

2001

A study of the congruence between the transition planning process and first -year outcomes for students with learning disabilities

Donna Marie Sabel
College of William & Mary - School of Education

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd>



Part of the [Secondary Education Commons](#), and the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sabel, Donna Marie, "A study of the congruence between the transition planning process and first -year outcomes for students with learning disabilities" (2001). *Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects*. William & Mary. Paper 1539618340.
<https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.25774/w4-8vrb-vj20>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

**Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600**

UMI[®]

**A STUDY OF THE CONGRUENCE BETWEEN THE
TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS AND FIRST-YEAR OUTCOMES FOR
STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Donna Marie Sabel

December 2000

UMI Number: 9999056

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 9999056

Copyright 2001 by Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company.

**All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

**Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346**

A STUDY OF THE CONGRUENCE BETWEEN THE
TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS AND FIRST-YEAR OUTCOMES FOR
STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

by

Donna Marie Sabel

Approved December 2000 by

Brenda Williams

Brenda Williams, Ed.D.
Chairperson of Doctoral Committee

Virginia D. McLaughlin

Virginia McLaughlin, Ed.D.

James Stronge

James Stronge, Ph.D.

To
my husband Noel,
our son, Cameron,
and
our angels, Ethan and Austin

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	vi
List of Tables.....	vii
Abstract.....	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	6
Research Question.....	6
Significance of the Study.....	7
Operational Definitions.....	8
Limitations.....	11
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature.....	14
History of Transition Planning.....	15
Process of Transition Planning.....	19
Participant Involvement in Transition Planning.....	21
Identified Adult Outcomes.....	28
Individual Transition Plans.....	29
Essential Features of Transition Planning.....	32
Transition Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities.....	36
Student Transition Outcomes.....	41
Summary.....	45
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	50
Population and Sample.....	51
School District Description.....	52
Instrumentation.....	54
Data Collection.....	59
Data Analysis.....	63
Chapter 4: Results.....	67
Demographics.....	67
Congruence Between Transition Plans and Practices.....	69
Congruence Between Transition Plans and Outcomes.....	71
Implementation of Practices.....	73
Facilitating and Inhibiting Factors.....	75
Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations and Implications.....	85
Summary.....	85
Conclusions.....	89

Discussion.....	93
Recommendations for Practice.....	97
Recommendations for Future Research.....	102
References.....	105
Appendix A: Letter Requesting Participation in Study.....	122
Appendix B: Transition Plan Review Checklist and Indicators.....	124
Appendix C: Consent Form and “Transition Component of the IEP”.....	129
Appendix D: Student Interview Guide.....	132
Vita.....	136

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank the members of my dissertation committee for their support, feedback, and technical contributions - - Dr. Brenda Williams, Dr. Virginia McLaughlin, and Dr. James Stronge.

A special and heartfelt thanks goes to Dr. Bernard Zollett, for his mentorship and support. He demonstrated a personal interest and steadily offered insight, perspective, and encouragement as he assisted in my endeavor.

There are several individuals, who with their input, experience, support, time, and technical expertise, made the journey to achieving this goal possible. I would like to express my appreciation to Cheryl Mitchell, Elaine Carlson, Dennis Martin, Nonie Bush, Sharon DeFur, and Bob Oakley.

Finally, I want to thank my husband, Noel for his years of support, patience, and belief in my ability to persevere. Without his love and willingness to take on substantial responsibility for our home and newborn son, this goal would have never been realized.

List of Tables

Table 1: Transition Practices Cited in the Literature.....	48
Table 2: Literature Analysis of Support for Recommended Practices.....	49
Table 3: Response Return Rate by School.....	68
Table 4: Congruence Between Transition Plans and Identified Practices.....	70
Table 5: Congruence Between Transition Plans and Postsecondary Outcomes.....	73
Table 6: The Extent to Which Recommended Practices Were Implemented in 25 Transition Plans.....	74
Table 7: Facilitating Factors to Participants' Transition Process.....	76
Table 8: Inhibiting Factors to Participants' Transition Process.....	80

**A STUDY OF THE CONGRUENCE BETWEEN THE
TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS AND FIRST-YEAR OUTCOMES FOR
STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

ABSTRACT

Through quantitative and qualitative methods this study examined the transition planning process in Virginia's Henrico County Public School Division for secondary students with learning disabilities in an effort to determine the extent to which postsecondary outcomes identified in their transition plans were achieved. Specific objectives of the study were (a) to determine the congruence between written objectives in exiting students' transition plans and identified recommended practices in the literature, (b) to determine the congruence between the transition plans developed for students with learning disabilities and their postsecondary outcomes, (c) to determine the extent to which identified recommended practices in students' transition plans were implemented, and (d) to identify facilitating and inhibiting factors to the transition planning process from the students' perspectives. Findings showed congruence greater than 50% between only three of the eight identified recommended practices in the literature and students' transition plans: parent/family involvement, development of self-advocacy/self-understanding skills, and participation in academic skills training. Considerably less congruence was evident for each of the remaining five practices. Interagency collaboration was not identified in any of the transition plans. Information gathered to determine the congruence between the transition plans developed for students with learning disabilities and their postsecondary outcomes showed the employment outcome area as having the

greatest degree of congruence and the education outcome area as being less than 50%.

Data collected to determine the extent to which recommended practices were implemented revealed vocational training, parent/family involvement, and paid work experience had been implemented 100% while the remaining practices were found to be implemented to a much lesser degree. Facilitating and inhibiting factors to the transition process as reported by participants revealed practices found in the literature as well as those not identified in the literature. Academic skills training emerged as a dominant facilitating factor. The lack of this training was cited most frequently as an inhibiting factor. In addition, teacher attitude was reported frequently as an inhibiting factor.

DONNA MARIE SABEL

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY IN VIRGINIA

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

In recent years, secondary schools have increased their emphasis on preparing all students with fundamental skills to become independent, contributing members of their communities upon graduation. This renewed focus is primarily a result of the documented failure of secondary education to provide many students with knowledge and skills pertinent to their future goals (Benz & Kochhar, 1996; Charner, Fraser, Hubbard, Rogers, & Horne, 1995; U.S. Department of Education, 1999). It is essential that all students be provided the opportunity to acquire those necessary skills prior to exiting high school, whether they plan to enter directly into the world of work or wish to pursue postsecondary education.

In a national effort to improve the transition from school to work for all students, the School to Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-239) was passed. This law provides a framework to help states and local communities respond to work force development needs by creating comprehensive school-to-work transition programs. The overall objective of these programs is to prepare all students for work and further education and to increase their opportunities to start initial jobs in high-skill, high-wage career areas (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). As a result, funds are provided to programs such as youth apprenticeships, cooperative education, and Tech Prep. These programs must contain a school-based learning component, a work-based component,

along with guidance and counseling, work place mentoring, technical assistance for employers, and coordination with employers (Evers, 1996).

Despite the availability of such programs, the transition from school to postsecondary life is often a concern and can be a tumultuous time for young adults. This is particularly true for students with disabilities. Recent studies of the outcomes of special education programs for those who graduate reveal findings that are disappointing. Adults with disabilities often experience significant problems making the transition into adult life (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Edgar, 1991; Halpern & Benz, 1987; Malian & Love, 1997; Wagner et al., 1991). When compared to their nondisabled peers, they are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed, be more restricted in their participation in community and leisure activities, receive lower pay, remain more dependent on parents and others, experience more dissatisfaction with employment, and encounter academic failure in postsecondary settings (Dunn, 1996; Edgar, 1987; Rice, 2000; Rojewski, 1999; Wagner, 1993). These findings are particularly disturbing given that the federal mandate to educate students identified as having disabilities had been in effect for the participants in the respective studies throughout most of their school years.

The results pertaining specifically to outcomes of students with learning disabilities are as discouraging as those regarding students enrolled in special education in general. Although individuals with learning disabilities show the highest rate of employment for all disability groups, they show high rates of unemployment compared to the general population (Edgar, 1987; Peraino, 1992). Of concern, too, are high rates of underemployment and low earnings (Haring, Lovett, & Smith, 1990; Rojewski, 1999). Findings by Wagner (1993) indicate two other outcomes that are not promising. That is,

Wagner found that within five years of graduation, 31% of individuals with learning disabilities had been arrested at least once. In addition, 50% of this population were reported to be parenting compared to only 21% of their nondisabled peers. Furthermore, according to Fairweather and Shaver (1991), for this population of individuals with average or above intelligence, the rate of enrollment in postsecondary education is extremely low (17% compared to 56% of the nondisabled population). Rojewski (1999) conducted a study two years after high school of 441 young adults with learning disabilities and 10,737 nondisabled young adults. Individuals with learning disabilities were found to be more likely to be employed rather than enrolled in postsecondary programs. It should be noted that the data presented above are reported on individuals who exited school by graduating. Follow-up studies of individuals leaving school report dropout rates for students with learning disabilities of 36%, 42%, 56%, and 29%, respectively (Adelman & Vogel, 1990; Edgar, 1987; Malcom, Polatajko, & Simon, 1990; U.S. Department of Education, 1999). In Virginia, the percentage of students with learning disabilities who dropped out during the 97-98 school term was 27% (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

Overall, the percentage of individuals with disabilities graduating with a high school diploma has remained constant at 30% over the past 10 years (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). A second National Longitudinal Transitional Study (NLTS-2) is being designed to follow a cohort of students through high school and into early adulthood. This will provide more current data that identify progress in transition services and postschool outcomes for students with disabilities.

Problems experienced during the school years are often the same as those experienced in adulthood. However, it is conceivable that they are heightened by the increasing demands in adulthood, such as the demands of work, daily routines, or advanced academic expectations. Although programs such as those supported by the School to Work Opportunities Act offer potential gains for students with disabilities, these students are competing with the general population for access to these programs. Consequently, Evers (1996) stated that the possibility exists for limited access to such programs. Bove, McNeil, Paolucci-Whitcomb, and Nevin (1991) reported that despite an emphasis in special education on equality, integration, and independence, many students with disabilities leave public education only to experience segregation and lead dependent, nonproductive lives.

In response to the research documenting the dismal outcomes of students with disabilities leaving public school, amendments to P.L. 94-142, now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), were signed into law (P.L. 101-476) in 1990. Included within this law were components that describe and mandate transition programming and services for youth with disabilities. In addition, the professional literature emphasizes the importance of planning related to transition (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, & Gilman, 1993), the process of transition beyond the school domain, and individualized education plans (IEPs) (Wehman, Kregel, & Barcus, 1985). Factors important to successful transition outcomes may be found in numerous studies and reports (Aune, 1991; Halpern, 1994; Kohler, 1993; Rusch, Enchelmaier, & Kohler, 1994). Also, a number of curricula specific to transition have emerged (Brolin, 1983, 1991; Ford et al., 1989; Wehman, 1992, 1995, 1998; West, Taymans, & Gopal, 1997).

Much information on the factors important to successful transition outcomes and the use of transition-specific curricula indicates an enormous effort toward ensuring implementation of transition planning. However, more information is needed. The following questions exist regarding transition: (a) What is happening in IEP meetings to address the transition needs of secondary-aged students? (b) To what extent are participants in the transition planning process using what the literature identifies as recommended practices? and (c) What are the results of actual transition planning efforts in terms of postschool success for students with disabilities?

As with other educational trends, many transition programs are being developed and implemented without the collection of any real data regarding the effectiveness of services and effects of planning on student outcomes. Halpern (1990) suggested that improved services can be provided if a systematic means (i.e., a set of guidelines) for monitoring the transition process is created. One approach is to increase the amount of program evaluation data collected on transition services. Another method is to gather qualitative data about the transition planning process and outcomes and compare those data to the existing theory regarding recommended practices and indicators of successful programs. A third method would involve increasing the amount of quantitative data on student outcomes and data collected from key participants in the transition planning process. Through quantitative and qualitative methods, this study examined the transition planning process in one public school division and determine the congruence of this planning with students' postsecondary outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine the transition planning process in Virginia's Henrico County Public School Division for secondary students with learning disabilities and to determine the extent to which postsecondary outcomes identified in their transition plans were achieved. Information was collected by quantitative and qualitative methods. The specific objectives of this study were (a) to determine the congruence between written objectives in exiting students' transition plans and identified recommended practices in the literature, (b) to determine the congruence between the transition plans developed for students with learning disabilities and their postsecondary outcomes, (c) to determine the extent to which identified recommended practices in students' transition plans are implemented, and (d) to identify facilitating and inhibiting factors to the transition planning process from students' perspectives.

Research Questions

To address the objectives mentioned above, the following questions were asked:

1. What is the congruence between written transition plans for students with learning disabilities and identified recommended practices in the literature?
2. What is the congruence between the transition plans developed for students with learning disabilities and their postsecondary outcomes one year after graduation?
3. To what extent are identified recommended practices in students' transition plans implemented?
4. What do students identify as facilitating and inhibiting factors to their transition process?

Significance of the Study

Many studies have been conducted over the past decade to assess the post-school outcomes associated with special education (Adelman & Vogel, 1990; Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000; Edgar, 1987; Sitlington, Frank, & Carson, 1993; Wagner, 1989, 1993). These efforts have been in direct response to parent, teacher, student, and public concern over the applicability of academic, social, and vocational skills taught via special education. An important outcome associated with effective education appears to be a successful transition from school to adult life.

Educators, parents, and adult service providers have gathered information and worked together to improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities. A common missing element in the transition planning process is an evaluation component (Malian & Love, 1997; West, 1988). Increasing emphasis on accountability and commitment to improve educational programs are driving forces behind evaluation efforts. It is through effective evaluation that educators can identify specific strengths and weaknesses of special education programs (McLaughlin & McLaughlin, 1993). The emphasis to date in the area of transition has been on planning, organizing, and implementing. Now it is time for local school divisions to take a closer look at the transition outcomes for students with disabilities. Only through such efforts can the quality and effectiveness of transition planning be determined.

To date, no formal comprehensive study has been conducted in Henrico County Public Schools to examine the effectiveness of the transition planning mandates for special education students ages 14 years and older (S. Snider, personal communication, December 5, 1997). An examination of written transition plans, students' perceptions of

the process as well as the congruence of transition planning to the outcomes of students who have exited the school division will be useful in improving services. The information collected in this study will provide insight currently lacking in the literature concerning local transition planning. In addition, the method used to gather information for the study will help to establish an evaluative tool for transition programs in other school divisions.

Operational Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions apply:

Individualized education plan (IEP). An IEP is a written statement developed by a representative of LEA, who is qualified to provide or supervise specialized instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities, a teacher, parents, and when appropriate, the child. It shall include statements of (a) present level of educational performance, including how the child's disability affects involvement and progress in general curriculum; or for preschoolers, how disability affects participation in appropriate activities; (b) special education & related services and supplementary aids & services to be provided and program modifications or supports provided for personnel; (c) explanation of extent to which child will not participate in regular class; (d) any individual modifications needed for student to participate in state and districtwide assessments; and if child will not participate in general assessments, why assessment is not appropriate and how child will be assessed; (e) frequency and location of services and modifications; (f) beginning at age 14, transition service needs focusing on child's course of study; (g) beginning at least one year before child reaches age of majority, information regarding rights transferred on reaching age of majority; and (h) how child's

progress toward annual goals will be measured, and how parents will be regularly informed of progress. (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments [IDEA], 20 U. S. C., Section 614 (D), 1997)

Individualized education plan meeting. The IEP meeting occurs at least once a year. The student's present level of functioning is discussed, progress made since the last meeting (for continuing students) is reviewed, and goals and objectives are established for the next year. Every third year, the IEP planning group conducts a review of the student's status based on the reevaluation data (Asselin & Clark, 1993).

Interagency. A group of individuals representing multiple and diverse agencies and organizations that come together and commit to teaching, learning, and working with each other across traditional agency and organizational boundaries to better serve individuals with disabilities. Their activities may include assessment, planning, service delivery, and evaluation at both the consumer and community levels (Everson & Guillory, 1998).

Learning disabilities. "Specific learning disability" means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written. The disorder may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimum brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage (IDEA, 1997).

Postsecondary education or training outcomes. Postsecondary education options include adult education, community college, or college or university programs. Any vocational or technical program beyond high school that does not lead to an associate of arts or baccalaureate degree is considered postsecondary training. Postsecondary training may be obtained in public vocational and technical schools, community colleges, vocational or technical programs, private vocational or technical schools, labor union trades/skills training, military vocational or technical skills training, apprenticeship programs, or state/federal employment training programs. Some of these programs require that an individual obtain a certificate or license before being permitted to practice his or her occupational skills (Asselin & Clark, 1993).

Recommended practice. Refers to practice or activity identified by experts in the field of transition as showing promise to enable students with disabilities to attain identified postsecondary goals. Practices identified for this study have been supported by two empirical studies or one empirical study and at least two research-referenced publications in which an author or authors implied that the practice was desirable or recommended. A source is considered research-referenced if the implications are guided by evidence obtained from systematic procedures that were not conducted by the article's author(s). This literature bases its support for an identified practice on previously conducted research rather than personal experience or opinion.

Students with disabilities. This term replaced "handicapped students," which was used until the 1990 reauthorization of the Education of Handicapped Act (EHA), now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It includes students evaluated in accordance with federal regulations (IDEA/300.530-300.534) whose

diagnosis is mental retardation, hearing impairment, deafness, communication impairment, autism, visual impairment, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, deaf-blindness, severe and profound disabilities, multiple disabilities, specific learning disabilities, or traumatic brain injury, who, because of these disabilities, require special education and related services (IDEA, 1997).

Transition plans. Refers to goals and objectives documented in a student's IEP that can pertain to instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other postschool adult living objectives, and when appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional evaluation as deemed necessary by the IEP committee for the student to be able to move from school to postschool activities (IDEA, 1997).

Transition process. Includes a process in which students and families are assisted in thinking about the student's life after high school and in identifying long-range goals. The high school experience is designed to create opportunities to gain the skills and connections needed to achieve these goals.

Transition services. A coordinated set of activities is developed for a student with a disability within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to postschool activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation (IDEA, 1997).

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations may impact the interpretation of the results of this study and therefore generalization to all schools:

1. The focus of this research was limited to one school division. Henrico County Public Schools is one of the six largest school divisions in Virginia and is considered to be representative of a diverse population. However, the sole sample may not be representative of other contexts.

2. The overall response rate was not as high as hoped. The design of the study precluded any further collection of data to analyze for nonresponse bias.

3. The study was descriptive in nature; therefore, no causal conclusion can be drawn from the information obtained.

4. The description of the transition planning process was based on self-report perceptions of the identified key participants. The study was affected by the inability to control for human response and for previous experiences and knowledge participants have regarding transition services. Qualitative and descriptive data were collected in order to establish a meaningful context.

5. This researcher is a secondary special education teacher in Henrico County Public Schools who is responsible for conducting IEP meetings where transition services are discussed and assisting in the implementation of transition plans. Researcher bias was addressed by employing certain strategies in an attempt to control for the issue. One approach was triangulation. Quantitative data collected by a developed checklist were compared to information gathered through semistructured individual interviews. These interviews were conducted with a smaller subset of the identified population to be surveyed. Independent raters were used to identify and record recommended practices relating to transition services to be implemented as a part of the student's educational program. The percentage of actual postschool outcomes for students were computed

when compared to identified outcomes in students' plans. A description of the transition planning process was formulated from the assemblage of data from document analyses of students' transition plans and semistructured interviews.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Since the middle of the 1980s, much literature has been generated in the area of transition for students with disabilities from school to postsecondary activities and community life. Ample resources describe the history of transition, what transition should entail, models of transition curricula, and reported recommended practices in transition. In addition, a growing body of literature regarding postschool transition outcomes for students with disabilities exists. The emphasis to date in the area of transition has been on planning, organizing, and implementing. Now is the time for local school divisions to examine their transition planning efforts and subsequent outcomes for students with disabilities. As stated previously, the purpose of this study was to examine the transition planning process in the Henrico County School Division for secondary students with learning disabilities and to determine the congruence of this planning with the students' postsecondary outcomes.

