

PARENTS' PERCEPTION AND KNOWLEDGE LEVEL OF TRANSITION
SERVICES AND PROGRAMMING NEEDS

by

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ABSTRACT

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In the past and present decades, the outlook for students with disabilities regarding independent living, employment opportunities, and postsecondary education has been viewed as dismal. Statistically, students with disabilities remain more likely to drop out of school (43%), more likely to be unemployed (61%), and less likely to enroll in postsecondary education (85%), when compared to the general population of youth graduating from the nation's public schools.

The successful transition from school to adult life for students with disabilities requires preparation in the secondary school, adequate support prior to and at the point of leaving school, and entrance into adult opportunities and services. One of the most critical components of successful transitioning requires effective familial involvement in the process to ensure the continuation of services post-graduation. Parents have been identified as key participants and play a vital role in the successful transitioning of their children.

The purpose of this study was to determine the current knowledge level of parents of students with disabilities regarding “transition services” needs and indicate the perceived effectiveness of current programming and services their children are receiving. The study included all parents of students identified by the Spring Valley School District as receiving special education programming, in grades 7-12, during the 2000-2001 school year.

This study utilized a survey packet, developed by the researcher, consisting of one “transition service” survey, designed to gather data on the knowledge level of parents relating to IDEA requirements, IEP development, parental participation legislation, and adult service agency agreements and services; one demographic survey, designed to gather descriptive statistics; and one “subjective survey,” designed to elicit parental perceptions of their understanding and confidence levels of their role in the transition process.

Findings suggested that a gap still existed between the expressed importance of parental involvement and “actual” parent involvement. There remained a question as to whether the current practices, in actuality, brought about the desired student outcomes. Findings identified that parents were unaware of “key components” related to successful transition planning and parents further indicated they were not receiving adequate support and/or information necessary to become active participants in the process.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Each year thousands of parents observe their child's participation in high school graduation ceremonies. Their children are entering a new phase of life that is undoubtedly experienced with a mixture of emotions. As many parents look to the future, they feel excited about their child's plans to enter the workforce or attend a postsecondary institution and live independently for the first time. However, until recently, many graduates with disabilities had no plans or options for postsecondary education and/or employment options and in fact, many remained at home with parents (Ford, 1992).

“As a result of the research demonstrating the importance of providing transition services, legislation has mandated systematic services” (Aspel et al., 1998, p. 203).

The creation of linkages or “bridges” between school and adult services became a federal initiative in 1983 when the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) identified transition from school to work as a national priority. (Ford, 1992, p. 3)

In the past and present decades, schools, federal and state organizations and adult service agencies have worked together to create more opportunities/options for individuals with disabilities. School districts have rewritten curriculum to better prepare students for the world of work and entrance into adult life. Adult service agencies have entered into agreements with schools and other agencies to support students prior to and following graduation from high school (Ford, 1992).

On July 26, 1990, The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed (Husby, 1994). According to the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC),

ADA made it unlawful to discriminate in employment against qualified individuals with disabilities (Husby, 1994). The EEOC also stated that ADA gave civil rights protection to individuals with disabilities by guaranteeing equal opportunities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications (Husby, 1994). ADA was initially developed by the National Council on Disability who issued a report in February 1986, "Toward independence," that recommended enactment of a comprehensive law to eliminate barriers and provide equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities, including students (Wodatch, n.d.).

"The Declaration of Independence recognizes that all persons are endowed with basic human rights"(Wodatch, n.d., p. 27). Employment is one of the most valued freedoms and is said to be the cornerstone of independent living, yet students with disabilities are not realizing this goal as they exit high school and make the transition from school to postsecondary education, employment, and independent living.

Research clearly indicates a continuously high disproportionate rate of unemployment of students with disabilities graduating from high school compared to the regular education population (Aspel et al., 1998; Dagen & Heiden, 1995; Husby, 1994; Kohler et al., 1993; Wagner, 1991). Johnson and Rusch (cited in Aspel et al., 1998) reviewed 24 frequently cited follow-up studies conducted between 1984-1990, all of which supported the need for transition services.

Another legislative mandate to come out of the studies for the need of effective transition services was The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments in 1997 (P.L. 105-17) that mandated transition services to be a coordinated set of activities:

(1) Designed within an outcome oriented process to promote the movement from school to postsecondary activities.

(2) Based on the student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests. (20 U.S.C. 1401(a) (19))

The IDEA Amendments of 1997 also required that a child's transition service needs (beginning at age 14) focus on his/her courses of study and a statement of needed transition services, including the interagency responsibilities or linkages, to be included in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) by age 16 (Neubert & Moon, 2000).

Transition planning has historically been viewed as a need only for those students with severe disabilities. According to Sitlington (cited in Kellogg, n.d.), Iowa's follow-up survey of students with mild disabilities found that students with learning disabilities (LD), emotional disabilities (ED), and mild cognitive disabilities (CD) were not receiving as much counseling or transition planning as those with severe disabilities. According to Ann Kellogg, Transition Program Consultant for The Department of Public Instruction (DPI), "Federal law now ensures that transition planning is occurring for all students with disabilities regardless of the severity" (n.d., p. 2).

DPI's vision for the transition of students with disabilities is that they will "exit secondary education to live, work, recreate, and pursue lifelong education and training in the community alongside their non-disabled peers...and encompasses three principles of transition:

(1) Students with disabilities electing the option of employment upon school exit will be prepared for employment by the school and

will be employed in a job appropriate to their preferences, knowledges, skills and abilities through cooperative services from vocational rehabilitation agencies, human service agencies, job service, private industry councils and employers.

(2) Students with disabilities so choosing...will be enrolled in postsecondary education or training upon exiting school...through cooperative services...

(3) Students with disabilities will achieve a level of independent community living commensurate with their preferences, knowledges, skills, and abilities...through cooperative services...(Kellogg, n.d., p. 3-4)

The IDEA transition legislation also requires a process that must include multi-agency linkages/coordination of instruction, community experiences, employment objectives, and other postsecondary living objectives (Kellogg, n.d.).

Current agreements between DPI and The Department of Workforce Development/Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) have been implemented to assist in the transition services process and help eliminate the gap that can occur between the student's exit from school and the beginning of DVR services (Pawlich, 2000).

Like the many phases of human life, there have been many phases for the field of special education. Since the beginning of the 70's, laws have been passed and resources spent on research and practice of legislated mandates. The question still arises; Are students with disabilities getting a "fair shake" at a life enjoyed by those without disabilities?

“Parents are ‘primary players’ in their child’s decision making process and as such are essential to positive outcomes” (Scorgie et al., 1999, p. 403). Scorgie et al. points out that mandated services don’t necessarily translate into effective/successful outcomes.

To be effective advocates, parents of students with disabilities need to know and understand mandated transition services. Therefore, a study of the perceptions and knowledge level of parents of students with disabilities regarding transition services seems most appropriate. The information obtained would be beneficial in determining how to better serve the students’ and families’ transition needs.

