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### Do Students with Disabilities Successfully Transition into the Work Force or Postsecondary Education?

Kathleen M. Philbin  
*St. John Fisher College*

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# Do Students with Disabilities Successfully Transition into the Work Force or Postsecondary Education?

## Abstract

This research focuses on students with disabilities and their transition and career planning for postsecondary life. The United States federal government has put into law, regulations and guidelines for children with disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) requires states and school districts to have a transition plan in place for all students with disabilities. The transition plan should prepare students for further education, employment, and independent living. Transition plans need to take into account the individual student's interest and abilities. Educators are in agreement that children with disabilities need to have a transition plan. Educators often have different ideas on what should be included in a transition plan. Several educators believe their school district can improve on their transition and career plans.

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Educators are in agreement that children with disabilities need to have a transition plan. Educators often have different ideas on what should be included in a transition plan. Several educators believe their school district can improve on their transition and career plans.

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## Introduction

Do students with disabilities successfully transition into the work force or post secondary education? What is the best way to guide students into life after high school? Educators are faced with these questions everyday. Students with disabilities need the support from their Individualized Plan (IEP) team during middle school and high school to succeed after high school. Teachers need to understand their part of the transition and career planning. They play a very important role.

What is transition and career planning?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the law that outlines rights and regulations for students with disabilities in the U.S. who require special education (Mauro, 2007, p.1). In 2004, the United States Congress reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The reauthorization of the act affirms that the primary purpose of the free appropriate public education guaranteed to children and youth with disabilities is to “prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living (Cortiella, 2005, p.1). One thing it sought was to improve the transitioning process of high school students to a post secondary education, the work force, and independent living. There were several new requirements added to IDEA in 2004 (Cortiella, 2005, p.1). One of the amendments focuses on the transition process. The amendments clarify that the transition process for a student with a disability now begins at age 16. It is not merely a plan for transition. Parents should request that the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), when appropriate, include a statement of inter-agency responsibilities and any needed linkages since this language is no longer in the statute (Joyce, & Rossen, 2006, p.1).

Students with disabilities are required by law to have a transition plan designed by their IEP team, for their post secondary school life”(Cortiella, 2005, p.1). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 2004, established a requirement that by age 16 a student’s IEP must include a transition plan. Originally the age requirement for a transition plan was 14. Many states feel 16 is too late to begin a transition plan. Several states begin the process at 14 or when a child is in middle school. “Transition planning is a coordinated set of activities focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of a student with disabilities to promote the student’s movement from school to post – school activities” (Ohio Legal Rights Service, 2005, p.1). “IDEA 2004 added a new requirement that transition services be based on the student’s strengths, as well as their preferences and interests. The addition of “strengths” makes it clear that the development of transition goals should focus on and build upon what the student can do — not focus entirely on what the student can’t do”(Cortiella, 2005, p.1). The IEP team is made up of several people including the student and parents. The team should also include the school psychologist, learning specialist, social worker and the child’s teachers (Mauro, 2006, p.1). The team evaluates the student and develops appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills; develops appropriate measurable goals (Cortiella, 2005, p. 2). It is important the goals reflect the student’s strengths, preferences and interests. The team will also develop a statement of the transition services. The transition services should reflect the student’s postsecondary goals. The transition statement should include and define every activity that must happen. It should also identify who is responsible for each activity. There should also be specific dates that each activity will begin and end. The transition plan is

an ongoing process. It should be reviewed at the student's annual review meeting (deFur, 2000, p2).

### Transitioning Statistics

The National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 (NLTS2) is a ten-year study funded by the Office of Special Education (OSEP) of the United States Department of Education. This particular part of the study focused on youths with disabilities who were out of secondary school. They were out of school up to two years. The age range was 15-19. The study surveyed more than 11,000 youths throughout the United States. There are eleven different categories of disabilities in this study. The categories include: learning disability, speech/language impairment, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, visual impairment, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury and multiple disabilities. The study was interested in youth with disabilities and transition. The study was conducted by telephone and mail in 2003. The respondents were the child, parent, or a school employee.

The questions in this part of the survey addressed postsecondary activities. The activities were divided into three categories, employment, postsecondary education, and job training. Employment is defined as working for pay, outside of the home. Postsecondary education is taking courses towards a GED or attending a vocational, business or technical school: a 2 year, junior, or community college; or a 4 year college or university (Camato, Garza, Levine, Newman, Wagner, 2007, p.7). Job training involves training in a specific job skill from someone other than a family member.