In this chapter, related literature and research is reviewed in order to provide an understanding of the evolution, process, and components of transition planning for students with disabilities. The review is organized into the following sections:

1. A Brief History of Transition Planning for Secondary Students with Disabilities
2. The Process of Transition Planning for Secondary Students with Disabilities

3. **Participant Involvement in Transition Planning for Secondary Students with Disabilities**
4. **Identified Adult Outcomes for Transition Planning**
5. **Individualized Transition Plans of Secondary Students with Disabilities**
6. **Essential Features for Successful Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities**
7. **Emerging Practices: Transition Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities**
8. **Studies of Student Transition Outcomes**

The chapter concludes with two tables. Table 1 shows the frequency with which transition practices are cited in the literature. Table 2 identifies those practices that have been supported by at least two empirical studies or one empirical study and at least two research-referenced publications in which an author or authors implied that the practice was desirable or recommended. A source is considered research-referenced if the implications are guided by evidence obtained from systematic procedures that were not conducted by the article's author(s). This literature bases its support for an identified practice on previously conducted research rather than personal experience or opinion.

A Brief History of Transition Planning for Secondary Students with Disabilities

Although the use of the term "transition" to describe the process that occurs between secondary education and posteducation is fairly new (within the last decade or so), the idea of preparing students for adult life goes back as far as public education itself. For example, Dewey (1929) defined the purpose of education as preparing children to be productive members of American society.

Likewise, the concept of preparing students with disabilities for a successful transition from school to postsecondary work and community life is not new. Collaborative transition service efforts between special education and vocational education date back to the 1930s (Danek & McCrone, 1989). Browning, Brown, and Dunn (1993) identified three notable efforts that have come forth since the early 1960s. The first effort to assist in this area was characterized by cooperative work-study programs. Through an agreement between the public schools and vocational rehabilitation agencies, the goal of these programs was to prepare students with mild disabilities for the community by providing an integrated curriculum of academic, social, and vocational components. They also provided work experience for students. It is reported that a total of 96,604 secondary students were served through these programs. Although highly successful for most of the decade, the work-study programs were abandoned in the 1970s due to changes in funding requirements that made cooperative efforts between educational and rehabilitation agencies difficult (Halpern, 1992).

In the 1970s the emphasis shifted to career education within a larger social radius. At this point career education became of great importance to the U.S. Office of Education. The Career Education Implementation Incentive Act of 1977 assisted schools in incorporating career education into their curricula. During this time attempts were made by leaders in special education to define career education with regard to students with disabilities (Koskaska & Brolin, 1985). As a result of these efforts, assessment tests, curricular materials, and general knowledge based on career education were developed.

Unlike the work-study movement that ceased to exist as a result of changes in funding and regulation, the career education movement was repealed by the federal

government. However, in the wake of both these programs came transition from school to work as a national priority (Will, 1984). The 1980s brought forth current efforts to assist students with disabilities as they move into postsecondary activities. Browning, et al. (1993) identified three important contributions of this period: "(a) the making of a definitional framework for direction, (b) the creation of transition-related legislation of programs for service and research, and (c) the development of a knowledge base for practice" (p. 188).

The term "transition," which emerged during the 1980s and is used today, has itself taken on different meanings as the concept evolved. For example, in a United States Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) 1984 position paper, transition is defined as "an outcome-oriented process encompassing a broad array of services and experiences that lead to employment (in Halpern, 1994, p. 116). Over the next several years, the definition was broadened to include outcomes other than employment. This wider focus was included in Public Law 101-146, The Individuals with Disabilities Act.

Several authors have drawn their own definitions of transition based on P.L. 101-146. Brolin (1991) discussed transition in terms of what it is not. According to him, it is not (a) just a coordination of services, (b) the only time in which a student moves from school to work, (c) focused solely on employment goals, (d) composed solely of interagency agreements, (e) to be initiated when a student becomes high school age, or (f) just special education's responsibility. In Brolin's view, transition is a process that begins the day a child enters school. The skills that are developed are those that will eventually assist him or her in making a successful transition to the appropriate environment after

high school. The Division of Career Development and Transition of the Council for Exceptional Children developed the following definition that includes themes similar to Brolin's definition:

Transition refers to a change in status from behaving primarily as a student to assuming emergent adult roles in the community. These roles include employment, participating in postsecondary education, maintaining a home, becoming appropriately involved in the community, and experiencing satisfactory personal and social relationships. The process of enhancing transition involves the participation and coordination of school programs, adult agency services, and natural supports within the community. The foundations for transition should be laid during the elementary and middle school years, guided by a broad concept of career development. Transition planning should begin no later than age 14, and students should be encouraged to the full extent of their capabilities to assume maximum amount of responsibility for such planning. (Halpern, 1994, p. 117)

Asselin and Clark (1993) stated that transition services are extremely individualized and thwart any exact definition. However, the definition provided in IDEA and subsequent definitions broaden one's interpretation of transition services. It is evident that the term transition has evolved to include all aspects of adult life and to refer to the processes used to meet educational needs related to postschool success. In the following section, transition is discussed from the viewpoint of being a process of education as well as the context of education.

The Process of Transition Planning for Secondary Students with Disabilities

The process of transition planning is required by IDEA. Beginning at age 14 (or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP team), a statement of needed transition services is developed for the student, including, when appropriate, a statement of interagency responsibilities or needed linkages (IDEA, 1997).

If a participating agency, other than the local educational agency, fails to provide the transition services described in the IEP in accordance with paragraph (1)(A)(vii) of IDEA, the local educational agency shall reconvene the IEP Team to identify alternative strategies to meet the transition objectives for the child set out in that program (IDEA, 1997).

As stated, transition planning is to be an integral part of the IEP process. The impetus for this planning is provided by a multidisciplinary team that includes school and postschool professionals, parents/guardians, students, and related community members (e.g., employers) (Everson & Moon, 1986; Hanley-Maxwell & Chadsey-Rusch, 1986; Hasazi, Furney, & DeStefano, 1999; Kohler, 1993). Schools and communities have different planning processes; however, they usually take the following into consideration: (a) students' goals and objectives (reflecting postschool instruction, job, home, and community skills); (b) specific services needed to accomplish those goals; and (c) referral to appropriate agencies, specific placements, and specific follow-up procedures/services (Wehman, 1992; Wehman, Moon, Everson, Wood, & Barcus, 1988). Although these considerations are critical for transition success, they are not sufficient in and of themselves.

Morgan, Moore, McSweyn, and Salzberg (1992) suggested that transition procedures include (a) instruction focused on developing skills necessary for community functioning, (b) identification of available adult service programs, and (c) provision of an optimal mix of opportunities and services. These components also imply that a comprehensive educational program should be provided to make sure that they are addressed. In its most practical sense, transition is a series of steps intended to improve the postschool success of students (Wehman et al., 1985).

The most desirable outcome of the transition process is that students with disabilities will be able to respond successfully to the complex and varied demands of adulthood. They must have the knowledge and skills to contend with various situations and be able to access supports and services when needed. The federal mandate requires local school divisions to assist students with disabilities with the acquisition of such knowledge and skills. Included in the mandate are critical elements that all schools must address: (a) a statement of needed transition services that are defined as a coordinated set of activities designed within an outcome-oriented process; (b) identified postsecondary areas of concern that include postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation; (c) transition efforts that are based on a student's needs in conjunction with the student's preferences and interests; and (d) transition activities that can include instruction, community experiences, development of employment and other postsecondary adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation (Halloran & Simon, 1995).

To be in compliance with the federal mandate, local school divisions must incorporate these elements into their operating procedures. In addition to the elements specified in IDEA, other factors must be considered when looking at the process of planning for transitioning students from school to adulthood. These include the practices employed by a school division to implement transition planning, the nature of the participants involved in the process, interagency collaboration, and an evaluative mechanism utilized to determine whether the planning process is yielding the results required by law.

Participant Involvement in Transition Planning for Secondary Students with Disabilities

An important variable in facilitating effective transition planning is the involvement of specific individuals who constitute the IEP committee. The following sections will examine the roles of participants in the planning process.

Special educators. As school systems struggle to develop comprehensive and efficient models of transition service delivery, special educators continue to be perceived as the primary overseers of transition plans (Gill & Edgar, 1990; Kohler, 1998; Okolo & Sitlington, 1986; West et al., 1997). As principal managers of the IEP and therefore of its transition component, special educators are regarded as the most dependable sources of student academic performance and social adjustment information (Lane, 1995). Taymans and deFur (1994) described special educators as generalist planners who are responsible for integrating social development, academic content, and vocational areas into instructional goals that have meaning for each student with a disability. Often they are designated as the first line of support for assisting, advising, and preparing students to become participants in academic, work-related, and extracurricular activities associated

with positive postschool adjustment (Spruill, 1993). Gajar, Goodman, and McAfee (1993) asserted that few would disagree that in the current delivery and coordination of school-based transition services, an unequal amount of responsibility is placed on special educators. Federal policy governing IEPs and transition planning does not mandate a model of coordination (National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities, 1993). This coordination is left to each local school division to develop and implement its own methods of planning, delivering, and monitoring.

Parents. Involvement of family members in the education of students with disabilities has been mandated since 1975 with the implementation of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), P.L. 94-142. The reauthorization of EAHCA as IDEA in 1990 addressed the mandate for family involvement in the development of transition-related IEPs, and the 1997 amendments strengthen this focus on family participation. Research shows that students with higher levels of family involvement are more successful in school than those with little or no family involvement (see, for example, Wagner, Blackorby, & Hebbeler, 1993).

Parent involvement is the factor most often identified with successful transition planning (Kohler, DeStefano, Wermuth, Grayson, & McGinty, 1994; Sale, Metzler, Everson, & Moon, 1991; Schalock et al., 1986). Parental support is necessary while the student is in high school. In addition, after students leave school, it is typically up to parents to ensure that their children obtain needed services (Lane, 1995). Cummings and Maddux (1987) reported that an additional benefit of continued parental involvement in the school program relates to the problem of unrealistic parental expectations. Parents of students with disabilities were found to have expectations for their sons or daughters as

being too low or, more frequently, unrealistically high. Parents often advocate for an educational program that does not support postschool goals; as a result, sufficient time to provide training and experiences related to more realistic goals may not be available. Continual involvement of parents in the education of their children offers ongoing opportunities to evaluate student abilities and progress toward specific postschool goals (Gajar et al., 1993).

Despite the benefits associated with parental involvement, parent participation has not occurred uniformly in the IEP process (Salembier & Furney, 1997). Some studies have characterized IEP conferences as being focused on compliance with legal procedures rather than on the collaborative development of individual plans for students (Harry, 1992; Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Leal, 1999). The literature places importance on the family's involvement in transition planning for students with disabilities and its effect on student outcomes. For this reason school divisions have a responsibility to be knowledgeable about the degree and quality of participation that occurs during transition planning.

Students. In defining transition services, the legislation focuses on outcomes, activities, students' preferences and interests, and student, parent, and service provider involvement. Recommended practices in transition emphasize student participation in transition planning (Halpern, 1994; Halpern, Yovanoff, Doren, & Benz, 1995; Johnson & Rusch, 1993; Kohler et al., 1994). A national study of high school transition programs for youth with disabilities showed that allowing students the opportunity for self-reliance and informed choices in curriculum options improved transition planning (Knowlton & Clark, 1989). Further, Reiff and deFur (1992) stated that active participation in the IEP

meeting is critical to the student's development of self-determination skills. This process gives students an opportunity to practice skills that they will need in settings after graduation. Similarly, Patton (1988) reported that active involvement of students in the planning of their high school program and transition goals resulted in greater satisfaction on the part of all team members. Aune (1991) described a model transition program for postsecondary-bound students with learning disabilities in which participants were actively involved in planning their own transition objectives and took responsibility for implementing the objectives stated in their IEPs. Project data showed that student participation in the IEP/transition conference was among the key elements in the successful transition from high school to college. Participants' progress was evaluated on the basis of data collected from case notes kept by transition counselors, a pre-/postquestionnaire and self-esteem scale, interviews conducted by the project evaluator with service providers at host schools, and student evaluations of the project. Working with this group of students for three years and collecting the large amount of descriptive data helped to identify these key elements.

Although positive results have been associated with student participation in educational and transition planning, students with disabilities have not usually been involved as team members in this process. Houck, Gellar, and Engelhard (1988) found that special education teachers perceived student involvement in program development and evaluation of programs at the secondary level to be low, but reported that the reasons for this seemed unclear. Karge, Patton, and de la Garza (1992) noted that students were not taking an active role in their transition planning, inferring that the lack of involvement was due to students not being properly prepared to participate and not being

given the opportunity to become actively involved in the meeting. Likewise, Lovitt, Cushing, and Stump (1994) discovered that, for the most part, the input of students with mild disabilities into their IEPs was limited. In their study, goals and objectives written in IEPs were not "student friendly" and were considered to be excessive. For example, one IEP reviewed listed 25 goals and 52 objectives; another IEP contained 19 goals and 85 objectives. Student reports indicated that they did not have a clear understanding of what was written and did not see the relevance of the plan to their lives.

A majority of the high school students with learning and behavioral disabilities interviewed by Guterman (1995) commented that their placement in special education had not helped them academically and objected to what they viewed as the low-level, irrelevant, and duplicative (with regular education) instruction they received. In addition, these individuals did not want to be supported by special education staff in the regular education classroom as that would draw attention to their academic difficulties. What they did want was instruction in a challenging and relevant curriculum that would prepare them for life after school. Lack of relevancy of the high school curriculum appears frequently as a main reason given by students with and without disabilities for dropping out of school or pursuing alternative education services (Kaufman, Klein, & Frase, 1999; Lange & Ysseldyke, 1998; Lichtenstein, 1993).

These findings suggest that further investigation is warranted by local school divisions to determine if students are active participants in their transition planning. If they were not, it is critical to determine those factors that prevent this process from occurring.

Interagency linkages. IDEA describes how outside agencies are involved in providing transition, requiring "a statement of the needed transition services for students, including when appropriate, a statement of interagency responsibilities or linkages (or both) before the student leaves the school setting" [Sec. 614 (d)(1)(II)]. "In the case where the participating agency, other than the educational agency, fails to provide agreed upon services, the agency shall reconvene the IEP team to identify alternative strategies to meet the transition objectives" [Sec. 614 (d)(5)].

The conditions of IDEA are clear -- the IEP must show who or what agency is responsible for delivering the instruction or related services needed to implement transition service goals and objectives. Local linkages with state or community adult services should be established to ensure communication, coordination, and collaboration between education and agency personnel. A primary objective of IDEA is to make the education system responsible for ensuring that students with disabilities receive appropriate transition services as long as they are still enrolled in school. IDEA puts the responsibility on the school to initiate a revised transition plan in the event that outside participating agencies do not provide agreed upon services.

Yet, the establishment of collaboration and cooperation among agencies and agency personnel is identified as a major barrier to transition (Edgar, Wehman, Kregel, & Seyfarth, 1985; Gajar et al., 1993). Although mandates include collaborative and cooperative statements among agencies at the federal, state, and local levels, these agreements are often nonfunctional (Gajar et al., 1993). Differences in agency philosophy, methods, requirements, "turf," funding, mission, and the interactions among

the vast number of involved agencies and advocacy groups reportedly interfere with the opportunity for collaborative success (Johnson, Sharpe, & Sinclair, 1997).

These findings are supported by the Report on the National Survey of the Implementation of IDEA Transition Requirements (1997), that showed a limited level of participation by community service agency representatives in transition IEP meetings. However, the study found that agency involvement varied as a function of disability level. That is, somewhat higher rate of agency participation was found for students with mild disabilities than for students with moderate to severe disabilities. Although the conditions of the federal transition requirements regarding agency involvement are clear, studies continue to suggest concern over the nature and extensiveness of their actual participation. The findings of this study raise questions about the extent to which specific procedures are being put into place by school districts to secure the participation of agencies. Reconvening the IEP team was cited as the practice most often used; however, survey findings show that this does not frequently occur. Problems identified as obstructing agency involvement include scheduling conflicts, insufficient numbers of agency personnel to cover a given community or region, lack of formal interagency agreements at the local level, no informal networking among school and agency personnel, and agencies' resistance to participate due to concerns over associated financial responsibilities. These barriers were consistently reported by the 548 special education directors, supervisors, and coordinators representative of all 50 states for this study. These barriers were reported in relation to students with both mild and moderate/severe disabilities.

Due to the challenges noted in the literature regarding interagency involvement, school divisions must be cognizant of the status of interagency collaboration. It is only through this awareness that school divisions can address the barriers that prevent the involvement of agencies, whose role can be pivotal in supporting the postschool service needs of individuals with disabilities.

Identified Adult Outcomes for Transition Planning

According to West et al. (1992), adult outcomes for transition planning fall into five domains: (a) postsecondary training and learning, (b) jobs and job training, (c) home living, (d) community participation, and (e) recreation and leisure skills. These anticipated outcomes should be based on assessment data, IEP committee input, family values and resources, and student preferences. Additionally, the authors highly recommended that medical needs, transportation, individual strengths and limitations, necessary support services, degree of occupational development, availability of jobs, and community resources be considered when selecting adult outcomes to be included in the transition component of the student's IEP.

Stodden and Boone (1987) identified a set of nine transition adjustment variables that should be included when addressing a student's transition needs: occupational placement maintenance, income level, continued education, community leisure, transportation, residential arrangements, medical health needs, and personal/social adjustment. Similarly, a synthesis of the literature on recommended practices for transition plans conducted by Stowitschek (1992) identified Attributes of Individual Transition Planning cited as "Best Practices" (p. 530). Targeted adult outcomes acknowledged in this research include vocational and residential options, leisure

opportunities, transportation to and from work, money management, and social skills training.

According to Hardman and McDonnell (1987), each transition plan should include an assessment of the student's needs, transition goals for both the student and the parents, activities to meet goals, person responsible, timelines, and evaluation procedures. In addition, the plan should be developed by parents, high school teachers, adult agency representatives, and any relevant adult service providers. Specific areas to be addressed by those developing the plan include vocational and residential options, personal management and recreation/leisure opportunities to be completed by the individual with the necessary supports, a program to establish and monitor the person's eligibility for specific adult services, needed case management services, and needed long term support. It is both a challenging and complex process to integrate students with disabilities into postschool settings. Therefore, transition plans should be comprehensive in scope and individualized to meet the unique needs of each student. In summary, goals written for transition must focus on the desires and needs of the student and family involved.

Individualized Transition Plans for Secondary Students with Disabilities

With the addition of transition services, the contents of the IEP have expanded as postsecondary outcomes such as employment, postsecondary education, adult services, independent living, and community participation must be addressed no later than age 16. Appropriately addressing these outcomes during the public school years, Congress feels, will promote a student's chances of achieving an adequate level of self-care, independence, self-sufficiency, and community integration (NICHCY, 1993).

As mandated in IDEA, IEPs must be developed to address the transition services necessary for a student to access postschool environments. IEPs should include clearly defined adult outcomes, appropriate supports and services to achieve these outcomes, and collaboration and coordination between school personnel and community and adult service providers.

A question that arises immediately concerning the transition planning process is what to include in the transition component of the student's IEP. Nowhere are the contents clearly stipulated (Gajar, et al., 1993). Again, recommended practices cited in the literature provide guidance in this area.

Research indicates that few transition plan documents reflect recommended practices regarding transition services (Grigal, Test, Beattie, & Wood, 1997; Lawson & Everson, 1994; Stowitschek, 1992). Grigal et al. (1997) evaluated the transition component of 94 high school students' IEPs, and although most of the components complied with IDEA's mandate, they did not include many of the elements representative of recommended practices in transition. For example, these researchers found most goals written with vague outcomes such as "will explore jobs" and "will continue in exceptional children's classes." The transition plan format should include the team's vision for the student's postschool life. This vision acts as a guide by which to identify the student's targeted adult outcomes. Other elements that should be a part of the transition plan format include names of agencies or persons who will assume responsibility for initiating and carrying out the plan, names of persons who will be providing services and evaluation of activities, persons responsible for monitoring the transition process, and timeline for activities (Stowitschek, 1992).

