participate. Your child will not be treated differently if he or she decides to stop taking part in the study.

The individuals conducting the study may need to end your child's participation in the study. They may do this if your child is not able to follow the directions they give him or her, if they find that your child's being in the study is more risk than benefit to him or her, or if the agency funding the study decides to stop the study early for a variety of scientific reasons.

What happens if my child gets hurt or sick during the study?
If you believe your child is hurt or if your child gets sick because of something that is done during the study, you should call Katherine L Steinman, at (859) 576-7243 immediately. It is important for you to understand that Eastern Kentucky University will not pay for the cost of any care or treatment that might be necessary because your child gets hurt or sick while taking part in this study. That cost will be your responsibility. Also, Eastern Kentucky University will not pay for any wages that might be lost as a result of this study.

Usually, medical costs that result from research-related harm cannot be included as regular medical costs. Therefore, the costs related to your child's care and treatment because of something that is done during the study will be your responsibility. You should ask your insurer if you have any questions about your insurer's willingness to pay under these circumstances.

What if I have questions?
Before you decide whether to accept this invitation for your child to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you or your child has questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Katherine L Steinman, at (859) 576-7243. If you have any questions about your child's rights as a research volunteer, contact the staff in the Division of Sponsored Programs at Eastern Kentucky University at 859-622-3636. We will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

What else do I need to know?
You will be told if any new information is learned which may affect your child's condition or influence your willingness to continue allowing your child to take part in this study.

I have thoroughly read this document, understand its contents, have been given an opportunity to have my questions answered, and give permission for my child to participate in this research project if he/she chooses to participate.

______________________________ ______________________________
Parent/Guardian's Name Date Child's Name Date

______________________________ ______________________________
Parent/Guardian's Signature Date Witness Signature Date

Appendix I:

Informed consent for vocational specialist

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

You are being invited to take part in a research study about secondary transition. The researcher would like to obtain your account of the transition process for young adults with intellectual disabilities. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be one of about four people to do so.

Who is doing the study?

The person in charge of this study is Katherine Steinman, a graduate student at Eastern Kentucky University. The researcher is under advisement by Dr. Dana Howell. There may be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to describe the perspectives of a young adult with an intellectual disability who has completed the transition process, his or her parent, and his or her job coach during the transition from high school to the community. By doing this study, we hope to learn the point of view of you, the young adult, and his or her parent, and the supports and barriers that you encountered when establishing transition goals.

Where is the study going to take place and how long will it last?

The research procedures will be conducted at a location convenient to the participants. The researcher will make sure it is in a comfortable atmosphere that is quiet and private. Each session will take about 60-90 minutes. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is a minimum of 60 minutes and a maximum of 90 minutes once over the next year.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in an interview to obtain information about your experience and role in a young adult’s life during the transition from high school to the adult world. Some of the questions will be asked to establish background information while other questions will examine your role, the barriers you encountered, and your experience as a professional.

Once these questions are answered, you will be provided with a copy of consent form and will be contacted later in a follow up email, phone call, or face-to-face interaction.

Are there reasons why I should not take part in this study?

There are no reasons why you should not take part in this study. The procedures of this study are just like a normal conversation that you may encounter on a daily basis.

What are the possible risks and discomforts?
To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than what you would experience in everyday life.

Will I benefit from taking part in this study?
You may not get any personal benefit from taking part in this study. The researcher is looking for your experience which may or may not benefit you in sharing it.

Do I have to take part in the study?
If you decide to participate in this study it should because you want to volunteer. You will not lose any rights that you would normally have if you decide to not volunteer. If you participate and you change your mind later, you can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

If I don't want to take part in the study, are there other choices?
If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except to not take part in the study.

What will it cost for me to participate?
There are no costs associated with taking part in this study.

Will I receive any payment or reward for taking part in the study?
You will not receive a payment or reward for this study. We thank you for choosing to volunteer in this research project.

Who will see the information I give?
Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write up the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about this combined information. You will not be identified in these written materials, nor will the student.

This study is confidential and pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity. Only the researcher and the people on the research team will know your identity.

What if I have questions?
Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to participate in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Katherine L Steinman, at (859) 576-7243. If you have any questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the staff in the Division of

Sponsored Programs at Eastern Kentucky University at 859-622-3636. We will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

What else do I need to know?
You will be told if any new information is learned which may affect your willingness to continue in this study.

I have thoroughly read this document, understand its contents, have been given an opportunity to have my questions answered, and give permission to participate in this research project.

Signature	Date	Witness Signature	Date

Appendix J:

Assent for young adult

I am studying how a student moved from high school out into the real world, and I would like to ask for your help. If you decide to participate in this project, you will be asked to talk with me for about half an hour. I will ask you questions about what it was like when you left high school, and how your life is now.

Your parents know that I am asking you if you want to participate, but it is up to you to decide if you want to do this. You should not feel pressured to participate, and no one will be upset with you if say no. Even if you say yes now but decide you want to stop later, no one will be upset with you. All you have to do is tell me that you want to stop.

Do you have any questions for me?

Do you want to participate?

