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A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE AMOUNT OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN GUIDANCE
COUNSELORS AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES RELATED TO A TRANSITION PLAN TO
THE WORLD OF WORK

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ABSTRACT

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A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE AMOUNT OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN GUIDANCE COUNSELORS AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES RELATED TO A TRANSITION PLAN TO THE WORLD OF WORK.

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The purpose of this study was to determine the amount of communication between guidance counselors and students with disabilities towards a post high school transition plan. Specific objectives addressed included the following: Does the guidance counselor help students and families think about the future and consider what they want to do after high school? Does the guidance counselor help students and families make connections to services they will need after high school? Is the guidance counselor available to students with disabilities? Does the guidance counselor provide vocationally related services to students and their families? This descriptive study surveyed a selective group of high school students between the ages of 16 and 21 who were receiving services from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The students voluntarily completed the survey. The data will be used to determine areas of strengths and weaknesses between the students and their guidance counselors in regard to post high school career planning.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

"Students with disabilities need a better chance to succeed in adult life. Numerous follow-up and follow-along studies of these youth in areas such as employment, living arrangements, mobility, and leisure document that a large proportion of special education students do not go on for further training, oftentimes do not receive needed post-school supports and services, and are not as successful as adults when compared to the general population" (Kellogg, 1997).

Findings have led to the conclusion that in order to improve post-school outcomes of these students, education can no longer view, plan, or implement students' educational programs in isolation from the students' community living, working, continued education, and social environments. The transition service requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) recognize that education can improve the post-school outcomes of students with disabilities by doing a better job of planning and helping to prepare students and families for the complexities and challenges of the adult world (DeStefano, O'Leary & Storms, 1996).

"According to 1995 data, 16.9 million working-age Americans, or 10.1 percent of the population aged

16-64, have a work disability – a limitation in the amount or kind of work they are able to perform, due to a chronic condition or impairment. Two-thirds of those (67.9 percent, or 11.4 million people) do not participate in the labor force, meaning that they are neither working nor actively seeking employment" (dsc.ucst.edu/abs/abii.html [8/7/99]).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), formerly known as the Education for the Handicapped Act (EHA), took effect October 30, 1990. The IDEA transition legislation explicitly requires a process which includes multi-disciplinary and multi-agency responsibilities and coordinated instruction, community experiences, employment objectives, and other post-school adult living objectives. Simply stated, this law requires a sharing of transition programming responsibilities among vocational education, employment specialists, post-secondary education, social services, mental health specialists, and special education. It is clearly not special education's sole responsibility (Kellogg & Hall, 1995). The transition service requirements of IDEA recognize that education can improve the post-school outcomes of students with disabilities by doing a better job of planning and helping prepare students and families for the challenges and complexities of adult life (Kellogg, 1997).

The intent of the transition services requirements in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, P.L. 101-476) is to improve the quality of life of young adults with disabilities. The basic purpose of the legislation is to better prepare students with disabilities to enter the workplace, to go on for further training, to become as independent as possible, and to contribute to society. Further, the intent is to enable students to gain access to the services that are necessary for them to accomplish the outcomes they desire and to have services in place before they leave school (Kellogg, 1997).

The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is designed to include the development, identification and planning of support services in the school and the community to increase the student's chances for successful transition into the world of work after graduation. The purposes of transition services are two-fold: "to help students and families think about their life after high school and identify long-range goals; and second, to design the high school experience to ensure that students gain the skills and connections they need to achieve those goals" (Kellogg, 1997).

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was amended in 1992 and now specifically requires vocational rehabilitation to establish policies and methods to facilitate the transition from school to the rehabilitation service systems for students with disabilities.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act contains strong protections against discrimination on the basis of handicap in employment; accessibility, preschool, elementary and secondary education; and health welfare and social services. In addition, vocational rehabilitation agencies are required to provide services to eligible individuals regardless of their age (Kellogg & Hall 1995).

The overall objective of vocational rehabilitation is to assist individuals with disabilities to achieve optimal vocational adjustment and maximum independent functioning; to enhance the probability of preparing for, securing, and maintaining employment to the highest degree of an individual's vocational potential (Institute of Rehabilitation Issues, 1987).

