

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE POST HIGH SCHOOL OUTCOMES  
OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, AND TEACHER AND  
PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF TRANSITION SERVICES  
PROVIDED IN A WESTERN WISCONSIN  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

By

Kari L. Tauschek

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Education Specialist  
with a Major in

School Psychology

Approved: 6 Semester Credits

---

Thesis Chair

Thesis Committee Members:

---

---

---

The Graduate College  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
May 2003

The Graduate College  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
Menomonie, Wisconsin 54751

**ABSTRACT**

Tauschek Kari L.  
(Writer)(Last Name) (First) (Initial)

An Investigation of the Post High School Outcomes of Individuals with Disabilities, and  
(Title)  
Teacher and Parent Perceptions of Transition Services Provided in a Western Wisconsin  
School District

School Psychology Dr. Ed Biggerstaff May/2003 92  
(Graduate Major) (Research Advisor) (Month/Year) (No. of Pages)

American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual: Fifth Edition  
(Name of Style Manual Used in this Study)

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the outcome of students with disabilities after leaving high school. Secondly, this research explores teacher and parent attitudes about transition services provided by the school to students with disabilities. A historical framework was based on the research of significant legislative acts that have shaped the implementation of transition services.

Data was collected to research the areas of independent living, postsecondary education, and the employment of former graduates and dropouts who exited high school between May 2000 and May 2001. These former students received services from the special education program while in high school. Furthermore, the perceptions of teachers and parents of former students who received special education services were assessed to supplement student feedback. Data analysis was constructed by the use of numbers and individual student, teacher, and parent suggestions.

Results from this study indicate that there is a blend of positive and negative former student outcomes within the school district. One to 2 years after exiting high school, the majority of the students were employed and working full-time. Most of the students were earning less than \$10 per hour and living with a parent or relative; however, nearly ½ were attending postsecondary education and working. Teachers and parents indicated that the school district has offered several beneficial services to students in past years including extracurricular activities, the school-to-work program, and the summer youth work program.

As students evolve and individual's needs change there continues to be a need to evaluate and improve transition programming. Students, teachers, and parents agreed that additional classes or curriculum were needed to allow students to practice monetary management, independent living, and job attainment skills.

Further study is recommended to determine the post high school outcomes, and parent and teacher suggestions within the same district in 2 years to assess transition program progress.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people I would like to thank for their motivation, inspiration, and emotional support throughout my 2 years of graduate school and two theses. Foremost, I want to thank Ed Biggerstaff, my theses advisor, for his soft heart and pleasant manner. You will always have a special place in my heart and I am blessed to have you as a friend, Ed! Thank you for all your hard work and dedication leading me to success.

Secondly, I need to thank my thesis committee members, Scott Orme and Mary Hopkins-Best. Thank you for your willingness to join my thesis team as well as for your efforts in helping me to place the finishing touches on my thesis.

Next, I would like to thank my boyfriend Jon for his unwavering support and relaxed personality when times were stressful. I am fortunate that fate and wonderful friends brought us together. I cherish the moments and memories that we have together. I love you more than words can say!

Thank you to my family and sister Renee for their frequent telephone calls and e-mails to keep my morale afloat. It has been a long 6 years of schooling to have a career that I enjoy. I could not have accomplished this milestone without your help and motivation.

I would also like to thank the administration, pupil services team, teachers, secretaries, parents, and students at the school sampled for my research. Thank you for your extra efforts, patience, and emotional support.

Finally, I would like to thank all of my friends. Our potlucks and nights out on the town have been memorable. I will never forget the fun times that we have had together. Thanks to everyone for another fun filled year!

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	i
Acknowledgments .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
<b>CHAPTER ONE: Introduction</b>	
Statement of Problem .....	3
Purpose of Study .....	3
Objectives .....	4
Definition of Terms .....	4
Assumptions .....	5
Limitations .....	6
<b>CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review</b>	
Introduction .....	7
Historical Overview of Transition .....	7
Related Transition Research .....	11
Role of Education and Parents in Transition .....	25
Summary .....	29
<b>CHAPTER THREE: Methodology</b>	
Introduction .....	31
Site Description, Subjects, and Selection .....	31
Instruments .....	33
Data Analysis .....	36

**CHAPTER FOUR: Analysis of Data**

Introduction . . . . .	37
Results . . . . .	37
Summary . . . . .	51

**CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations**

Introduction . . . . .	54
Discussion . . . . .	54
Conclusions . . . . .	55
Recommendations . . . . .	57

REFERENCES . . . . .	58
----------------------	----

**APPENDICES**

Appendix A – Student or Proxy Permission Form . . . . .	64
Appendix B – Teacher Focus Group Permission Form . . . . .	65
Appendix C – Parent Focus Group Permission Form . . . . .	66
Appendix D – Student File Evaluation and Survey. . . . .	67
Appendix E – Teacher Focus Group Outline . . . . .	83
Appendix F – Parent Focus Group Outline . . . . .	85
Appendix G – Student Perceptions . . . . .	87
Appendix H – Teacher Perceptions . . . . .	88
Appendix I – Parent Perceptions . . . . .	91

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Introduction**

“What’s my game?”

“Should I play checkers or chess?”

“Do I know all the rules of the game?”

“Do I have the basic skills to play the game on my own?”

Every student should answer questions analogous to these as they transition from high school to adulthood. Checkers and chess are analogies for the “game of life” (Johns, 1993, p. 1). Checkers specifically refers to life as a high school student. Sequentially, chess refers to life as an adult. It is essential for students to master the basic academic, social, and emotional skills to be successful in the high school setting (checkers). Reciprocally, adulthood (chess) is a more complex game that requires advanced decision-making and extended skill growth. It is essential for a student to master chess in order to live independently. To complicate the situation even further, students with special needs have more difficulty learning these life skills.

As a result, high school transition programs have become increasingly important for students with disabilities in their preparation for adult life. Exploring recreational interests, developing a graduation credit plan, visiting the career center, practicing self-advocacy skills, implementing a money management plan, practicing independent living skills, taking college entrance exams, obtaining a paid work experience, registering to vote, and applying for adult services are just some of the myriad transition skills needed by students to successfully transition from life as a high school student to life as an adult. The reason for teaching transition skills can be best explained by the Chinese Proverb, “Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for the rest of his life.”

For decades, the role of school professionals has continued to evolve at the secondary level in the coordination of student transition services. A significant change in the implementation of transition services occurred due to the recent 1997 amendments (P.L.105-17) to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Importantly, the IDEA transition amendments stated that transition service needs must be stated within a student's Individual Education Program (IEP) beginning at age 14. This helps to ensure that the parents and school staff are held accountable for preparing adolescents with disabilities for life as an adult. The amendments attempted to "equalize the playing field" to allow students with special needs to transition into adult life with the same degree of success as their peers without disabilities.