If you want to participate, you can write your name on the line below. If you have any questions, please ask me before you sign. If you do not want to participate, please do not write your name.

______________________________ ______________________________

Signature Date Witness Signature Date

Appendix K:

Interview outline

Opening instructions:
Introduce yourself
Thank them for coming
Offer water/drink
Inform them of the purpose of the study
Review the consent form
Get the consent form signed

Questions for the young adult participant:
(These questions are not in order of the final interview)
    What was like to leave high school?
    Were you working when you left high school?
    Where do you work now?
    Do you volunteer anywhere?
    What are your goals since leaving school?

Questions for the parent:
(These questions are not in order of the final interview)
    Tell me a little bit about his or her experience in the school system.
    How has it been obtaining and maintaining vocational supports for your child?
    What were the barriers that you encountered during the secondary transition phase?
    What supports were available to you during the transition process?
    Did your child meet the IGP goals that had been established for him during his time in school?
    What were your feelings about taking on a more secondary role in your son's life?
    How did you cope with those feelings?
    What is the main thing that you want to leave behind for your son?

Questions for the vocational specialist
(These questions are not in order of the final interview)
    What barriers did you encountered when working with this individual?
    What supports did you have to help make this transition easier?
    How involved were you during the transition process?
    Did you have any trouble meeting his transition goals?

Closing instructions:
Thank them for coming
Give them their thank you present
Inform them that there is contact information inside the envelope if they have any questions at a later point
Show them out

Appendix L:

Customized employment and transition

Customized Employment and Transition: 10 Effective Steps to Vocational Success

By Cary Griffin

Introduction

Joey has never had a real job. He carries a label of autism. He uses Facilitated Communication, a Dynavox, and limited sign language to communicate. Joey faced a major life transition with a plan generated through a practical assessment process called Discovering Personal Genius (DPG). This assessment, which gathers existing information and is not predicated on predicting future success, helped the team from his community rehabilitation program catalog Joey's skills and generate a list of three overarching "vocational themes." For each theme, a "list of twenty" was prepared. These three lists represented sixty unique places where people with the same skills and interests worked in his hometown. Refining these listings of "where the career makes sense" guide employment development activities and represents the latest advances in solid career development strategies. Transition, after all, is supposed to be an outcome, not simply a process (Griffin & Keeton, 2009).

Joey worked with his team locating places where his skills could develop, and where his interests would keep him enthralled. His interests and burgeoning skills in gardening and in horses led to his part-time work cleaning stables and grooming horses, and to retaining a community garden plot where he could grow carrots as horse treats. As his wages increased, he paid for additional riding lessons, and set up a table at horse events where he sold carrots, and locally purchased treats, and grew his social capital among other equestrian enthusiasts. As Joey transitions to life as a community member, he has a part-time job where he learns critical career skills; he is around others who share his interests and have his success at heart; and he owns a small, but real, business that is growing as he adds new products from his supply chain. Today, only about 22% of adults with developmental disabilities are working (Griffin, Hammis, Geary, 2007). However, with a bit of planning and an understanding of employment options, people with disabilities can attain vocational success.

Customizing Employment

Joey's story serves as an inventive, but simple, approach to creating employment. Traditional competitive employment fails people with disabilities. There are many entry-level jobs available for people with disabilities, but career advancement, and doing what one loves is rare for individuals with significant disabilities. Therefore, changing our understanding of employment and our approach to getting jobs is necessary. The starting point is knowing the process, what's possible, and what resources are available. The following 10 Points will help guide career development:

Avoid Comparison. At the heart of Customized Employment (CE) is the realization that when two applicants are compared to one another by an employer, the one with the disability almost always loses. So, use social networks, paid internships and work experiences, and family/school connections to develop jobs. Also, recognize that there are unlimited ways to make a living in this world, and by being pro-active (i.e. creating a business), one is no longer captive to what the labor market may offer.

Focus on Skills. Far too often, Transition age youth are asked what they like. While interests do indeed reinforce the quest for knowledge, starting with one's skills and talents is a better career development approach. Many people have interests but lack the skills to compete. Skills are at the heart of success, so make certain from a young age that your child is accumulating experiences that feed talents of value in the marketplace. A child who makes toast every morning for the family has a good shot at working in a restaurant, or starting their own. Don't support passive experiences; get your child into the action where they'll learn to wash their clothes, change a car's oil, milk a cow, run a computer, mow a lawn, bake a cake. These simple skills represent the foundation of vocational success.

Raise expectations. Families are often discouraged from having dreams for their children with disabilities, which results in many adults living lives of isolation and poverty. Expecting children to grow up and work is a crucial first step to success. Make certain that children have household chores, after-school jobs, and summer employment.

Expectations are followed by action. One critical activity is saving for the future. Families should consider establishing an "employment fund" for their child just as they might for a sibling expected to attend college. This fund can be used for advanced training, buying tools, securing transportation, or starting a business.

Advocate for real work experience. Work experiences should be paid either by the school, an arrangement through a youth employment program sponsored by the local Workforce Center or One-Stop, by Vocational Rehabilitation, or by the employer. These time-limited try-outs match the interests of the individual and reveal the supports necessary for success, the best teaching approaches, and illuminate future options for work and study. Wages build a work ethic, garner peer status, and reinforce the connection between labor and reward. Most of us had after school or summer jobs as children, and we got paid for that work.