The transition component, regardless of its format, should include space for recording transition elements identified as recommended practices in the literature. In addition, a synthesis of the literature indicates that researchers concur that transition plans must be longitudinal (Stowitschek, 1992; Wehman, 1992) to help students obtain appropriate vocational, academic, and social goals for their lives in postschool environments.

In essence, the IEP is the impetus for appropriate instruction while the student is in school, whereas the transition plan or component addresses the movement of students into postschool activities. IDEA details this process by (a) providing a definition of transition services, (b) listing the activities that make up transition services and detailing the basis for determining which activities are appropriate for an individual student, (c) specifying the process by which a statement of needed transition services is to be included in a student's IEP, and (d) describing the responsibilities of the educational agency to monitor the provision of services (DeStefano & Wermuth, 1992). These initiatives focus on transition planning from two perspectives: (a) improvements in transition planning for individual students through modifications of the IEP process, and (b) improvements in planning for program capacity to support the service needs that are identified in individual plans (Halpern, Benz, & Lindstrom, 1992).

As illustrated, the inclusion of transition planning as an integral part of the IEP is a complex process. Helping students with disabilities to plan this task of movement from school to work or further education to community will necessitate the efforts of a number of professions in a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach (Szymanski & Danek, 1985).

During the decade since the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) identified transition as a priority, over 266 model programs have been developed to meet this challenge (Rusch, Chadsey-Rusch, & Szymanski, 1992). As a result of these model programs and the research surrounding them, a number of factors have surfaced as contributing to recommended practices. In the following section, a review of the factors reported to be recommended practices for transition in general (i.e., programs that serve diverse students) is presented. Included are more recently identified recommended practices for programs that serve students with learning disabilities.

Essential Features of Successful Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities

The numerous reported practices with promise for successful transition planning include a number of common factors. Practices cited most frequently are interagency cooperation and collaboration, vocational assessment, vocational skills training, social skills training, paid work experience while in high school, career education curricula, written transition plans, and parent or family involvement in the transition process (DeStefano, 1989; Kohler, 1993; Schalock et al., 1986; Wise & Matthews, 1987).

Kohler (1993) reviewed 49 documents consisting of theory-based or discussion literature, experimental or quasi-experimental literature, and follow-up literature. Over half of the documents reviewed identified vocational training, parent involvement, and interagency collaboration and service delivery as important for effective transition planning to occur. Further, social skills training, paid work experience, and individual transition plans were identified as recommended practices in over one third of the documents. Finally, Kohler reported that employability skills training and inclusion in integrated settings were shown to be effective in two studies, although these factors were

not implied as effective in the majority of documents reviewed. Even though the data obtained from these document reviews represent social validity, the data do not show empirical validity.

In order to examine the methodology used to identify essential practices and exemplary programs in transition, Kohler et al. (1994) analyzed 15 studies that have identified effective or exemplary transition programs. In addition, they identified those practices that are frequently labeled as recommended across evaluation studies. These findings related to the practices cited by Kohler. Again, in both investigations, the findings lacked empirical support.

Kohler et al. (1994) stated that consistent measures need to be created and applied in the analysis of relationships between certain program activities and student outcomes. Until then, the practices stated in the literature cannot be recognized as truly effective in the transition process. Kohler (1993) recommended that these practices be used as the groundwork for future transition programs. Empirical evidence needed to support or reject their usage can be generated by describing and integrating these practices into transition programs.

Halpern (1994) identified four major components in guiding the process of transition planning for students with disabilities:

- (a) an emerging sense of student empowerment that eventually enhances student self-determination within the transition planning process;
- (b) student self-evaluation, as a foundation for transition planning;
- (c) student identification of post-secondary transition goals that are consistent with the outcomes of their self-evaluations;
- and (d) student selection of appropriate educational experiences to

pursue during high school, both in school and within the broader community, that are consistent with their self-evaluations and their post-school goals. (p. 118)

The strength of the transition program depends upon the degree to which activities are developed and implemented in order to foster these four components. For example, if students are to develop a sense of empowerment, they must be given opportunities to explore options and take responsibilities for choices regarding their transition planning. Halpern suggested that the following items be considered when selecting an approach for the delivery of identified transition services: (a) the extent to which an instructional program is based on student skills, interests, and preferences; (b) inclusion of the student within the regular school program; (c) provision of community-based learning opportunities; (d) involvement of adult service agencies as needed; and (e) involvement of community organizations, as contrasted with service agencies, in helping students with their transitions.

Benz et al. (2000) reported the results of two complementary studies of a transition program for youth with disabilities. The first study examined student and program factors that predicted participants' graduation with a standard high school diploma and placement in employment and continuing education. The second study examined participants' perceptions of the program and staff characteristics that were considered most important in helping them achieve their education and transition goals. The program, titled "Youth Transition Program" or YTP, is operated collaboratively by the Oregon Department of Education, the Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Division, the University of Oregon, and local schools statewide. The YTP serves individuals with disabilities who require support beyond the services typically available through a

district's traditional general education, special education, and school-to-work programs to achieve their secondary and postsecondary employment and continuing education goals. Students are referred to this program because of additional circumstances that put them at risk for completing school and transition planning (e.g., limited or negative job experiences, teenage parenting responsibilities, unstable living conditions). Practices include: (a) transition planning focused on postschool goals and self-determination and help to coordinate school plans with relevant adult agencies; (b) instruction in academic and vocational training; (c) paid work experience; and (c) follow-up support services for up to two years after leaving the program.

Results showed that rates of engagement in employment or education remained above 80% for those who completed the program during the first two years after leaving the program. Participants' perceptions of the program and staff characteristics revealed that most important to them achieving their transition goals was the availability to: (a) discuss problems with school, family, and friends; (b) provide specific support for education and transition goals; (c) assist with other issues that affect transition success (e.g., accompanying individual to court to resolve legal problems); and (d) provide general support to problem-solve real-life issues that arose during the early transition years after leaving school.

Thus, the literature that details essential features for effective transition planning focuses on issues related to developing, organizing, and implementing. These factors gleaned from the literature reviewed above are, of course, recommended practices in general. Programs will vary depending on their locale, the number of students served, the disability categories served, and the community in which they exist. A discussion of

recommended practices reported for programs that serve students with learning disabilities follows.

Emerging Practices: Transition Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities

A number of researchers have made recommendations for improving current transition planning efforts for students with learning disabilities because of the diverse array of needs they present. Transition services must be broadened to help those individuals with learning disabilities who desire to attend college or other postsecondary education programs (Dalke & Schmitt, 1987; Merchant & Gajar, 1997). Investigations by Rojewski (1993, 1996a, 1996b) revealed that individuals with learning disabilities tend to experience certain career-related problems, such as career immaturity, passive involvement in the career decision-making process, and limited information about the world of work. As a result, when considering program design for this population, Rojewski (1992) proposed three areas: (a) academic concerns, (b) social and personal concerns, and (c) vocational concerns. Within each of these areas, support is necessary to overcome any skill deficit. If a student's learning disability does not cause serious career limitations, career awareness becomes critical. Reiff, Evans, and Anderson (1989) reported that students with learning disabilities tend to make arbitrary selections on career preference instruments due to this lack of exposure.

While Mellard and Hazel (1992) agreed with Rojewski's identification of areas of concern for students with learning disabilities, they pointed out that the area of social competencies are most likely to have the greatest impact on the individual once he or she is out of school. The authors argued for increased transition planning and guidance at the secondary level. In addition, they suggested that too much time is spent on remedial

academics at the expense of instruction on mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, and work skills.

Okolo and Sitlington (1986) concurred with Mellard and Hazel and recommended that high school special education programs for students with learning disabilities provide not only vocational assessment, exploration, and instruction, but instruction in job-related interpersonal skills as well. They also suggested instruction in job-related academic skills, provision of support services, and postschool placement and follow-up.

According to Grayson, Wermuth, Holub, and Anderson (1997), students with learning disabilities should have the opportunity to receive an alternative education that is entirely vocationally orientated. Such a program would use teachers and counselors trained in special education as primary providers of job placement, training and follow-along services before and after students graduate from high school. As described by these authors, a vocationally orientated model would consist of the following five components: (a) basic skills, survival skills, and academic strategies instruction, and job related skills taught in a vocationally relevant manner; (b) subject matter integrated with the vocational education curriculum; (c) mainstream vocational education courses and community-based job experiences beginning in the ninth grade; (d) special educators responsible for job placement, training, and follow-along before students exit high school; and (e) multiple high school reentry points available to those participating in this program until they reach 21, whether or not they have graduated from high school. An example of such a vocationally orientated education option is the Pathways to Satisfaction program. This comprehensive program is being implemented in part or wholly, in over 30 school districts in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois.

In a review of nine transition programs for students with learning disabilities, Rojewski (1992) identified seven components of practices with promise for effective planning: (a) individualized planning, (b) vocational preparation, (c) academic remediation and support, (d) counseling, (e) support systems and services, (f) job-seeking and placement, and (g) follow-up and follow-along measures. As noted, social skills training did not emerge as one of the components of recommended practices in this review.

Although youth with disabilities are less likely to participate in postsecondary education than their peers without disabilities, there is a growing number of students with learning disabilities are seeking a postsecondary education. On campuses across the nation, a generation of students who have been diagnosed with learning disabilities as early as elementary school are entering college. As a result, the number of college students identified as having a learning disability is increasing (Gajar, 1998; Henderson, 1999), rising from 15% in 1985 to 25% in 1991 (Adelman & Vogel, 1990; Durlak, Rose, & Bursuck, 1994; Matthews, Anderson, & Skolnick, 1987). According to the American Council on Education's 1991 study of disabilities among 1.6 million full-time college freshmen, 2.2% identified themselves as having learning disabilities, compared to 1.2% three years earlier. In 1998, this percentage increased to 3.5% (Henderson, 1999). This percentage is expected to increase with the next survey (Lewin, 1994). Another indication of the rising number of students with learning disabilities who choose to enter postsecondary education is the number of students seeking accommodations on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). In 1993, 27,000 students requested accommodations, compared to 16,000 in 1989. According to Weiss (2000), 47,000 SAT exams were given

with special accommodations in 1999. Similarly, requests for accommodations on medical school, law school, and graduate school exams have increased dramatically over the past five years (Lewin, 1994).

Reiff and deFur (1992) recommended that planning for a successful postsecondary experience begin in high school, preferably with a multistage approach where transition services are delivered before, during, and, in some situations, after college. Merchant and Gajar (1997) discussed the need for self-advocacy training for first year-college students with learning disabilities since there is little evidence that formal training exists in high school. These authors suggested that students with learning disabilities need the opportunity to role play in secondary and postsecondary situations in order to develop self-advocacy skills. In a role-playing situation, students would describe the nature of their disability, the impact on learning, and the accommodations they need for success. Aune (1991) reported on a postsecondary transition program that began in the student's junior year of high school and continued until the end of the student's first year of college. She concluded that the major components of successful transitioning are: (a) self-understanding, (b) college preparatory coursework, (c) accommodations, (d) self-advocacy, (e) student participation, (f) the transition team, and (g) transition case management.

Reiff and deFur (1992) stated that the components identified by Aune (1991) are comparable to elements of the "success model" developed by interviewing highly successful adults with learning disabilities (Reiff, Gingsberg, & Gerber, 1995). These individuals stated that the majority of their success depended upon three kinds of internal decisions (desire, goal orientation, and reframing) and four kinds of external

manifestations of those decisions (persistence, goodness of fit, learned creativity, and favorable social ecologies). For example, self-understanding is an essential element of reframing, student participation promotes both goal orientation and desire, the transition team and case manager represent parts of favorable social ecologies, and the notion of goodness of fit directs the team decision making. This could be represented by the advisement to consider options other than a four-year college, including a two-year college, a community college, vocational training, or direct entry into the work force.

In summary, the review of literature on recommended emerging practices for transition planning for students with learning disabilities revealed an emphasis on different components based on the selected postsecondary outcome. Several authors (Grayson et al., 1997; Mellard & Hazel, 1992; Okolo & Sitlington, 1986; Rojewski, 1992) reported the need for instruction and experience in job-related areas. The most comprehensive was proposed by Grayson et al. (1997), who recommended an entirely vocationally driven program. Students directly entering the work force or vocational training program after graduation could most benefit from this type of planning. Other authors (Aune, 1991; Merchant & Gajar, 1997; Reiff & deFur, 1992) identified practices reported to foster success in the college environment. For those college bound individuals with learning disabilities, opportunities to develop skills for self-advocacy/self-understanding is deemed a critical component in transition planning. This skill was not identified as a component by the previously identified authors.

Rusch and Millar (1998) found that despite the attempts to impact the transition planning process, no single program or approach can sufficiently meet the needs of all youths in every community. However, a set of recommended practices are shared by

researchers and model program developers. Practices supported by all the cited authors included: (a) academic instruction geared toward the environment the student would be entering after high school; (b) implementation of transition planning at the start of a student's high school years; (c) provision of support services; (d) extension of any necessary instruction and support to the individual in the new setting; and (e) incorporation of a follow-up procedure to evaluate past planning and the individual's progress after exiting the school system. In the following section, outcomes of studies on transition programs are discussed

Studies of Student Transition Outcomes

As discussed in the introduction to this paper, postschool outcomes for students with learning disabilities are disappointing. Employment rates are low, earnings are usually at or below minimum wage, and independence is not often attained. Although studies that show overall outcomes are helpful for comparison to nondisabled populations and between disability categories, the information is not useful in modifying programs and services.

A number of outcome studies of individuals with learning disabilities have emerged that put more emphasis on describing postschool outcomes, and characteristics or needs of students, and relating these results back to program services. For example, Mithaug, Horiuchi, and Fanning (1985) interviewed 32 individuals following high school graduation regarding postschool activities and perceived educational needs. Only two-thirds of the individuals interviewed reported being employed. Of these, only one third of these individuals found the job themselves. Reported wages were at or below minimum wage. Two-thirds of the participants reported living with their parents. In

addition, most of them stated a desire for greater social activity. When asked to relate specific educational needs, respondents reported the need to learn to live independently, to be involved in social and community activities, to learn about different jobs, and to identify the best jobs for themselves.

In another follow-up study, Shapiro and Lentz (1991) surveyed over 50 individuals with learning disabilities at 6, 12, and 24 months following high school graduation. Like Mithaug et al. (1985), these researchers asked questions regarding postschool activities and educational needs. Furthermore, participants were asked about personal resources such as parental occupation, marital status, living arrangements, frequency of contact with relatives, drug use, and help received after high school. Findings revealed significantly higher rates of employment for these participants than did the findings of the Mithaug study. The lowest rate was 77% at 6 months, and 97% at 12 months for one cohort group. However, like the Mithaug study, Shapiro and Lentz found that individuals earned low pay, reporting feeling neutral to slightly happy regarding job satisfaction. When asked about their educational experiences, the participants in this study responded that they need more job related skills training.

Both studies concluded that a critical element in postschool success is parental support and involvement. Mithaug et al. brought this up even though they found they parents were not reported as being helpful in finding jobs. Shapiro and Lentz found that graduates reported relatives and friends as being more helpful than community agencies and professionals. Another important finding of this study was the lack of relationship between what students were trained to do in vocational education and what they were actually doing on the job. The authors concluded that if the goal of vocational programs

is job readiness, this was an acceptable finding. However, if the goal was to learn an identified vocation, this finding should be of some concern.

Siegel, Robert, Waxman, and Gaylord-Ross (1992) conducted a follow-along study of participants in a transition program for youths with mild disabilities. to examine outcomes regarding employment, postsecondary transition services, and postsecondary education for 82 individuals with learning disabilities. Data were gathered at six-month intervals over a four-year period. Like Shapiro and Lentz (1991), Siegel et al. found fairly high, stable rates of employment, both full- and part-time, across the four-year time span, with 80% reporting continuous work. Findings for wages were above minimum wage. Earnings increased slightly for individuals at the four-year follow-up. Participants in this program continued to receive transition services after graduation from high school with the most intensive service happening during the first six months. Most frequently cited services included follow-up and counseling, rehabilitation casework, and assistance with job searches. In addition, on-the-job training and assistance with postsecondary education and training were provided. Findings on enrollment for postsecondary education were higher than the national average for individuals with mild disabilities with 31% enrolling in programs. However, upon further examination, it was found that many who enrolled did not finish even one class.

Rojewski (1999) used a national longitudinal database to compare the goals and attainment of individuals with and without learning disabilities two years after high school completion. Individuals with learning disabilities reported lower graduation rates, and were more likely to aspire to lower occupational positions and less likely to be enrolled in some type of postsecondary education program than their nondisabled peers.

These results provide additional evidence of a consistent, long-term, and stable pattern of lower occupational and educational aspirations and lower postsecondary attainment for individuals with learning disabilities. This researcher suggested that this pattern may be attributed to specific problems related to the career development of individuals with learning disabilities such as career immaturity, passive involvement in the career decision making process, and limited information about the world of work. In addition, teachers and parents may be influential in limiting job or career choices, restricting opportunities and access to training programs, or suggesting narrow stereotypical employment possibilities. Researchers (e.g., Hotchkiss & Borow, 1996; Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1996; Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996) have shown how negative teacher and societal perceptions and explanations can impose lower status and a devalued role for individuals, which in turn can result in limited educational or career choices, narrow opportunities, and restricted access to training programs. Rojewski proposed that the findings from this study be used to improve guidance and counseling activities, the development and sequencing of academic and occupational courses and programs, and transition planning efforts for individuals with learning disabilities.

In contrast to previously stated studies on the outcomes for students with disabilities (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Dunn, 1996; Malain & Love, 1997; Peraino, 1992; Wagner, 1993), the positive findings of the study conducted by Siegel et al. (1992) cast an encouraging light on the specific transition program that the participants who entered the work force had completed. Features of this program included a semester-long supervised real work experience during the last year of high school, a concurrent weekly workshop focusing on employment skills, and postsecondary services provided by

transition specialists. In addition to the postsecondary services reported above as being utilized most often, transition specialists gave training on independent living skills, resource referrals, social skills training, job search support, and ecosystemic intervention.

This section presented studies conducted that pertained to student transition outcomes. These findings can add an important element to the practices proposed in the literature for effective transition planning. The consideration of outcomes of programs and individuals will assist in evaluating the practices that have a positive effect on students in achieving their identified goals after they have graduated from high school.

Summary

In this chapter, the related literature and research was reviewed as a way to provide an understanding of the evolution, process, and components of transition planning for students with disabilities. A description of participants involved in the process was provided as well as an overview of the content and format of the transition component of the IEP. Furthermore, the chapter provided a summary of what experts in the field have found to be essential features associated with recommended practice in transition planning and implementation for students with disabilities in general and for the learning disabled population. Lastly, studies of student transition outcomes were discussed. Table 1 presents practices discussed in the literature and the frequency with which each is mentioned. A literature search was conducted for the time period 1985 to 2000 and utilized the following ERIC descriptors: disabilities, educational practices, learning disabilities, outcomes, planning, program effectiveness, program evaluation, program implementation, secondary education, special education, student needs, transition curriculum, transition programs, transition services, and transitional programs.

The search yielded 45 articles that were reviewed. Of these sources, 28 discussed a practice or practices that were supported by an empirical study or a research-referenced article in which the author(s) implied that the practice was desirable or recommended. The implications made by the author(s) of the research-referenced articles are guided by evidence obtained from systematic procedures that were not conducted by the author(s). The 28 articles reported practices that met the decision rule established for a practice to be included in the study. To be included in the study, the practice had to be supported by at least two empirical studies or one empirical study and at least two research-referenced articles in which the author(s) implied that the practice was desirable or recommended.

The most frequently cited practice in these sources was vocational training. Common features represented in a vocational training program are: (a) structured work-based learning; (b) a school curriculum that builds on work experience; (c) paid work experience; (d) a program that arranges student work placement; (e) an academic and vocational curriculum that is integrated; and (f) usually targets students who are at risk or not college bound (Rusch & Millar, 1998). Parental involvement, interagency collaboration, and the development of self-advocacy/self-understanding were identified equally as the second most frequent of the practices to be included in the student's transition planning program. Practices were cited more often in discussion literature where the recommendation was based on personal experience or opinion. For example, vocational training, was identified as a recommended practice in five of the 12 studies. The discussion literature cited this practice seven times.