Research by Blackorby and Wagner (1996), prior to the IDEA amendments, found that students with disabilities have far lower graduation, employment, and postsecondary education rates. As a result of similar studies (Johnson, McGrew, Bloomberg, Bruininks, & Hung-Chih, 1997), many individuals were ambivalent about whether students with disabilities were learning valuable life skills while in high school. Unavoidably, transition is a complex process that requires a lot of time, effort, and motivation by the student, family, school, and community for optimal results.

To nurture this process, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) (2001) specifically stated that the school district must have a "plan for evaluating its system for the design and delivery of special education and related services and for addressing any needs that are identified by the evaluation" (p. 115-23). Specific subcategories of this plan indicate a need for follow-up of graduates to evaluate transition services provided to students including "general information about the satisfaction of



parents of children with disabilities and adult pupils who are receiving special education and related services” (DPI, 2001; p. 115-23). Another subcategory of the plan to aid in assessing transition services involves gathering “general information about persons who no longer attend high school and who received special education and related services provided by the local educational agency, such as whether they are employed, are living independently, and are enrolled in postsecondary education” (DPI, 2001; p. 115-23).

#### Statement of the Problem

The term “transition” is an evolving legislative concept enforced for students with disabilities. In correspondence with the law, public high schools must provide transition services to the best of their abilities to help students become successful adults. However, schools are often unclear about the overall benefits of the services they have provided for the student after the student has graduated from high school. Further study will provide school districts with a model for surveying high school graduates and allow schools to determine strengths and weaknesses within their transition programs. This will allow the school districts to set appropriate performance standards and improve the transition services provided to students with disabilities so they may exit high school with the life skills needed to flourish as adults.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate post-high school outcomes of former graduates with disabilities in a western Wisconsin school district during April 2002. A secondary, but equally important purpose of the research was to explore teacher and parent perceptions of school transition services provided to former students with disabilities.

## Objectives

There are two objectives this research will address.

1. Identification of current independent living, postsecondary education, and employment statuses of former high school students with disabilities.
2. Determination of suggestions for activities or classes to improve the high school transition program based on teacher and parent perception, and graduate outcomes.

## Definition of Terms

The terms “disability,” “transition,” and “individual transition plan” related to this research have been defined by (P.L. 101-476) the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997). For this study, IDEA’s (1997) definitions will be used.

Disability – “Any person who is at least 3 years old but not yet 22 and who has not graduated from high school and who by reason of any of the following needs special education and related services:

1. Orthopedic impairments,
2. Cognitive disability,
3. Hearing impairments,
4. Visual impairments,
5. Speech or language impairments,
6. Emotional disturbance,
7. Other health impairments,
8. Learning disabilities,
9. Autism,
10. Traumatic brain injury,
11. Developmental delay” (Department of Public Instruction [DPI], 1999; p. 7).

Transition – “A coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that –

- A. is designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promote movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and

adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;

- B. is based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests and;
- C. includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation" (DPI, 1999; p. 7)

#### Individual Transition Plan (ITP) –

1. "beginning at age 14, and updated annually, a statement of the transition service needs of the child under the applicable components of the child's [Individual Education Program] IEP that focuses on the child's courses of study (such as participation in advanced-placement courses or a vocational education program);
2. beginning at age 16 (or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP Team), a statement of the needed transition services for the child, including, when appropriate, a statement of the interagency responsibilities of any needed linkages;
3. beginning at least one year before the child reaches the age of majority under State law (18), a statement that the child has been informed of his or her rights under this title, if any, that will transfer to the child on reaching the age of majority..." (DPI, 1999; p. 8).

#### Assumptions

Several assumptions will be apparent to complete this research:

1. It will be assumed that all questions from the survey will be answered honestly, to the best of the student's or parent proxy's knowledge at the present time, and all comments will be truthful.
2. It will be implicit that all focus group teachers and parents will answer questions honestly, to the best of their knowledge at the present time, and all comments will be truthful.
3. It is understood that all questions on the survey will be fully completed by the student or parent proxy at their home by an examiner initiated telephone call.
4. All focus group questions and comments will be fully completed by the teacher or parent in the high school conference room.

### Limitations

The findings of this study are not to be generalizable or meant to be made applicable to all high school students. The limitations of the present study are:

1. The sample size for this study was 7 students, 3 teachers, and 3 parents due to low voluntary participation.
2. The post-high school outcomes of students may differ at various times.
3. Post-high school outcomes may vary from student to student.
4. Post-high school outcomes may differ from school to school.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Literature Review**

#### Introduction

This chapter discusses the significant research documented in the literature including the historical overlay of transition beginning with formal legislative acts such as the Rehabilitation Act, IDEA, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Carl Perkins Act, School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA), Goals 2000, Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and closing with the county Transition Councils. In addition, significant research studies of student transition from high school to adulthood, and the role of education and parents in nurturing transition were also discussed.

#### Historical Overview of Transition

Transition is poetically defined as, “A passage, which joins two others more important than itself” (Cayne, 1989). In essence, transition is a passage of greater life journeys to come. Transition is a concept that has been a part of human development since the beginning of time. Preparing children for adulthood is not a new concept although its role in secondary education has continued to grow in recent decades.

A steadfast document was submitted by Madeline Will (1986) from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) called, “OSERS Programming for the Transition of Youth with Disabilities: Bridges from School to Working Life.”

This document defined transition as:

The transition from school to working life is an outcome-oriented process encompassing a broad array of services and experiences that lead to employment. Transition is a period that includes high school, the point of graduation, additional postsecondary education or adult services, and the initial years of employment. Transition is a bridge between the security and structure offered by the school and the opportunities and risks of adult life. Any bridge requires both a solid span and a secure foundation at either end. The transition from school to

work and adult life requires sound preparation in the secondary school, adequate support at the point of school leaving, and secure opportunities and services, if needed, in adult situations (cited in Levinson & Ohler, 1998; p. 2).