National, collaboration between schools and vocational rehabilitation agencies is far from commonplace (Wagner & Cox, 1991) and is limited largely to the basic referral of students to vocational rehabilitation (Kellogg 1997). The general barriers to school and vocational rehabilitation collaboration cited most often include: poor/inaccurate perceptions of vocational rehabilitation by school staff and

nonexistent/ineffective procedures to structure the collaboration of school and vocational rehabilitation staff throughout the referral, eligibility determination, and transition planning process (Wagner & Cox, 1991).

Collaboration between schools and vocational rehabilitation agencies will be imperative as schools and vocational rehabilitation seek to implement their respective transition related responsibilities under IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992.

The American School Counselor Association has defined the school counselor as a certified professional educator who assists students, teachers, and administrators to help students with developing skills in the areas of problem solving, coping skills, and decision making skills to benefit post school success.

School districts view and utilize rehabilitation counseling in a manner similar to guidance counseling and school social work services. Rehabilitation counselors assigned to the school role should have caseloads determined by the extent of individual students' needs (dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/een/trn_rehb.html[8/7/99]).

Statement of the Problem

Research shows that collaboration between school professionals and community services are an integral part of the successful transitioning of youth with disabilities. Studies also indicate that collaboration with students with disabilities and their high school guidance counselors are not effectively taking place.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the amount of communication between guidance counselors and students with disabilities towards a transition plan to the world of work following the commencement of high school.

Analysis of the Problem

This descriptive study will answer the following objectives:

1. Does the guidance counselor help students and families think about the future and consider what they want to do after high school?
2. Does the guidance counselor help students and families make connections to services they will need after high school?
3. Is the guidance counselor available to students with disabilities?
4. Does the guidance counselor provide vocationally related services to students with disabilities and their families?

Definition of Terms

Transition services: a coordinated set of activities for a student designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities must be based upon the individual student's needs; take into account student's preferences and interests; and include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment, and other post-school adult living

objectives, and if appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation (The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act P.L. 101-476).

Eligibility: the students with disabilities specified in Wisconsin's handicapped law (Subchapter V of Chapter 115, Wis. Stats.) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are "any person under the age of 21 years...with the following conditions...(who) may require educational services to supplement or replace regular education: Orthopedic impairment, Cognitive disability or other developmental disability, Hearing handicap, Visual handicap, Speech or language handicap, Emotional disturbance, Other health impairment, Learning disability, Autism, and Traumatic brain injury"

Special education: vocational education if it consists of specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability 34 CFR 300.17(a)(3).

Vocational rehabilitation: services provided by qualified personal in individual or group sessions that focus specifically on career development; employment preparation; achieving independence; and integration in the workplace and community of a student with a disability 34 CFR 300.16(b)(10).

Limitations

This study was limited by the geographical area of the population used in the study. Students were surveyed mainly from rural, northwestern Wisconsin. Caution should be taken when generalizing the results of this study to other areas. The reader is also cautioned that the information is based on the student's perception of the services they received and is not necessarily fact.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

This chapter will provide a historical perspective on the legislation and evolution that has impacted on the fields of guidance and counseling and vocational rehabilitation. It will further discuss transition services as they relate to students' with disabilities. Finally, the need for effective collaboration between guidance counselors and vocational rehabilitation agencies will be discussed.

History of School Counseling

School counselors as part of the total educational team have important knowledge to share concerning the needs of students. Their knowledge, skills, and expertise are vital for the success of our future leaders, workers, and citizens. As part of the total educational team, school counselors can help students build a bridge to the future.

The role of the school counselor has changed and the information available for redefining the role of the school counselor has accumulated through approximately 100 years of research and practice. The profession of the school counselor is relatively young but its history can be traced back to the 1880's (Coy, 1990).

Jesse B. Davis introduced the first recorded school guidance program in 1889. As a school principle in a Detroit high school, Davis introduced guidance as a curricular component in each English class in the school. Frank Parsons, who became known as the "Father of Guidance," began his vocational bureau in Boston in 1908 to help youngsters who were leaving the public schools with career choices (Brewer, 1942). Davis included vocational and moral guidance in his program when he moved to Grand Rapids school, while Parsons' program was basically vocational, matching the individual's traits with a vocation. These early counselors focused on guidance and concentrated on moral and vocational issues (Mathewson, 1962).

The next emphasis became the measurement of personality traits and individual aptitude, which continued through the years following the Great Depression. By this time, guidance included vocational guidance and assessment in the schools (Brewer, 1942).

Another major change occurred in the guidance movement in 1949 when Mathewson noted that the guidance process occurs in an individual in a developmental sequence to the age of maturity. This aspect became another major change in guidance and directed it toward the developmental needs of individuals (Mathewson, 1962).