In Table 2, these practices are categorized by the degree to which the literature supports them as having a positive impact on student outcomes. The research-referenced

articles represented in Table 2 present derivative implications that are guided by evidence obtained from systematic, objective procedures not conducted by the article's author(s). This literature bases its support for an identified practice on previously conducted research rather than personal experience or opinion. Numerous documents about transition practices are available, but empirically supported evidence pertaining to the practices is lacking. However, many or some of these practices are being recommended at the local division level to assist students in their attainment of their postsecondary goals. Therefore, meaningful and ongoing evaluation of these practices must take place at the local level. Transition practices, by their very nature, reflect the community in which the student will live, the needs and goals of the student in the process of transitioning, and the resources available within the school district and community. Federal mandate states critical elements in providing transition services that all schools must address. Coupled with a consideration of those practices identified by experts in the field as having promise for enabling students to attain identified postsecondary goals, a basis is given upon which to begin examining the planning process that occurs and the transition plans that are written at the local level. Such efforts will determine the quality and level of effectiveness of transition planning that is occurring locally and the impact this planning is having on student outcomes.

Table 1

Transition Practices Cited in the Literature

Practices	Frequency
Vocational training	11
Interagency collaboration	10
Parent/family involvement	9
Self-understanding/self-advocacy skills	9
Social skills training	7
Paid work experience	6
Vocational assessment	6
Academic skills training	5
Career education curriculum	3
Community based instruction	1
Counseling	1
Integration with nondisabled peers	1
Individual transition plan with focus on student skill development	1

Note. Practices identified from 28 articles reviewed for the time period 1985 to 2000.

Table 2
Literature Analysis of Support for Recommended Practices

	Vocational Training	Social Skills Training	Academic Skills Training	Parent Involvement	Interagency Collaboration	Vocational Assessment	Self-Undrstd. Advocate	Paid Work Experience
Anne, 1991			X				X	
Bennett, Lindstrom, Yovanoff, 2000	X		X		X			X
Cummings & Maddux, 1987				X				
DeStefano, 1989	X	X		X	X		X	X
Fardig et al., 1985						X		
Gajar et al., 1998		X		X	X	X		
Gill & Edgar, 1990	X							
Halpern et al., 1995							X	
Hardman & McDonnell, 1987				X	X	X		
Haring et al., 1990					X			
Hanzl et al., 1985	X							X
Johnson & Rusch, 1993							X	
Knowlton & Clark, 1989							X	
Kohler, 1993	X	X		X	X	X		X
Kohler et al., 1994	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Lane, 1995				X				
Mellard & Hazel, 1992	X	X	X				X	
Mithaug et al., 1985	X	X						
Okolo & Sidlington, 1986		X	X			X		
Patton, 1988							X	
Reiff & deFur, 1992							X	
Rojewski, 1992	X		X		X			
Sale et al., 1991				X				
Schallock et al., 1986	X			X				
Shapiro & Lentz, 1991	X							
Singal et al., 1992					X			
Szymanski & Danek, 1985					X			
Wise & Matthews, 1987								X

Decision rule: Practices supported by at least two empirical studies or one empirical study and at least two research-referenced articles in which the author(s) implied that the practice was desirable or recommended.

Empirical Study

Research-referenced article. Implications are guided by evidence obtained from systematic procedures that were not conducted by the author(s).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The intent of this investigation was to examine the transition planning process in Henrico County Public Schools for secondary special education students identified as having learning disabilities. The specific purposes of this case study were: (a) to determine the congruence between written objectives in exiting students' transition plans and identified recommended practices in the literature, (b) to determine the congruence between the transition plans developed for students with learning disabilities and their postsecondary outcomes, (c) to determine the extent to which identified recommended practices in students' transition plans are implemented, and (d) to identify facilitating and inhibiting factors to the transition planning process from students' perspectives. Information was collected by quantitative and qualitative methods. The methodology and procedures used to investigate the research questions addressed in the study are summarized in this chapter.

Research Questions

1. What is the congruence between written transition plans for students with learning disabilities and identified recommended practices in the literature?
2. What is the congruence between the transition plans developed for students with learning disabilities and their postsecondary outcomes?
3. To what extent are identified recommended practices in students' transition plans implemented?

4. What do students identify as facilitating and inhibiting factors to their transition process?

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of 106 students from the Henrico County Public Schools who were determined eligible for the program for students with learning disabilities by a multidisciplinary professional team and who graduated in the 1997-98 school term with a standard diploma. A letter was sent to all 106 graduates who received special education services from the learning disabilities program soliciting participation in this study (See Appendix A). One component of the letter asked respondents to grant permission for the school district to release a copy of their 1997-98 IEP to the investigator so she could review and compare identified outcomes to those on the consent form. Another component informed graduates that they might be asked to participate in a telephone interview with the investigator. As consent forms for participation in the study were received, the names and pertinent information were put on index cards. Information for those who agreed to be interviewed were written on blue index cards. The outcomes identified on the respondents' consent forms were compared to the outcomes identified on the "Transition Component of the IEP" form. After this comparison, the index cards for those who agreed to be interviewed were sorted into two groups.

Forty-eight students responded affirmatively to participate. Thirty-two agreed to be interviewed. One group of interviewees (23) consisted of participants who achieved 50% or more of their identified outcomes. The other group of interviewees (9) included participants who achieved less than 50% of their identified outcomes. For the telephone interviews, all participants who attained less than 50% of their identified postsecondary

goals were contacted. Of the 23 participants who achieved 50% or more of their identified postsecondary goals, 16 were selected to be interviewed. This selection was done with the intent to provide a balanced perspective as to which factors inhibited or facilitated the transition process. This "purposeful" sampling provides "information-rich" (Patton, 1990, p. 169) cases that yield a greater, more in-depth understanding of issues pertinent to the questions being addressed in this study. However, the participants from each group were randomly sampled using a random number table. According to Patton (1990), a small sample size for an in-depth examination does not automatically mean that the sampling strategy should not be random. For many studies, random sampling, even of small samples, increases the credibility of results. A small, purposeful, random sample aims to reduce suspicion about why certain cases are selected to be studied. The remaining seven participants not chosen were then randomly selected and placed in order from one to seven. These participants would be contacted in the event an individual from the original group could not be reached after three attempts. The last IEP written for these students was reviewed.

School District Description

The selected site for the study was Henrico County Public Schools, located in central Virginia. It is among the six largest county public school divisions in the state. Approximately 39,000 students attend 30 elementary, nine middle, and eight high schools, as well as two technical centers, two adult education centers, and the Virginia Randolph Special Education Center. Approximately 79% of 1998 graduates planned to pursue higher education. Nearly 54% decided to attend four-year colleges, while 24.9% planned to attend two-year colleges. Approximately 4.3% had goals to attend business,

college, trade or technical schools, or apprenticeship programs. Of these graduates, 42.8% earned a Standard Diploma, 52.58% earned an Advanced Diploma, 1.0% earned a Special Diploma (Special Education), and 2.2% earned a Certificate of Completion (Henrico County Public Schools, 1998). Among graduates identified with learning disabilities, 75.6% earned a Standard Diploma, 13.8% earned an Advanced Diploma, 5.7% earned a Special Diploma, and 3.2% earned a Certificate of Completion (Henrico County Public Schools, 1998). According to data collected during the 1997-98 school year, 18.5% of the students came from one-parent families, and 22.6 % participated in the federal lunch subsidy program.

Of the approximately 39,000 students attending Henrico County Schools, 4,946 received special education services. It is reported that 2,097 of these students are receiving services because of an identified learning disability. During the 1997-98 school year, 1,033 secondary students received special education support. Of this number, 597 were identified as having a learning disability. During the 1997-98 school year, 106 students with disabilities graduated with standard diplomas, and 11 received special diplomas or certificates of attendance.

The Henrico County School Division is the largest employer in the county. There are approximately 4,600 employees, of which 3,800 hold full-time positions. The Department of Exceptional Education and Support Services is responsible for the instructional programs for students with disabilities. This department includes 300 special education teachers, 155 instructional assistants, 30 speech and language pathologists, seven occupational therapists, five physical therapists, 20 school psychologists, 20 school social workers, one audiologist, five interpreters for the deaf and

hard of hearing, and 107 guidance counselors. The school division can be characterized as growing and stable with regard to its student population. To date, no formal comprehensive study has been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the transition planning mandates for special education students ages 14 years and older (S. Snider, personal communication, December 15, 1997; V. Dowdy, personal communication, February 22, 2000).

Instrumentation

The overall purpose of this study was to examine the transition process in Henrico County Public Schools for secondary special education students with learning disabilities who have earned Standard Diplomas and to determine the extent to which identified postsecondary outcomes were achieved. Several instruments were used to collect data. In this section, each instrument will be described.

Research Question 1: Transition Plan Review Checklist

Data to answer Research Question 1 were gathered by use of a checklist designed to examine the transition component content and evidences of recommended practices. The checklist was based on a review of the literature regarding recommended practices in the field of transition for special education students. The practices included in the checklist were supported by experts in the field of transition as having promise for enabling students with disabilities to attain identified postsecondary goals. These practices have been supported in at least two empirical studies, or in one empirical study and at least two research-referenced publications in which an author or authors implied that the practice was desirable or recommended. A publication is considered research-referenced if the implications made are guided by evidence obtained from systematic

procedures that are not conducted by the article s author(s). This literature bases its support for an identified practice on previously conducted research rather than personal experiences or opinion.

The final form of the checklist, titled "Transition Plan Review Checklist," consisted of two sections. The first section included those practices that met one of the earlier stated criteria. Using this decision rule, eight practices were included in this section. The second section identified practices that cannot be categorized under practices identified in the first section, but have appeared as activities on IEPs in Henrico County Public Schools. Each practice identified had to be supported by evidence or indicators, such as student enrollment in a course or specific activities stated in the student's plan. These indicators were predetermined by the investigator prior to training the raters who were to use the checklist.

The checklist was validated by an expert panel consisting of seven individuals knowledgeable about transition. They were asked to review the checklist and predetermined indicators for the raters and provide feedback to ensure that the items used to assess the presence of recommended practices were clear and related to the purpose of the study. The checklist and predetermined indicators were amended if two or more panelists provided feedback to do so. Two panelists suggested a change of wording for statements on the checklist. This was to provide consistency for the raters (i.e., "Students will . . ." instead of alternating with "Evidence of . . ."). The phrase "as indicated by" was substituted with "evidence to verify this." Two panelists recommended the addition of practices so the raters could evaluate their presence in the students' plans. These practices were interest driven or components of the new IDEA regulations. The latter

changes were not made because of the previously established criteria for the selection of recommended practices. Based on the panelists' feedback, the checklist indicators remained unaltered. (The checklist and indicators are included in Appendix B.)

Research Question 2: Checklist of Specified Outcomes

In response to Research Question 2, a checklist of specified outcomes was listed on the lower half of the consent form for participants to complete. The identified outcomes included on this form are the same as those listed on the form, "Henrico County Public Schools Transition Component of the IEP." This form is used in the development of transition plans for students in Henrico County Public Schools and is included in the IEP document. The participants were asked to check the outcome(s) with which they currently were involved in at that time. In addition, they were asked to indicate the extent to which they were engaged in an outcome (i.e., full-time or part-time). If they were employed, they filled in the space provided for place of employment and position. (The consent form and the "Transition Component of the IEP" are included in Appendix C.) Respondents selected to participate in a semistructured telephone interview had an opportunity to elaborate on the outcomes identified on their consent form when they were asked to tell about their experiences since graduation and their current situation. Description of the instrument used to gather this information is presented in the following section.

Research Questions 3 and 4: Student Interview Guide

Research Question 3. A student interview guide to be used in semistructured telephone interviews was developed. The information gathered from this instrument was used to determine the extent to which recommended practices in students' transition plans

have been implemented. The questions about identified recommended practices were presented in a yes-no categorical response mode. A categorical response of "partial" was included for instances when respondents indicated that they partly completed an identified practice in their plans. This response mode was followed by an open-ended question to address Research Question 4. Graves and Kahn (1979) found that telephone interviewing produces information comparable to the data collected from personal interviews. According to Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) using a semistructured interview has an advantage over using a mailed questionnaire. It is reasonably objective and permits a more thorough understanding of the respondent's opinions and the reasons behind them.

The guide was used with each of 25 participants selected from those who gave consent to be interviewed. The student interview guide was tailored to each of the 25 participants using his or her identified postsecondary outcome(s), specific career goal(s), and recommended practices stated in the IEP.

Research Question 4. The student interview guide was used to determine what students identify as facilitating and inhibiting factors to their transition process. Participants were asked whether a particular practice identified in their plan was helpful in attaining their identified goals. The interview guide contained two open-ended questions that were presented to the participant at the end of the interview. These questions requested the respondent to identify factors that were facilitating or inhibiting. The open-ended questions were intended to provide a depth of understanding of the transition process from these individuals' perspectives. (The Student Interview Guide is included in Appendix D.)

After the student interview guide was developed, a pilot study was conducted to evaluate and improve the guide and interview procedure and to help the investigator gain experience in using the procedure before any data for the study were collected. Gall et al. (1996) recommended that the subjects interviewed in the pilot study should be taken from the same population as the main study sample whenever possible and from a similar population when a research design does not permit drawing from the main population. They also noted that the number of subjects interviewed in the pilot study does not need to be large; therefore, three respondents who agreed to be interviewed in this study were selected to be participants in the pilot study. Because each interview guide had been tailored to each of the 25 selected participants using his or her identified postsecondary outcome(s), specific career goal(s), and recommended practices stated in the IEP, these three participants understood all but two questions presented to them. One question related to assessing the extent to which a participant had opportunities to develop self-advocacy skills. Two of the three participants made references to experiences in elementary and middle school. As a result, this question was modified with the qualifier "While in high school" The second request for information pertained to inhibiting factors. This question was rephrased to "What things did you lack or not get in high school that would have helped you achieve your goal or do better at (insert identified outcome)?" Lastly, because the interviews were taped recorded, a statement was included in the introduction requesting permission to do so. The pilot study assisted in determining whether the language to be used in the interview was understood by the participants and whether adequate information was recorded, and it provided an opportunity to evaluate the methods of recording the interview data.

Data Collection

A letter requesting participation in this study was sent to all individuals with learning disabilities who received special education services and graduated in June 1998 with a Standard Diploma. Attached was a cover letter from the individual's high school principal and special education department chair encouraging participation in the study. Three weeks after the initial mailing, a follow-up mailing was conducted. Three weeks after the follow-up mailing, another mailing was sent that offered a gift certificate incentive for participation in the study. Any previous respondents received a certificate for their responses. Finally, a third follow-up mailing was conducted to encourage participation and increase the population for the study. Respondents' names and pertinent information were written on index cards as they were received. The respondents who agreed to be interviewed had their information recorded on blue index cards.

Gall et al. (1996) stated that if more than 20% of respondents did not respond, an attempt should be made to determine whether nonrespondents' replies to the request to participate in the study and the checklist of specified outcomes listed on the lower half of the consent form would differ from the respondents' replies. These researchers recommended contacting a small number of randomly selected individuals from the nonrespondent group. Tuckman (1972) suggested selecting 5 to 10% of the individuals from the list of nonrespondents. These individuals would be contacted to solicit participation in the study and asked to respond to the checklist of specified outcomes in a telephone interview format. Permission sought by the researcher to contact nonrespondents by phone was denied by the Department of Research and Planning in Henrico County Public Schools due to concerns regarding confidentiality of information.

Research Question 1: What is the congruence between written transition plans for students with learning disabilities and identified recommended practices in the literature?

Transition plan review checklist. Using the final revision of the Transition Plan Review Checklist, three independent raters with knowledge of special education and the development of IEPs evaluated the transition components of the participants' IEPs. The investigator trained the raters by having them use the instrument to rate three sample IEPs. The raters were provided with examples of indicators such as course enrollment or specific activities to assist in identifying and categorizing practices. According to Gall et al. (1996), for tallying highly specific information, the percentage of agreement should be above 90%. However, when the rater must make inferences or evaluations regarding the information, 70% to 80% agreement is usually considered satisfactory. Tuckman (1972) noted that if agreement is 70% or better, it can be concluded that individual differences in rater perception are within tolerable limits, thus reducing potential internal validity based on instrumentation. Based on the fact that the raters made an evaluative judgment regarding the transition component of the IEPs, a required level of interrater reliability was set at 80%.

To address the possibility of discrepancy among raters, the interrater reliability was addressed at three points: (a) during the rater training period, (b) midway through the number of IEPs given to the raters to evaluate, and (c) at the end of the study. Each IEP used in the study was assigned a number from 1 to 48, which was the highest number of total IEPs used. Rater A was assigned IEPs 1-16, Rater B was assigned IEPs 17-32 and Rater C was assigned IEPs 33-48. The IEPs given to the raters were not identified by number.

First, the raters were given their eight IEPs to evaluate. Then all raters were given IEPs 25 and 26 to evaluate. These IEPs were used to determine interrater reliability. The evaluations of IEPs 25 and 26 were accounted for in only Rater B's set. The raters were given their second set of IEPs to evaluate. At the end of the next set of IEPs that were evaluated, each rater was given IEPs 47 and 48. Again, inter-rater reliability was checked. IEPs 47 and 48 were accounted for in only Rater C's set.

As stated earlier, the raters used the Transition Plan Review Checklist to analyze the transition component of the respondents' IEPs. The raters checked "yes" if a practice was evident in the student's plan, and "no" if there was no evidence of that practice. If a "yes" was checked, the rater wrote the indicator that supports the positive response. Any other practices evident in the student's plan were recorded in the section included for this purpose. These data were collected to answer Research Question 1.

Research Question 2: What is the congruence between the transition plans developed for students with learning disabilities and their postsecondary outcomes?

Checklist of specified outcomes. To obtain information for Research Question 2, graduates who agreed to participate in the study were asked to respond to a checklist of specified outcomes listed on the lower half of the consent form. The identified outcomes from the consent form were compared to the those identified in the participant's plan to determine if the outcome(s) were achieved.

Student interview guide. Each respondent selected to participate in a semistructured telephone interview was asked to tell about his or her current situation and experiences since graduation. This allowed the respondents the opportunity to elaborate on the outcomes identified on their consent forms. This request was presented to the

participant at the beginning and at the end of the interview. The purpose of asking the participant a second time was to see if more information would be given once rapport had been established with the interviewer.

Research Question 3: To what extent are identified recommended practices in students' transition plans implemented?

The student interview guide. The Student Interview Guide was used in a telephone semistructured interview with 25 participants. The investigator conducted the interviews with each of the participants. The interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the respondents. Information was recorded regarding the identified outcomes on the individual's transition plans. Respondents were asked if recommended practices stated in their plans have been accomplished. Responses were recorded as "yes," "no," or "partial." Participants who responded with a yes or indicated that a practice was partially implemented were asked to give an example of that practice stated in their plans. Neutral probes were used if the respondents answers were unclear. Examples of probes used included Could you be a little more specific? , I m not sure I am entirely clear about what you mean. Could you explain it a little more? , and Could I read back what I have written down to be sure I have exactly what you wanted to say? .

Research Question 4: What do students identify as facilitating and inhibiting factors to their transition process?

The student interview guide. Each time after the participants were asked if a recommended practice evident in their plans had been accomplished (Research Question 3), an open-ended question followed, which asked whether or not the practice was helpful to them in attaining their identified outcomes. Open-ended questions were used to collect

information regarding identification of facilitating and inhibiting factors to their transition process. Once again, if a respondents answers were not clear, neutral probes were used to clarify the response. The phrase yes, I see, was used to communicate to the participants that what they said was understood by the interviewer. In addition, questions were repeated to see if the participants would offer additional information once rapport had been established with the interviewer.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1: What is the congruence between written transition plans for students with learning disabilities and identified recommended practices in the literature?