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-112) prohibits the discrimination of individuals with disabilities in programs supported by Federal agencies, finances, employment, or contractors (United States Department of Justice [U.S. Dept. of Justice], 2001). Further, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (P.L. 94-142) was renamed (P.L. 101-476) the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA is an advocate for individuals with disabilities and promotes public awareness. Moreover, IDEA has nourished the concepts of Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) to endorse that a “disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society” (United States Department of Education [U.S. Dept. of Education], 1995; p. 5). According to IDEA, transition coordination should “occur among the student, family, school, agencies, and community” focusing on the following:

1. “involving the student meaningfully in the IEP [Individual Education Program] process;
2. identifying desired post-school outcomes for the student;
3. providing programming and coordinating activities while the student is still in school that lead to the desired outcomes;
4. creating linkages among students, family, and community resources before the student leaves school;
5. specifying agencies who provide needed services; and
6. creating alternatives when services are not provided” (DPI, 1999; p. 12)

As defined earlier, IDEA identifies transition as a coordinated set of activities that are focused on the individual's needs and interests. Amended (P.L. 105-17) in 1997, IDEA reinforced transition planning for students within the IEP to begin at age 14 including a statement of needed services and at age 16 a statement of community agency responsibilities (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2000). Examples of IDEA accomplishments include:

1. "The majority of children with disabilities are now being educated in their neighborhood school in regular classrooms with their non-disabled peers.
2. High school graduation rates and employment rates among youth with disabilities have increased dramatically. For example, graduation rates increased by 14 percent from 1984 to 1997. Today, post-school employment rates for youth served under IDEA are twice those of older adults with similar disabilities who did not have the benefit of IDEA.
3. Postsecondary enrollments among individuals with disabilities receiving IDEA services have also sharply increased. For example, the percentage of college freshmen reporting disabilities has more than tripled since 1978" (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2000; p. 2).

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (P.L. 101-336) of 1990 prohibits the discrimination of individuals with disabilities in "employment, State and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications" (U.S. Dept. of Justice, 2001; p. 2). Moreover, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (P.L. 94-482) of 1990 uses federal monies to better focus on the needs of all individuals in the improvement of high school and technical college vocational education programs. Renewed in 1998, the act also emphasizes curriculum-based efforts to develop a high-skill, high-wage workforce (DPI, 2002).

Wisconsin was one of the first states to implement (P.L. 103-239) the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) in 1994. Federal funds are provided to programs that help students, with and without disabilities, transition from school settings into the world of work. The act underlines three essential areas:

1. instruction and curriculum integrating academic and vocational learning
2. career awareness, exploration, and counseling earlier than 7th grade
3. workplace activities that lead to meaningful employment and continual learning (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2002)

Also in 1994, the Goals 2000: Educate American Act was adopted to increase education standards and allow better preparation for youth seeking productive employment. For example, Goal 2 of this act advocated a 90% high school graduation rate by the year 2000. Goals 2000 further emphasized the enhancement of parental involvement in children's learning (Way & Rossmann, 1996).

Later in 1998, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) (P.L. 105-220) rewrote federal statutes to "consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, training, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation programs" (Minnesota Workforce Center [MNWFC], 2002; p. 1). As a result, these modified statutes became more concise and flexible. Although the WIA advocated the merging of programs, in the end individual programs remained. There continues to be movement toward better networking between programs (MNWFC, 2002; p. 1)

Lastly, throughout the years, Dunn County along with other counties across Wisconsin have developed Transition Councils consisting of parents, human service providers, public school representatives, and area postsecondary institutions.

Importantly, the Dunn County Transition Council has four purposes:



1. “to encourage communication between schools, agencies, students, families, and guardians;
2. to advocate for effective and efficient coordination of services for the identified population of students;
3. to advocate for program improvement within all organizations which could impact on these youth; and
4. to advocate for transition planning and services for students at least two years prior to and two years after their exit from high school” (Dunn County Transition Council, 1992; p. 1)

#### Related Transition Research from 1997-2001

“Students with learning disabilities, who comprise the largest group of students with disabilities in the public schools today, have not received the same degree of attention relative to transition as have their more severely disabled peers” (Levinson & Ohler, 1998; p. 2). It has appeared that much of the school’s transition assistance focuses on the adaptive skill needs of severely disabled peers and less attention is given to transition for students where intellectual functioning and ability to attend postsecondary education is not a concern (Levinson & Ohler, 1998).

The amount of students with disabilities participating in postsecondary education has soared from the past. Statistics by Henderson (1999) have shown that nearly 10% of enrollment is comprised of students with disabilities and just under ½ of those students are learning disabled (cited in Hitchings, Luzzo, Ristow, & Horvath, 2001). This may be in part due to the better laws requiring high schools to aid students in their transition needs.

Research was conducted by Kampa and Sorensen (2001) using the Statewide Postsecondary Outcomes Survey of Individuals with Disabilities. A telephone survey was administered to students with disabilities 1 year after exiting secondary school

between December 1999 and December 2000. The transition areas of postsecondary education, current employment, and independent living were assessed for 389 respondents. Eighty percent of the former students were employed while 64% of those were employed full-time. Fifty-seven percent of the youth earned less than \$7 per hour although 47% of the students in the study attend postsecondary education. Overall, 67% of the former students continue to live at home with their parents (Kampa & Sorensen, 2001).

Another study was completed by Hitchings et al. (2001) evaluating the transition planning, career development, and impact of the disability of 97 undergraduates with learning disabilities. “Of the 20 students who expressed a desire to continue to college or university, only 1 was able to specifically recall participating in transition meetings” and only a few had met with a high school counselor annually to discuss classes or colleges (Hitchings et al., 2001; p. 6). Overall, the majority of the students had trouble describing their disability and accommodations needed for future vocations. Despite these statistics, 60% of the students could state a broad career goal and had engaged in at least 1 career-oriented activity such as volunteering, college preparation classes, could express specific interests, or had completed a career inventory (Hitchings et al., 2001). Earlier, Hitchings, Luzzo, Retish, Horvath, & Ristow (1998) found that 6 out of 44 students with disabilities reported being “actively” involved in their transition plan during high school (cited in Hitchings et al., 2001). The researchers had expected more students to participate in their transition planning due to the new IDEA mandates.

Research by Stowitschek (2001) closely analyzed the collaboration patterns of team members regarding transition for high school students with disabilities. One

hundred sixty-seven students receiving special education services across three high schools were surveyed via telephone. School administrators, counselors, special education teachers, general and vocational education teachers, peer tutors, and parents were also interviewed for additional information. All of the schools appeared to be implementing inclusion and seemed willing to accept changes in programming. Many parents were aware of their child's program and in contact with the school. Site-specific activities that encouraged school and parent collaboration included active parent participation, peer tutoring programs, and community networking. Several limitations of transition collaboration were identified:

1. "primary dependency on informal communication processes, with few or incomplete formal structures to back them up;
2. limited knowledge or input on the part of general education staff regarding how students with disabilities are placed in their classes;
3. no concerted formal effort to inform general educators of the purposes, functions, and communication processes of the special education programs;
4. limited or nonexistent knowledge of IEP goals and the IEP process on the part of many students who are the objects of the IEPs;
5. few direct or formal shared collaborative program activities in integrated settings, such as co-taught courses, in-class accommodation supports, or jointly operated programs;
6. limited implementation of coordinated transition programming or services, beyond the addition of transition goals in the IEP" (Stowitschek, 2001, p.14).