During both of the world wars, the armed services developed and used many new types of testing procedures in their screening and classification of inductees. After World War II, professional educators adopted some of the instruments developed during the war (Murro & Kottman, 1995). In the 1940's and 1950's, in addition to this focus on testing, there was also an emphasis on "mental health" and "guidance counseling," especially in junior and senior high schools. E. G. Williamson developed a school guidance model that was extremely popular in the 1940's and 1950's-trait and factor (directive) guidance. In this model, the school counselor was to use information to solve students' problems, especially in the areas of vocational and interpersonal adjustment (Murro, 1995).

Another major impact on the movement of guidance counseling was the launch of the Soviet satellite, Sputnik I in 1957. This launch frightened the American people because they thought it was a signal of Russian dominance in the fields of industrial technology and science. In response to this public outcry, Congress passed several pieces of legislation, including the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958. This law provided funds to train school guidance counselors in order for them to place emphasis on urging students to take more courses in science and math to better prepare them for college (Coy, 1990).

During the 1950's, states began the process of developing and implementing certification standards. The purpose was to standardize coursework that students were taking in their program. The first certification standards for the Pupil Personnel Service Certificate, Guidance and Counseling were implemented in Ohio on January 1, 1955 (Ohio Department of Education, 1954). Ohio was typical of most states that implemented certification standards at that time. School guidance and counseling programs were a program of the college of education at local universities and the certification process was controlled by the state board of education.

Carl Rogers developed a theory of client centered counseling, which helped shift the focus away from the

individual problem and its solution to the relationship between the counselors and their clients. Client centered counseling became the primary mode of interaction for many counselors-both in schools, and the field of mental health in the late 1960's and 1970's (Muro, Kottman, 1995).

In the 1960's, 1970's and the 1980's, the role and function of school counselors began to evolve to its present expanse, which includes development, implementation, and evaluation of comprehensive guidance program; provisions of direct counseling services to students, parents, and teachers; educational and vocational planning; student placement; referral; and consultation with teachers, administrators, and parents (Muro, Kottman, 1995).

As time passed, counseling and guidance services continued to grow and change, especially at the elementary level. The Education Act for All Handicapped Children of 1975 (Public Law 94-142) provided federal funds for special education services for handicapped children (Muro, Kottman, 1995).

In 1997, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Governing Board adopted a new definition of school counseling:

Counseling is a process of helping people by assisting them in making decisions and changing behavior. School counselors work with all students, school staff, families, and members of the community as an integral part of the education program. School counseling programs promote school success through a focus on academic achievement, prevention and intervention activities, advocacy, and social/emotional and career development (Campbell & Dahir, 1997).

History of Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational rehabilitation, as both a service and profession, emerged in the early 1900's to meet the growing demands of a depleting labor force. Rehabilitation practices can be traced throughout history, although rehabilitation did not emerge as a profession until the 1900's with the advent of legislation such as the Smith-Hughes Act and the Soldiers Rehabilitation Act (Rubin & Roessler, 1995).

The realization of the retraining needs of dislocated industrial workers as well as the training needs of the migrating rural youths led to the federal action in 1917 in the form of the Smith-Hughes Act. This act made federal monies available on a matching basis to each state for vocational education programs. It also created the Federal Board for Vocational Education, which later administered both the veteran and civilian vocational rehabilitation programs (Rubin & Roessler, 1995).

During World War I, the idea of extending vocational education to persons with disabilities was gaining acceptance. The purpose of the training was to help individuals with a disability develop "residual capacities" needed for vocational effectiveness. Government officials and society leaders were beginning to realize that a person with a disability could be vocationally rehabilitated by training around the impairment. These developments, along with the large number of veterans returning from the war with disabilities, led to much interest in federal legislation for vocational rehabilitation of the returning wounded (Rubin & Roessler, 1995).

In 1920, the Smith-Fess Act (Public Law 236), was passed. The act launched the first civilian vocational rehabilitation legislation. Vocational education was extended to individuals with physical disabilities. Federal funds were provided to the states on a matching basis of providing vocational guidance, vocational education, occupational adjustment, and placement services (Rubin & Roessler, 1995).