Statement of the Problem

Research shows that for students to be successfully transitioned from high school to postsecondary education or employment, special educators and adult service providers that assist in the transition process, must value the knowledge of and input from families. Research further shows that “support strategies” between school and families are not taking place effectively.

The purpose of this study was to determine the current knowledge level of parents of students with disabilities regarding “transition services” needs and services provided to their children who were identified as needing special education programming, grades 7-12, in the Spring Valley School District, during the 2000-2001 school year. Results also indicate the perceived effectiveness of current programming and services their children are receiving.

The study included all parents of students identified by the Spring Valley School District as receiving special education programming. Data was collected through the use

of a survey packet that included one “transition services” survey, one demographic survey, and one subjective survey. The questions related to general knowledge of current transition services, identification of relevant service agencies, information identified as critical for successful transitioning, and questions pertaining to parents’ perception of the services their children are receiving.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the focus of this study:

1. What is the knowledge level of parents regarding “transition services” and programming?
2. What factors inhibit parent satisfaction and involvement with the transition process?
3. What are the parents’ perceptions of the opportunity for interchange of information and supports with the process?

Definition of Terms

The following terms were clarified for the purpose of this study:

Advocacy – “full support for, and representation of, the interests of an individual or a group” (Vergason et al., 1997, p. 6).

Disability –

a physical, psychological, or neurological deviation in an individual’s makeup. A disability may or may not be a handicap to an individual, depending on one’s adjustment to it...within the passage of IDEA, the field has shifted to the use of disability and has abandoned the use of handicap. (Vergason et al., 1997, p. 51)

DPI – The Department of Public Instruction “is the state education agency responsible for special education in Wisconsin in accordance with IDEA” (Pawlich, 2000, p. 2).

DVR – The Department of Workforce Development/Division of Vocational Rehabilitation:

is a federal/state program working in partnership with people with disabilities to individually pursue, obtain, and maintain employment suited to a person’s abilities and interests leading to independence, increased self-sufficiency, and full inclusion in society. DVR is Wisconsin’s primary provider of employment services for people with disabilities. (Pawlich, 2000, p. 2).

Interagency Cooperation – coordinated efforts across agencies such as DVR, social service agencies, vocational/technical institutions, and public schools to ensure the delivery of appropriate services.

Individualized Education Program – the IEP is:

a component of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which requires a written plan of instruction for each child receiving special services; gives a statement of the child’s present levels of educational performance, annual goals, short-term objectives, specific services needed by the child, dates when the services will begin and be in effect, and related information. The program is undertaken by a team that includes the parents. (Vergason et al., 1997, p. 85).

Transition Services –

a provision of IDEA that requires the planning and implementation of a coordinated set of activities for students with disabilities that promotes their

successful movement from school to postsecondary activities including postsecondary education, vocational training, employment, adult education/services, and independent living/community participation” (Vergason et al., 1997, p. 163).

Assumptions

It was assumed by the researcher that the subjects responded to the questions on the survey in an honest manner and refrained from using reference materials when filling out the “transition services” survey. The researcher also assumed a high return rate and that the parents who completed and returned the survey were representative of all the parents of students with disabilities at the Spring Valley Middle/High School to whom the surveys were sent.

Limitations

Only parents of students receiving special education services attending Spring Valley Middle/High School in grades 7-12 were represented in this study. The results of this study should only be generalized to the Spring Valley School District or to a school with similar geographic, structural, academic, ethnic, and socioeconomic attributes.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Tragically, thousands of students with disabilities leave high schools unprepared to pursue postsecondary education opportunities or without the support needed to secure and maintain employment. The first section of this chapter will review from a historical perspective the unemployment status of students with disabilities. The second section of this chapter will review the major education reform movements that resulted from the research that emerged in the 1980s indicating that students with disabilities were not prepared to be productive members of society. The third section begins with a focus on identified “best practices” and recommended practices for parents to help their child achieve desired student outcomes. Lastly, the chapter focuses on a historical review of family roles of students with disabilities and continues with a review of the legal requirements related to family involvement in transition programming. This section will conclude with an examination of the actual involvement of parents as indicated in the research; despite mandated family participation.

Unemployment: Status of students with disabilities

In 1983, Congress mandated the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) to provide people in the field with information regarding the transitioning of youth with disabilities. The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) funded the study. More than 8,000 students ages 13-21 took part in this 5 year study. Findings from the NLTS reported that in a two-year period, 43% of students with disabilities, ages 15-20 dropped out of school. This number was compared to the rate of

24% of youth in the general population who dropped out of secondary school. NLTS data demonstrated that only about half of students with disabilities were leaving school by graduating (Wagner et al., 1991). The study further showed that despite increased opportunities for youth with disabilities, only about 14% were enrolled in postsecondary schools (which primarily consisted of vocational/trade schools enrollment). This finding compared to a rate of 56% for students in the general population who were enrolled in postsecondary schools (Wagner, 1991). Findings from NLTS reported 4 key points regarding school completion for students with disabilities:

- (1) The dropout rate among students with disabilities was significantly higher than among regular education students.
- (2) Poor grades and absenteeism were factors in the dropout rate.
- (3) Certain characteristics and behaviors associated with poor school performance were identified.
- (4) Relationships between school programs and students outcomes were factors along with individual student and family influences. (Wagner, 1991, p. 3)

Two reasons most commonly cited by parents for their children with disabilities dropping out of school were “that they did not like school (30%) or that they were not doing well in school (28%)” (Wagner et al., 1991, p. 7). Wagner reflected on the results of the NLTS study and made the following statement:

How do we interpret this mixed bag of transition experiences: Whether the transition outcomes of youth with disabilities are represented by a glass that is half empty or half full depends in part on the expectations we have for these young people. (Wagner et al., 1991, p. 1)

Wagner et al. (1991) further indicated that when compared to the general population, students with disabilities were doing poorly. The research clearly stated that they were more likely to drop out of school (43%), more likely to be unemployed (61%), and if employed, make less money, and less likely to enroll in postsecondary education (85%). Kohler et al. (1993) reported that low wages and unemployment issues still face students with disabilities and in fact the probability of securing employment diminishes greatly over time following graduation.

Edgar (cited in Collet-Klingenberg, 1998) argued that while research shows students with learning disabilities have the highest rate of employment for all disability groups, they are still disproportionate compared to the general public. In addition, Shaver and Fariweather (cited in Collet-Klingenberg, 1998) found that students with learning disabilities were enrolled in postsecondary education at a low rate of 17% compared to 56% of the nondisabled population. This figure is particularly alarming considering students with learning disabilities have average to above average intelligence.

Transition Defined

Since the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1975, subsequent amendments have been passed to focus IEP planning on the years preceding and ensuing graduation to improve life after the secondary school years for students with disabilities.

Madeliene Will, Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) was instrumental in drawing national attention to the area of transition for students with disabilities in the 1980s (Stodden, 1998). This new priority according to Will (Stodden, 1998) was established “to strengthen education,

training, and support services for youth with disabilities, and to support their successful transition from school to the adult world of independent work and living” (p. 63).