Fox (2001) investigated parents' perceptions and knowledge of transition services and their child's special education, program needs. Twenty-one parents were surveyed who were unable to correctly indicate "IDEA requirements, IEP development, parental participation, and adult agency and service agreements" (Fox, 2001; p. 37). Parents

specified that the school district provided “little” or “no support” regarding school district information, support, service identification, and IEP attendance. Inconsistently, parents stated they “somewhat understood” and were “somewhat confident” in the transition services provided. This study supports the need for parental collaboration in transition (Fox, 2001).

A study by Thoma, Rogan, and Baker (2001) assessed the involvement of 8 students with moderate, severe, or multiple disabilities in their transition planning during their final year of high school. Teachers, parents, and students were observed, interviewed, and documents were evaluated. It was found that teachers and parents did not prepare the students for upcoming meetings or advocate participation. School staff conversed primarily with parents and focused on student weaknesses. Positively, their transition plans often outlined recreational, leisure, and relationship goals although goals were frequently not developed with the aid of the student (Thoma et al., 2001).

Research by Benz, Lindstrom, and Yovanoff (2000) combined two studies. First, they examined student and program dynamics that foretold student graduation and employment and/or postsecondary education placement. Secondly, they investigated student perceptions of the program and staff characteristics that helped them to excel in their transition goals. The Youth Transition Program (YTP) was used as a model by the state of Oregon beginning in seven schools. Nine hundred and seventeen students were assessed at program entry, every 6 months while in the program, at program exit, and every 6 months for 2 years after exiting the program. The probability that the students would graduate with a diploma jumped by 400% (Benz et al., 2000). These findings

support transition services that are aligned with improved secondary and post-school performance:

1. “direct support for students in general education classes delivered in a manner that does not highlight students’ affiliation with special education;
2. participation in paid work experiences that are related to students’ emerging career interests;
3. instruction in vocational education, functional academic, and other transition content; and
4. completion of student-identified transition goals” (Benz et al., 2000; p. 524).

Research from a national longitudinal study of 25,000 students was reported by Rojewski (1999) to evaluate the outcomes of students with and without learning disabilities (LD) 2 years after completing or dropping out of high school. Data was collected when students were in 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades and again 2 years after leaving high school. The research findings indicate that former students with a LD had lower graduation rates and were less likely to attend a postsecondary education program. Students with a LD were more likely to have a moderate to low-prestige job and a higher percentage of females with a LD worked at low-prestige jobs compared to their male counterparts. Further, lower self-esteem and socioeconomic status were found among former students with a LD that were unemployed (Rojewski, 1999).

Research in Colorado by Lehmann (1999) sought to explore 12 high school students’ participation in transition related activities. Students, teachers, and parents were interviewed and observed revealing that there was a better need for communication, administrative support, role clarification, and student Individual Transition Plan (ITP) participation. Few students with special needs participated in student clubs or athletic

teams and there was little opportunity for them to practice self-advocacy, empowerment, or leadership activities.

Lovitt (1999) interviewed 43 parents of high school students with disabilities to gather their opinions regarding the school curriculum and instruction. Extracurricular activities, jobs, inclusion, and a caring and committed staff were stated as important. Parents indicated better communication among staff, greater IEP individualization, and increased general education teacher training on disabilities were needed. It was noted that several parents lacked knowledge about the IEP process and by increasing communication this could be lessened. Noteworthy findings indicated that parents assumed that special education would “fix” their child and often parents could not understand why their child was not achieving at higher levels (Lovitt, 1999).

Descriptive research sought to determine the level of knowledge and collaboration between special education teachers and vocational rehabilitation counselors. Surveys were completed by a sample of special educators from seven counties in western Wisconsin (Keys, 1998). Results of the study indicate that special educators have made gains in their knowledge and use of vocational rehabilitation services. There appears to be doubt by the teachers about the value of the services, a need for more effort by the vocational rehabilitation counselor to attend the IEP meetings, and more teacher release time to collaborate with outside agencies (Keys, 1998).

Doren and Benz (1998) studied the predictors of employment outcomes for women with disabilities. Four hundred twenty-two students from Oregon and Nevada who exited their high school programs were interviewed their senior year and again 1 year later. They found that women who had 2 or more job experiences while in high

school, and concurrently had a network of family and friends to help them seek employment fared better in their post-school outcomes. In the end, the research found that fewer women (47%) than men (72%) with disabilities were employed 1 year after leaving school (Doren & Benz, 1998).

A study surveying the experiences of teachers, parents, and students participating in special education programs was conducted by Malian and Love (1998). Data from a southwestern state was analyzed and found that parents felt there was a need for more instruction in the areas of reading, math, writing, money management, and problem solving. Parents also indicated a need for further job exploration, training, seeking, and placement. Students agreed that further money management and job exploration instruction were needed. Additionally, teachers reported that community-based services significantly helped their students. Data found that students who were included in the general classroom for greater percentages of the day and/or participated in school clubs were more likely to graduate. Consequently, students that graduated were also more likely to earn higher wages and had greater job stability. Reciprocally, students that dropped out of school were more likely to be incarcerated and use alcohol or drugs (Malian & Love, 1998).

Love and Malian (1997) completed an earlier study in Arizona to evaluate the post-school outcomes of students with disabilities exiting high school. Five hundred and twenty-two individuals including students, teachers, and parents were interviewed. The majority of the students were employed, working full-time, earning \$5 an hour, and receiving assistance finding jobs from family members. Those completing high school had a greater likelihood of attending postsecondary education. The majority of students

continued to live at home with their parents and indicated family and friends were their sources of assistance. Dropouts were more likely to be incarcerated and use alcohol or drugs.

Research (Benz, Yovanoff, & Doren, 1997; Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Halpern Yovanoff, Doren, & Benz, 1995; Heal & Rusch, 1995; McGrew, Bruininks, & Thurlow, 1992; Wagner, Blackorby, Cameto, & Newman, 1993; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997) indicates that there are several correlating factors that contribute to improved postsecondary education and employment outcomes of students with disabilities:

1. "Participation in vocational education classes during the last 2 years of high school, especially classes that offer occupationally-specific instruction;
2. Participation in paid work experience in the community during the last 2 years of high school;
3. Competence in functional *academic* (e.g., reading math writing, and problem-solving); *community living* (e.g., money management, community access); *personal-social* (e.g., getting along with others); *vocational* (e.g., career awareness, job search); and *self-determination* (e.g., self-advocacy, goal setting) skills;
4. Participation in transition planning;
5. Graduation from high school; and
6. Absence of continuing instructional needs in functional academic, vocational, and personal-social areas after leaving school" (cited in Benz et al., 2000, p. 510).

Research by Johnson et al. (1997) investigated the results of a National Transition Study of Individuals with Severe Disabilities (NTSSD) after leaving high school. Nearly 400 former students with severe disabilities or parent proxies across five states were surveyed by telephone regarding current independent living, employment, and postsecondary education. Overall, the majority of the students had low rates of



postsecondary education, job instability, and demonstrated little participation in community activities. Fifty-eight percent of young adults continued to live with their parents while 25% lived in a publicly supported residence. Furthermore, 40% of the family members felt that adult daycare or respite care was inadequate within the area. Family members also indicated that there was a need for greater financial planning assistance and help in obtaining community services (Johnson et al., 1997).