According to this study, 72% of the students interviewed had completed high school by graduating or receiving some type of certificate of completion; 28% did not finish high school, and 79% of the students interviewed had been engaged in employment, postsecondary education, job training or a combination of those activities since leaving high school (Camato, et al., 2007 p.3). Also, the study found that 7 of 10 youth with disabilities were employed after leaving high school (Camato, et al., 2007 p.3). Specifically, the study found that 21% had gone on to school and worked; 49% of the student's only activity was employment, while 4% sole activity was postsecondary education; and 6% of the students had job training (Camato, et al., 2007 p.3).

The NLTS2 looks at eleven different disability categories. They broke down youth engagement by disability categories. Again the engagement is employment, postsecondary education, and job training. According to the NLTS2, 83% or more of students with learning disabilities or speech or visual impairments, were engaged in some type of transition activity (Camato, 2007 p.3). The NLTS2 also found that 78% of youth with other health impairments were engaged in some type of employment or volunteer activity in the community; 73% of youth with a hearing impairment were engaged in some type of employment or volunteer activity in the community; 59% of students with orthopedic impairments; 56% of youth with autism, and 54% of youth with multiple disabilities, were engaged in some type of employment or volunteer activity (Camato, 2007 p.3). Youth with mental retardation had the lowest rate of engagement at 52% (Camato, et al., 2007 p.3). "Youth with disabilities with medium and high functional cognitive skills are more likely to be engaged than youth with low functional cognitive skills" (Camato, 2007 p.3).

According to the NLTS2, 72% of the 11,000 youth with disabilities that were surveyed, completed high school and 79% were engaged in some type of community activity (Camato, et al., 2007 p.3). There is a difference between the different disability categories in terms of engagement in employment, postsecondary education and job training. The authors of this study found no difference in the level of engagement between gender and race. They did find a difference of the level of engagement between different household income levels. The study also found that 93% of all youth with disabilities from families of income levels of more than \$50,000 were engaged in community based activities such as, postsecondary education, employment and independent living. Conversely, 70% of youth from families with household income of \$25,000 or less were engaged in activities (Cameto, 2007, p.3). The authors also discovered 21% of youth with disabilities were not engaged in any type of community activities (Cameto, 2007, p.3).

According to the NLTS2, 72% of the 11,000 youth with disabilities that were surveyed, completed high school and 79% were engaged in some type of community activity. There is a difference between the different disability categories in terms of engagement in employment, postsecondary education and job training. The authors of this study found no difference in the level of engagement between gender and race. They did find a difference of the level of engagement between different household income levels. Ninety three of all youth with disabilities from families of income levels of more than \$50,000 were engaged, whereas 70% of youth from families with household income of \$25,000 or less were engaged in activities. The authors also discovered 21% of youth with disabilities were not engaged in any type of community activities.

The National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 also asked the students and parents how they felt about the special education services they received in secondary school. Fifty seven percent of parents said they were satisfied with the services their child received. Twenty nine percent said they were somewhat satisfied of the services their child received. Thirteen percent of the parents surveyed said they were dissatisfied with the services their child received (Cameto, 2007, p.3).

The National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 also surveyed school based educators regarding transition planning. The survey wanted to know what the goals are for participants in transition planning after high school. Forty seven percent of the participants said they wanted to go to either a two year or four year college. Thirty nine percent wanted to attend a postsecondary vocational training program. When asked about employment, 53% wanted to obtain competitive income employment. Forty nine percent of the students wanted to live independently after high school (Cameto, 2005, p.1).

“Transition planning involves identifying measurable postsecondary goals, transition services, and a course of study that will help students achieve those transition goals (Cameto, 2005, p.1).” The survey asks the school-based educators questions regarding coursework of the transition-planning participant. Seventy four percent of the participants had a transition plan that specifies a course of study to meet transition goals. Fifty four percent of the participants received instruction focused on transition planning. 76% of the participants had post school services identified (Cameto, 2005, p.1).

The National Longitudinal Transitional Study 2 was also interested in the parent relationship with the school. “An important part of the school’s role in assisting the

transition of students with disabilities to adult life is informing parents about the services related to a student's disability that are available after high school (.Cameto, 2005, p.1). School based educators were asked if parents were kept informed of services the participants were receiving. The answers were broken down into age groups. Overall, 57% were informed of the services. As the students got older, the information the parents received increased. At age 14, 28% of the parents were informed. At age 15, 34% of the parents were informed. At age 16, 56% of the parents were informed. Ages 17-18, 77% were informed of the postsecondary services their child received (.Cameto, 2005, p.1).