In 1983, legislation was once again amended to reflect the need for demonstrated support and coordination among education and service agencies to assist students with disabilities in making the transition from secondary school to employment or postsecondary education and independent living/community services. Section 626, entitled “Secondary Education and Transition Services for Handicapped Youth” authorized federal funds for grants to improve and develop programs linking secondary education and related services (Stodden, 1998).

In 1990, IDEA (P.L. 101-476) was reauthorized and defined transition services as: a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed 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...(20 U.S.C. 1401 (a)(19))

Stodden pointed to a shift in the focus of planning from what people “could *not* do to what persons with disabilities *could* do to contribute to their own quality of life and to society in general”(1998, p. 67). Another intent of P.L. 101-476, according to Kellogg (1999), is to enable students who enter the workplace, and/or go on to further education, and become independent to gain access to the services necessary to achieve these desired outcomes before they leave school.

In 1997, IDEA (P.L. 105-17) was once again reauthorized to further address the concerns of families and advocates of children with disabilities. A number of changes

were made to protect the rights of parents and students. Stodden once again pointed to another shift from “focusing on and being accountable for process (steps or procedures applied to implement programs) to a focus on being accountable for results (educational and transitional results for children with disabilities)” (1998, p. 71).

According to the Report of the House Committee on Education and Labor on P. L. 101-476, the focus on transition planning must now be considered by age 14 because of the concern that by age 16 many students are already at high risk for dropping out of school because they feel the school has little to offer. Furthermore, the students who do remain in school may need more than the two years of transition services (cited in Kellogg, 1999).

Numerous legislative mandates and government programs and policies over the past decades have evolved to ensure that students with disabilities and their families are receiving the supports and education necessary to make the transition from high school to postsecondary education, employment, and/or training. Efforts to coordinate, integrate, support, and consolidate legislation and programs so that the needs of “all” students can be met remain a challenge (Stodden, 1998).

Best Practices and Desired Student Outcomes

The concepts and components of transition planning have received much attention in an attempt to improve the outcomes for students with disabilities related to employment, postsecondary education, and independent living. The ever-present criticism regarding the gap between educational research and practice has also been directed at the field of special education, especially regarding parental participation (Thompson et al., 2000; Collet-Klingenberg, 1998; Rusch & Chadsey, 1998; Westling,

1996; Kohler et al., 1993; Wagner et al., 1991). As a result, Kohler et al. (1993) identified “best practices” related to successful transitioning. The purpose of this study was to determine which of these practices identified were supported by literature as having a positive outcome or impact on students. “Kohler conducted an extensive review of the existing literature aimed at determining which transition practices had been substantiated as *being* a ‘best practice,’ as opposed to those *assumed to be* a ‘best practice’” (Rusch & Millar, 1998, p. 46). Over 49 documents were identified and reviewed for this study. The three effective practices that emerged in over 50% of the literature reviewed were: vocational training, parent involvement, and interagency collaboration. Other key practices that emerged in over 33% of the literature reviewed were: transition planning, paid work experience, and social skills training (Kohler et al., 1993).

In the area of employment, the findings by Kohler et al. were not too promising. However, there were identified variables that increased student outcomes. A proper match between the student’s ability and the job was cited as a key variable, which increased the likelihood of finding and maintaining employment. Successful job maintenance was influenced by family support and the initial ability of the family to assist the student with locating a job. Finally, success in employment was achieved when students with disabilities were able to display appropriate behavior and social skills as well as a positive work attitude (1993).

Kohler in 1996, continued the research by organizing the transition practices into a “conceptual framework consisting of (a) student-focused transition planning, (b) family

involvement, (c) collaboration, (d) student development, and (e) program integration” (cited in Rusch & Millar, 1998, p. 47).

Hughes et al. conducted a study to determine strategies accepted by practitioners as successful transition techniques and to seek specific procedures for implementing the strategies. The purpose of this study was to take a look at the discrepancies between what the researchers know and what practitioners are actually implementing in the field. The first step in the study identified the following eight support strategies:

identify and provide social support, identify environmental support and provide environmental changes, promote acceptance, observe student’s opportunities for choice, provide choice-making opportunities, identify student’s strengths and areas of needing support, teach self-management, provide opportunities to learn and practice social skills (1997, p. 210).

The study produced a variety of procedures identified by practitioners for implementing the eight support strategies. Practitioners suggested 592 procedures, which were then put into 36 different categories for people in the field to utilize when supporting students through the transition years. Data collected for this study was unique because practitioners were actually included in the process by incorporating their suggestions for implementing the strategies prior to adopting them (Hughes et al., 1997).

“Literature on best practices in transition can be delineated into three areas including planning, implementation, and follow-up services” (Collet-Klingdenberg, 1998, p. 73). Collet-Klingdenberg’s study examined one school district to determine their transition related services and the effects of their practices on student experiences. The study was conducted to “address the void in the literature regarding best practices” (1998,

p. 76). Collet-Klingdenberg indicated that there was little research on the effects of these practices on the outcomes of students with disabilities. Continued exploration of these “best practices” is necessary to determine if they are truly universal. The only way to develop a clear picture is to continue to study programs by “examining with the proverbial magnifying glass, the intricacies of real-life practice” (1998, p. 77).

Family Involvement in the Transition Process

Complex patterns and unique characteristics of families make it difficult to describe appropriate family-school relationships. The complications of an evolving process combined with continuously changing practices add to the complexity of family involvement. Family involvement evolves for each individual family who participates in the process (Hanley-Maxwell et al., 1998).

Prior to legislation, parents seldom held meaningful roles in planning their child’s education (Thompson et al., 2000). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EHA), P.L. 94-142, was the first law that included in the IEP process, the family as part of the evaluation and planning team. Their rights to due process and other procedural safeguards were also mandated. The 1990 amendments to IDEA (P.L. 94-142) included active family participation and planning in the transitioning process (Hanley-Maxwell et al., 1998).

According to Barbara Keogh (1999), The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 and Public Law 94-142 did not come about because of research indicating a need to consider individuals with disabilities. Rather, it resulted from the legal battles of parents and advocates who demanded services. Keogh identified three topics she felt needed in-depth research. One of these areas had to do with the

effectiveness of programs/interventions with children with disabilities because while advocacy was evident, the effects of advocacy were harder to confirm. Keogh concluded that, “parents of children with special needs must make decisions about programs, but unfortunately it is often availability or advocacy, not appropriateness or effectiveness, that determine decisions” (1999, p. 299).

Parental involvement is clearly mandated, yet in a recent study conducted by Thompson et al. (2000), evidence of parent ownership in the process was minimal. The investigation examined the information reported on Transition Planning Guides (TPGs) with parent perceptions of postschool goals and support needs. TPGs were a form of transition planning documents used by the state of Illinois to assist in transition planning. Thompson et al. identified “active versus passive participation” by parents as a key to effective transition planning (p. 21). Thompson also noted the lack of research that examines the relationship between transition planning and actual student outcomes (2000).

In a study by Collet-Klingenberg (1998), observations indicated a gap between the expressed importance of parent involvement and the actual parent involvement by school staff and service providers as well as the degree of parent involvement in the activities related to transition (e.g., IEP meetings, connections with service providers, ongoing communication). These findings suggested that effective transition planning must ensure the inclusion of parents as full participants and even leaders of the transition planning process (Collet-Klingenberg, 1998).