The ITPs of 94 high school students with disabilities were investigated by Grigal, Test, Beattie, and Wood (1997). The plans were evaluated and rated for compliance with IDEA, best practice etiquette, and the differences among disability groups. Results indicated the majority of plans were in accordance with IDEA, but lacked best practice elements. The plans often:

1. showed vague goal statements, did not specify monitoring staff, and gave unclear timelines;
2. lacked long-term planning and annual revision; and
3. had minimal adapted materials or activities and did not include scheduled interaction with people without disabilities (Grigal et al., 1997).

#### Related Transition Research from 1992-1996

Whitney-Thomas and Hanley-Maxwell (1996) decided to study parent's experiences as their children left high school. Also, they assessed how the transition experiences of 93 parents of children with disabilities differed from 111 parents of children without disabilities. The questionnaire was divided into three factors including comfort level during transition, vision of their child's future, and response to the schooling process. The findings indicated that parents of children with disabilities were more likely to feel pessimistic and discomfort compared to parents of children without

disabilities. School staff was considered a key component of student transition but ultimately a teaming of parents, schools, and students need to be responsible for adulthood preparation (Whitney-Thomas & Hanley-Maxwell, 1996).

Way and Rossmann (1996) sought to identify on a national level the role that families play in preparing youth for work. One thousand two hundred sixty-six seniors across four states were surveyed to analyze how individual and family characteristics result in the development of learning processes and readiness for school-to-work transition. Results showed that family was rated as a factor for preparing students for work. Elevated socioeconomic status and ideal family functioning (e.g. organization, open communication, positive conflict resolution, seeking growth opportunities, and fair decision making) were also shown to increase student knowledge of transition skills. Moreover, family cohesion and a strong parent locus of control played an important role. In addition, dual-parent families were shown to have a greater proactive style, more frequently interacted with their children about careers, and tended to have better interaction in their child's schooling. Families who were less active in their surroundings, used a laissez-faire decision making method, and utilized an authoritarian parenting style were less effective in teaching work preparation skills (Way & Rossman, 1996).

A research study by Ohler, Levinson, and Barker (1996) evaluated the career maturity of college students with and without learning disabilities (cited in Levinson & Ohler, 1998). The career maturity tool indicated no difference between the two groups. Nonetheless, students with learning disabilities did receive more instructional accommodations in college and demonstrated a greater need for career assistance than

their peers without disabilities (Levinson & Ohler, 1998). Jagger et al. (1992) stated that this trend might be a result of students with disabilities not fully understanding how their personal strengths and weaknesses relate to their successfulness in a potential career (cited in Levinson & Ohler, 1998).

Research by Emight, Conyers, and Szymanski, (1996) and Rojewski (1994) support the idea that vocational selection is highly influenced by disability status along with other variables such as gender, socioeconomic status, family structure, self-efficacy, level of education, and age (cited in Levinson & Ohler, 1998). Furthermore, previous research with high school and college students has shown that there are four important factors related to how disabilities affect the selection of a vocation (Hitchings et al., 2001).

First, Szymanski, Hershenson, Enright, and Ettinger (1996) found that the type and severity of a disability could decrease an individual's participation in activities to discover his/or her environment from childhood into young adulthood (cited in Hitchings et al., 2001). Secondly, Adelman and Vogel (1993) found that often considerable amounts of time were spent by the student during high school focusing on academic and physical remediation so less time was able to be spent investigating career options and gaining work experience (cited in Hitchings et al., 2001). Skinner and Schneck (1992) found a third factor that hampered career selection involved the overprotective nature and desire of parents to see their child succeed along with lower ability expectations by parents and professionals (cited in Hitchings et al., 2001). Finally, studies by Clark and Kolstoe (1995), Mercer (1997), and Smith (1998) found that during career selection student with disabilities often had an external locus of control, often feared failure, were

less goal oriented, were unaware of career options, had difficulty making decisions, and lacked needed skills for employment (cited in Hitchings et al., 2001). Due to these factors, research by Adelman and Vogel (1993), Aune and Friehe (1996), Aune and Kroger (1997), Danek (1992), and Goodman and McAfee (1993) have shown that individuals with disabilities are at a vocational disadvantage and have a greater likelihood to be unemployed or underemployed (cited in Hitchings et al., 2001).

Data was analyzed from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) by Blackorby and Wagner (1996). Of approximately 1800 students surveyed, there were not significant differences between some groups of students with disabilities and general education peers in employment rates, wages, postsecondary education, and independent living arrangements. The average hourly wage was \$5.72 per hour. Many youth with disabilities graduated from high school and postsecondary institutions at lower rates than peers. As a result, the gap between earnings for both groups is expected to widen. Young women with disabilities were also less likely to be employed which may be a result of their choice to serve as stay at home wives and/or mothers (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996).

Thirty-eight special education teachers were surveyed concerning the assessments of their students at a vocational evaluation center (Lijewski, 1995). The teachers indicated that the evaluation results were helpful particularly in identifying student strengths and skill needs, appropriate courses and in-school work experiences, and post-high school work or educational experiences interests (Lijewski, 1995).

Another study assessed the pilot job-shadowing program within a northern Wisconsin school district. The objective was to use the information collected to develop

a comprehensive School-to-Work Transition Plan for the district (Harrison, 1995). Ten students participated in the job shadowing experience and follow-up interviews were conducted with the students and job shadowing supervisors to evaluate program assets and deterrents. Both students and supervisors felt that the experience was a positive one. Students thought the program helped them in understanding policies and teaching strategies used, and developing future goals. After the experience, students indicated they wanted to ask more questions, take better notes, and receive better descriptions of the jobs. Supervisors stated that they would have liked further student questions and feedback (Harrison, 1995).

Bergquist (1995) investigated a western Wisconsin school district's need to develop a transition program and sought to identify the skills needed within a functional curriculum. Ten individuals providing services to students with disabilities including school administrators, teachers, and personnel from outside agencies were interviewed. The data collected supported the need to develop a functional curriculum that involves the vocational assessment of students and specifically the teaching of student work and social skills (Bergquist, 1995).

A National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) (1993) was completed to assess the progress of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This study evaluated the postsecondary education participation, employment, residential arrangements, and community participation of youth with disabilities who have been out of school for up to 3 years (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1993). Of the 1,763 respondents, 31% attended an academic or vocational postsecondary program. Fifty-five percent of the youth were employed while 28% of the respondents were living independently. In

total, 30% of students with disabilities in grades 9 through 12 dropped out of school.