Because of the expansion that occurred in rehabilitation services from 1954 to 1965, many called this period the Golden Era of Rehabilitation. President Eisenhower emerged as a strong supporter of the vocational rehabilitation movement. The President urged Congress to draft legislation to meet the need of the nation. Congress responded with the Vocational Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1954 (Public Law 565). These amendments increased funding and expanded services for a large number of persons with mental retardation and mental illness (Rubin & Roessler, 1995).

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was amended in 1992 and now specifically requires the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to establish policies and methods to facilitate the transition from school to the rehabilitation service systems for students with disabilities. The law contains strong protection, in Section 504 of its implementing regulations, against discrimination on the basis of handicap in employment, accessibility: preschool, elementary, and secondary education, post-secondary education, health, and health and social services. In addition, vocational rehabilitation agencies are required to provide services to eligible individuals regardless of their age.

Amendments to the Vocational Rehabilitation Act are very specific with respect to vocational rehabilitation role with school districts for those students concurrently receiving services from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation:

When (VR) services are being provided to a handicapped individual who is eligible for services under the (IDEA), the IWRP is prepared in coordination with the appropriate education agency and includes a summary of relevant elements of the IEP for that individual. 34CFR 361.41(c).

In the 1950's, work-study programs for youth with disabilities first emerged and later became the leading strategy in the public schools for preparing these youth for post school employment (Brolin, 1976).

The Kennedy era marked the beginning of a period of considerable federal interest and growth in special education, vocational education, vocational rehabilitation, and other programs designed to assist unemployment youth and adults with disabilities. The 1964 Civil Rights Act spurred a major focus on prohibiting discrimination in education, social services, and other federally sponsored activities on the basis of race or national origin. During the mid-1960's and early 1970's, most states enacted legislation mandating that schools provide special education services to all school youth. This was followed in 1975 by the landmark federal legislation entitled the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142), which ensured that children ages 3-21 with disabilities would receive a free and appropriate public education (Rusch & Phelps, 1987).

In the 1983 Amendments of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1973 (EHA PL 98-199), Congress sought to address the major education and employment transition difficulties encountered by youth with disabilities. Section 626 of PL 98-199, entitled "Secondary Education and Transitional Services for Handicapped Youth" authorized the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) to spend 6.6 million dollars annually in grants and contracts intended to strengthen and coordinate education, training, and related services, thereby assisting youth in their transition to post secondary education, competitive employment, or adult services (Rusch & Phelps, 1987).

The intent of the law is aimed at increasing the participation of students with disabilities to qualify for vocational programs and services (Knickrehm, 1994). Portions of PL 94-142 must be incorporated into these vocational programs that are offered to assist individuals with disabilities. These include 1) providing activities and programs in the least restrictive environments and 2) including vocational

activities and programs as a component of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), (Wheeler, 1987).

Also in 1984, the Developmental Disabilities Act (PL 98-527) identified employment as a primary outcome of the education of youth with disabilities. Around this time, the transition movement regained both the rehabilitation and education circles. The movement can be traced to several factors: (a) the establishment of OSERS in the federal government: (b) initiatives of then assistant secretary of OSERS, Madeline Will: and (c) the priority on transition in the Individual with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA, PL 102-476).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, formerly known as the Education for the Handicapped Act (EHA), took effect October 30, 1990. The IDEA transition legislation explicitly requires a process, which includes multi-disciplinary, and multi-agency responsibilities and coordinated instruction, community experiences, employment objectives and other post-secondary adult living objectives. Simply stated, this law requires a sharing of transition programming responsibilities among vocational education, employment specialists, post-secondary education, social services, and mental health specialists and special education. It is clearly not special education's sole responsibility (Kellogg & Hall, 1995).

Purpose of Transition Services

Students with disabilities need a better chance to succeed in adult life. Numerous follow-up and follow-along studies of these youth in areas such as employment, living arrangements, mobility, and leisure document that a large proportion of special education students do not go on for further training, oftentimes as adults when compared to the general population (Wagner, 1991). These findings have led to the conclusion that in order to improve post-school outcomes of these students, education can no longer view, plan, or implement students' educational programs in isolation from the students' community living, working, continued education, and social environments.

The purposes of transition services are two-fold: "to help students and families think about their life after high school and identify long-range goals; second, to design the high school experience to ensure that students gain the skills and connections they need to achieve those goals.

Students with disabilities will have a plan upon exiting secondary education to achieve a level of independent community living commensurate with their preferences, knowledge, skills, and abilities through cooperative services from the school, vocational rehabilitation agencies, human service agencies (long term support), community organizations, Independent Living Centers, and natural support systems (dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/een/trn_purp.html [8/7/99]).