Similarly, Westling (cited in Stephenson & Dowrick, 2000) indicated few studies have identified the priorities and preferences of parents. Crais, Parette and Angelo (cited

in Stephenson & Dowrick, 2000) indicated that although parental involvement was recognized as exemplary practice, family involvement had been “limited to that of information provider rather than that of collaborative decision maker” (p. 26).

Dagen and Heiden, Director of Pupil Services and Coordinator, Programs for Transition, respectively, pointed to parents as partners and key players in the transition process. They pointed out that “parents are the number one predictor of a successful student transition...parents are the #1 experts on their children” (1995, p. 32).

Westling (1996) reviewed 25 studies that surveyed parents of children with disabilities to determine their needs and satisfaction with various services provided. Westling indicated that only recently has research addressed the desires and needs of parents. The desire to include parents has been stated in the law and in literature, but the “systematic inquiry” into the desires of parents has been overlooked. Therefore, Westling suggested that the “appropriate role of the parent of a child with a disability today may be as a consumer” (p. 86).

Williams et al. (cited in Westling, 1996) in their study of best practices asked parents to rate their desired level of involvement. Eighty percent of the parents wanted their involvement to include increased opportunity for teacher interaction, more planning opportunities that involved more than just the IEP requirements, an opportunity to develop community-based learning, and more information about effective practices as learned by school personnel (Williams et al., as cited in Westling, 1996).

Westling drew several conclusions from the 25 studies examined. Parents of children with disabilities want to be involved in the process through increased participation and the ability to influence their child’s program. Many parents indicated

the desire to take on a more active role by participating in parent groups or requesting additional participation in the process. Even for those parents who take a less active role in the process, most if not all desire continuous and effective communication with the school and teachers (1996). In addition, Lynch and Stein (cited in Westling, 1996) found that even though the majority of parents indicated satisfaction with their child's program, 95% of parents indicated a "need for additional parent education in special education law, parents' and students' rights, methods for disciplining, and criteria used for identification and placement in special education" (p. 102). It appeared from these studies that the need for information by parents had not been met.

Bill (1999) strongly encouraged parents to become involved in the process to make sure an appropriate transition plan is in place before the child leaves high school to ensure interagency collaboration and responsibilities for services are established prior to graduation. Under IDEA, school districts write the IEP, provide the services, and fund services, which changes dramatically when parents begin dealing with adult service providers after their children leave high school. Outside agencies each have their own plans and criteria for eligibility requirements along with a multitude of issues such as waiting lists, financial restraints, and limits on the number of clients receiving services.

Cathy Urbain (cited in Bill, 1999) stated that due to the complexities of adult service agencies, parents should begin several years prior to graduation setting up appointments and meeting with service agency representatives to determine which agencies can help their children.

In a report of a National Conference, Goodall and Bruder (cited in President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, 1987) asserted three major parent-oriented issues: "(a) parents must learn about the transition process; (b) parents must recognize their role in the transition process; and (c) parents must actively participate in the transition process" (p. 1). Goodall and Bruder (cited in President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped) also indicated that parents are a vital part of the process because of the knowledge and influence they have over their children and are often the "ultimate advocates" (1987, p. 1).

Harry et al., and Stineman et al. (cited in Hanley-Maxwell et al., 1998) identified several factors that appeared to reduce family involvement in the special education process:

- (1) Lack of knowledge, personal resources, authority and power, and communication.
- (2) Professional perceptions of appropriate family involvement (type and degree).
- (3) Amount of past discouragement of family involvement in educational decisions.
- (4) Confusion related to expectations.
- (5) Limited or inaccessible opportunities to participate.
- (6) Normal familial stress. (p. 246)

Parents are the driving force behind their sons/daughters, therefore practitioners engaged in transition planning who must work with service providers and the community to build bridges must also assist families to build and maintain support systems (Inman, cited in Presidents' Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, 1987; Rusch & Chadsey,

1998). Professionals in the field must find ways to improve family-school collaboration and build mutually respectful relationships rather than simple family involvement in the process (Hanley-Maxwell et al., 1998). Dettmer et al. (cited in Hanley-Maxwell et al., 1998) identified the five principles on which family-school collaboration is based:

1. Families are a constant in children's lives and must be equal partners in all decisions affecting the child's educational program.
2. Family involvement includes a wide range of family structures.
3. Diversity and individual differences among people are to be valued and respected.
4. All families have strengths and coping skills that can be identified and enhanced.
5. Families are sources of wisdom and knowledge about their children. (p. 245)

In 1993-94, Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs) statewide became involved in a study funded by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to interview exited students and survey their parents to determine the career development needs of students with disabilities taking into account their perspective. Each of the 11 participating CESAs interviewed 10 individuals with disabilities who had been out of school for 4 to 10 years (Transition: Guiding practice to improve student outcomes, 1995).

Eighty-seven parents were also surveyed throughout the state. Non-encouragement to become active in the planning or writing of their children's IEP was reported by 64% of the parents. Parents indicated more training, additional schooling in basic skills, job placement counseling and technical education would have better assisted

their children in securing employment. In making the transition from school to work, the following agency services were viewed by parents as important: (a) tutoring; (b) coordination of service agencies; (c) independent living training; (d) job placement/training; (e) resume preparation/interviewing skills and training; (f) internships; and (g) self-esteem workshops. Additional concerns expressed by parents were: (a) lack of school support; (b) need for extended planning; (c) identification of disabilities; (d) access to services; (e) earlier follow-up; and (f) receiving training that will enable students to secure good jobs (Transitions: Guiding practices to improve student outcomes, 1995).

The study and subsequent guide and training manual took three years to produce. The goal of the statewide follow-up information was to provide practitioners with effective and practical programming that leads to positive and productive outcomes for students with disabilities (1995).

Summary

Professionals have long recognized the importance of family participation in the transition process. Parents are the “one constant in a lifetime of changing service agencies and service providers” (Goodall & Bruder, cited in President’s Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, 1987, p. 1). Transition is a lifelong process.

Transition is not a discrete time in life affecting only the individual and one aspect of their functioning. Rather, transition is a part of career development, which is known to be a life-long process that begins at birth, and relates to all life roles, not just work. (Super, cited in Hanley-Maxwell et al., 1998, p. 258).

Legislation, “best practices,” and research have clearly indicated the critical role families play in the successful transitioning of their children.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will include a description of the subjects studied, as well as a description of the selection process of subjects identified for inclusion in this study. Procedures for data collection and data analysis will be presented along with information on the instruments used. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the limitations of the procedures used in this study.

Description of Subjects

The Spring Valley Middle/High School is a small school district in West Central Wisconsin with a city population of 1,051. Enrollment in the Middle/High School in January 2001 was 370 students in grades 7-12. Approximately 53 students or 14% of that population were students identified through the IEP process, as receiving special education programming.

The subjects in this study were parents of students receiving special education programming, in grades 7-12, attending the Spring Valley Middle/High School.