Although, the NLTTS showed that students who took unrelated survey vocational classes (e.g. typing, woodwork, or auto mechanics) or a coordinated series of vocational classes as a concentration were less likely to drop out of school than those students who did not (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1993). Overall, three factors *positively* influenced academic performance and graduation rates including:

1. “direct, individualized tutoring and support to complete homework assignments, attend class, and stay focused on school;
2. participation in vocational education classes, particularly during grades 11 and 12; and
3. participation in community-based work experience programs, again especially during the last 2 years of high school” (cited in Benz et al., 2000; p. 511).

In addition, three factors *negatively* influenced academic performance and graduation rates including:

1. “being identified as emotionally disturbed;
2. having a prior history of absenteeism or course failure; and
4. being 3 or more years behind grade level in reading and math” (cited in Benz et al., 2000; p. 511).

A study to measure the independent living, employment, and postsecondary education among former high school participants with mild disabilities was completed by Sitlington, Frank, and Carson (1993). A sample of 739 youth with disabilities was interviewed 1 year after leaving high school. Half of the sample included graduates while the other ½ comprised dropouts from their high school program. Employment rates for the former students ranged from 58% for students with a behavioral disability (BD), 62% for students with a mild mental disability (MD), and 77% for students with a

learning disability (LD). Unemployment ranged from 12% for students with a LD to 22% for students with a BD compared to 4% of the general Iowa graduates. The average hourly wage ranged from \$3.65 per hour for students with a MD to \$4.40 for students with a LD. The researchers noted a lower quality of employment and lower participation in postsecondary education for all the former students within the three disability categories. Approximately 60% of the respondents continued to live at home with parents or relatives (Sitlington et al., 1993).

Furthermore, in this study females were more likely to be unemployed including 18% of females with BD and 6% of females with MD. Females were also employed in jobs that were less desirable and received fewer job benefits compared to their male counterparts (Sitlington et al., 1993).

Mellard and Hazel (1992), Minskoff (1994), and Spekman, Goldberg, and Herman (1992) found that successful adults with learning disabilities have strong self-advocacy skills and goal impetus in the workplace (cited in Hitchings et al., 2001). It has also been shown by Ginsberg, Gerber, and Reiff (1994), and Spekman, Goldberg, and Herman (1992) that it is essential for individuals with disabilities to fully comprehend their strengths and weaknesses (cited in Hitchings et al., 2001).

#### Role of Education and Parents in Transition

A Transdisciplinary Transition Model (TTM) was developed by Levinson to bring together schools and community agencies. This model was used to better provide transition services to students with disabilities using several steps: assessment, planning, training, placement, and follow-up (Levinson & Ohler, 1998).

First, it is important to assess the student's level of abilities and needs by assessing intellectual, academic, social, vocational, independent living, and physical functioning. The assessment should consist of formal and informal measures and be conducted by a team of professionals in the school and community (Levinson & Ohler, 1998). Second, the assessment data collected should be used to develop a transition plan within the student's IEP to document the goals, objectives, service provider, and time frame (Levinson & Ohler, 1998). Subsequently, the instruction and training of the student immediately follows the plan development. The student is then ready for placement in a job setting, residence, and/or postsecondary educational setting (Levinson & Ohler, 1998). Finally, it is essential that the transition model involve the follow-up evaluation of a student to assess the successfulness in his/or her post-school settings. "Termination of some support services, initiation of other services, and/or a change of placement may result from this follow-up evaluation" (Levinson & Ohler, 1998; p. 4).

Ohler, Levinson, and Sanders (1995) consolidated an extensive list of transition services that secondary schools should offer to students with disabilities. This list was summarized into simpler categories as follows:

1. multidimensional vocational assessment – intellectual, academic, personality, interests, and career maturity;
2. career awareness and exploration activities – reading, informational interviewing, shadowing, and job simulation;
3. individual academic and career counseling to explore goals and strengths;
4. work experience – part-time, summer, volunteer, and credit earned jobs;
5. social skills training – interpersonal communication, self-awareness, self advocacy, and job keeping skills;



6. supervising of career development needs and progress – postsecondary service providers, parents, and rehabilitation agency personnel;
7. consultation of faculty through in-services about the nature of learning disabilities and how this affects academic and career potential; and
8. job placement assistance, instruction on job finding, and follow-up to facilitate transition on the job or in postsecondary education (cited in Levinson & Ohler, 1998).

Quadland and Rybaci (1998) developed a transition-planning guide for parents, students, and professionals. The guide involved an organized rubric outlining activities that should be completed by students with special needs from age 13 to 21:

1. **13 – 14 year olds:** “obtain certified birth certificate, obtain employment, continue career exploration, explore recreational/leisure interests, acquire self-advocacy skills, participate in community activities, explore community services, identify personal style, access personal health care needs, develop graduation credit plan, set goals for work and higher education;
2. **14 – 15 year olds:** access transportation options, access career interests/aptitudes, explore job opportunities, assess time/money management skills, participate in recreational/leisure activities, evaluate future financial needs, perform community service, develop personal health plan, practice self-advocacy skills, job shadowing, visit area job/career center, conduct functional vocational evaluation;
3. **15 – 16 year olds:** implement a time/money management plan, practice self-advocacy skills, obtain employment experience, develop job seeking/keeping skills, practice interpersonal skills, practice personal health care skills, conduct functional vocational evaluation, explore legal representation, practice independent living skills;
4. **16 – 17 year olds:** take college entrance tests, participate in recreational/leisure activities, master self-advocacy skills, practice job seeking/keeping skills, explore post-school living arrangements, reassess/update vocational plan, establish graduation date and plan, obtain paid work experience supervised by school, identify step/timelines for post-school training, investigate other skills training options, practice independent living skills, investigate and visit adult services, practice independent living skills, visit postsecondary training sites, identify personal assistance needs, apply for legal representation/guardianship if necessary, understand adult rights/responsibilities;

5. **17 – 18 year olds:** identify/communicate accommodations, gather all relevant student records, participate in recreational/leisure activities, master self-advocacy skills, register for voting/selective service, review graduation IEP, develop graduation placement, maintain paid/supervised employment, finalize independent living arrangements, direct personal assistance services, apply for skill training options, complete postsecondary applications, formally apply for all adult services; and
6. **18 – 21 year olds:** participate in recreational/leisure activities, demonstrate self-advocacy skills, complete transition IEP goals, obtain regular integrated employment, receive appropriate services from adult agencies, and participate in adult responsibilities” (Quadland & Rybaci, 1998; p. 85).

Various studies have produced recommendations to help high schools in making transition programs better. It is recommended that educators and counselors cooperatively create multiple year plans that encompass activities to teach vocational and academic skills such as self-advocacy and disability awareness (Hitchings et al., 2001). Other recommendations include school networking within the community, expanding the communication for school-to-work transitioning, creating a “hands-on” learning environment, instilling employment and motivation for municipal responsibility, and providing resources and options to students and parents through career counseling (Harrison, 1995).