The recommended practices identified on the Transition Plan Review Checklist in the students' transition plans were tallied and percentages derived. This information shows the percentage of identified recommended transition practices in the literature that are included in transition plans for students with learning disabilities in Henrico County Public Schools. In addition, this information reflected the percentage of congruence between the presence of each identified practice in students' plans and identified recommended practices in the literature. Additional practices identified, but not categorized under one of the eight recommended practices from the literature, were tallied and percentages given.

Research Question 2: What is the congruence between the written transition plans for students with learning disabilities and their postsecondary outcomes?

The outcomes listed on the returned consent form that were identified by the respondents were compared to the outcomes identified on the "Transition Component of IEP" form for each respondent. If a congruence or match was evident, the number "1"

was recorded. If a partial match was evident, a ".5" was recorded for that category. If there was no congruence between the outcomes identified in the participant's plan and what was identified on the consent form, a "0" was recorded.

The total number of plans that showed evidence of congruence were tallied. From this information, percentages were derived that will reflect the number of postsecondary outcomes identified in transition plans that were achieved. In addition, this information reflected the percentage of congruence between the transition plans developed based on the identified outcomes for students with learning disabilities and their postsecondary outcomes.

The statements given in response to Questions 1 and 2 from the Student Interview Guide was used to provide detail to and validation of the outcomes selected by the 25 participants for the semistructured telephone interview. Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data is a form of comparative analysis. Patton (1990) stated that utilizing this procedure enhances the quality and credibility of findings. This qualitative data will provide "depth and detail" (Patton, 1980, p. 22) to the quantitative measurement which utilizes a predetermined response. This qualitative measure permitted the investigator to record and understand these 25 participants in their own terms and provided another operational measure of the same concept (Patton, 1980, 1990).

The statements given were compared to the outcomes identified on the returned consent form. The information was to describe the participants' experiences in transitioning from high school to their identified outcomes.

Research Question 3: To what extent are identified recommended practices in students' transition plans implemented?

Nominal responses from the Student Interview Guide were used to describe the extent to which identified recommended practices in the 25 participants' transition plans had been implemented. Participants were asked if recommended practices evident in their plans had been accomplished. Responses were identified as "yes," "no," or "partial." The frequency of "yes" responses was tallied and percentages derived for each plan. In addition, the frequency of "yes" responses was tallied and percentages derived for the total number plans used in the semistructured interviews. The frequency of "partial" responses was tallied and percentages derived for each plan and for the total number of plans used.

Research Question 4: What do students identify as facilitating and inhibiting factors to their transition process?

Responses to the open-ended questions relating to facilitating and inhibiting factors to the participants' transition process were evaluated by the researcher for "recurring regularities" in the data (Patton, 1990, p. 403). Patton (1990) stated that these regularities represent patterns that can be sorted into categories. Categories were formed to organize the data using a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Major categories of incidents or perceptions that appeared to be similar and those that appeared to be different were noted. When a category was formed, all incidents that seem to fit it were compared. If, on further comparison of the incidents, some did not fit the dimension of the category, a new category was established. The data were reread to see whether other incidents fit the second category. This process continued until categories were set. It conforms to the principles of grounded theory in which categories are "grounded" in the data (Gall et al. 1996, p. 565). The information gathered from the

open-ended questions was coded according to the categories derived directly from the data. With this process, the data were synthesized to reflect what students identified as facilitating and inhibiting factors to their transition process.

Ethical Considerations

In order to follow procedures for conducting research, an application was sent seeking approval to implement the study to the College of William and Mary, School of Education Committee on Research on Human Subjects. Next, to comply with the school division guidelines for research, the required information was submitted to the Department of Research and Planning in Henrico County Public Schools for review and approval.

Efforts were made to ensure that no information from the study was used out of context and misrepresented in any way. However, it is impossible to exercise control of the document and its content after it is published.

The anonymity of the participants was protected. Participants were told that all information would be confidential and that data would be reported in an aggregate as well as on an individual basis. In addition, participants were told that the results of the study would be reported in such a way as to protect the anonymity of the participants.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the analysis of the research data for the study. Each research question stated in Chapter 1 is addressed. The chapter is organized as follows: (a) overview of the study; (b) demographic information relative to the participants; and (c) findings of the research questions.

Overview of the Study

This study was designed to examine the transition planning process in Virginia's Henrico County Public School Division for secondary students with learning disabilities and to determine the extent to which postsecondary outcomes identified in participants' transition plans were achieved. Information was collected by quantitative and qualitative methods. The specific objectives of the study were: (a) to determine the congruence between written objectives in exiting students' transition plans and identified recommended practices in the literature; (b) to determine the congruence between the transition plans developed for students with disabilities and their postsecondary outcomes; (c) to determine the extent to which identified recommended practices in students' transition plans were implemented; and (d) to identify facilitating and inhibiting factors to the transition planning process from the students' perspective.

Demographics

Participants were students of the Henrico County Public Schools who were determined eligible for the program for students with learning disabilities and graduated at the end of the 1997-98 school term. A letter was sent to all 106 graduates' addresses

provided by the school division's Central Administrative Office. Seven letters were returned with no forwarding addresses available. Three follow-up mailings were conducted at three week intervals. The overall return rate was 49.5%. Table 3 shows the rate of return for each school.

Table 3

Response Return Rate by School

School	Graduates receiving letter	Responses	Total
Freeman	11	9	81.8%
Godwin	18	17	94.4%
Henrico	11	4	36.4%
Hermitage	20	7	35%
Highland Springs	7	3	42.9%
Tucker	16	7	43.8%
Varina	16	2	12.5%
Virginia Randolph	0	--	--
No forwarding address	7		
Totals	106	49	49.5%

Note. In VA Randolph Community High School no students with learning disabilities graduated with a Standard Diploma.

Of the 49 respondents, 33 (67.3%) gave permission to be contacted for a phone interview. One respondent was later withdrawn from the sample when a copy of his IEP

could not be located at his former school or produced by the individual. Therefore, the final sample size was 48. This subsequently reduced the participants who consented to be interviewed to 32. Of the 48 individuals, 64.6% received special education services for less than 50% of their school day. Six and three-tenths percent of the participants received special education services for 50% or more of their school day. Twenty-nine and two tenths percent received no direct services and were considered "Consultative." Twenty-nine or 60.4% of the participants were male compared to the 19 or 39.6% of the sample who were female. Twenty-five participants were reached by phone to complete the interviews.

Findings

Congruence Between Written Transition Plans for Students with Learning Disabilities and Identified Recommended Practices in the Literature

Using the Transition Plan Review Checklist, three independent raters evaluated the transition component of participants' IEPs. To address the possibility of discrepant evaluations among raters, interrater reliability was addressed at three points: (a) during the rater training, (b) midway through the number of IEPs given to the raters to evaluate, and (c) at the end of the evaluation session. Because the raters were making an evaluative judgment regarding the transition component of the IEPs, a required level of interrater reliability was set at 80%. The interrater reliability for the three check points was 100%, 94%, and 94%, all exceeding the established benchmark.

Table 4 shows the congruence between each of the identified recommended practices and the students' written transition plans. These practices have been supported by at least two empirical studies or one empirical study and at least two research-

referenced publications in which an author or authors implied that the practice was desirable or recommended. A source is considered research-referenced if the implications made are guided by evidence obtained from systematic procedures that were not conducted by the article's author(s). This literature bases its support on previously conducted research rather than personal experience or opinion

Table 4

Congruence Between Transition Plans and Identified Practices

Practice	Congruence
Student will participate in vocational training	35.4%
Student will participate in social skills training	6.3%
Student will participate in academic training	56.3%
Parent/family involvement in transition planning	81.3%
Student will learn and practice self-understanding/self-advocacy skills	70.8%
Student will participate in paid work experience	27.1%
Student will participate in a vocational assessment	2.1%
Interagency collaboration occurs	0%

Research Question 1 gathered information to determine the congruence between written transition plans for students with learning disabilities and identified recommended practices in the literature. A congruence greater than 50% was found between only three of the eight practices and students' transition plans. These three practices were:

parent/family involvement (81.3%), the development of self-advocacy/self-understanding skills (70.8%), and the participation in academic skills training (56.3%). Considerably less congruence was evident between each of the remaining five practices and the participants' transition plans. Interagency collaboration was not identified in any of the transition plans.

Congruence Between the Transition Plans Developed for Students with Learning Disabilities and Their Postsecondary Outcomes

Information collected from a checklist of specified outcomes listed on the lower half of the participants' consent forms was used to compare to the postsecondary outcomes identified in their transition plans. The participants checked the outcome(s) they currently were involved in. In addition, they indicated the extent to which they engaged in an outcome (i.e., full-time or part-time). If they were employed, they filled in a space provided for the place of employment and position held.

If a congruence or match was evident, the number "1" was recorded. A category was established to acknowledge the partial fulfillment of a goal. If a partial match was evident, a ".5" was recorded for that category. If there was no congruence between the outcomes identified in the participant's plan and what was identified on the consent form, a "0" was recorded.

Three areas were addressed when planning for the transition from high school to students' identified goal(s) for themselves: education, employment, and adult/community living. In the area of education, the congruence between transition plans developed and the participants' postsecondary outcomes was 45.8%. These participants were enrolled at a community college, college or university on a full-time basis. The participants IEPs

indicated that they had fully achieved the educational goals identified in their transition plans. In addition, 12.5% partial congruence existed between transition plans and the participants' postsecondary outcomes. These individuals were attending a community college, college or university on a part-time basis rather than full-time as indicated in their transition plan. No congruence was evident in 41.6% of transition plans. Stated educational goals for these participants were not met.

For employment, the congruence between transition plans and the participants' identified outcomes was 85.4%. Fifty-five percent of the 40 respondents were still in college as full-time students. These individuals were considered to be making progress toward achieving their identified outcomes and were therefore, included in this category. In addition, 8.3% partial congruence was evident between transition plans and participants' outcomes. These individuals identified full-time competitive employment as an outcome/goal in their transition plans and were working part-time at the time the checklist was completed. No congruence was found in 6.2% of transition plans between employment goals and participants' identified outcomes. These individuals were unemployed and not in any postsecondary training or educational program.

One of the goals in the area of community/adult living is to live alone, with friends or partner. This goal was identified in all 48 plans. The congruence between this goal written in transition plans and the participants' outcomes was 77%. Fifty-four percent of the 37 participants were still in college as full-time or part-time students and living at home during the summer or while working part-time in addition to taking classes. These participants were considered to be making progress toward achieving this identified outcome and were included in this category. No partial congruence was found.

No congruence was found in 22.9% of the transition plans between this goal and participants' outcomes for this area. Although these participants' plans stated that they would be living alone, with friends or partner, they were living at home with their parents. Table 5 summarizes the information reported.

Table 5

Congruence Between Transition Plans and Postsecondary Outcomes

Outcome area	Congruence	Partial Congruence	No Congruence	Total*
Education	45.8%	12.5%	41.6%	99.9%
Employment	85.4%	8.3%	6.2%	99.9%
Adult/Community living	77%	0%	22.9%	99.9%

*Percentages rounded.

As illustrated, the employment outcome area presented the greatest degree of congruence (85.4%) between the outcomes identified in participants' transition plans and the outcomes identified by the participants one year after graduation. Congruence between participants' outcomes and the outcomes identified in their transition plans for the area of adult/community living was lower at 77%.

Extent to Which Identified Recommended Practices in Students' Transition Plans Were Implemented

The Student Interview Guide was used in a telephone semistructured interview with 25 participants. Information was recorded regarding the identified outcomes on the individual's transition plan. Respondents were asked if recommended practices stated in their plans had been accomplished. Responses were recorded as "Yes," "No," or

"Partial." Table 6 presents the frequency with which a practice was identified in the 25 transition plans and the extent to which each practice was implemented.

Table 6

The Extent to Which Recommended Practices Were Implemented in 25 Transition Plans

Practice	# of Plans w/ Practice	100% Implementation	Partial Implementation	No Implementation
Parent/family Involvement	22	22		
Self-advocacy	17	4	10	3
Academic training	11	4	3	4
Vocational training	10	10		
Paid work experience	8	8		
Social skills	2	1		1
Vocational assessment	0			
Interagency collaboration	0			

Vocational training was identified in 40% of the 25 participants' transition plans. This practice was implemented 100%. Social skills training was identified in only two plans. Of these two transition plans, only one participant stated that the goals and objectives in the plan were implemented. Academic skills training was present in 44% of the 25 transition plans. In those 11 plans, four with objectives in this area were accomplished, three plans had objectives that were partially implemented and four participants reported that objectives relating to academic skills training did not occur. Parent/family involvement was identified by the signature of the parent on the

participant's page of the individual's IEP or by identification in the present level of performance section. Eighty-eight percent of the plans reflected this practice. Sixty-eight of the transition plans contained objectives that related to the development of self-understanding/self-advocacy skills. Four participants confirmed that objectives stated in their plans to develop this skill were implemented. Ten individuals stated that their objectives were partially addressed, and three reported the objectives were not implemented. Paid work experience was identified in 32% of the plans. These individuals reported to have worked and received paychecks while in high school. Vocational assessment and the occurrence of interagency collaboration were not identified in any of the 25 transition plans.

Student Identification of Facilitating and Inhibiting Factors to Their Transition Process

Responses to the open-ended questions relating to facilitating and inhibiting factors to the participants' transition process were evaluated for "recurring regularities in the data (Patton, 1990, p. 403). Categories were formed to organize the data using a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Table 7 presents categories of the facilitating factors identified by the participants.

Table 7

Facilitating Factors to Participants' Transition Process

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Participants (n=25)		
Academic skills training		
Study skills	9	
Writing instruction	5	
Technology instruction	3	
Reading instruction	<u>2</u>	
	19	80%
Vocational training	10	40%
Paid work experience	6	24%
Student-teacher interactions	5	20%
Extracurricular activities	5	20%
IEP modifications	3	12%

Academic skills training. Academic skills training emerged as a dominant factor.

According to respondents, academic skills training was categorized into four areas: study skills, writing instruction, technology instruction, and reading instruction. Study skills was cited the most frequently of the three. One participant stated, "I took a reading/studying course and that was probably the best thing I took in high school. Taught me how to better read and take notes. This was a regular class for a full year.

Taught me to proof read. I learned more here than my English classes." Another participant responded, "Organizational stuff from my LD teacher mostly in elementary school. I felt the whole experience in elementary school was just study skills. I know kids in college who were smart and could make it through high school, but couldn't in college because here you have to do it on your own." One participant stated, "Foundations of study skills I got from my regular classes." In this category, five of the nine respondents stated that their study skills instruction came from their regular education classes and not from special education services.

For those individuals who went to college, writing instruction was an important factor. "My English classes because of writing papers. That's what college is mostly about. That's what you do in college," stated one participant. Another replied, "Writing papers were helpful for when I had to do it in college." A third participant echoed this sentiment when he said, "Writing papers. Helped with doing that in college."

Vocational training. Vocational training was given credit for helping participants determine their career choices. In describing the electricity program at one of the technical centers, for example, a participant stated, "I enjoyed the electrical stuff. I wanted to get into the field of electricity, like fiber optic wires. This led me to try computer science. I went one year of the program my senior year. It was very helpful. Very hands on experience. My teacher took a lot of time with us. Vo-tech was much funner than XXXX (name of high school). Less pressure." Another example came from a participant who said, "I love vo-tech. It made me more confident in myself. And it made me a better person. It showed me what was real, my dreams and stuff like that - - what I wanted. I found Radio Broadcasting is my love." For one individual, the

vocational training experience was helpful in determining what career not to pursue. She stated, "Helped me know that I didn't want to do this (nail technician) for a living. I just can't sit around and look at someone's hands for two hours."

Paid work experience. Individuals who participated in paid work experiences shared positive comments regarding the opportunities this gave them to learn to be more independent in life. One participant commented, "It led me to a full-time job. Helped me learn to budget money for a living." Another individual said, "It was helpful in learning how to be on my own. I took the marketing program and got out at 12:00. It helped me to support myself." These statements reflected the benefits these individuals experienced by working and receiving a paycheck while in high school.

Student-teacher interactions. Having a person who listened, encouraged and advised was reported as a facilitating factor to the transition process for several participants. One participant stated, "Advice to be in classes I could truly succeed in. Feeling there were teachers who were willing to help me achieve my goals." Another commented, "XXXX, my LD teacher. He was kind, helpful. Had him for four years." Yet another individual said, "Mrs. XXXX, a teacher, best teacher, she listened, encouraged me to do things."

Extracurricular activities. Participation in extracurricular activities was cited as opportunities to learn how to balance responsibilities, get along with different people, and provide experience in an area one may want to pursue as a career. For example, one respondent stated, "Wrestling - - and I helped the coaches. This gave me experience with what I might like to coach or teach PE [physical education]." Another participant reported, "Band was a great thing for me. Getting use to people I may not get along with."

Keeping a schedule." One other stated, "Juggling responsibilities like band, homework, track."

IEP modifications. The last facilitating factor was the IEP and modifications to the participants' curriculum. Respondents were aware of the need to do things differently than their peers in order to succeed in school. One participant commented, "Being able to get extra time on tests and exams. Being able to be in a room by myself and sit there and do the exam." Another participant stated, "Being able to use the modifications on my IEP, like untimed tests."

The last three categories of facilitating factors (student-teacher interactions, extracurricular activities and IEP modifications) could not be associated with any of the previously identified recommended practices from the literature. The following section discusses inhibiting factors to the transition process as reported by the 25 respondents who were interviewed. Table 8 shows the categories of the identified inhibiting factors.

Table 8

Inhibiting Factors to Participants Transition Process

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Participants (n=25)		
Academic skills training		
Lack of relevant/real-curriculum	7	
Lack of study skills instruction	7	
Lack of practice writing papers	2	
	16	64%
Teacher attitude	9	36%
Enrollment in Special education classes		
Population	2	
Size	1	
Curriculum	1	
	4	16%

Academic skills training. This category generated the most frequent references as an inhibiting factor. Three major areas emerged within this category. They were the lack of relevant/real-life curriculum, the lack of study skills, and the lack of practice writing papers. Participants who identified the lack of relevant/real-life curriculum as a factor expressed a desire for instruction in skills they would need for their jobs and to help them become more independent. One of the participants stated, "School should be for teaching you what you want to do for a living. First to 8th grade should be book work and 9

through 12th should be four years of training of what you want to do for a living. It would have helped to had vo-tech for four years instead of two." Another participant said, "Didn't feel like I got to do things I could actually use. Like tax things. We should have done more papers, resumes, college applications." One individual suggested, "Need a class that would tell us how reality really is -- that it's hard out here. It would have been cool to hear from people who graduated and what they've been through."

Several participants stated that more time was needed in the area of study skills. It was the participants' perception that not receiving instruction in this area negatively impacted how they did in college. One person reported, "Needed more teaching of study skills. How to manage your time. You have so much freedom in college". Another similar statement was given, "Needing study skills for college." One individual's comments expanded on the idea by having said, "Kids should be taught study skills. Focus on whatever their weaknesses are and figure out ways they can learn the information out on their own. We need to learn how to learn the information."

Two participants reported that the lack of practice writing papers hindered their success in colleges. One just stated, "Not having the practice of writing more papers." The other individual said, "Not enough papers. We needed to do more papers. I needed practice doing this. Even though I would have hated it. Because once you get behind [in college], it's overwhelming and you just can't catch up."

Teacher attitude. This category generated frequent references as an inhibiting factor. A prevalent theme of the responses was that teachers thought students with learning disabilities could not achieve the same or do as well academically as their nondisabled peers. One person shared, "Being put in a box by some people just because I

had a learning disability. Like I shouldn't take a foreign language. This made me feel discouraged. But I knew I could do it. People shouldn't generalize. Another participant stated, "Because you're LD, some teachers and counselors feel you shouldn't go to college or try to go after what you really want to do. That's discouraging. Causes you not to think you can." Still another individual commented, "This is a general reference I experienced: You're LD, aren't you suppose to be stupid? Those of us in the college prep with LD kept our mouths shut. When I was diagnosed, they pushed vo-tech. From some teachers I got the impression they thought: 'What are you doing in this regular level class?' I knew then it would be an uphill battle the entire year."