Sample Selection

A cluster sampling method was used to select the sample. All the parents were identified through the Special Education Department database, which queried all parents who had students with disabilities enrolled second semester, of the 2000-2001 school year. This represented all the parents of students with disabilities in grades 7-12, ages 13-21, in the Spring Valley Middle/High School.

Instrumentation

A survey packet was mailed to all the parents selected for the study. A research participation solicitation letter was sent to invite subjects to participate in this study to facilitate examination of transition services in the Spring Valley School District.

Part one of the survey consisted of questions related to “transition services.” It was designed to gather data on the knowledge level of parents relating to mandated IDEA requirement, IEP development, parental participation legislation, and adult service agency agreements and services. Nominal data was collected for the transition survey questions.

Part two of the survey consisted of a Likert type scaled “subjective survey” designed to elicit parental perceptions of their understanding and confidence levels of their role in the transition process. Ordinal data was collected for the subjective survey. The scales ranged from a rating of *completely understand* to *don't know; very useful* to *don't know*; and *very confident* to a rating of *I don't know*.

Part three of the survey consisted of questions used to gather demographic information (gender, age, education, previous “transition services” training, age level of their children, and the number of years their child has been receiving special education services through the Spring Valley Middle/High School). Nominal data was collected for the demographics.

The surveys were developed by the researcher and therefore do not have documented measures of validity and reliability. However, questions on the “transition services” survey were obtained from current legislative mandates and IEP programming requirements available to the researcher as a practitioner in the field of special education.

Therefore, the survey appeared to have face validity based on feedback from three practitioners in the field who viewed the survey. A copy of the finalized survey and cover letter is located in the Appendix A.

Date Collection

The survey packets were printed and mailed to the parents identified for this study on June 1, 2001, with a return date of June 22, 2001. Enclosed in the packet was a postage paid envelope addressed to the researcher, marked in care of, the Spring Valley School District. Midway through the allotted time frame given to complete the surveys, the researcher sent reminder postcards to all the subjects of this study to increase return rate/participation. The researcher collected the surveys on a weekly basis each Monday and Wednesday of the weeks between June 1st and June 27th. The researcher retrieved the returned envelopes from the Spring Valley Middle/High School mailbox identified as belonging to the researcher.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted by the researcher and began with coding. The researcher, to calculate basic descriptive statistics, used frequencies and percentages. Given the small sample size, only basic descriptive statistics were calculated which provided an overview of parents' knowledge level and level of confidence/understanding of "transition services" and programming. Nominal and ordinal data was used in this study. Percentages and frequencies were used with all data.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations to the methodology in this study:

1. This study was limited by size, location, and utilization of an instrument

developed by the researcher.

2. Surveys were mailed to parents subsequent to the end of the school year therefore, potential subjects may have been unavailable.

3. Parents of graduated seniors were not excluded from the list of identified subjects therefore, these subjects may represent a percentage of the sample who did not return the survey.

4. The researcher did not distinguish disability categories therefore, no comparison by disability can be inferred.

5. Items on the “transition services” survey may have been more technical than participants’ knowledge level and therefore ambiguous to them.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

This chapter will present the results of the data obtained from parents of students with disabilities in grades 7-12 from the Spring Valley School District. Parents were asked to complete a survey to assess their knowledge level and perceptions of transition services and programming needs of their children. Of the 56 parents surveyed, a total of 21 persons responded. Therefore, a return rate of 38% was documented. Demographic and descriptive statistics will be reported first. Data collected on each research question will then be given. The results will be represented in frequency counts and percentages of respondents for each corresponding question.

Demographic Information

The sample for this study consisted of 71.4% females and 28.6% males. The respondents ranged in age from 30 years of age to over 55 years of age, with the majority of respondents falling into the 35 to 39 years of age range (35%) and the 45 to 49 years of age range (30%). Parents eligible to participate in the study had children between the ages of 13 and 21. The majority of respondents identified their son/daughter to be in the 13 to 14 years of age level (60%) the second highest group being 15 to 16 years of age (25%), followed by 17 to 18 years of age (10%), and 19 to 20 years of age (5%) being the least common group represented.

The majority of respondents reported that their son/daughter had received special education services in the Spring Valley School District for 1 to 3 years (70%). The remainder of the responses ranged from 4 to 6 years, 10%, 5%, and 15%, respectively.

Occupations of respondents and levels of education are as follows: Service (33.3%); Professional (27.8%); Technical (27.8%); and Health (11.1%); high school diploma or equivalent (61.9%); technical college (19%); bachelor's degree (14.3%); and master's degree (4.8%).

Of the participants who responded to the survey, an overwhelming 85.7% had no related transition education training (e.g. parent advocacy, parent workshops) and an alarming 70% of parents who responded to the survey indicated the amount of training received by the school district was inadequate in helping them understand and participate in their child's transition and IEP planning.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1: What is the knowledge level of parents regarding “transition services” and programming?

Parents were asked to complete a “transition services” survey that was designed to gather data on the knowledge level of parents related to mandated IDEA requirements, IEP development, parental participation legislation, and adult services agreements and services. The questions on the survey were obtained from current legislative mandates and DPI program requirements available to the researcher as a practitioner in the field of special education. A condensed version (key concepts relating to the above mentioned components are in parentheses) of the 15 “transition services” questions can be found in Table 1. Both frequency counts and percentages of respondents are listed in the table.

Survey questions 1, 2, 5, 7, and 10 address the research objective of parents' knowledge level of IDEA requirements. Results indicated that over 50% of respondents indicated no knowledge of the correct response, while approximately 21% of respondents

identified an incorrect response, and approximately 25% of respondents indicated a correct response. Survey questions 8, 9, and 14 address the research objective of parents' knowledge level regarding development of transition IEPs. Respondents identifying "components" of needed transition services, examples of "related services," and determining when services are "not needed" responded with a higher percentage of correct responses. The rate of correct responses for questions 8, 9, and 14 are 33.3%, 61.9%, and 33.3%, respectively.

Survey questions 3, 4, and 9 address the research objective of parents' knowledge level of parental participation as mandated in the legislation. Results indicated that the two questions related to identifying "participants" of a transition services IEP and information contained in the "notice to attend" letter rated higher percentages of incorrect and don't know responses. Over 85% of respondents could not identify the correct response to question 3 and 61.9% of respondents failed to identify the correct response to question 4. On the other hand, 61.9% of respondents indicated a correct response to question 9.

Survey questions 6, 11, 12, 13, and 15 address the research objective of parents' knowledge of adult service and agency participation in the transition process. Results indicated that parents who responded to the question regarding identifying examples of "interagency linkages," did not know the answer (71.4%) or gave an incorrect response (4.8%). Overall, parents either did not know or answered incorrectly to those questions identifying responsibilities of adult service agencies.

With the exception of questions 5, 9, and 12, parents yielded a response rate of less than 50% correct responses to the questions on the "transition services" survey.

Results indicated the majority of parents lack essential knowledge of the necessary components for the effective and successful transitioning of their children.