The group, Advocates for Children of New York, did a study in 2006 on the success rate of children with disabilities after high school. The report found the transition services in the New York City Department of Education were not successful. They analyzed 264 IEPs for students age 15-21 (Silverman, 2006, p.2). They found that 26% of the IEPs reviewed, 26% did not have a transition plan (Silverman, 2006, p.2). They also found 31% of the students participated in the IEP plan (Silverman, 2006, p.2). Of the IEPs that did have transition plans, the majority failed to have measurable goals. They did not clearly identify services that were to be provided. They also failed to incorporate student's strengths, preferences or interests. The IEPs did not indicate the coursework and support services the students needed to earn their high school diploma or reach their long-term goal (Silverman, 2006, p.6). The conclusion made after the review of the 264 IEPs, none were in compliance of the law.

The Advocates for Children of New York group came up with several recommendations for the New York Department of Education. The recommendations were requirements that IDEA had made into law. One recommendation was that the

NYC Department of Education provides a system to ensure that transition planning begins by the required age of 15. They also suggested that post school activities be tracked. It was also recommended the personal involved in the transition planning be properly trained (Silverman, 2006. p7).

#### Best practices for transitioning and career planning

A transition plan should be set in place for a student with disabilities before their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. It is believed the sooner a student with an IEP has a transition plan in place the more successful the student will be in both high school and postsecondary life (Cortiella, 2005. p.1). Many states require a student with an IEP to have a transition plan put in place by the age 14 or before they enter high school. The coursework and services a child receives in high school has a tremendous impact on postsecondary life (Joyce & Rossen, 2006, p.1). It is important that the transition plan is thought out thoroughly by the transition team. The team should include the student, parents, school psychologist, learning specialist, social worker and the child's teachers (Mauro, 2006, p.1).

Sharon deFur (2000) believes the transition plan needs to be put in place several years before high school graduation. She advocates for each state to begin the transition plan at age 14 or in middle school. There are several things deFur (2000) believes should be considered when making a transition plan. A child's experiences in high school are just not academic, but also social. Both of these greatly influence a child's future. A child's preferences and interest play an important role. That is why deFur (2000) encourages students and their parents to take an active role in the transition process. deFur (2000) believes a child should be their own advocate. They need to know their rights in the special education system. Parents should also be strong supporters of their child.

Sharon deFur (2000) believes the transition team should ask the student several questions about what they want in the future. They should be asked what their strengths are and how they could use them to build a success during high school and beyond. Students should be asked what skills she/he might need to develop or improve to reach her/goals. Other questions regarding school and community involvement will also help the team to make a successful plan.

The transition planning should be a coordinated set of activities focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of a student with disabilities to promote the student's movement from school to post – school activities. The team evaluates the student and develops appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills; and develops the appropriate measurable goals (Cortiella, 2005, p. 2). It is important the goals reflect the student's strengths, preferences and interests. The team will also develop a statement of the transition services. The transition services should reflect the student's interest and preferences. The coursework should be meaningful to the student also. The plan should also be individualized.

The IEP and the transition plan should be based on student centered planning. It should reflect the student's preferences, interests and abilities. When the transition team chooses a work experience or Community Based Worked Assessments, it should also take into account the student's interest and abilities. A student should not be placed because there is availability. The placement should help the student to develop skills. The placement should also be a place where the student can utilize his/her abilities to the

fullest. There should be a job coach who can help the student to improve on his/her abilities. All progress should be documented and measured (Graham, & Wright, 2006, p.2).