Some participants expressed the sentiment that the teacher's attitude negatively impacted implementation of the modifications stated in their IEPs. One respondent reported, "One teacher, my psychology teacher. My mom would get chapters ahead of time so she could read them into a tape recorder so I could keep up. He would not help us. Told me I wouldn't make it at college if I couldn't make it in his class. I hated him." One participant stated, "I had an English teacher in the college prep level that didn't work with my case manager. So I dropped down to a standard level who would work with her. I need my tests read to me and they wouldn't let me do that." Still another stated, "Teachers not really having an idea of what a learning disability is. My teachers not always doing what my IEP says."

Special education classes. Four of the participants identified the delivery of services in special education as an inhibiting factor to the attainment of their goals. One person reported, "Special ed. was just a whole lot of lazy people. People who didn't want to be in school. Sometimes I would just be in class and we really didn't do anything. So

that kinda hurt me in Algebra II because I really didn't have anything in Algebra I."

Another stated, "Being in special ed. classes with students who had behavior problems - - not doing work and wasting everybody's time. People with emotional problems shouldn't be in class with LD students." The transition from special education classes to college courses was difficult for one individual, who said, "When I went to XXXX (Community College) and this may seem weird because most people are used to regular universities and so when I say this about XXXX (Community College), people will probably laugh, but it was hard going from small classes to college classes. Hard to ask for help."

Another participant spoke of the pace of the curriculum and the effect it had on his preparation for college. He reported, "The special education classes didn't cover the material. They went very slow. Actually, they went too slow. They should prepare you a little bit more for college because once you get there, you're slammed right in the face. I think they should cover the whole curriculum. In high school I didn't mind the special ed classes because they were easy. But now I regret it. Now I wish I had taken regular classes."

In this chapter an overview of the study was presented, demographic information relative to the participants was given, and data gathered via the Transition Plan Review Checklist, the checklist of specified outcomes on the participants' consent forms, and the Student Interview Guide were reported. Congruence greater than 50% was found to exist between only three of the eight practices and students' transition plans: parent/family involvement, development of self-advocacy/self-understanding skills, and participation in academic skills training. Considerably less congruence was evident between each of the remaining five practices. Interagency collaboration was not identified in any of the

transition plans. Information gathered to determine the congruence between the transition plans developed for students with learning disabilities and their postsecondary outcomes showed the employment outcome area as having the greatest degree of congruence and the education outcome area as being less than 50%. Data collected to determine the extent to which recommended practices were implemented revealed that vocational training, parent/family involvement, and paid work experience had been implemented 100% while the remaining practices were found to be implemented to a much lesser degree. Facilitating and inhibiting factors to the transition process as reported by participants revealed practices found in the literature as well as those not identified in the literature. Several recommended practices were not reported. Chapter 5 will discuss the implications of these data and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter provides a summary and discussion of the major findings of the study. Implications for future research are provided.

Summary

Specialized planning and preparation are necessary for the successful transition of secondary students with learning disabilities to adult living. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 (Public Law 105-17) clarified the fact that improved postsecondary outcomes are the major impetus of a free appropriate education for students with disabilities. The transition mandates included in the 1997 IDEA Amendments strengthen existing transition concepts and mandates that have been in effect since IDEA was passed in 1990 by drawing attention to how students' programs can be planned to facilitate success in their transition to postschool employment, continuing education, and independent living.

This focus on transition policies and practices is primarily a result of the documented gap that students with disabilities present in comparison with their nondisabled peers in the areas of employment, education and independent living after graduation (Blackoby & Wagner, 1996; Charner et al., 1995; U.S. Office of Education, 1997). Educators, parents, and adult service providers have gathered information and worked together to improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities (Malian & Love, 1997; West, 1988). The emphasis to date in the area of transition has been placed

on planning, organizing, and implementing. The time has come for local school divisions to take a closer look at the transition outcomes for students with disabilities.

No formal comprehensive study had been conducted in Henrico County Public Schools to examine the effectiveness for the transition planning mandates for special education students ages 14 years and older (S. Snider, Personal Communication, December 5, 1997; V. Dowdy, Personal Communication, February 22, 2000). The purpose of this study was to examine the transition planning process in this school division for secondary students with learning disabilities and to determine the extent to which postsecondary outcomes identified in their transition plans had been achieved. Information was collected by quantitative and qualitative methods. The specific objectives of the study were to (a) determine the congruence between written objectives in students transitions and identified recommended practices in the literature, (b) determine the congruence between the transition plans developed for students with learning disabilities and their postsecondary outcomes, (c) determine the extent to which identified recommended practices in students transition plans were implemented, and (d) identify facilitating and inhibiting factors to the transition planning process from the students perspectives.

A comprehensive review of the literature revealed eight essential features supported by two empirical studies or one empirical study and at least two research-referenced publications that were associated with recommended practices in transition planning and implementation. A research-referenced publication was defined as one in which an author or authors implied that the practice was desirable or recommended. The implications are guided by evidence obtained from systematic procedures that were not

conducted by the article's author(s). This literature bases its support for an identified practice on previously conducted research rather than personal experiences or opinion. These features were: (a) paid work experience, (b) vocational training, (c) opportunities to develop self understanding/self-advocacy; (d) interagency collaboration, (e) academic skills training, (f) social skills training, (g) vocational assessment, and (h) parent/family involvement. These eight features were used to develop a transition plan review checklist to evaluate their existence in written transition plans for students with learning disabilities. The checklist was validated by an expert panel for its clarity and relevance to the purpose of the study. Postsecondary outcomes identified on the form, Henrico County Public Schools Transition Component of the IEP were used to develop a checklist of specified outcomes included in the lower half of the consent form for participants to complete. The student interview guides used with the 25 selected participants were tailored to each individual using his or her identified postsecondary outcome(s), specified career goal(s), and recommended practices stated in the IEP. A pilot study was conducted to evaluate and improve the guide and interview procedure and help this investigator develop experience in using the procedure before research data was collected.

Limitations of the Study

The conclusions, discussion, interpretations, and recommendations presented here need to be considered in conjunction with the following limitations of the study.

1. The focus of this research was limited to one school division. Henrico County Public Schools is one of the six largest school divisions in Virginia and was considered to

be representative of a diverse population. However, the sole sample may not be representative of other contexts.

2. The overall response rate was not as high as hoped. However, the design of the study precluded any further collection of data to analyze for nonresponse bias.

3. The study is descriptive in nature; therefore, no causal conclusion can be drawn from the information obtained.

4. The description of the transition planning process was based on the self-report perceptions of the identified key participants. The checklist of specified outcomes and the Student Interview Guide (methods of data collection) were based on the assumption that participants responded truthfully. Participants' previous experiences and knowledge about transition services were factors uncontrollable by this investigator. Qualitative and descriptive data were collected in order to establish a meaningful context.

5. The researcher is a secondary special education teacher in Henrico County Public Schools, who is responsible for conducting IEP meetings where transition services are discussed and for assisting in the implementation of transition plans. Possible researcher bias was assessed by triangulation. Quantitative data collected by a checklist were compared to information gathered through semistructured individual interviews. These interviews were conducted with a smaller subset of the population surveyed. Independent raters identified and recorded recommended practices relating to transition services to be implemented as a part of the student's educational program. The percentage of actual postschool outcomes for students were computed compared to identified outcomes in students' plans. A description of the transition planning process

was formulated from the assemblage of data from documented analyses of students transition plans and semi-structured interviews.

Conclusions

Given these limitations, the conclusions drawn from this study will be discussed and are as follows.

1. Research Question 1 gathered information to determine the congruence between written transition plans for students with learning disabilities and identified recommended practices in the literature. Congruence greater than 50% was found to exist between only three of the eight practices and students transition plans: parent/family involvement (81.3%), development of self-advocacy/self-understanding skills (70.8%), and participation in academic skills training (56.3%). Considerably less congruence was evident between each of the remaining five practices and participants transition plans. Interagency collaboration was not identified in any of the transition plans. Practices identified for this study were documented as being effective for providing a meaningful transition to the postsecondary goals identified in a student s plan. Wehman (1990) reported that, unfortunately, school systems either do not implement these practices or do not implement them over the duration of time a student is in high school. Goals and objectives in the students transition component of the IEP reflect practice and vary depending on individual needs. However, information gathered to determine the congruence between transition plans and recommended practice revealed that the congruence was less than 36% for more than half of the identified practices recommended in the literature. These data suggest that practices supported in the

literature were not utilized or were utilized with too little frequency to facilitate the transition process.

2. Research Question 2 gathered information to determine the congruence between the transition plans developed for students with learning disabilities and their postsecondary outcomes. Participants responded to a checklist of specified outcomes listed on the lower half of the consent form. The responses were compared to the postsecondary outcomes identified in their transition plans. The following three outcomes areas were addressed: education, employment, and adult/community living. All student plans specified living on their own or with a friend or partner for the adult/community living outcome. The employment outcome area presented the greatest degree of congruence (85.4%) between the outcomes identified in participants transition plans and the outcomes identified by the participants a year after graduation. Congruence between participants outcomes and the outcomes in their transition plans for the area of adult/community living was lower, at 77%. Given that work force participation promotes financial and living independence, the expectation would be for this percentage to be higher. Based on previous research (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Rice, 2000; Rojewski, 1999), it may be concluded that factors existed such as low wages and weak independent living skills to cause the discrepancy between the two outcome areas.

The congruence between the goals for the education outcome area in participants transition plans and what they identified as their postsecondary outcome for this area was less than 50%. The information pertaining to this outcome area revealed that a high percentage of graduates did not attain the outcome identified in their plans. These data

implied that for students who wanted to pursue education beyond high school, their transition plans were not effective.

3. Research Question 3 collected data to determine the extent to which identified recommended practices in students transition plans were implemented. The Student Interview Guide was used in a telephone semistructured interview with 25 participants. Three of the recommended practices identified in participants transitions plans were implemented 100%: vocational training, parent/family involvement, and paid work experience. A component of the vocational training program available to students in Henrico County Public Schools enables students to receive paid work experience in the area where they have received training. The marketing program, another career education program, also requires students to work in an area of career interest and receive a paycheck. The structure of these programs provided students with two of the practices recommended in the literature. It may be concluded that the congruence evident between the participant identified outcomes and the outcomes identified in the transition plans for area of employment may be attributed to the total implementation of both practices.

Social skills training was an underrepresented practice (6.3%) in participants transition plans. Of the 25 plans, only two contained objectives that addressed this area. Of the two plans, one participant reported that goals and objectives relating to this area were implemented. Academic skills training and opportunities to develop self-advocacy/self-understanding are identified in the literature as practices that facilitate a successful transition to college (Aune, 1991; Merchant & Gajar, 1997). As reported by the participants, the extent to which the goals and objectives were implemented in this area was less than 50%. The area of self-advocacy/self-understanding was much lower (4

of the 17 plans). Participants responses revealed that more goals and objectives for this area were partially implemented (10 of the 17 plans). Based on the practices that are reported in the literature to facilitate a successful transition to college, it could be speculated that the extent to which these practices were implemented impacted students attainment of their education goals. Goals and objectives for vocational assessment and interagency collaboration were not present in any of the 25 plans.

4. Research Question 4 identified facilitating and inhibiting factors from the students perspective. Academic skills training emerged as a dominant factor that the participants frequently identified as being helpful to their transition process. Conversely, when asked to identify an inhibiting factor, a lack of skills in this area was reported. From the participants perspectives, this was an important component in their transition process. Therefore, efforts need to be made to implement the goals and objectives written in their plans that pertain to this area.

Two other recommended practices identified in the literature were cited by participants: vocational training and paid work experience. They were identified in transition plans and were reported by participants as being implemented. According to the information gathered on the areas of vocational training and paid work experience, it appeared that students received these services and benefited from their experiences. Although cited in the literature as recommended practice, social skills training, parent/family involvement, the development of self-advocacy/self-understanding skills, vocational assessment, and interagency collaboration were not identified as facilitating factors by the participants. This may be attributed to the amount of exposure participants had to the practices identified. Three facilitating factors were cited that were not

identified in the review of literature: student-teacher interactions, extracurricular activities, and IEP modifications.

Teacher attitude was reported frequently as an inhibiting factor. Lack of relevant/real-life curriculum also was identified by 28% of the interviewed participants as a barrier. The issue of curriculum surfaced within references to special education classes not completing the appropriate amount of content material over the course of the year. In summary, the information gathered from the participants supported several of the practices identified in the literature as having a positive impact on students transition process. Concern is warranted because the findings suggest that recommended practices written in transition plans were not always implemented. Practices not identified by participants may be due to their lack of exposure to such practices. Those involved in the development and facilitation of a student s transition plan need to be aware of additional factors that may impact a student s attainment of his or her goal(s).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the transition planning process in Virginia s Henrico County Public School Division for secondary students with learning disabilities and to determine the extent to which postsecondary outcomes identified in students' transition plans were achieved. Several key aspects were analyzed. Written transition plans were examined for recommended practices identified in the literature as supporting the successful movement from high school to targeted postsecondary goals. Graduates were contacted to determine if they had attained the postsecondary goals identified in their transition plans. Further exploration addressed the extent to which

recommended practice had been implemented. Lastly, facilitating and inhibiting factors to the transition process were identified by the participants.

Based on the review of participants' transition plans, it was found that the majority of the students' parents/families were included in the development of their transition plans. This can be viewed as a strength of the division's transition planning process. Goals and objectives that provided opportunities for developing self-advocacy/self-understanding may be indicative that these skills benefited and are needed by students regardless of their choice to attend college or enter the work force. Data showed that most recommended practices identified in the literature were underutilized in the development of transition plans. For example, one practice, interagency collaboration was not found in any of the 48 plans evaluated. It could be speculated that those responsible for coordinating and overseeing the transition process for students were unaware or had little knowledge of these services/practices. With regard to vocational assessment, one explanation for the low incidence of vocational assessment in students' transition plans may be that division practice was for assessments to take place while the students were in eighth or ninth grade. If this is the case, it would be helpful to note that information in the student's present level of performance and use it to guide transition planning. Federal and state law require interagency agreements among federal, state, and local agencies. However, in spite of legislation, lack of collaboration between agencies and school divisions occurs (Gajar et al., 1993). The data collected in this study support this concern stated in the literature.

The analysis of the data suggested that students with learning disabilities had difficulty attaining their educational goals after high school. This may be attributed to

the lack of the development of specific skills needed to be successful in the college environment. Although there was a congruence of 70.8% between written transition plans and the practice of developing self-advocacy/self-understanding skills, it cannot be concluded that the goals and objectives supporting this practice were implemented.

All students transition plans identified living on their own or with a friend or partner for the goal to be attained in the adult/community living area. The employment outcome area presented the greatest congruence (85.4%) between the outcomes identified in participants transition plans and the outcomes identified by them one year after graduation. Congruence between participants outcomes and the outcomes identified in their transition plans for the area of adult/community living was lower, at 77%. As stated earlier, given the notion that work force participation promotes financial and living independence, the expectation for this area would be higher. One possible explanation may be related to the level of earnings received in the jobs held by the participants. When compared to their nondisabled peers, adults with disabilities are more likely to be underemployed, receive lower pay and remain more dependent on their parents (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Dunn, 1996; Wagner, 1993).

In order to determine the extent to which recommended practices were implemented in participants' transition plans, information was collected through semistructured interviews with 25 of the participants. It was found that the practices of parent/family involvement, vocational training and paid work experience were implemented completely for all plans that identified these practices. Practices that were implemented to a lesser extent included the development of self-advocacy/self understanding and academic skills training. Since these skills were identified as

important components in a transition plan for those planning to attend college, it may be speculated that the lack of opportunity to develop these skills negatively impacted participants' attainment of their postsecondary education goals. Conversely, the greater degree of congruence between employment outcomes identified in students' plans and their reported outcomes may be attributed to the greater degree of implementation of the practices (vocational training and paid work experience) identified as promoting successful transition to the work force. It may be speculated that if vocational assessments and interagency collaboration had occurred to a greater extent, greater congruence would have been reflected in the employment outcome area. This assumption is based on the literature, which emphasizes the importance of these practices in facilitating the transition to the world of employment.

Participants' perspectives regarding facilitating and inhibiting factors supported recommended practices in the literature. Their responses also identified additional variables that had positive or negative effects on their transition process. One such frequently identified practice was academic skills training. This category included instruction in the areas of study skills, writing, technology, reading, and the provision of relevant/real life curriculum. In addition, the lack of this type of instruction was cited as an inhibiting factor. This was especially true for college-bound participants. This finding can be viewed as additional support for the need to give academic skills training serious consideration in the development of transition plans. Participants in this sample desired a relevant curriculum to assist them with the day-to-day tasks they would confront in living independently. This finding is similar to those of several authors (e.g., Kaufman et al., 1999; Lange & Ysseldyke, 1998; Lichtenstein, 1993). After

interviewing high school students with learning and behavioral disabilities, Guterman (1995) reported that these students felt their placement in special education had not helped them academically, and they objected to what they viewed as the low-level and irrelevant instruction they had received. Sadly, similar comments were made by participants in this study. Teacher interaction and attitude were noted as variables that positively and negatively affected the participants on a daily and yearly basis as they prepared for their goals after high school. Interactions that provided encouragement and advisement were reported as having a positive impact on the participants' transition process. Negative teacher attitude toward students with learning disabilities participating in college-bound classes was cited as an inhibiting factor to participants' transition process. This serves as a reminder of the importance of the human element in the process of assisting students in striving and making progress toward the goals they set for themselves.

Recommendations for Practice

The purpose of this study was to examine the transition planning process for secondary students with learning disabilities in one school division and to determine the extent to which postsecondary outcomes identified in their transition plans had been achieved. Data were collected from written transition plans, students' perceptions of the process as well as the congruence of transition planning to the outcomes of students who had exited the school division. The intent was to use those data to improve services and provide insight currently lacking in the literature concerning local transition planning. Based on the results of this study, several themes emerged as areas for recommended practice. These themes are increased interagency collaboration, the inclusion of

emerging recommended practices, student outcomes and follow-up procedures, and family involvement.

Theme 1: Increased Interagency Collaboration

The absence of interagency collaboration may reflect the systemic obstacles that exist and inhibit the establishment of collaboration and cooperation among agencies and agency personnel with public school divisions. Differences in agency philosophy, methods, requirements, turf funding, mission, and the interactions among the number of involved agencies and advocacy groups occur that interfere with the opportunity for collaborative success (Johnson, Sharpe, & Sinclair, 1997). These findings are supported by the **Report on the National Survey of the Implementation of IDEA Transition Requirements**, (1997), that showed a limited level of participation by community service agency representatives in transition IEP meetings.

Local interagency transition committees have proven to be a viable forum for promoting cooperative activities and affirming the commitment of multiple agencies toward a common goal (Bates, Bronkema, Ames, & Hess, 1992). One should be established to promote coordination and the development of more effective local transition services. Key stakeholders should include education and adult services agencies, as well as organizations representing individuals with disabilities, families, employers and other general community services. Haley, Wyllys, VanDerwerker, & Power-deFur (1997) stated that the contact made with agencies for the purpose of establishing an interagency transition committee should be made by the school district s leadership. The involvement and support of the district superintendent and school board are important for ensuring the commitment of other agencies. Working with service

providers within other agencies and obtaining their support will increase the likelihood of obtaining a commitment from the agency to participate.

As the public school division and agencies begin to share an understanding of transition needs and accept transition outcomes as the common denominator in evaluating effectiveness, a shared investment in the transition planning process should develop. The public school administrator provides the direct link to the student and to the student's family. Therefore, the school system should function as the primary service provider to facilitate interagency communication and cooperation in providing services. The role of the administrator is one of a catalyst and supporter in the promotion of these services. One method of promoting and informing is to implement a countywide campaign regarding transition-related services that is directed at parents of students with disabilities. A presentation to this group should answer questions about how interagency collaboration will help students. Information about the roles of various agencies and professionals should be provided. Responses should promote a focus on the shared vision of providing interagency support for young adults to enable them to live in their community as independently as they are able (Haley et al., 1997).