The philosophy of transition services as mandated by IDEA bases upon interdisciplinary and interagency collaboration and cooperation, which promotes quality, applied education for students with disabilities which will enable them to be successful in post-secondary education, integrated employment, and independent living. Under IDEA, the school district is the agency responsible for initiating the multi-agency linkages and multi-disciplinary collaboration for transition services through the IEP process. In order to accomplish appropriate transition programming, many systematic changes need to be made not the least of which are the development of relevant secondary curriculum and the inclusion of students with disabilities in it. Typically, school systems do not have in place policies and procedures to ensure some of the unique IDEA transition requirements such as "community experiences," interagency planning in the IEP, "development of employment objective, and other adult living objectives." Therefore, district policy, philosophy, objectives and staff role descriptions may need to be revised.

System change can only take place when sanctioned by changes in board policy and implemented by administrative actions (Kellogg, 1995).

It is generally recommended that school districts view and utilize rehabilitation counseling in a manner similar to guidance counseling and school social work services. Rehabilitation counselors assigned to the school role should have caseloads determined by the extent of individual students' needs. The fiscal and administrative issues of which agency or party (school, DVR, or third party) is responsible for providing and/or funding rehabilitation counseling services may need to be resolved locally by formal interagency agreements (dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/een/trn_rehb.html [8/7/99]).

Transition services required by vocational rehabilitation means that services must be provided by qualified personnel in individual or group sessions that focus specifically on career development, employment preparation, achieving independence, integration in the workplace, and community of a student with a disability.

The transition from school to adult life has been especially difficult for approximately 10% of school children with disabilities (Fagen & Jenkins, 1989). While national unemployment has averaged around 6%, from 40% to 70% of persons with disabilities have been unemployed, and 65% to 75% of that same population have been unable to achieve independent-living status (Blackoryby & Wagner, 1996). These unsettling statistics make it clear that strategies for assisting students with special needs have not been optimally effective, as they have been implemented within special education programs. Consequently, the conceptualization of more innovative transition frameworks within special education programs has become more critical.

Parallel efforts have been undertaken by professionals in the fields of school counseling and special education to systematically alter school-based intervention programming for youth. During the last two decades, the wide-ranging duties of school counselors have been organized into coherent, multidisciplinary systems usually described by comprehensive developmental guidance programs (Baker, 1996). These programs, however, have experienced difficulty in meeting the multifaceted needs of the students with disabilities. Numerous authors have encouraged school counselors to assume more responsibility assisting students with disabilities to make the transitions from school to adulthood (Brolin & Gysber, 1989). Because of their extensive expertise in career and personal outcomes, school counselors-as vital members of the school team that plans and implements transition programming-can play a crucial role in the educational process for students with special needs (Hughey, 1989).

Unfortunately, suggestions for greater school counselor involvement inevitably carry an underlying assumption that these practitioners have the available time, resources, and programmatic control to effectively fulfill this role and that a failure to do so is indicative of a lack of will or desire. In actuality, many school counselors are severely limited by their present work environments (Paisley & Borders, 1995). Perhaps the most overriding issue for the school counseling specialty is the lack of control school counselors have over their day-to-day work activities and development of their profession.

Based on review of available literature, it appears that transition services for students with disabilities is in need of some fine tuning in order to increase chances for success with these students. Therefore, the purpose of this descriptive study will be to determine the amount of communication between guidance counselors and students with disabilities towards a post high school transition plan. Findings will be utilized to assist in identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses in order to develop stronger programs for special needs students.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine the amount of communication between guidance counselors and students with disabilities towards a post high school transition plan. Students receiving services from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation were approached with the survey at their local high schools as well as at a vocational assessment center in northwestern Wisconsin. The survey was used to determine the student's perception of guidance services they received at their high school with their guidance counselor. It was decided that a descriptive methodology would be most appropriate. This reflects the study's purpose as a discovery-oriented piece of work in a field where there is little established knowledge, rather than as research intended to test an experimental hypothesis or an existing theory.

Population

A sample of thirty-two high school students between the ages of 16 and 21 who were receiving services from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation were considered a representative sample. The students were from school districts throughout northwestern Wisconsin.