Career Planning Begins with Assessment, A guide for Professionals Serving Youth with Educational and Career Development Challenges by Joe Timmons, Mary Podmastko, Christine Bremer, Don Lavin and Jean Wills, is a 145-page guide to help youth and the adults who work with them. According to the guide transition is defined as the period of time when adolescents are moving into adulthood. “In order for youth to make informed choices about academic programs and career planning, they need access to a range of opportunities and experiences that allow them to explore their own interests and many options available to them for postsecondary educational and employment (Bremer, Levin, Podmastko, Timmons, Willis, 2005, p1). The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth has a list of helpful opportunities and experiences that are called Guidepost for Success. Guidepost 1 is School Based Preparatory Experiences. Student’s coursework should be grounded in standards, clear performance indicators and graduation exit options. Guidepost 2 is Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences. Career preparation and work based learning experiences should be provided during the school day. Guidepost 3 is Youth Development and Youth Leadership. It is a process that prepares students to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood. Guidepost 4 is Connecting Activities. Students should be connected to programs, services, activities, and supports that help them gain access to choose post school options. Guidepost 5 is Family Involvement and Supports. Involvement of family and or other caring adults promotes the social, emotional, physical, academic, and

occupational growth of youth. The transition team should use the Guidepost when preparing the transition plan (Bremer, 2005, p1).

Transition Quality Indicators were developed by the federal government to assist states with assesses their transition practices.

According to D. Brewer (2007) the federal government established State Performance Plan Indicator #13 (SPP 13) so that states would report the percentage of students with Individualized Education Programs whose goals and transition services reasonably enable the student to meet measurable post-secondary goals. In New York State, Transition Quality Indicators (TQI) were established to help school districts collaboratively assess their current transition-related practices (Brewer, 2006, p.1).

There are several parts to the Transition Quality Indicators survey. The first part of the survey deals with educational program structures. “Does the educational program have the resources and structure to communicate clear guidelines, provide professional development and encourage creative opportunities for growth of transition and school careers”(VESID, 2005)? The educators would rate their answers on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being exemplary. The next topic is Interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration. The question is: Are educational program educators and community agencies aware of each other’s services and engaged with students in collaborative projects to improve transition outcome? The next set of questions pertains to family involvement in the student’s transition planning. The question states: Are families actively participating in transition planning, community resources, training events, and program development activities related to life after school? The survey also wants to know about the student’s participation in the IEP development. The question is: Do students actively participate

in a process of vocational assessment, IEP development academic and career planning to achieve desired educational and adult outcome? The last topic is about student development. The question states: Are course offerings in the areas of academics, life skills, vocational evaluation preparation, and work experiences responsive to local economic conditions and the diversity of your student population (VESID, 2005)?

In his book, *Ready or Not, Here Life Comes*, Dr. Mel Levine discusses how society makes it hard for children to grow up to productive community members and what he believes can be done about it. He believes rearing and educating children involves long-range priorities. Students need to have great insight in to themselves in order to be successful. They need to know what they like or dislike. They need to know what their strengths and weaknesses are. Educators can help students with this process. He has come up with the Growth Processes (The Four I's) to help children to become successful. Levine believes if a child has a deep self-knowledge, they will become a happy and successful adult. The first I is Inner Direction. Children need to be able to deepen their self-knowledge. The second I is Interpretation for sharpening outside insights. The third I is Instrumentation for equipping a mind's toolbox. The fourth I is for Interaction. It is crafting interpersonal skills. Levine believes if educators used the Growth Processes, children will be able to successfully transition into postsecondary school life (Levine, 2005, p72).

What can students and Families do to aid in the success of Transitioning

Students and families should have an active role in a child's transition and career planning. It is very important they know what the child's rights and responsibilities are.

The Free Appropriate Public Education Act states the school must provide a child with free and appropriate education. It also states it will provide special education and related services without charge. The IEP is a very important tool for the success of a student with a disability. A child is the center of the IEP and the most important member of the team. The parents also play a very crucial role IEP team (Whitney, 2007, p.2).

Parents and the child should be a strong advocate team for the child with disabilities. . In 2007 the United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights posted on their website a letter to the parents of students with disabilities. The purpose of the letter was to “raise awareness and to share information about the legal rights and responsibilities of parents” (United States Department of Education, 2007). The letter discusses the importance of knowing the rights and responsibilities of a child with disabilities.

As children get older they need to become their own advocate. Howard Eaton and Leslie Coull wrote a guide for students who want to go on to postsecondary learning. The guide is Transitions to Postsecondary Learning, Self-advocacy Handbook. This guide is written for the student with disabilities. The author, Howard Eaton, has a learning disability. He does have masters in education and is a teacher. He wrote this guide with first hand knowledge. Leslie Coull is also a teacher. The guide is divided into four sections with the last section being a checklist for transition. There is a checklist for high school, college and assessments. The first section is titled “Top 10 difficulties going from high school to college.” The second section is “The top 4 difficulties colleges have with a learning disability.” The third section is “Top ten ways to improve your self-advocacy skills.” It also has resources and websites for students.