Theme 2: Inclusion of Emerging Recommended Practices

According to the data collected, it appears that Henrico County Public Schools needs to direct attention to increasing inclusion of the practices recommended in the literature for addressing students' postsecondary needs. Therefore, those who oversee the development of students' transition plans need to evaluate carefully each of the practices as to its value in promoting students' attainment of their postschool goals. The findings of this study showed that congruence greater than 50% was found to exist between only

three of the eight practices and students' transition plans. These three practices were parent/family involvement (81.3%), the development of self-advocacy/self-understanding skills (70.8%), and the participation in academic skills training (56.3%).

Considerably less congruence was evident between each of the remaining five practices and the participants' transition plans. Based on this information, a greater emphasis needs to be placed on the consideration of vocational training, paid work experience, social skills training, vocational assessment, and interagency collaboration in the development of students' transition plans. Since special education teachers are charged with the responsibility of overseeing the development of students' transition plans, they need to be informed of recommended transition practices. This could be accomplished by the sharing of information across districts either through newsletter or staff development. Training could be introduced as part of the preschool opening week for the secondary special education teachers.

In order to further increase the inclusion of recommended practices and maximize students' attainment of their postsecondary goals, Henrico County Public Schools may want to explore the possibility of designating one or more persons to carry out the responsibilities associated with the implementation of transition services to students with disabilities. Although a greater degree of congruence was found between the practices of developing self-advocacy/self-understanding skills and academic skills training and participants' written transition plans, further investigation revealed that these practices were implemented less than 50%. Responsibilities of this role would include training personnel such as special education teachers, guidance counselors and administrators, implementing a follow-up program, establishing liaison with outside agencies that can

provide support for students after graduation, and overseeing transition programs at all of the high schools on an ongoing basis. This fixed role would provide a central source of information for individuals responsible for implementing individual transition plans. Central office support and leadership would be critical in the initial establishment and continued funding of such a position.

Theme 3: Student Outcomes and Follow-Up Procedures

The lowest area of congruence between the transition plans developed for students with learning disabilities and their postsecondary outcomes was achievement of educational goals. For the participants in the study, this area includes goals to attend and complete a program at a community college, college or university. A semester course for senior students with disabilities planning to attend college would provide an opportunity to address specific topics that would aid those individuals in the preparation and transition to that environment. A course of this nature might include speakers who are past graduates and currently attending college, discussion of laws pertaining to adults with disabilities in the college setting, self-advocacy skills, and academic skills instruction such as study skills. In addition to full implementation of goals and objectives written in students plans that address the skills needed to be successful in postsecondary education, it is important that schools provide community experiences that will help to form a link between high school and college. For example, partnerships with local colleges would allow students the opportunity to become familiar with what is expected in postsecondary education and become better prepared to meet the demands of that setting.

A school division can determine the effectiveness of the practices it implements only if data are collected on students exiting its schools. In order to design future programs based on evidence of effectiveness, the outcomes of individual transition practices and plans used in Henrico County should be thoroughly documented. Prior to this investigation, no system for following up transition outcomes had been conducted. A follow-up program needs to be implemented. Such a program could be discussed as a part of the last IEP/transition review meeting held with parents and students prior to graduation and permission could be obtained at that time to contact graduates one year after exiting the school system. Contact could be made through the mailing of a checklist of specified outcomes to be completed by the graduates. This form would be compared to a checklist of intended outcomes the students filled out prior to graduation or at the last IEP meeting held.

Theme 4: Family Involvement

The ongoing participation of families who want to become directly involved is an important factor of successful transition programs (Gajar et al., 1998; Kohler, 1993; Wehman, 1990). Although this area of practice implementation is seen as an area of strength for the school division, it is still not at 100%. The school division should strive to increase its involvement of parents/families due to the positive impact of this practice on the transition process.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the outcomes of this investigation, the following are suggestions for future research.

1. Further research is needed to investigate the discrepancy between congruence in the outcome areas of employment and adult/community living. Results may be used to improve services through implementation of specific practices or the inclusion of outside agencies to assist individuals in further developing skills needed for independent living.

2. Research is needed to further examine the transition planning process for the college-bound student with learning disabilities in order to improve existing outcomes in postsecondary education.

3. Interviewed participants cited teacher attitude most frequently as an inhibiting factor to their transition process. A prevalent theme that emerged was that general education teachers thought students with learning disabilities could not academically achieve the same as their non-disabled peers. In addition, participants linked teacher attitude to difficulties in implementing modifications stated in their IEPs. Further study is needed to assess faculty attitudes in this school division toward students with disabilities with regard to their pursuit of higher-level or college preparatory classes. Such an investigation would be to determine the validity of the participants' perceptions with regard to faculty attitudes.

4. Results of this study revealed that the recommended practice of interagency collaboration was not present in any of the 48 transition plans evaluated. Further research is needed to identify the reason(s) for the total absence of this practice. Research should focus on the identification of barriers and facilitating factors to the agencies' participation in the transition planning process from the agencies' and school division's perspectives.

5. Data collected to determine the congruence between the outcomes stated in transition plans developed for students with learning disabilities and their actual postsecondary outcomes showed a discrepancy for the employment outcome area and the adult/community living outcome area. Compared to the congruence for employment outcome area, the congruence for the adult/community living outcome area was lower. Further investigation is needed to determine the causes for this discrepancy.

6. Future investigation should be conducted to determine the correlation between the level of services received in special education (i.e., self-contained, resource, collaborative/integrated, consultative) and students' attainment of postsecondary goals stated in their transition plans.

References

- Adelman, P. B., & Vogel, S. A. (1990). College graduates with learning disabilities - employment attainment and career patterns. Learning Disability Quarterly, 13, 154-166.
- Asselin, S. B., & Clark, G. M. (1993). Understanding and implementing secondary education transition services. In B. S. Billingsley (Project Director), Program leadership for serving students with disabilities (pp. 299-341). U.S. Department of Education, Project # H029H10034-93
- Aune, E. (1991). A transition model for postsecondary-bound students with learning disabilities. Learning Disabilities Research and Practice, 6, 177-187.
- Bates, E., Bronkema, J., Ames, T. & Hess, C. (1992). State-level interagency planning models. In F. Rusch, L DeStefano, J. Chadsey-Rusch, L. A. Phelps, & E. Szymanski (Eds.), Transition from school to adult life: Models, linkages, and policy (pp.116-129). Sycamore, IL: Sycamore Publishing Company.
- Benz, M. R., & Kochhar, C. A. (1996). School-to-work opportunities for all students: A position statement of the Division on Career Development and Transition. Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 19, 31-48.
- Benz, M. R., Lindstrom, L., & Yovanoff, P. (2000). Improving graduation and employment outcomes of students with disabilities: Predictive factors and student perspectives. Exceptional Children, 66(4), 509-529.
- Blackorby, J., & Wagner, M. (1996). Longitudinal post-school outcomes of youth with disabilities: Findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study. Exceptional Children, 62(5), 399-413.

- Borg, M. D. , & Gall, W. R (1982). *Educational research: An introduction*. New York: Longman.
- Bove, M., McNeil, M., Paolucci-Whitcomb, P., & Nevin, A. (1991). What have we accomplished in the education of persons with severe challenges? *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 14(2), 110-115.
- Brolin, D. (1983). Refocusing special education for career development. *Journal for Special Educators*, 19(4), 55-60.
- Brolin, D. E. (1991). *Life centered career education: A competency based approach* (3rd ed.). Reston, VA: The Council for Exceptional Children. (ERIC Document Reproduction No. 311 666)
- Browning, P., Brown, C., & Dunn, C. (1993). Another decade of transition for secondary students with disabilities. *The High School Journal*, 76, 187-194.
- Charner, I., Fraser, B. S., Hubbard, S., Rogers, A., & Horne, R. (1995). Reforms of the school-to-work transition. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 77, 40-59.
- Cummings, R. W., & Maddux, C. D. (1987). *Career and vocational education for the mildly handicapped*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Dalke, C., & Schmitt, S. (1987). Meeting the transition needs of college-bound students with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 20, 176-180.
- Danek, M. M., & McCrone, W. P. (1989). The mandate for transition services: Myth or reality? In T. E. Allen, B. W. Rawlings, & A. Schildroth (Eds.), *Deaf students and the school-to-work transition* (pp. 1-29). Baltimore: Brookes.

DeStefano, L. (1989). Facilitating the transition from school to adult life for youths with handicaps. In W. K. Kiernan & R. L. Schalock (Eds.), Economics, industry and disability: A look ahead (pp. 337-349). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

DeStefano, L., & Wermuth, T. R. (1992). IDEA (P.L. 101-476): Defining a second generation of transition services. In F. R. Rusch, L. DeStefano, J. Chadsey-Rusch, L. A. Phelps, & E. Szymanski (Eds.), Transition from school to adult life (pp. 537-549). Sycamore, IL: Sycamore Publishing Company.

Dewey, J. (1929). The sources of a science of education. New York: Horace Liveright.

Dunn, C. (1996). A status report on transition planning for individuals with learning disabilities. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 29, 17-30.

Durlak, C., Rose, E., & Bursuck, W. (1994). Preparing high school students with learning disabilities for the transition to postsecondary education: Teaching the skills of self-determination. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 27, 51-59.

Edgar, E. (1987). Secondary special education: Is much of it justifiable? Exceptional Children, 53, 555-561.

Edgar, E. (1991). Providing ongoing support and making appropriate placements: An alternative to transition planning for mildly handicapped students. Preventing School Failure, 35(2), 36-39.

Edgar, E., Wehman, P., Kregel, J., & Seyfarth, J. T. (1985). Community integration of young adults with mental retardation: Transition from school to adulthood. In P. Wehman & J. W. Hill (Eds.), Competitive employment for persons with moderate

and severe mental retardation: From research to practice (pp. 197-215). Richmond: Virginia Commonwealth University, Rehabilitation Research & Training Center.

Evers, R. B. (1996). The positive force of vocational education: Transition outcomes for youth with learning disabilities. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 29, 69-78.

Everson, J. M., & Guillory, J. D. (1998). Building statewide transition services through collaborative interagency teamwork. In F. R. Rusch & J. G. Chadsey (Eds.), Beyond high school: Transition from school to work (pp. 299-317). Belmont: CA.

Everson, J. M., & Moon, S. (1986). Transition services for young adults with severe disabilities: Professional roles and implication for inservice training (pp. 58-70). In C. Hanley-Maxwell & J. Chadsey-Rusch (Eds.), Enhancing transition from school to the workplace for handicapped youth: The role of vocational rehabilitation. Champaign: University of Illinois.

Fairweather, J. S., & Shaver, D. M. (1991). Making the transition to postsecondary education and training. Exceptional Children, 57, 264-270.

Ford, A., Schnorr, R., Meyer, L., Davern, L., Black, J., & Dempsey, P. (1989). The Syracuse community-referenced curriculum guide for students with moderate and severe disabilities. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

Gajar, A. (1998). Postsecondary education. In F. R. Rusch & J. G. Chadsey (Eds.), Beyond high school: Transition from school to work (pp. 383-405). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Gajar, A., Goodman, L., & McAfee, J. (1993). Secondary schools and beyond: Transition of individuals with mild disabilities. New York: Merrill Publishing.

Gall, M. D., Borg, W. R., & Gall, J. P. (1996). Educational research: An introduction. New York: Longman.

Gill, D., & Edgar, E. (1990). Outcomes of a vocational program designed for students with mild disabilities: The Pierce County vocational/special education cooperative. Journal for Vocational Special Needs Education, 12 (3), 17-22.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). Discovery of grounded theory. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Co.

Graves, R. M., & Kahn, R. L. (1979). Surveys by telephone: A national comparison with personal interviews. New York: Academic Press.

Grayson, T. E., Wermuth, T. R., Holub, T. M., & Anderson, M. L. (1997). Effective practices of transition from school to work for people with learning disabilities. In P. J. Gerber & D. S. Brown (Eds.), Learning disabilities and employment, (pp. 77-100). Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

Grigal, M., Test, D. W., Beattie, J., & Wood, W. M. (1997). An evaluation of transition of transition components of individual education programs. Exceptional Children, 63, 357-372.

Guterman, B. R. (1995). The validity of categorical learning disabilities services: The consumer's view. Exceptional Children, 62, 111-124.

Haley, P. H., VanDerwerker, W., & Power-deFur, L. A. (1997). Supporting inclusive education through interagency collaboration. In Power-deFur, L. A. & Orelove, F. P. (Eds.), Inclusive education: Practical implementation of the least restrictive environment (pp. 117-130). Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen.

Halloran, W. D., & Simon, M. Y. (1995). The transition services requirement: A federal perspective on issues, implications, and challenges. The Journal for Vocational Special Needs Education, 17(3), 94-97.

Halpern, A. (1990). A methodological review of follow-up and follow-along studies tracking school leavers in special education. Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 13(1), 13-27.

Halpern, A. S. (1992). Transition: Old wine in new bottles. Exceptional Children, 58(3), 202-211.

Halpern, A. S. (1994). The transition of youth with disabilities to adult life: A position statement of the Division on Career Development and Transition, the Council for Exceptional Children. Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 17(2), 115-124.

Halpern, A. S., & Benz, M. R. (1987). A statewide examination of secondary special education for students with mild disabilities: Implications for the high school curriculum. Exceptional Children, 54(2), 122-29.

Halpern, A. S., Benz, M. R., & Lindstrom, L. E. (1992). A systems change approach to improving secondary special education and transition programs at the community level. Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 15, 109-120.

Halpern, A. S., Yovanoff, P., Doren, B., & Benz, M. R. (1995). Predicting participation in postsecondary education for school leavers with disabilities. Exceptional Children, 62(2), 151-164.

Hanley-Maxwell, C., & Chadsey-Rusch, J. (Eds.). (1986). Enhancing transition from school to the workplace for handicapped youth: The role of vocational rehabilitation. Champaign: University of Illinois.

Hardman, M., & McDonnell, J. (1987). Implementing federal transition initiatives for youth with severe handicaps: The Utah community-based transition project. Exceptional Children, 53(6), 493-505.

Haring, K. A., Lovett, D. L., & Smith, D. D. (1990). A follow-up study of recent special education graduates of learning disabilities programs. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 23, 108-113.

Harry, B. (1992). An ethnographic study of cross-cultural communication with Puerto Rican-American families in the special education system. American Educational Research Journal, 29(3), 471-494.

Hasazi, S. B., Furney, K. S., & DeStefano, L. (1999). Implementing the IDEA transition mandates. Exceptional Children, 65(4), 555-566.

Henderson, C. (1999). College freshmen with disabilities: A biennial statistical profile. Washington, DC: HEATH Resource Center, American Council of Education, U.S. Department of Education.

Henrico County Public Schools (1998). Summary statistics for 1998 graduates. Department of Research and Planning. Richmond, VA: Henrico County Public Schools.

Henrico County Public Schools (1998). Summary statistics for 1998 graduates: Learning —disabled students only. Department of Research and Planning. Richmond, VA: Henrico County Public Schools.

Hotchkiss, L., & Borow, H. (1996). Sociological perspectives on work and career development. In D. Brown & L. Brooks (Eds.), Career choice and development (3rd ed., pp. 281-334). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Houck, C. K., Geller, C. H., & Engelhard, J. (1988). Learning disabilities teachers' perceptions of educational programs for adolescents with learning disabilities. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 21, 90-97.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997. (P.L. 105-17). (1997). 20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq. (Congressional Record 1997).

Johnson, D. R., & Rusch, F. R. (1993). Secondary special education and transition services: Identification and recommendations for future research and demonstration. Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 16, 1-18.

Johnson, D. R., Sharpe, M., & Sinclair, M. F. (1997). Report on the national survey of the implementation of the IDEA transition requirements. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, National Transition Network, Institute on Community Integration.

Karge, B. D., Patton, P. L., & de la Garza, B. (1992). Transition services for youth with mild disabilities: Do they exist, are they needed? Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 15, 47-68.

Kaufman, P., Klein, S., & Frase, M. (1999). Dropout rates in the United States: 1997. Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Statistics. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 431 051)

Knowlton, H. E., & Clark, G. M. (1989). National study of high school special education programs for handicapped youth in transition, Vol. I: Qualitative component. Washington, DC: Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 314918)

Kohler, P. D. (1993). **Best practices in transition. Substantiated or implied?** Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 16, 107-121.

Kohler, P. D. (1998). **A comprehensive approach to planning and delivering secondary education and transition services.** In F. R. Rusch & J. G. Chadsey (Eds.), Beyond high school: Transition from school to work (pp. 179-205). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Kohler, P., DeStefano, L., Wermuth, T., Grayson, T., & McGinty, S. (1994). **An analysis of exemplary transition programs: How and why are they selected?** Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 17 (2), 187-202.

Koskaska, C. J., & Brolin, D. E. (1985). Career education for handicapped individuals. (2nd ed.). Columbus, OH: C. E. Merrill Publishing Company.

Lane, G. (1995). **Empowerment in transition planning: Guidelines for special educators.** LD Forum, 21, 34-38.

Lange, C. M., & Ysseldyke, J. E. (1998). **School choice policies and practices for students with disabilities.** Exceptional Children, 64, 255-270.

Lawson, S., & Everson, J. (1994). A national review of statements of transition services for students who are deaf-blind. Helen Keller National Center/Technical Assistance Center.

Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1996). **Career development from a social cognitive perspective.** In D. Brown & L. Brooks (Eds.), Career choice and development (3rd ed., pp. 423-475). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lewin, T. (1994). **For learning disabled, new help with college.** Education Life, 26-29.

Lichtenstein, S. (1993). Transition from school to adulthood: Case studies of adults with learning disabilities who dropped out of school. Exceptional Children, 59, 336-347.

Lovitt, T. C., Cushing, S. S., & Stump, C. S. (1994). High school students rate their IEPs: Low opinions and lack of ownership. Intervention in School and Clinic, 30, 34-37.

Malcom, C. B., Polatajko, H. J., & Simon, J. (1990). A descriptive study of adults with suspected learning disabilities. Journal Learning Disabilities, 23, 518-520.

Malian, I. M., & Love, L. L. (1997). Leaving high school: An ongoing transition study. Teaching Exceptional Children, 30 (3), 4-10.

Matthews, P., Anderson, D., & Skolnick, B. (1987). Faculty attitude towards accommodations for college students with learning disabilities. Learning Disabilities Focus, 3, 46-52.

McLaughlin, J. A., & McLaughlin, V. L. (1993). Program evaluation. In B. S. Billingsley (Project Director), Program leadership for serving students with disabilities (pp. 343-358). U.S. Department of Education, Project # H029H10034-93

Mellard, D. F., & Hazel, J. S. (1992). Social competencies as a pathway to successful life transitions. Learning Disability Quarterly, 15, 251-271.

Merchant, D. J., & Gajar, A. (1997). A review of literature on self advocacy components in transition programs for students with learning disabilities. Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 8, 223-231.

Mitchell, L. K., & Krumboltz, J. D. (1996). Krumboltz's learning theory of career choice and counseling. In D. Brown & L. Brooks (Eds.), Career choice and development (3rd ed., pp. 233-280). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mithaug, D. E., Horiuchi, C. N., & Fanning, P. N. (1985). A report on the Colorado statewide follow-up survey of special education students. Exceptional Children, 51, 397-404.

Morgan, R. L., Moore, S. C., McSweyn, C., & Salzberg, C. L. (1992). Transition from school to work: Views of secondary special educators. Education and Training in Mental Retardation, 27, 315-323.

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities. (1993, March). Transition Services in the IEP (NICHCY Transition Summary #9). Washington DC: Author.

Okolo, C. M., & Sitlington, P. (1986). The role of special education in LD adolescents' transition from school to work. Learning Disability Quarterly, 9, 141-155.

Patton, E. (1988). Transition planning for mildly handicapped secondary students: A Montgomery County pilot project. The Pointer, 32, 18-21.