Table 1

Parents' Knowledge Level of Transition Services

Question	Frequencies/Percentages		
	<u>Correct Response</u>	<u>Incorrect Response</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
1. Definition of the term "transition services"	5 23.8%	4 19.1%	12 57.1%
2. Identify "coordinated set of activities" definition	3 14.3%	7 33.3%	11 52.4%
3. Identify "participants" of a transition services IEP	3 14.3%	9 42.8%	9 42.9%
4. Information contained in the "notice to attend" letter	8 38.1%	4 19.0%	9 42.9%
5. Identify Amendment "change in age requirement" (IDEA)	11 52.4%	1 4.7%	9 42.9%
6. Identify "three principles of transition" vision statement	5 23.8%	3 14.3%	13 61.9%
7. Provide "statement of needed transition services" age requirement	2 9.5%	7 33.4%	12 57.1%
8. Identify "Components" of needed transition services on the IEP	7 33.3%	2 9.6%	12 57.1%
9. Define IEP team determination of services "not needed"	13 61.9%	3 14.3%	5 23.8%
10. Identify Components of coordinated set of "needed activities"	5 23.8%	3 14.3%	13 61.9%

11. Examples of “interagency linkages”	5 23.8%	1 4.8%	15 71.4%
12. Agency identification for “assistive living”	14 66.7%	3 14.3%	4 19.0%
13. Agency identification for “financial assistance”	7 33.3%	4 19.1%	10 47.6%
14. Examples of “related services”	7 33.3%	2 9.6%	12 57.1%
15. Agency identification for “vocational evaluation”	10 47.6%	3 14.3%	8 38.1%

Research Question 2

Research Question 2: What factors inhibit parent satisfaction and involvement with the transition process?

Respondents rated the level of support from the school district for involvement in the transition planning. Level of support could be rated as (1) strong support, (2) some support, (3) little support, (4) no support, or (5) don’t know. As shown in Table 2, most of the respondents rated their school district as providing “little support” to “no support” (38.1%). While 23.8% of parents rated that the school district provided “strong support” and 14.3% stating that the school district provided “some support”, 23.8% of the respondents indicated they “don’t know.”

Table 2**Parents' Level of Support in Planning Transition Service Needs**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Strong Support</i>	<i>Some Support</i>	<i>Little Support</i>	<i>No Support</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>
Level of school Support	5 23.8%	3 14.3%	6 28.6%	2 9.5%	5 23.8%

As indicators of school commitment to provide information to parents, respondents were asked to rate the usefulness of the information provided to them in helping them understand their involvement in the process. Level of usefulness could be rated as (1) very useful, (2) useful, (3) somewhat useful, (4) not useful, or (5) don't know. As shown in Table 3, the majority of respondents (70%) stated that the information they received was "somewhat useful" (35%) to "not useful" (35%). Only 20% of respondents rated the usefulness of information provided by the school district as being "very useful" (10%) and "useful" (10%).

Table 3**Parents' Level of Information Needed to Understand Transition Services**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Very Useful</i>	<i>Useful</i>	<i>Somewhat useful</i>	<i>Not useful</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>
Information provided by the school district	2 10.0%	2 10.0%	7 35.0%	7 35.0%	2 10.0%

As an indicator of parental involvement and satisfaction with participation in the IEP process, respondents were asked if they felt confident (1) attending an IEP meeting and asking questions, (2) in receiving appropriate transition services for their child, and (3) determining their child's transition services needs. Table 4 presents their responses. Only three (14.3%) of respondents indicated they felt "very confident" attending a transition IEP meeting and only three respondents (14.3%) felt "very confident" their child was receiving appropriate transition services. When asked how confident respondents were in determining their child's transition service needs only five (23.8%) indicated "very confident" or "confident" while 52.4% and 19.0% stated "somewhat confident" and "not at all confident", respectively. The vast majority of respondents fell within the "somewhat confident" and "not at all confident" level in each category listed. Receiving appropriate transition services was rated the highest "no confidence" level for the majority of respondents (38.1%).

Table 4

Parents' Confidence of Transition Services

<i>Category</i>	<i>Very Confident</i>	<i>Confident</i>	<i>Somewhat Confident</i>	<i>Not at all Confident</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>
Attending a transition IEP meeting	3 14.3%	5 23.8%	10 47.6%	2 9.5%	1 4.8%
Appropriate transition services	3 14.3%	1 4.8%	8 38.1%	8 38.1%	1 4.8%
Determining transition services	1 4.8%	4 19.0%	11 52.4%	4 19.0%	1 4.8%

Research Question 3

Research Question 3: What are the parent's perceptions of the opportunity for interchange of information and supports with the process?

Parents rated their level of understanding regarding (1) transition services legislation, (2) transfer of parental rights, (3) parental roles, (4) transition services definition, (5) outside agency supports, and (6) responsibilities of the school district. As shown in Table 5, most of the respondents rated their understanding of the information provided at the "somewhat understand" level. Level of understanding could be rated as (1) completely understand, (2) mostly understand, (3) somewhat understand, (4) don't understand, or (5) don't know. The lowest level of understanding was from parents who indicated they "don't understand" the legislative section of IDEA that refers to the transfer of parental rights at the age of majority (33.3%), with 28.6% of respondents stating they "somewhat understand," and 14.3% stating they "don't know."

When asked how well they understood transition services legislation, ten respondents (47.6%) indicated they "somewhat understand," while 6 respondents (28.6%) stated they "don't understand," and 3 respondents (14.3%) stated they "don't know."

As depicted in the results by the percentages listed on the table, the majority of respondents entered the middle to extreme end of the scale (somewhat understand or don't understand). Overall, it appears that the opportunity for interchange of information and supports with the process are perceived by parents to be somewhat ambiguous.

Table 5Parents' Perception of Transition Services

<i>Category</i>	<i>Completely Understand</i>	<i>Mostly Understand</i>	<i>Somewhat Understand</i>	<i>Don't Understand</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>
Transition services legislation		2 9.5%	10 47.6%	6 28.6%	3 14.3%
Parental role	5 23.8%	6 28.6%	6 28.6%	3 14.3%	1 4.8%
Transfer of parental rights	2 9.5%	3 14.3%	6 28.6%	7 33.3%	3 14.3%
Term "Transition services"	1 4.8%	6 28.6%	7 33.3%	5 23.8%	2 9.5%
Role of outside Agency	1 4.8%	4 19.0%	8 38.1%	6 28.6%	2 9.5%
Schools' Responsibilities	1 4.8%	4 19.0%	9 42.9%	4 19.0%	3 14.3%

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter will include a discussion of the results of the study and conclusions drawn from the study. The chapter will conclude with recommendations for the Spring Valley School District along with some recommendations for further research.

Discussion

This study was developed to investigate parents' perceptions and knowledge level of transition services and programming needs of their children receiving special education programming in the Spring Valley School District. A researcher-developed survey was sent to fifty-six parents, with twenty-one parents returning the survey and participating in the study.