Moreover, students need to advocate their own desires, goals, and activities at the IEP meetings (Grigal et al., 1997). A monitoring system for all students in special education, regardless of their dropout status, should be utilized to help ensure they receive appropriate transition, follow-up, and post-school services (Love & Malian, 1997). Also, greater basic life skills curriculum should be incorporated into ITPs (Love & Malian, 1997). Other suggestions for educators and service providers involve concentrating secondary and transition services simultaneously on post-school

preparation and school completion, foreseeing individualized planning and services for the student that advocates curricular relevance and self-determination skills, promoting collaborative services, and developing curriculum for all students with and without disabilities focusing on vocational development and community learning (Benz et al., 2000).

In order to enhance transition collaboration within schools, it is recommended that formal communication (e.g. planned informational meetings) be readily utilized to boost informal communication, consolidate improvements needs, and support the stability of programs over time (Stowitschek, 2001). Collaboration can also be promoted through meetings with general education teachers about the special education programming and with students about the IEP process and the importance of their contribution. Activities such as team teaching and program evaluation are further recommended (Stowitschek, 2001).

Parents can also actively participate in their child's transition from high school to adulthood (Lovitt, 1999). Parents need to help identify IEP goals, remain aware of student progress, and understand the method of evaluation. Further, it is essential for parents to know about their child's rights, privileges, and the due process procedures along with staying current regarding the major trends and issues within education. Parents should additionally understand deferred diplomas, ITPs, post-school possibilities, and community agencies (Lovitt, 1999).

### Summary

This chapter discussed the literature available regarding the history, research, and educational and parental roles related to student transition. With the emergence of new

legislation, the definition of transition has become more clear and concise. To assess program and student success in accordance with the law, there will continue to be a need for special education services to be analyzed. The emergence of new surveys and research about transition will allow schools to persist in adapting their transition programming.

Knowledge of student outcomes and perceptions in correspondence with teacher and parent perceptions will allow the school to make needed transition program improvements in the skill areas of independent living, employment, and postsecondary education. This enhancement could empower a greater percentage of students to live on their own, seek higher paying careers, and more eagerly participate in post-high school training.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the selection of site and subjects, the instruments used, and the design of the study. The data collection process and data analysis is explained.

#### Site Description

The qualitative research study was conducted at a public rural school in western Wisconsin. As a former school psychology practicum student at the selected western Wisconsin school, the examiner was given permission by the school psychologist/and director of special education to assist in the assessment of former students in special education. Additionally, the teacher and parent perceptions of the special education, transition program at the high school level were explored.

#### Subject Selection

The special education files of former students exiting the high school program either by graduation or dropping out of school between May 2000 and May 2001 were reviewed. Six males and 6 females graduated in May 2000 while 3 males and 1 female graduated in May 2001. Further, 1 male student dropped out of school between May 2000 and May 2001. Those former students, or parent/or guardian proxies were telephoned using the file contact information to inform them about the study. The examiner informed the respondents about the purpose of the study, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and contact information by reading the permission form (Appendix A). A permission form was mailed to those individuals agreeing to participate

including a return envelope. Upon the return of a permission slip, a telephone survey was administered.

The former students or parent/or guardian proxies were asked questions during a 15-minute telephone interview. The volunteers who participated in this study included 7 former students who graduated from their high school program from May 2000 to May 2001. While in high school, 2 of the students surveyed received special education services for a cognitive disability (CD), 4 students for a learning disability (LD), and 1 student for a Low Incidence (LI) disability of autism. All of the seven former students were Caucasian and between the ages of 19 and 21. There were 4 males and 3 females in the telephone survey group. Individual student perceptions (Appendix G) were reported. The parent/or guardian of the former student answered the survey questions for 2 of the former students as a result of student inability to communicate responses due to a severe cognitive disability and the inability to locate another student.

Secondly, 5 potential respondents who were high school teachers were selected by the school's psychologist/and director of special education from all subject areas who actively attend students' Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings and have been teaching in the district for at least 5 years. Three high school teachers of former students in the special education program volunteered to discuss their perceptions of the school transition program. Teachers were informed by a combination of phone calls and consent letters about the purpose of the study, confidentiality, voluntary participation, contact information, date, time, and meeting location by the examiner reading the permission form (Appendix B). A permission form was mailed to all teachers selected with a return deadline. Three male teachers attended the meeting in the high school conference room

after school; 2 were special education teachers, and the other was a general education teacher. Of the 3 teachers who participated the focus group, all 3 individual's responses were used. Individual teacher perceptions (Appendix H) were reported.

Finally, 5 potential parents/or guardians of former students receiving high school, special education services were selected by the school's psychologist/and director of special education who actively attended their child's Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings. Three parents/or guardians volunteered to discuss their perceptions of the high school transition program. Two of the parents/or guardians that participated in the focus group had children who completed a telephone survey. The parents/or guardians of former students who exited the high school program from May 2000 to May 2001 were contacted by telephone about the purpose of the study, confidentiality, voluntary participation, contact information, date, time, and meeting location by the examiner reading the permission form (Appendix C). The parents/or guardians were also contacted by telephone the day prior to the meeting to confirm the date, time, and meeting place. Permission forms were signed by the parents/or guardians agreeing to participate during the evening meeting in a conference room at the community center. Of the 3 parents who participated the focus group, all 3 individual's responses were used. Individual parent perceptions (Appendix I) were reported.

### Instruments

The first instrument chosen for this research was the Post High School Outcomes Survey of Individuals with Disabilities (Appendix D). Mary Kampa and Carolyn Sorensen, coordinators of the Wisconsin postsecondary outcomes study for students with disabilities, developed the survey in corroboration with the Wisconsin Department of

Public Instruction (DPI) and the Cooperative Educational Services Agency (CESA) #11.

The survey was initially developed due to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Report to Congress (cited in Kampa & Sorensen, 2001). This report stated that progress has been made although improvement continues to be needed to fulfill transition requirements, including:

1. “the determination of appropriate agency linkages;
2. development of interagency agreements and memoranda of understanding;
3. increased collaboration with other agencies;
4. provision of training on the implementation of transition requirement to parents, students, and services providers;
5. increased understanding of, involvement in, and availability of independent living centers; and
6. the development of culturally sensitive transition plans to meet the needs of students” (Kampa & Sorensen, 2001; p. 7).

The Post High School Outcomes Survey of Individuals with Disabilities is a multidimensional measure of independent living skills, postsecondary education, and employment in relation to preparatory skills for adulthood learned during high school. The survey administered by telephone has 36 multi-faceted questions that allow the individual to choose one or more of the dictated choices describing their living arrangements, postsecondary schooling, and employment situations including the response “Not Sure/or Refused” when not knowing or not wanting to disclose a response. The survey can be completed in approximately fifteen minutes.