## Post-Secondary Education

The Free Appropriate Public education law does not apply to postsecondary education. It is very important that students and families understand their rights and responsibilities for postsecondary education. In school, students with disabilities have a team to direct and support them through the education process. In postsecondary education, the institutions depend on the student to take control of their own education. Students are expected to initiate and monitor their own educational services. In high school it is very important for the transition team to help the student foster self-advocacy and self monitoring skills they will need in postsecondary education (Joyce, & Rossen, 2006, p.1).

The United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights has produced a pamphlet for students with disabilities who are interested in postsecondary education, vocational school or career training. The pamphlet discusses the rights and responsibilities of the student. It explains laws and regulations pertaining to postsecondary education. It also explains the responsibilities and obligations of the postsecondary school. There is information on what to do if the school discriminates based on a disability (U.S. Department of Education Office of Education, 2007).

The office of vocational education services for individuals with disabilities (VESID), offers several different pamphlets to help students with disabilities plan for the future. One important form is Transition Planning Self Assessment Inventory. This form should be done before going to an IEP meeting. The questions on the form range from current education program, vocational needs, further education, financial, to personal management and living needs (VESID, 2005).

Not all students want to go to a two or four year college. Some will opt to go to vocational school or training. Vocational Rehabilitation Services for High school Students-Q-A for Students is a resource from VESID. It is a student friendly tool that gives answers to questions that are frequently asked by students with disabilities. It explains what VESID does. It answers questions regarding services and what a student needs to do to be able to participate. It also discusses what options VESID offers. It answers questions about confidentiality (VESID, 2005).

The Free Appropriate Public Education law does not apply to postsecondary education. It is very important that students and families understand their rights and responsibilities for postsecondary education. In school, students with disabilities have a team to direct and support them through the education process. In postsecondary education, the institutions depend on the student to take control of their own education. Students are expected to initiate and monitor their own educational services. In high school it is very important for the transition team to help the student foster self-advocacy and self monitoring skills they will need in postsecondary education (Joyce, & Rossen, 2006, p.1).

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## Conclusion

The United States Federal Government implemented a law, IDEA that protects the rights of children with disabilities. Generally when the students are in middle school their IEP team begins to focus on transition and career planning. There have been several studies done on transition and career planning for students with disabilities. Many school districts have a transition and career plan system in place and they should because it is the law. Some schools need improvement in their systems. The best practices for transition and career planning begin with the student. The IEP team must take into account each student's own interest and abilities. The student and their families must be the strongest advocate.

## Methodology

To gain a better understanding of transition and career planning in our area and NYS, a survey was developed and distributed to Special Education educators in three local school districts, Monroe 2- Orleans BOCES, and Monroe 1 BOCES. Thirty -two surveys were completed and returned. The survey questions were distributed in three ways: in one MS in a large suburban school district; after a professional development session on educational benefit for a suburban school district; and after a professional development session offered by BOCES 1 and 2 on Transition and Indicator 13.

The survey questions were developed as a result of a comprehensive literature review on the topic. The questions were written to find out what K-12 special education teachers understood about transition. Some of the questions asked how the participants felt about their own school districts. The survey data was analyzed and then compiled into chart

form. In the analysis process, trends across responses were noted, as were responses that seemed contradictory.

### Findings

#### 1. How would you define transition and Career services?

All thirty-two respondents answered this question and the responses were varied. The chart below details their responses.