Research Instrument

A survey was developed to answer the four research objectives of this study (see Appendix B). A pilot study was conducted by a professional counselor who administered the survey to four students that matched the population criteria. Refinements were completed based on feedback from these individuals. A cover letter was developed to explain the reason for the survey (see Appendix A). This cover letter, which included a parental release, was mailed to individuals under the age of 18 that met the population criteria.

Procedures for Analysis of Data

The following section will address each research question, the 18 survey questions, and the method of analysis.

Research objective I. Does the guidance counselor help students and families think about the future and consider what they want to do after high school? Survey questions 7, 8, 9, 10, and 17 from the survey directly relate to the research question. They are:

7. Do you have access to the information you want and need about colleges and other schools, which offer post-secondary education?
8. Do you know about financial aid for post-high school education?
9. Has your school given your parents or guardian the opportunity to discuss your educational plans?
10. Have you taken an interest inventory to help you in planning your career?
17. Were you helped with career planning and information, career preparation, and

selection of courses?

Research objective II. Does the guidance counselor help students and families make connections to services they will need after high school? Survey questions 11, 12, 13, and 18 address this concern. They include the following:

11. Do you have access to information you want and need about various occupations you are now considering?

12. Does the counselor in your school assist you in securing employment?

13. Have you had the opportunity to participate in career days or occupation fairs?

18. Were you helped to become familiar with the employment possibilities in your community and surrounding areas?

Research objective III. Is the guidance counselor available to students with disabilities? Survey questions 1,2,3, and 14 address this question. They are as follows:

1. Do you know which member of your school staff is your school counselor?

2. Can you visit the guidance office when the need arises?

3. Do you feel that the school counselor is accessible when you need to see him/her?

14. Did the school counselor help you when you entered your new school to learn how to get along in it?

Research objective IV. Does the guidance counselor provide vocationally related services to students with disabilities and their families? Questions 4,5 and 6 as well as 15 and 16 address this research question. They are:

1. Has your counselor stressed the relationship between the courses you are taking and careers you may choose?

2. Has your counselor interpreted the meaning of your test scores and discussed them in relation to planning your educational and career goals?

6. Have you been taught vocational decision making skills?

14. Have you had the opportunity to discuss the importance of a good education and how to plan for it?

15. Have you been taught employment-seeking skills (job interviewing, resume writing, filling out applications and others)?

Items on the survey that were answered by yes, no or uncertain responses, which are nominal data, will be restricted to frequency and percentages in the analysis. Questions on the survey that were accompanied by a likert scale allowed students to respond along a five-point continuum. This data allows calculation of the standard deviation, mean score of each response, and number of frequency of each response.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the amount of communication between guidance counselors and students with disabilities towards a post high school transition plan. Students with disabilities receiving services from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation were approached with the survey at high schools located in northwestern Wisconsin as well as students with disabilities who came through a vocational assessment at a vocational assessment center in northwestern Wisconsin.

The surveys were completed by thirty-two high school students between the ages of 16 and 21 from northwestern Wisconsin. Questions on the eighteen-item survey were designed to give insight to four-research questions of this study. The results were recorded at a nominal level of measurement using percentages for yes, no, and unsure responses. The standard deviation, mean, and frequency of response were determined for likert scale items.

Research objective I: Does the guidance counselor help students and families think about the future and consider what they want to do after high school? Survey questions 7, 8, 9, 10, and 17 directly relate to this question. The results are as follows:

7. Do you have access to the information you want and need about colleges and other schools, which offer post-secondary education?

Yes 62%

No 22%

Unsure 16%

8. Do you know about financial aid for post-high school education?

Yes 41%

No 56%

Unsure 3%

9. Has your school given your parents or guardian the opportunity to discuss your education plans?

Yes 56%

No 37%

Unsure 6%

10. Have you taken an interest inventory to help you in planning your career?

Yes 56%

No 25%

Unsure 19%

17. Were you helped with career planning and information, career preparation, and selection of courses?

Value Frequency Percent

Always 5 5 15.6%

4 9 28.1%

3 6 18.7%

2 8 25.0%

Never 1 4 12.5%

Mean: 3.093

Standard Deviation: 1.3

Survey results indicate that the 62% of the students with disabilities reported that they have access to information regarding post-secondary education. The remaining 38% stated that they didn't or were unsure if they did. Less than half of the students were aware of financial aide. Fifty six percent of the students had completed an interest survey and had discussed future educational goals with their parent and guidance counselors in-group meetings.