Augment exploitable resources. The best jobs go to those who earn profits for their employer. Special Education graduates do not typically bring obvious exploitable skills to the employer, therefore having equipment or tools that enhance employability are crucial to career advancement. Using valued resources to secure employment is the analogous to using a college degree to get a job (Griffin, Hammis & Geary, 2007).

Apply for Social Security. As graduation approaches, parents should investigate eligibility for the Social Security (SSA) system. Social Security provides a variety of work incentives available to students including the Student Earned Income Exclusion which allows those enrolled in educational programs to earn up to $1640 per month and $6,600 per year before reducing SSI monthly payments (www.ssa.gov). Social Security also allows for the Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS). This work incentive allows an individual to maintain a monthly check and simultaneously receive SSA payments to pursue a career, pay for transportation, get training or degrees, or start a business of their own (Griffin & Hammis, 2003).

Arrange for a smooth transition. Many states have waiting lists for adult services, so graduating with a paid job, and plenty of work experience is crucial. Apply to the state for case management services and apply for vocational supports at the local One-Stop center.

Consider self employment as an option. Business ownership is the fastest growing employment option in America today and many people with disabilities have skills and interests that easily translate into moneymaking opportunities. Consider starting early and remember how young most children are when they open their first lemonade stand.

Use the family network. Most people get their jobs through personal contacts. Families consume local goods and services and have friends and colleagues. Use these contacts to advocate for and leverage work experiences and jobs for your child with a disability. Many families also have business owners among their membership. Call on these relatives for advice, orders, and customer referrals.

References

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Many employment resources are available at www.griffinhammis.com ; www.centerforsocialcapital.org; www.start-up-usa.biz; http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition ; www.worksupport.com ; www.employmentforall.org; www.mntat.org

Note: parts of this article appeared previously in an article for *Impact*, published by the University of MN.

Appendix M:

Career exploration and types of employment

Career Exploration

Volunteer Opportunities, Internships & Job Sampling

Even before adolescents with autism are ready to sample different work experiences in the community, there are opportunities for them to get some work experience right in their own school buildings. This is an important first step in understanding your adolescent's strengths and challenges within different types of work. Strengths can be built upon and challenges minimized before work experiences in the community begin. Some examples of possible work experience in the school building include:

- Working in the school store – filling orders, stocking shelves, completing transactions.
- General office tasks – sorting mail, shredding documents, greeting visitors.
- Volunteer opportunities for community service.
- Maintaining a portion of grounds or garden.
- Participating in a recycling program.
- Collecting canned goods for a food bank.
- Working in the cafeteria.

Internships

During school, or even after graduation, finding a paid or unpaid internship can help individuals with autism gain valuable work experience. Internships can often help with skill building, job training programs, and eventually the job application process. Some students can be connected to a peer or mentor at the internship or volunteer site who can lend a hand if needed.

For young adults with autism with more significant challenges, job coaches can help them reach their full potential. A job coach will assist the adolescent or young adult with autism in obtaining a job and provide onsite support and assistance. A job coach may spend time at a job site before the individual begins the job in order to understand the requirements of the job and then will provide assistance to the individual with autism to successfully complete the job. Your school district may be able to help you find an agency that can supply a job coach.

Families may also need to keep in mind that individuals with autism may need to build up the endurance and stamina needed to complete their work day. This needs to be taken into consideration when exploring internships and job sampling options. Adequate time needs to be provided to make sure that the appropriate level of endurance and stamina is achieved. This way, the young adult can meet the requirements of the job.

Table 2. Types of employment

Types	Definitions
Competitive Employment	● Full-time or part-time job within a community ● Supports are usually withdrawn after the student has a job ● Responsibility of the student to learn the job and maintain level of performance
Supportive Employment	● Supports are provided for students in a competitive job for as long as they hold the job ● Supervision supports are reduced the longer the student is in the job so that the student may achieve occupational independence ● Funded by state developmental disabilities or vocational rehabilitation ● Families are required to advocate for supported employment if it is appropriate for their child

Source: AustismSpeaks (2011).

Table 2 (continued). Types of employment

Types	**Definitions**
Customized Employment	● Incorporating the strengths and interests of the student with disabilities into job tasks or duties within a business ● Job and job requirements are uniquely created for the student ● Requires the vocational specialist to learn about the student and fully understand their strengths and needs for support
Self Employment	● Matching an individual's strengths and interests to a service that could provide income ● Allows for individualization of work environment for the person to fully access and adapt work requirements
Secured/ Segregated Employment	● Individuals with disabilities work in self-contained units and are not integrated with workers without disabilities ● Does not foster independence in work environments, but rather dependence ● Supported by a combination of federal and/or state funds
Sheltered Employment	● Programs in a protective environment that provides training and services that will assist adults with disabilities in developing life skills as well as educational and pre-vocational skills ● Most commonly associated with individuals with Autism

Source: AustismSpeaks (2011).