<b>Respondent #1:</b> <i>Programs available to give youth tools to move from school-based activities to adulthood.</i>
<b>Respondent #2:</b> <i>What will the student do after school ends to be a productive member of society, providing independence and career tolerated or liked by student.</i>
<b>Respondent #3:</b> <i>Devices that support children's career development.</i>
<b>Respondent #4:</b> <i>Helping students understand that their future is important to reflect on and they can begin to look at what their future holds.</i>
<b>Respondent #5:</b> <i>Support for students to move from one situation (vocational or academic) to another.</i>
<b>Respondent #6:</b> <i>Transition and career services mean the long range journey to prepare special education students for the most independent living possible in regards to ADLs and job skills.</i>
<b>Respondent #7:</b> <i>Channeling strengths into the areas of future careers.</i>
<b>Respondent #8:</b> <i>School supporting student's goals for after graduation.</i>
<b>Respondent #9:</b> <i>Helping student with strengths and for opportunities for career.</i>
<b>Respondent #10:</b> <i>Planning for student after school is finished (HS-21).</i>
<b>Respondent #11:</b> <i>Work related issues.</i>
<b>Respondent #12:</b> <i>Preparing and planning for future and a vocation.</i>
<b>Respondent #13:</b> <i>Transition: Moving between environments. Career Services: Introduction/Exploration of vocations.</i>
<b>Respondent #14:</b> <i>Work after high school.</i>
<b>Respondent #15:</b> <i>Planning for continued education and employment following high school.</i>
<b>Respondent #16:</b> <i>The service that aids the lull after high school to be a vocational/educational/and residential reality.</i>
<b>Respondent #17:</b> <i>Transition: A change from one state to another over time. Career Services: services to prepare and see you into your career and maintain you for as long as you need.</i>
<b>Respondent #18:</b> <i>These are services that help people find ideas and career and contacts that they may not normally find on their own.</i>
<b>Respondent #19:</b> <i>Work after graduation from High School.</i>
<b>Respondent #20:</b> <i>Services that help students after they graduate.</i>
<b>Respondent #21:</b> <i>School to work.</i>
<b>Respondent #22:</b> <i>A smooth transfer into the community as a self-sufficient adult.</i>
<b>Respondent #23:</b> <i>Productive life beyond formal education; services to help students/clients obtain work training.</i>
<b>Respondent #24:</b> <i>Getting young adults employed.</i>
<b>Respondent #25:</b> <i>What transition and career services in the City Schools? Only seems to be at some schools.</i>
<b>Respondent #26:</b> <i>Preparing to live, learn and earn in the community.</i>
<b>Respondent #27:</b> <i>Students at age 15 are mandate3d to have support.</i>
<b>Respondent #28:</b> <i>Any planning needed or associated with meeting the goals and needs of students and their families.</i>
<b>Respondent #29:</b> <i>The change from school to the work force, armed services, post school.</i>
<b>Respondent #30:</b> <i>Going from one setting to another and being guided into an appropriate career.</i>

<b>Respondent #31:</b> <i>Students should know their strengths and interests so they could choose a job that suits them.</i>
<b>Respondent #32:</b> <i>The process of getting a child through high school to develop those life skills for post graduation.</i>

**2. At what age/grade do you think planning should begin?**

<b>Early Elementary (K-2) (ages 5-8)</b>	<b>Intermediate Elementary (3-5) (ages 9-11)</b>	<b>Middle School (6-8) (ages 12-14)</b>	<b>High School (9-12) (ages 15-18)</b>
7*	4*	13*	13*

\*Denotes that some respondents gave more than one answer for this question.

**3. What should be included in an “ideal” transition plan?**

Responses for this question fell into one of six categories. 27 of 32 respondents answered this question.

<b>Goal Setting</b>	<b>Strengths/areas for growth</b>	<b>Vocational/job training</b>	<b>Input – Parents, Teachers service providers, and Student</b>	<b>Career Exploration</b>	<b>Life Skills</b>
10*	11*	11*	9*	12*	5*

\*Denotes Respondents gave more than one answer for this question.

**4. What is the role of the special education teacher in transition and career planning?** Answers to this question varied considerably among some respondents.

There also were a number of respondents who answered this question in a similar way.

The responses are below. For those answers where there was more than one response the number is indicated next to the statement.

<i>Develop goals and identify and implement supports for student</i>	4
<i>To communicate those skills needed, mastered, and those in development for post graduate life</i>	3
<i>Preparing a plan that is realistic based on student’s strengths/needs</i>	7
<i>Give students opportunities to experience a variety of things (academic, work, life)</i>	4
<i>To facilitate the plan; help with exploration of careers</i>	2

<i>Depending on child teacher works on both general and specific work skills, life skills, and academic skills needed</i>	4
<i>To monitor, listen, and encourage</i>	3
<i>Help write plan</i>	1
<i>To elicit input for plan from teachers, parents, outside service coordinator, student</i>	1
<i>Discuss career plans with each child</i>	1
<i>Service coordination – help student understand services and agencies available to help</i>	1
<i>Information gatherer, provider, advisor, organizer, reports to administrator as needed</i>	1
<i>Research career options</i>	2
<i>Advocate for students</i>	1
<i>Due to the relationship built into the role of student and educator, they play a vital role not only in determining the students wants, but knowing their skill level to implement plan</i>	1
<i>Teachers need to be trained and informed about transition and options for students</i>	1

**5. Do you think transition and career services in your district, and/or within NYS are effective?**

<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
12*	12*	10

\*Denotes two respondents who answered the question with both “yes” and “no”.