Patton, M. Q. (1980). Qualitative evaluation methods. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Peraino, J. M. (1992). Post-21 follow-up studies: How do special education students fare? In P. Wehman (Ed.), Life beyond the classroom (pp.231-259). Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing.

Reiff, H. B., & deFur, S. (1992). Transition for youths with learning disabilities: A focus on developing independence. Learning Disability Quarterly, *15*(4), 237-249.

Reiff, H. B., Evans, E., & Anderson, P. L. (1989). Vocational preferences of secondary students with learning disabilities. Journal of Learning Disabilities, *22*, 613-620.

Reiff, H. B., Ginsberg, R., & Gerber, P. J. (1995). New perspectives on teaching from successful adults with learning disabilities. Remedial and Special Education, *16*, 29-37.

Rice, M. M.. (2000). Transition study reveals the plight of special needs students. Rural Educator, *21*(2), 33-36.

Rojewski, J. W. (1992). Key components of model transition services for students with learning disabilities. Learning Disability Quarterly, *15*, 135-150.

Rojewski, J. W. (1993). Theoretical structure of career maturity for rural adolescents with learning disabilities. Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, *16*, 39-52.

Rojewski, J. W. (1996a). Occupational aspirations and early career choice patterns of adolescents with and without learning disabilities. Learning Disability Quarterly, *19*, 99-116.

Rojewski, J. W. (1996b). Educational and occupational aspirations of high school seniors with and without learning disabilities. Exceptional Children, *62*, 462-476.

Rojewski, J. W. (1999). Occupational and educational aspirations and attainment of young adults with and without LD 2 years after high school completion. Journal of Learning Disabilities, *32*(6), 533-52.

Rusch, F. R., Chadsey-Rusch, J., & Szymanski, E. (1992). An analysis of OSER-sponsored secondary special education and transition services research. Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 15, 121-143.

Rusch, F. R., Enchelmaier, J. F., & Kohler, P. D. (1994). Employment outcomes and activities for youth in transition. Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 17(1), 1-16.

Rusch, F. R., & Millar, D.R. (1998). Emerging transition best practices. In F. R. Rusch & J. G. Chadsey (Eds.), Beyond high school: Transition from school to work (pp. 36-56). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Sale, P., Metzler, H., Everson, J., & Moon, M. (1991). Quality indicators of successful vocational transition programs. Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 1(4), 47-63.

Salembier, G., & Furney, K. (1997). Facilitating participation: Parents' perceptions of their involvement in the IEP/transition planning process. Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 20, 29-42.

Schalock, R. L., Wolzen, B., Ross, I., Elliott, B., Werbel, G., & Peterson, K. (1986). Post-secondary community placement of handicapped students: A five-year follow-up. Learning Disability Quarterly, 9(4), 295-303.

Shapiro, E. S., & Lentz, F. E., Jr. (1991). Vocational-technical programs: Follow-up of students with learning disabilities. Exceptional Children, 58, 47-60.

Siegel, S., Robert, M., Waxman, M., & Gaylord-Ross, R. (1992). A follow-along study of participants in a longitudinal transition program for youths with mild disabilities. Exceptional Children, 58, 346-356.

Sitlington, P., Frank, A., & Carson, R. (1993). Adult adjustment among graduates with mild disabilities. Exceptional Children, 59, 221-233.

Spruill, J. A. (1993). Secondary assessment: Structuring the transition process. Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 8 (2), 127-132.

Stodden, R. A., & Boone, R. (1987). Assessing transition services for handicapped youth: A cooperative interagency approach. Exceptional Children, 53 (6), 537-545.

Stowitschek, J. J. (1992). Policy and planning in transition programs at the state agency level. In F. Rusch, L. DeStefano, J. Chadsey-Rusch, L. A. Phelps, & E. Szymanski (Eds.), Transition from school to adult life: Models, linkages, and policy (pp. 519-536). Sycamore, IL: Sycamore Publishing Company.

Szymanski, E. M., & Danek, M. M. (1985). School to work transition for students with disabilities: Historical, current, and conceptual issues. Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin, 29 (2), 81-89.

Taymans, J. M., & deFur, S. H. (1994). Preservice and inservice professional development for school to adult transition. Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 17 (2), 171-186.

Tuckman, B. W. (1972). Conducting educational research. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

Turnbull, A., Turnbull, H., Shank, M., & Leal, D. (1999). Exceptional lives (2nd ed.). Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

U.S. Department of Education. (1994). School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994, Pub. L. No. 103-239, [On-line]. Available: <http://www.stw.ed.gov/factsht.act.htm>.

U.S. Department of Education. (1998). To assure the free appropriate public education of all children with disabilities: Twentieth annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Washington, DC: Author. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 431 284)

U.S. Department of Education. (1999). To assure the free appropriate public education of all children with disabilities: Twenty-first annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Act. Washington, DC: Author.

U.S. Office of Education. (1997, December 29). Assistance to the states for education of handicapped children: Procedures for evaluating specific learning disabilities. Federal Register, 42 (250), 65082-65085.

Wagner, M. (1989). The transition experience of youths with disabilities: A report from the national longitudinal study. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International. (Eric Document Reproduction No. 303 988)

Wagner, M. (1993). Trends in postsecondary youth with disabilities: Findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study of special education students. Paper presented at the meeting of the Transition Research Institute at Illinois Project Director's Eighth Annual Meeting, Washington, DC.

Wagner, M., Blackorby, J., & Hebbeler, K. (1993). Beyond the report card: The multiple dimensions of secondary school performance of students with disabilities. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.

Wagner, M., Newman, L., D'Amico, R., Jay, E. D., Butler-Nalin, P., Marder, C., & Cox, R. (1991). Youth with disabilities: How are they doing? The first comprehensive report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study of special

education students. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International. (ERIC Document Reproduction No. 341 228)

Wehman, P. (1992). Life beyond the classroom: Transition strategies for young people with disabilities. Baltimore: Brookes.

Wehman, P. (1995). Individual transition plans: The teacher's curriculum guide for helping youth with special needs. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

Wehman, P. (1998). Developing transition plans. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

Wehman, P., Kregel, J., & Barcus, J. M. (1985). From school to work: A vocational transition model for handicapped students. Exceptional Children, 52, 25-37.

Wehman, P., Moon, S. M., Everson, J. M., Wood, W., & Barcus, J. M. (1988). Transition from school to work: New challenges for youth with severe disabilities. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

Weiss, K. R. (2000, January 9). Well-off students seek an advantage in taking college SATs. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, p. A-18.

West, L. L. (1988). Designing, implementing, and evaluating transition programs. The Journal for Vocational Special Needs Education, 10(2), 3-7.

West, L. L., Corby, S., Boyer-Stephens, A., Jones, B., Miller, R., & Sarkees-Wircenski, M. (1992). Integrating transition planning into the IEP process. Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

West, L. L., Taymans, J. M., & Gopal, M. I. (1997). The curriculum development process: Integrating transition and self-determination at last. Journal for Vocational Special Needs Education, 19(3), 116-122.

Will, M. (1984). Supported employment services: An OSERS position paper.
Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Wise, W. E., & Matthews, C. L. (1987). A study of the relationship of education and transition factors to the job status of mildly and moderately handicapped students.
Dover: Delaware State Dept. of Public Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED 290299

Ysseldyke, J. E., Thurlow, M. L., & Gilman, R. (1993). Educational outcomes and indicators for students completing school. Available from: NCEO, 350 Elliott Hall, 75 East River Road, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455.

Appendix A

2002 Moonwind Place
Richmond, Virginia 23233
March xx, 1999

Dear 1998 Graduate:

I am conducting a study to examine how Henrico County Public Schools helps students with learning disabilities become independent by getting jobs or enrolling in school after graduation.

I am looking to see what types of activities were written in students' IEPs to help them achieve the goals set for themselves to become independent. Also, I want to see if students were able to reach these goals.

I hope to speak with former students, like yourself, in order to determine what factors helped you or did not help you get where you are today.

If you agree to be a part of this study, I need your permission to look at your last IEP written before you graduated. Your identity will be kept confidential. If you agree to be interviewed, you may be contacted by telephone. The interview should take approximately 20 minutes. Again, your identity will be kept confidential in the final report. A copy of this report will be mailed to you upon request.

I hope you agree to participate. If you do, please fill out the attached form and return it to me in the enclosed envelope by _____, __, 1999. If you have questions, please contact me at 740-5411 in the evening.

Sincerely yours,

Donna M. Sabel

Appendix B

Transition Plan Review Checklist

Recommended Practices in the Literature Evident in Student's Plan

1. Student will participate in vocational training

Yes No

If "Yes," evidence to verify this: _____

2. Student will participate in social skills training

Yes No

If "Yes," evidence to verify this: _____

3. Student will participate in academic skills training

Yes No

If "Yes," evidence to verify this: _____

- The parent/family will be involved in transition planning

Yes No

If "Yes," evidence to verify this: _____

5. Students will learn and practice self-understanding/self-advocacy skills

Yes No

If "Yes," evidence to verify this: _____

6. Student will participate in paid work experience while in high school

Yes No

If "Yes," evidence to verify this: _____

7. Student will participate in a vocational assessment

Yes No

If "Yes," evidence to verify this: _____

8. Interagency collaboration occurs

Yes No

If "Yes," evidence to verify this: _____

Additional Practices Evident in Transition Plan Review

Note any other practices or strategies evident in plan.

1. _____
Evidence to verify this: _____
2. _____
Evidence to verify this: _____
3. _____
Evidence to verify this: _____

Transition Plan Review Checklist Indicators

1. Vocational training:
 - a. Vo-tech or specified technical program listed on page 1 of IEP under Extent of Participation in Regular Education Services (i.e., Carpentry, Electricity, Culinary Arts)
 - b. Written behavioral objective that identifies participation in an elective such as computers, accounting, or drama that directly supports career goal identified on present level of performance page
2. Social skills training:
 - a. Personal Development course listed on page 1 of IEP under Specific Special Education
 - b. Annual goal(s) and behavioral objectives that identify social skill development
3. Academic skill training:
 - a. Personal Development course listed on page 1 of IEP under Specific Special Education
 - b. Annual goal(s) and behavioral objectives that address specific techniques for developing learning strategies
4. Parent/family involvement in transition planning:
 - a. Signature on participation page of IEP
 - b. Statements in student s present level of performance that acknowledge parent/family involvement (i.e., Mrs. Smith would like John to obtain a driver s license or thinks John has the ability to attend college)
5. Opportunities to develop self-understanding/self-advocacy:
 - a. Identification of the need on the Transition Component of the IEP page and correlating goal(s) and behavioral objectives
 - b. Personal Development course identified under Specific Special Education on page 1 of IEP

6. Paid work experience while in high school:

- a. **Identification of paid work experience (part-time job) in student s present level of performance**
- b. **Identification of Marketing course under Extent of Participation in Regular Education Services on page 1 of IEP**
- c. **Identification of vo-tech program under Extent of Participartion in Regular Education Services on page 1 of IEP**

7. Vocational assessment:

5. **Participation identified in present level of performance and/or results of testing listed on this page**
6. **Behavioral objective written that states the student will participate in a vocational assessment**

8. Interagency collaboration:

- a. **Signature of agency participation**
- b. **Identification of input noted in present level of performance on page 2 of IEP**
- c. **Identification of an Agency/Linkage on the Transition Component of the IEP page**

Appendix C

Participant Consent

I, _____, grant permission for Henrico County Public Schools to release a copy of my last written IEP of the 1997-98 school year to Donna Sabel.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

____ Yes, I am willing to be contacted by telephone and interviewed about my experiences in school and what I have been doing since graduation.

Phone #: _____ Best time to call: _____

____ No, I do not want to be contacted about an interview.

Right now, I am:

____ Attending a college or university: full-time ____ part-time ____

____ Attending a community college: full-time ____ part-time ____

____ Attending a technical or trade school: full-time ____ part-time ____

____ In an apprenticeship program: full-time ____ part-time ____

____ Enrolled in the military

Other: _____

____ Working: full-time ____ part-time ____

Place of employment _____ Position: _____

____ Living at home

____ Living alone, with friends, or a partner

Please return in the self-addressed stamped envelope. Thank you for your time and willingness to participate.

**Henrico County Public Schools
Transition Component of the IEP**

Name _____

Education Goal	Employment Goal	Community/Adult Living Goal
Adult Education <input type="checkbox"/>	Full-Time Competitive Employment <input type="checkbox"/>	Living alone, with friends or partner <input type="checkbox"/>
Vocational Training <input type="checkbox"/>	Part-Time Competitive Employment <input type="checkbox"/>	Living with family <input type="checkbox"/>
Community College <input type="checkbox"/>	Full-Time Supported Employment <input type="checkbox"/>	Supervised living Residential Care <input type="checkbox"/>
College or University <input type="checkbox"/>	Part-Time Supported Employment <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation Independence <input type="checkbox"/>
Tech Prep <input type="checkbox"/>	Apprenticeship <input type="checkbox"/>	Financial planning developed <input type="checkbox"/> (For Social Security Benefits-see below)
Apprenticeship <input type="checkbox"/>	Sheltered Employment <input type="checkbox"/>	Leisure/Recreation Community Participant <input type="checkbox"/>
Military <input type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>	Medical or Personal Care Assistance Identified <input type="checkbox"/>
Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Self-Advocate <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>
Specialized transition services/instruction or planning needed for postsecondary education at this time? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Refer to related goal(s), objective(s), and/or service(s) _____	Specialized transition services/instruction or planning needed to develop employment objective(s) at this time? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Refer to related goal(s), objective(s), and/or services(s) _____	Specialized transition services/instruction or planning needed in developing community living objective(s) at this time? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Refer to related goal(s), objective(s), and/or services _____
<input type="checkbox"/> No Why Not? _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> No Why Not? _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> No Why Not? _____ _____
Community experiences needed toward this outcome at this time? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Refer to related goal(s), objective(s), and/or service(s) _____	Community experiences needed toward this outcome at this time? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Refer to related goal(s), objective(s), and/or service(s) _____	Community experiences needed toward this outcome at this time? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Refer to related goal(s), objective(s), and/or service(s) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> No Why Not? _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> No Why Not? _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> No Why Not? _____ _____

Agency/Linkage

- DRS
- Henrico Mental Health
- J Sargeant Reynolds
- Center for Career Assessment Services
- Other _____

Apply for SSI:

- before age 18
- after age 18

Appropriate for inclusion on the IEP for some students (not required for all) are:

Functional vocational evaluation services needed at this time? No Yes Refer to related goal(s), objective(s) or service(s).

Independent living skills services needed at this time? No Yes Refer to related goal(s), objective(s) or service(s).

The proponent for this form is: **EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION DEPT., Tel. 652-3801 Stock No. 1301-341**

Distribution: White - Student's File Canary - Parent/Guardian/Surrogate Pink - IEP Folder Goldenrod - Related Services

Appendix D

Student Interview Guide

Introduction:

I would like to talk with you about your experiences in school and what you have been doing since you graduated. Before we start, I want to remind you that your participation is completely voluntary, and that everything you say will be kept confidential. If any question makes you uncomfortable or you do not want to answer for any reason, just say so. Also, if for any reason you wish to discontinue the interview at any time, you may do so. May I have your permission to tape record the interview? Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Would you start by telling me what you have been doing since you left high school starting with the period right after graduation and bringing me up to the present?

(Prompt: Did you . . . insert career objective--selected outcome: postsecondary education, employment, military, apprenticeship . . .)

If "No," why did you decide not to . . . insert career objective--selected outcomes?

If "Yes," how . . . are your classes going? how . . . is your job going?

(Answers RQ2&4)

2. Do you still live with your parents or are you living on your own or in a college dorm?

Do you have plans to move out on your own?

What do you find most difficult about living on your own?

What do you do socially? Clubs . . . Organizations?

(Answers RQ2)

3. I'd like you to think back to your time in high school and tell me about your experiences. I am going to ask you some questions about the classes you took and the activities you participated in while in school.

- a. Did you participate in vocational training? (use indicators from plan) (RQ3)

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Partial

Was taking this class helpful in preparing you for what you are doing now?

_____ Yes _____ No

If "Yes," how was it helpful?

If "No," why do you feel it was not helpful?(facilitating/inhibiting factors-RQ4)

- b. Did you participate in any social skills training? (use indicators from plan) **(RQ3)**
 _____ Yes _____ No _____ Partial
 Was taking this class/working on these skills with your sped teacher helpful in preparing you for what you are doing now?
 _____ Yes _____ No
 If "Yes," how or in what situations?

 If "No," why do you think it wasn't helpful? **(facilitating/inhibiting factors-RQ4)**
- c. Did you get any academic skills training? (use indicators from plan) **(RQ3)**
 _____ Yes _____ No _____ Partial
 Was taking this class/working on these skills with your sp ed teacher helpful in preparing you for what you are doing now?
 _____ Yes _____ No
 If "Yes," how or in what situations?

 If "No," why do you feel it wasn't helpful? **(facilitating/inhibiting factors-RQ4)**
- d. Did you have opportunities to develop self-understanding/self-advocacy? (use indicators from plan) **(RQ3)**
 _____ Yes _____ No _____ Partial
 If "Yes," how were those opportunities helpful to what you are doing now?

 If "No," why do you feel it wasn't helpful? **(facilitating/inhibiting factors-RQ4)**

 Did you have an active role in your IEP meeting? **(RQ3)**
 _____ Yes _____ No _____ Partial
 Can you tell me why you did or didn't? **(facilitating/inhibiting factors-RQ4)**

 Do you understand what your learning disability is? **(RQ3)**
 _____ Yes _____ No _____ Partial
 While in high school, who told your teachers about your learning disability and the types of accommodations you were to receive in your classes? **(RQ3)**
- e. Did you work and get a paycheck while you were in school? **(RQ3)**
 _____ Yes _____ No
 If "Yes," do you feel this experience was helpful in preparing you for what you are doing now? In what ways is it helpful?

 If "No," why did you not work while you were in school?
 Who helped you to find your job(s)? **(facilitating/inhibiting factors-RQ4)**

- f. Did you participate in a vocational assessment/screening? **(RQ3)**
 _____ Yes _____ No
 Was participating in this activity helpful in determining what you wanted to do
 once you left school?
 _____ Yes _____ No
 If "Yes," how was it helpful?
- If "No," why do you feel it wasn't helpful? **(facilitating/inhibiting factors-RQ4)**
- g. Is anyone, besides your family or friends, assisting you with the job you have now
 or just checking with you to see if things were going well with your job after you
 had been working there awhile? **(RQ3)**
 _____ Yes _____ No
 If "Yes," who is the person? Do you feel this person has been helpful in your
 current job situation?
- If "No," would you think having someone help you with problems you had in
 your job would be helpful to you? **(facilitating/inhibiting factors-RQ4)**
- h. Is anyone, besides your family or friends, helping you with your classes or just
 checking with you to see if things are going well or if there are any problems?
(RQ3)
 _____ Yes _____ No
 If "Yes," who is this person? Do you feel this person has been helpful? In what
 ways?
- If "No," would you think having someone help you with problems you had would
 be helpful? **(facilitating/inhibiting factors-RQ4)**
4. Based on your experiences in high school, what things helped you achieve the
 goal of . . .(insert identified outcome(s)/career goal)? **(facilitating factors-RQ4)**
5. What things did you lack or not get in high school that would have helped you
 achieve your goal or do better at . . . (insert identified outcome(s)/career goal)?
(inhibiting factors-RQ4)

Vita

DONNA MARIE SABEL**EDUCATION**

Ed.S. The College of William and Mary, Education Administration, 1994

M.Ed. University of Richmond, Learning Disabilities, 1988

B.S. Virginia Commonwealth University, Special Education-Mental Retardation, 1981

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

Henrico County Public Schools (8/83 — present)

Exceptional education teacher (83 — present); Department chair (90 — 00)

Hanover County Public Schools (2/96 — 5/96)

Central Office/Director of Special Education Intern

King William/West Point Public School (8/81 — 6/83)

Exceptional education teacher