The data collected from the "transition services" survey indicated that parents of special education children in the Spring Valley School District were unable to correctly identify key components of successful transition planning. This knowledge level related to mandated IDEA requirements, IEP development, parental participation, and adult agency and service agreements. Significantly high levels of "incorrect responses" or "unknown" responses may be explained by looking at the age level of the child as indicated by the parent. The majority of respondents identified their son/daughter to be in the 13 to 14 years of age range (60%) and of those who responded to the survey 70% indicated their child had received special education services from the school district for only one to three years. This would indicate a high proportionate rate of responders

whose children had just recently developed transition IEPs or had yet to develop transition IEPs.

With regard to parent satisfaction and involvement with the transition process, the majority of respondents rated the school district as providing “little support” or “no support” regarding information obtained from the school district, support from the school district in planning transition services, identifying appropriate services, and attending IEP meetings. The majority of respondents reported being “somewhat confident” in the transition process, yet there exists a discrepancy between confidence/satisfaction levels and the knowledge level of parents regarding “transition services.” Results showed a higher level of “incorrect and don’t know” responses on the knowledge level questions compared to a higher rate of “somewhat confident and somewhat understand” on the subjective survey assessing parents’ perceptions of transition services and programming needs.

Conclusions

This study supports previous studies concerning the importance of family involvement in the transition process. Stodden (1998) reported numerous legislative mandates and government programs and policies to ensure families are receiving the supports and education necessary to assist their child in making the transition from school to work/training. Of the participants who responded to this study, 85.7% had no related transition services training and 70% indicated the amount of training received by the school district was inadequate.

Kohler et al. (1993) reported parent involvement and interagency collaboration as two of the top three practices that emerged in over fifty percent of the literature.

Additionally, Kohler (cited in Rusch & Miller, 1998) continued the research by organizing the transition practices into a framework that included family involvement as a primary practice. Although parental involvement is clearly mandated, Thompson et al. (2000) pointed out that evidence of parent ownership in the process was minimal. It would appear the research was supported by the respondents of this survey who clearly represented a “passive versus active” role in the process. The researcher of this study does not assume the passive role of parents is necessarily by choice but rather a result of several factors, such as; past discouragement practices, limited opportunities to participate, lack of knowledge and/or information, and/or confusion related to expected involvement. As Westling (1996) indicated, parents want to be involved in the process and even those parents who desire to take a less active role, most if not all desire continuous and effective communication. In this study, parents also indicated a desire to become more involved by responding with a high percentage rate to those items related to participation and supports currently perceived as unsupportive.

As observed in the study by Collet-Klingenberg (1998) and to which this study concurs, a gap indeed exists between the expressed importance of parental involvement and the actual parent involvement. The research in this study indicates that related activities such as contacts with service providers and ongoing communication between school staff and parents is not taking place effectively. Parents clearly desire more information to assist them in making supportive and appropriate choices for their children. Lynch and Stein (cited in Westling, 1996) found that 96% of parents desired additional parent education in the area of special education. Similarly, this study found

70% of parents who responded to the survey were dissatisfied with the amount of training and/or information received from the school district.

Bill (1999) strongly encouraged parents to become involved in the process early to identify outside agency participation prior to graduation. In addition, Cathy Urbain (cited in Bill, 1999) stated that it was essential that parents were linked with these agencies due to the complexities of the adult service agencies. In this study, questions related to “interagency linkages” and “identifying the appropriate agency” overwhelmingly received incorrect or don’t know responses from the majority of parents. Interagency collaboration is cited in much of the literature as a key component of successful transition planning, yet many parents are unaware of the services offered by these agencies and lack the knowledge to actively determine which agencies could assist their child.

In summary, it appears that there have been gains in regard to special education programming for students with disabilities. There remains however a question as to whether the current practices, in actuality, bring about the desired student outcomes. Clearly, parents continue to question their role in the process and struggle to make sense of a complex adult service system that at times can be exasperatingly difficult to access. As this study confirmed the importance of parental involvement, it appears that more effort is needed on the part of all participants to ensure appropriate and successful transitioning so that students with disabilities can live, work, and recreate alongside their non-disabled peers.

Recommendations

Several suggestions were made specific to the Spring Valley School District regarding transition services programming.

1. The best test of how well a program works is to determine the postschool outcomes for students with disabilities. It is therefore necessary for the individual school district to conduct follow-up studies on students who have exited the program.
2. The school district must explore ways to actively engage parents in becoming active participants in the planning and implementation of the transition plan by providing more face-to-face opportunities for training and interaction.
3. Increased communication between parents and staff should include information on “best practices” in transition programming, legislative updates of current mandates specific to special education and transition legislation, interagency collaboration agreements and services, and transition IEP components.
4. Development of a training module and/or information guide for parents and other service providers on the critical components of transition services and planning.
5. Upon completing of training provided to parents it is recommended that a survey instrument be reintroduced to gauge training effectiveness.

The following recommendations were made for further research.

1. Little research exists on the real-life effects of “best practices” on eventual student outcomes. Future research should directly address the connection between program practices and postschool outcomes for students with disabilities.

2. Conduct further research on the practices that are currently validated by federally sponsored model programs throughout the United States as effective programs to improve secondary special education programs.

3. In 1994, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act was signed into law. Goal 2 stated that the high school graduation rate will be at least 90 percent. In 1991 the results of the first comprehensive longitudinal study was conducted to provide information regarding the transitioning of youth with disabilities. The National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) results were reported in 1991. The research clearly indicated that students with disabilities were doing poorly compared to the general population. They were more likely to drop out of school and less likely to enroll in postsecondary education. Further research is necessary to gather current statistics to determine whether progress in model transition programs has improved student graduation and postsecondary school outcomes.

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APPENDIX A

Parent Survey

Research Participation Solicitation Letter

Sharon Fox
 Spring Valley School District
 Special Education Department
 P.O. Box 249
 Spring Valley, WI 54767-0249

Dear Valued Parent/Guardian:

My name is Sharon Fox (cognitive disabilities teacher) and I am conducting a survey that examines the transition services needs of parents who have students with disabilities in the Spring Valley School District. The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 requires the school district to provide “transition services.” As you are aware, professionals and parents alike are challenged to keep current in this ever-changing and advancing field. I invite you to participate in this study to facilitate this examination of transition services in the Spring Valley School District.

Enclosed in your study packet are one transition services survey, one demographic survey, and one subjective survey. Please complete each form by recording your answers directly on each form. The anticipated time to complete the entire study packet is approximately 15 minutes. When completed, please enclose and return all of the forms in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided. Your responses are anonymous and by completing the surveys you are giving your informed consent as a volunteer. The findings of this research will not contain your name or any other identifying information. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary, but is greatly appreciated.

When completing the forms, please rely on your own knowledge of transition services. Refrain from using reference materials.

Please complete the forms and return by June 22, 2001.

Thank you for your participation in this important examination of transition services provided to the special education students at Spring Valley Middle/High School. The results will be used to determine how we can better serve the students’ and families’ transition needs.

If you have any questions or concerns about participation in the research, please contact me at (715) 235-7611 or leave a message on my voice mail at school (715) 778-5554 and I will get back to you promptly.