**6. a) If answer to question 5 is yes, what makes the transition and career planning services effective?**

<i>Indicator 13 is helping, so does input from student parents, school personnel</i>
<i>OT/Teachers and transition teams working together</i>
<i>Places kids into appropriate settings to achieve success. Trend in NY is to minimize special education services (least restrictive environment)</i>
<i>Teamwork</i>
<i>New transition program has been helpful so has more training</i>
<i>Many students have service coordinators, which helps and there is VESID and CBA programs in our schools</i>
<i>Revisiting it to get student involved in thinking about what they'd like to do and where they see their strengths and talents</i>
<i>Solid living skills and verifiable employment</i>
<i>Students visit places to see what careers are like that they are considering; there are people to shadow in these chosen careers and mentors</i>
<i>Yearly review with student and family</i>
<i>Input and cooperation from families, outside agencies</i>
<i>The plans are effective when the team knows resources available</i>
<i>Input from various people, communication, dedicated people who are interested in their students</i>

**b) If answer to 5 is no, what changes are needed to make transition and career service plans more effective?**

<i>There needs to be more information available to school staff as to what is available to make appropriate decisions</i>
<i>Need to be globally informed; need to bring in community people whose job it is to inform teaching staff on the job market</i>
<i>Too many of our students don't know where they are going when they leave our schools</i>
<i>We need more professional development to help HS teachers as well as students</i>
<i>Earlier communication with VESID; more out of classroom experiences related to work and careers</i>
<i>Get word out to those writing the IEPs</i>
<i>Need more direction from district, SED on transition</i>

**7) What do you do when a student comes up with an unrealistic plan? (i.e. wants to be a professional baseball player but never played baseball)**

<b>Encourage them to have "Plan B"</b>	<b>Do Nothing</b>	<b>Be honest – discuss their skill set determine goal</b>	<b>Discuss alternative jobs/careers</b>	<b>Research job – skills needed; job shadow</b>
5*	1*	9*	4*	17*

- Denotes respondents gave more than one response to the question.

**8. How do you get parents involved?**

For this question, one respondent did not answer the question. There were eight responses that were categorized as "other".

<b>Call Parents on Phone to get input</b>	<b>Meetings at least one per year</b>	<b>Send home questionnaire and information</b>	<b>Other</b>
13*	16*	6*	8*

<p><b>Other:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Make parents feel part of the process;</i></li> <li>• <i>Invite parents into the class to visit, observe, and participate in class events; (3)</i></li> <li>• <i>Have parents attend career fairs – engage them in process;</i></li> <li>• <i>Home visits are helpful;</i></li> <li>• <i>Develop a relationship with parent anyway you can</i></li> </ul>
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\*Denotes that respondents gave more than one response for this question.

**9. How do you get some students to take the transition process seriously?**

Eight respondents did not answer this question.

<i>I hold 1:1 conferences throughout the year with each student</i>
<i>Get students involved, and have them take control of their life and decisions</i>
<i>Serious communication</i>
<i>Talk to them about where they see themselves after school – try to get them to take ownership</i>
<i>This is a huge challenge – we try and talk to them about the necessity of this and describe reasons why this is important</i>
<i>If they have a curiosity on a topic, I let them explore it</i>
<i>Give student examples of students who did it and the success rate</i>
<i>Make it real to them and get them involved</i>
<i>I talk to them seriously about it</i>
<i>Talk to them</i>
<i>Hook them up with a good role model to get them to buy into it; find meaningful ways to reward them</i>
<i>Don't start too early</i>
<i>Use other students, develop relationships</i>
<i>Make it relevant</i>
<i>Active involvement – having students drive the plan; have them develop IEP</i>
<i>Real work experiences with real work rewards and consequences</i>
<i>Have students outline/investigate a realistic budget –this really shocks students!</i>
<i>Discussions</i>
<i>Discussions, observation of job sites</i>
<i>Emphasize how important all of the skills are that are needed for the outside world and model how they are used</i>
<i>Talking about jobs, careers – take them in to see various jobs</i>
<i>When they are 18-21 they will have to support themselves – tell them that</i>
<i>Explain its purpose in their overall educational career. This is to help them get where they want to go—you can make choices here</i>
<i>Engage them in planning and provide experiences</i>

**10. Does self advocacy become part of transition planning? If so, How?**

Four Respondents did not answer this question.