Research objective II: Does the guidance counselor help students and families make connections to services they will need after high school? Survey questions 11, 12, 13, and 18 address this concern. They include the following:

7. Do you have access to information you want and need about various occupations you are now considering?

Yes 56%

No 37%

Unsure 6%

8. Does the counselor in your school assist you in securing employment?

Yes 28%

No 59%

Unsure 12%

9. Have you had the opportunity to participate in career days or occupation fairs?

Yes 50%

No 50%

Unsure 0%

17. Were you helped to become familiar with the employment possibilities in your community and surrounding areas?

Value Frequency Percent

Always 5 5 15.6%

4 4 12.5%

3 7 21.8%

2 9 28.1%

Never 1 7 21.8%

Mean: 2.718

Standard Deviation: 1.4

Fifty six percent of the students stated they had access to information to further explore careers of interest. Half of the students had been able to attend a career fair. Also, only half of the students were made aware of employment possibilities in their community.

Research Objective III: Is the guidance counselor available to students with disabilities? Survey questions 1, 2, 3, and 14 address this objective. They are as follows:

1. Do you know which member of the school staff is your counselor?

Yes 100%

No 0%

Unsure 0%

2. Can you visit the guidance office when the need arises?

Yes 84%

No 6%

Unsure 9%

3. Do you feel that the school counselor is accessible when you need to see him/her?

Yes 59%

No 25%

Unsure 16%

7. Did the school counselor help you when you entered your new school to learn how to get along in it?

Value Frequency Percent

Always 5 6 18.7%

4 2 6.2%

3 9 28.1%

2 6 18.7%

Never 1 9 28.1%

Mean: 2.687

Standard Deviation: 1.4

All the students surveyed knew who their counselor was and where they could find him or her. However, 41% felt the counselor was not accessible when they needed to see them.

Research Objective IV: Does the guidance counselor provide vocationally related services to students with disabilities and their families? Questions 4, 5, and 6 as well as 15 and 16 address this research question. They are:

1. Has the counselor stressed the relationship between the courses you are taking and careers you may choose?

Yes 47%

No 41%

Unsure 12%

2. Has your counselor interpreted the meaning of your test scores and discussed them in relation to planning your educational and career goals?

Yes 25%

No 68%

Unsure 6%

3. Have you been taught vocational decision making skills?

Yes 41%

No 41%

Unsure 19%

7. Have you had the opportunity to discuss the importance of a good education and how to plan for it?

Value Frequency Percent

Always 5 5 15.6%

4 7 21.8%

3 9 28.1%

2 5 15.6%

Never 1 6 18.7%

Mean: 3.00

Standard Deviation: 1.3

8. Have you been taught employment-seeking skills (job interviewing, resume writing, filling out applications and others)?

Value Frequency Percent

Always 5 9 28.1%

4 2 6.2%

3 4 12.5%

2 9 28.1%

Never 1 8 25.0%

Mean: 2.843

Standard Deviation: 1.6

Almost 70% of the students stated that the counselor had not interpreted the meaning of their test scores and how they related to future career goals. Almost half of the students responded that they had not been taught employment-seeking skills such as job interviewing, resume writing and others. Over 50% reported that they had not discussed how to plan for a good education or the importance of it.

Students completing the survey were provided space where they could write their own comments that would help improve the guidance services in their schools. They are as follows:

"More counselors would be helpful so you can get prompt appointment time for important matters".

"Stop pressuring kids who are unsure of what they want to do after high school! When the time comes they will know what they want to do...otherwise-I think guidance services are very helpful".

"I wasn't served well by guidance-my needs were being met through special education teachers".

"I don't really know, I never looked into it".

"There could be more counselors so they had time to be with students. They could be in their rooms. Sometimes they are hard to find. Sometimes you get time sometime you don't".

"Guidance counselor always seems busy with other issues. This is good, but makes it hard when wanting to talk to him and not having an appointment".

Although only a few students made recommendations for changes in their guidance counseling program, there was an underlying finding that the majority of students with disabilities did not feel that they were getting services that are essential for successful transitioning to post-school outcomes.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the amount of communication between guidance counselors and students with disabilities towards a post high school transition plan. Specific objectives

addressed included the following: Does the guidance counselor help students and families think about the future and consider what they want to do after high school? Does the guidance counselor help students and families make connections to services they will need after high school? Is the guidance counselor available to students with disabilities? Does the guidance counselor provide vocationally related services to students and their families?

The subjects in this survey were a selective group of high school students between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one. All the students were receiving services from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The students completed the survey voluntarily.