Sincerely,

Sharon Fox
 CDB/CDS Instructor
 Designated Vocational Instructor

Date

Transition Services Survey

Directions: Please select one answer to each question by circling the chosen letter.

Completing this survey indicates that you are at least eighteen years of age and you are giving your informed consent to be a subject of this study.

1. Considering the definition of the term “transition services,” which of the following could NOT be included as a transition service?
 - a. vocational training
 - b. independent living
 - c. psychological testing
 - d. employment objectives
 - e. I don’t know

2. The “coordinated set of activities,” described in the definition of transition services, must be “based upon the individual student’s needs, taking into account the student’s preferences and interests.” Which would NOT be included?
 - a. instruction
 - b. community experiences
 - c. development of employment and other post-school objectives
 - d. determination of program placement
 - e. I don’t know

3. If the purpose of the IEP meeting is the “consideration of transition services” for a student, who does NOT have to be invited to the meeting?
 - a. the student
 - b. parent(s)/guardian(s)
 - c. regular education teacher
 - d. a representative of any other agency that is likely to pay or provide transition services
 - e. I don’t know

4. The “notice to attend” a meeting for consideration of transition services must contain all of the following information EXCEPT:
 - a. the student preferences and interests
 - b. the purpose of the meeting
 - c. indicate that the student will be invited
 - d. identify any other agency that will be invited to send a representative
 - e. I don’t know

5. The IDEA Amendment of 1997, describes the IEP program in respect to transition as beginning at what age?
- 14
 - 15
 - 16
 - 17
 - I don't know
6. The Department of Public Instruction's (DPI) vision for students with disabilities regarding transition services includes "three principles of transition." Which is NOT one of those principles?
- students with disabilities electing the option of employment upon school exit will be prepared for employment
 - students with disabilities so choosing and based on their knowledge, skills, abilities, and preferences, will be enrolled in postsecondary education training programs
 - students with disabilities will have a plan upon exiting secondary education to achieve a level of independent living
 - students with disabilities will have a plan for accessing public housing and transportation
 - I don't know
7. The IEP for each student must include a statement of the needed transition services including, if appropriate, a statement of each public agency's responsibilities before the student leaves the school. This must take place no later than age:
- 14
 - 15
 - 16
 - 17
 - I don't know
8. The statement of "needed transition services" on the IEP should do all of the following EXCEPT:
- specify the work, education and living outcome the student desires in adult life
 - specify the support needed by the student to achieve those outcomes
 - reflects the student's needs, preferences, and interests
 - specify the responsibilities of the parent(s)/guardian(s)
 - I don't know

9. If the IEP team determines that service is not needed in any of the transition services areas, the IEP team must:
- meet again to determine services
 - specify which agencies will provide services
 - provide justification to explain why the student is not in need of services in each area
 - develop goals and objectives
 - I don't know
10. IDEA defines "transition services" as a coordinated set of activities that must include needed activities in the areas of instruction, community experiences, employment objectives, and all of the following EXCEPT:
- post-school adult living objectives
 - if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills
 - if appropriate, functional vocational evaluation
 - remedial education services
 - I don't know
11. Which of the following would NOT be an example of an "interagency linkage?"
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
 - Workforce Resources
 - The Department of Human Services
 - The Department of Public Instruction
 - I don't know
12. If you were seeking assistive living for your son/daughter, which agency would you contact?
- Independent Living Center
 - Workforce Resources
 - Social Security Administration
 - The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
 - I don't know
13. If you were seeking financial assistance for your son/daughter to share in the cost of tuition and/or books for postsecondary education, which agency would you contact?
- Independent Living Center
 - Workforce Resources
 - Social Security Administration
 - The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
 - I don't know

14. Which of the following would NOT be an example of a related service?
- a. the student will be provided transportation to a work site
 - b. the student will be provided with an FM hearing device to enable him/her to perform his/her duties at a job site
 - c. orientation and mobility at a work site
 - d. special education teacher will observe student during a work experience
 - e. I don't know
15. If you wanted to find out what skill, abilities, and aptitudes your child had, which agency could provide a vocational evaluation?
- a. Department of Human Services
 - b. Employment Agency
 - c. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
 - d. Private Industry Council
 - e. I don't know

Subjective Survey

Directions: Please put an X on the line of the answer you have chosen. Mark only one answer for each question.

Completing this survey indicates that you are at least eighteen years of age and you are giving your informed consent to be a subject of this survey.

1. How well do you understand transition services legislation and the impact it has on your child?

- I completely understand
- I mostly understand
- I somewhat understand
- I don't understand
- I don't know

2. How well do you understand your parental role in the transition IEP process?

- I completely understand
- I mostly understand
- I somewhat understand
- I don't understand
- I don't know

3. How well do you understand the legislation section of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, (IDEA) that refers to the transfer of parental rights at the "Age of Majority?"

- I completely understand
- I mostly understand
- I somewhat understand
- I don't understand
- I don't know

4. How well do you understand the meaning of the term "transition services?"

- I completely understand
- I mostly understand
- I somewhat understand
- I don't understand
- I don't know

5. How well do you understand the role of outside agencies (e.g. DVR, Human Services) participation in providing transition services for your child?

- I completely understand
- I mostly understand
- I somewhat understand
- I don't understand
- I don't know

6. How well do you understand the school's responsibilities to provide transition services?

- I completely understand
- I mostly understand
- I somewhat understand
- I don't understand
- I don't know

7. How confident do you feel attending a Transition IEP meeting and asking questions related to transition services?

- Very confident
- Confident
- Somewhat confident
- Not at all confident
- I don't know

8. How confident do you feel that your child is receiving the appropriate transition services?

- Very confident
- Confident
- Somewhat confident
- Not at all confident
- I don't know

9. How confident do you feel in determining your child's transition services needs?

- Very confident
- Confident
- Somewhat confident
- Not at all confident
- I don't know

10. How useful has the information provided by the school district been in helping you understand transition services?

- Very useful
- Useful
- Somewhat useful
- Not useful
- I don't know

11. What level of school support do you feel you have in planning transition service needs for your child?

- Strong support
- Some support
- Little support
- No support
- I don't know

6. How many years has your son/daughter received special education services at the middle/high school level?

- 1 year
 2 years
 3 years
 4 years
 5 years
 6 years
 6+

7. Age level of son/daughter:

- 13 – 14
 15 – 16
 17 – 18
 19 – 20
 21 +

8. Has the training you have received been adequate in helping you understand and participate in your child's transition and individualized education plan?

Yes No

If no, why do you feel you have not had enough training? Check all that apply.

- lack of time to devote to self-knowledge
 unable to pay fees to attend parent workshops and/or planning
 unaware of resources available to pursue further knowledge
 distance to continuing education/workshops too great
 other, please explain:

9. Do you have a computer in your home? Yes No

If yes, do you have Internet access? Yes No

10. Do you feel special education staff are open and receptive to assisting parents in understanding transition service needs of your son/daughter?

Very receptive Somewhat receptive Not at all receptive

11. Does your school district have a special education parent advisory group?

Yes No

12. Are you a member of this team? Yes No