<i>Yes. Developing independence is contingent upon some degree of self-advocacy</i>
<i>Yes. Student has some input – written, verbal, and can change if he/she deems it is what they want.</i>
<i>Yes. Social skills training, role playing an modeling help build self advocacy</i>
<i>Yes. Letting them have a voice in it –let them share and get them involved</i>
<i>Yes. The student should have some idea of what they would like to do, or become, and tell us what they would like more assistance with.</i>
<i>Yes. Not sure how</i>
<i>Yes, and need to learn how to express needs.</i>
<i>Absolutely –set up situations so students can take steps to be a self-advocate. You can teach them this.</i>
<i>Student has to be able to understand demands of job and ask for clarification – help child understand that if he/she really understands demands they will be successful.</i>
<i>It is the most important component to effective transition</i>
<i>Yes. Any service needed needs a voice to get the service.</i>
<i>Yes. This is a skill students need to be taught.</i>
<i>Yes. Students need to be able to know what they want and ask for it.</i>
<i>Yes, interviews need to demonstrate positive attitudes</i>
<i>Yes, the student may have a different ideal and it maybe Ok.</i>
<i>Yes. Some goals in IEP Direct fit this (example, discussion, direction, repetition)</i>
<i>Yes. The students have to know their ability and strengths to properly advocate for themselves.</i>
<i>Yes. When the teacher/counselor encourage the student to talk about their interests and what they plan to do after HS.</i>
<i>Yes. They need to know how to stick up for their rights to be sure they get what they want in life.</i>
<i>Yes. It's the student's future – we can only assist them to make the plans.</i>
<i>Yes. Students might communicate their desires.</i>
<i>Yes. Students must stand up and take responsibility and control.</i>
<i>Yes. Goal is to teach students on how to seek resources within the community to assist into adulthood, and job training.</i>
<i>Yes. (2)</i>
<i>Give examples of real life situations in careers and as an adult going through everyday life.</i>
<i>Student needs to be comfortable with speaking of his/her disabilities</i>
<i>Yes. Students need to be abler to express what they want and why/how they can work towards it.</i>

Discussion

Given the varied responses to the responses to question one, one finding is there needs to be more work done to ensure that special education teachers K-12 have a better

understanding of what is transition and career planning. VESID has begun to address this through indicator 13 and through a variety of professional development sessions offered across NYS by SETRC networks. Partnerships need to be developed between K-12 educators, colleges, and services agencies. It is evident from the responses that teachers also need specific strategies to use with students to help them understand career options.

Another finding is that there is not consensus on what grade/age should you begin transition and career planning. Twenty six responses said that it should begin in Middle and high school, while 11 felt it should begin in elementary school.

A third finding is in regard to the effectiveness of transition and career planning in NYS. The respondents were split evenly on this question.

A fourth finding was that many of the participants had different ideas of what the special education teacher's role is in the transition and career planning. There should be a clear and concise plan for special education teachers what their part of the plan should be.

#### Limitations of the Study

This survey had questions that did not give the respondents answers to choose from. Question 10 received 28 different answers. Question 10 four people did not respond because they didn't understand the question. Questions 2,3, 5 and 10 were not specific enough. Several respondents choose more than one answer.

Future research on the success of transition and career services for students with disabilities should include a survey for parents. The survey used in this research could be used again but change the way the questions are stated.

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Appendix

**Transition and Career Planning Survey**

- 1. How would you define transition and career services?**
  
- 2. At what age or grade do you think planning should begin?**
  
- 3. What should be included in an “ideal” transition plan?**
  
- 4. What is the role of the special education teacher in transition and career planning?**
  
- 5. Do you think transition and career services in your district, and/or within NYS are effective?**
  
- 6. a) If answer to 5 is yes, What makes the transition and career planning services effective?**  
**b) If answer to 5 is no, What changes do you see are needed in the area of transition and career services to make them more effective?**
  
- 7. What do you do when a student comes up with an unrealistic plan? (i.e. wants to be a professional baseball player but never played baseball)**
  
- 8. How do you get parents get involved?**

**9. How do you get some students to take the transition process seriously?**

**10. Does self advocacy become a part of transition planning? If so, how?**