Items on the survey that were answered by yes, no, and unsure responses, were analyzed using percentages and frequency. Questions on the survey that were accompanied by a likert scale were calculated using standard deviation, mean score and number of frequency for each response.

The intent of this chapter is to discuss the results of the data analysis and make future recommendations to this study.

Conclusions

In regard to the research objective, is the guidance counselor available to students with disabilities, the following was determined: All of the students that completed the survey stated that they knew who their counselor was. Eighty-four percent felt that they could visit the counselor's office whenever they needed to. However, only 59% of the students felt that the counselor was accessible to them. Students stated that the counselor was difficult to meet with if you didn't have an appointment. The counselor was usually with another student or not in the office. Twenty-eight percent of the students reported that they did not have any help from the counselor when they entered their new school. Only 18% responded that they had.

The students were asked questions to determine if the counselor had provided them with vocationally related services to students and their families. Forty-seven percent stated that their counselor had stressed the relationship between the classes they chose and the careers they were interested in. That leaves over half of the students to respond to no or unsure to this question. Sixty-eight percent of the students responded that the counselor had not interpreted the results of their test scores and how they related to an educational plan. Less than half (41%) of the students felt that they had been taught vocational decision making skills. Students were asked if they felt they had been taught employment seeking skills and twenty-five percent responded "Never". A "never" response was ranked as a one on a scale from one to five. Forty percent of the students ranked this question as a two or three. This result indicated that they did not feel strongly about having been taught these skills. Only 15% reported that they had always had the opportunity to discuss the importance of an education, and how to plan for it in regard to post high school opportunities.

Sixty-two percent of the students stated that they had access to information about colleges and other schools. The survey did not ask if they knew how to use the materials. Only 41% knew about financial aid for post-high school education. Over half of the students (56%) had been given the opportunity to discuss future plans with their parents present with the counselor. Over half (56%) reported that they had taken an interest test to assist in future career planning.

Guidance counselors, special education teachers, vocational rehabilitation counselors and students with disabilities may find these results useful when working with high school students who have disabilities,

especially in regard to implementing a transition plan to post high school outcomes. Serious consideration should be given to having the student be more involved with the guidance counselor and/or materials available to these students along with training on how to use the materials. Guidance counselors could provide training to special education teachers, transition coordinators, and parents on how to use career planning materials. It is likely that students who have disabilities will require additional time to examine career information. In most cases the guidance counselor will not be able to meet this time demand due to the total population of the school that they are responsible for. Implementing a parent night for individuals with special needs could also be addressed if necessary. The school could also examine the roles and responsibilities counselors and special education staff have towards a student with disabilities. Increased communication between the students and the guidance counselor would allow the students with disabilities a better opportunity to develop appropriate career plans and/or information about services available in the community. Better communication would also ensure that key people would be on board to increase the student's chances for success in the future after high school graduation. Continued efforts are needed on the part of the guidance counselor to gain further awareness and access to the needs of the disabled student.

It is also recommended that the preparation of training for guidance counselors be examined. It would be highly beneficial for counselors to have course work completed in the following areas: inclusion, intervention strategies, disabilities, and how to perform consultation and inservices with others.

Recommendations

As a result of this study, the following areas are recommended for future research:

1. A study to determine to what extent special educators, guidance counselors, and transition coordinators feel they are responsible for the transition of students with disabilities to the world of work following high school graduation.
2. A study on special education teachers and the role they play in the students' transition plan.
3. A study to determine the guidance counselor perception on his/her responsibilities, amount of communication, and assistance that they provide to students with disabilities.

Appendix A

Dear Parent(s)

Your child has been scheduled to attend a five-day vocational evaluation at the Assistive Technology and Assessment Center at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. This vocational evaluation experience offers him/her an opportunity to try out many different kinds of work and determine what type of work you would enjoy most.

I am asking permission for your child to complete a survey regarding any contact he/she has had with his/her high school guidance counselor in the past. I hope to identify any areas of strengths and weaknesses counselors may have when working with students with disabilities or special needs. Each child's comments and survey answers will be kept anonymous and will have no affect on their school performance.

Please feel free to contact me at (715) 232-1157 or at (715) 839-9209 if you have any questions. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Michelle Walker

Professional Counselor

I do _____ do not _____ (check one) agree to allow my child _____ to participate in this survey about communication between high school guidance counselors and students with disabilities or special needs.

Signature Date

Appendix B

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