This scale is subdivided into 6 parts including the collection of demographic and student data, the IEP review, postsecondary living skills, postsecondary education/training, employment, and high school experiences. Upon the student or



parent/or guardian's permission to participate, the student's demographic and student data was collected from the student's special education file. Further, the student's latest IEP prior to exiting the high school program was evaluated. The remaining information consisting of postsecondary living skills, postsecondary education/training, employment, and high school experiences was collected by telephone from the respondent.

The initial data collected by the statewide transition study using the survey established baseline data for the postsecondary outcomes of individuals with disabilities who received special education and related services and successfully exited their secondary education setting with a diploma between December 1999 and December 2000. The examiner was given permission by Mary Kampa, Project Coordinator, to individually participate in the study and to use all materials provided by her including a compact disk containing the student survey, Access database, and the summary report template.

The final two instruments utilized for this research were the teacher focus group questions (Appendix E) and the parent/or guardian focus group questions (Appendix F). Each focus group discussed four multifaceted questions evaluating the participant perceptions of the high school's beneficial transition services and programs; suggestions to improve the student's participation in leisure and social, community, independent living, and employment after leaving high school; other needed transition services not provided; and the community agencies utilized by the student during high school. The target school's school psychologist/and director of special education collaboratively with the research examiner developed these four questions.

Each focus group meeting began with participant introductions, the purpose of the study and their involvement in the study, confidentiality, withdrawal, risks, voluntary responses, audio recording, and approximate length of the meeting. Next, the school's psychologist/and director of special education briefly defined transition services. The examiner then started the group conversations with the first question. The examiner and the school psychologist/and director of special education used effective group dynamics techniques such as reflective listening to aid in the disclosure of perceptions by teachers and parents/or guardians. Each focus group was completed in approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

#### Data Analysis

The survey data was analyzed by calculating numbers using the Access database. Individual survey respondent suggestions were sorted based on the three opportunities the individual had to make transition improvement suggestions focusing on independent living, postsecondary education, and employment. The teacher and parent/or guardian focus group perceptions were sorted according to the transition questions they addressed. The three group's individual responses, suggestions, and perceptions were analyzed for similarities.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Analysis of Data**

#### Introduction

First, this chapter will present the results of the analysis of the quantities and perceptions of high school transition services taken from the telephone surveys that the former students or parent/or guardian proxy completed. Of the 7 students who participated, 2 were parent/or guardian proxies and all 7 individual's responses were used. Scores will be reported on two variables for Post High School Outcomes: Male and Female, and Disability. Individual student and proxy perceptions (Appendix G) will be reported. There are two objectives.

1. Identification of current independent living, postsecondary education, and employment statuses of former high school students.
2. Determination of suggestions for activities or classes to improve the high school transition program.

Second, this chapter will present the results of the teacher and parent focus group sessions perceptions of high school transition services provided to former students with disabilities. Of the 3 teachers and 3 parents/or guardians who participated in separate focus groups, all 6 individual's responses were used. Individual teacher perceptions (Appendix H) and individual parent perceptions (Appendix I) will be reported.

#### Results

##### ***Study Participants***

For this study, students with disabilities who successfully exited or dropped out of their high school education between May 2000 and May 2001 were included in the

population. With permission, this summary report template was modified using the current research data to allow for easy comparison with initial statewide results.

The disability areas of hearing impaired (HI), other health impaired (OHI), orthopedically impaired (OI), speech and language impaired (S/L), traumatic brain injury (TBI), visually impaired (VI), autism (Autism), and deaf/blind (D/B), and were grouped as “Low Incidence” (LI). Many of the data points had few or no respondents when analyzed by gender and disability.

Attempts were made by telephone to contact all of the students with disabilities who successfully exited or dropped out of their high school education between May 2000 and May 2001. Of the potential respondents, there were 6 males and 6 females who graduated May 2000, 3 males and 1 female who graduated May 2001, and 1 male who dropped out of school between May 2000 and May 2001. Due to behavioral record confidentiality, further information was not documented from former student files until written student or parent/guardian permission was received. Of the former students or parents/guardians contacted, 7 volunteered to participate and the interviews were successfully completed. This may present a somewhat limited view of outcomes for *all* students with disabilities who received special education and related services and no longer attend high school.

Secondly, 5 potential respondents who were high school teachers were selected by the school’s psychologist/and director of special education from all subject areas who actively attend students’ Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings and have been teaching in the district for at least 5 years. Three high school teachers of former students

in the special education program volunteered to discuss their perceptions of the school transition program.

### ***Respondents***

Of the 7 successfully completed former student interviews, 5 of the respondents were the former students themselves; and 2 of the respondents were the parents of the former students. Further, for this latter group of respondents, 1 of the former students was unable to communicate responses and 1 was unable to be located. None of the respondents were identified as having a secondary disability, or three or more disabilities.

During their last year of high school attendance, 4 of the respondents were in the special education environment for less than 21% of their school day, 2 were in the special education environment between 21% and 60% of their school day, and 1 was in the special education environment for more than 61% of their school day. Of the 2 respondents identified with cognitive disabilities, 1 was reported as having a mild or moderate disability and 1 was reported as having a severe or profound disability.

Of the successfully completed teacher focus group, 3 male teachers at the high school attended the meeting. Two volunteers were special education teachers and the other was a general education teacher. Further, of the successfully completed parent/or guardian focus group, 3 parents/or guardians attended the meeting. Two of the parents/or guardians that participated in the focus group had children who completed a telephone survey.

### ***Graduation Status***

The database for this study included students who successfully exited or dropped out of their high school education placement. Respondents predominantly exited with a

regular high school diploma (6) while 1 respondent dropped out of high school prior to receiving a diploma. The National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) data suggests that 38% of students with disabilities who left school did so by dropping out (compared to 25% of students in the general population) (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1993).

### **Independent Living**

Independent living assesses residential arrangements and general community participation, including engagement in activities outside the home, residential independence, and social and civic activities. The ability to live on one's own is believed to be evidence of the ability of youth to perform many common adult tasks. Paying bills, preparing meals and voting are indicative of functioning adults (Wagner, Blackorby, Cameto, & Newman, 1993).

#### ***Living Arrangements***

The majority of the young adults (5) in this study having previously attended a western Wisconsin school district continue to live in their parents' home at least one year after exiting high school. Two students reported living in a place other than a rental apartment, their own home, a residential treatment center, a detention or correctional facility, a hospital, a group home, a foster home, or military housing. Further, 1 of those 2 respondents indicated living with a family member other than his/or her parents.

#### ***Social/Recreation***

Of the 7 respondents, all reported getting together socially with friends or family members (other than those they live with). The NLTS results indicate that nationally, nearly 82% of youth regularly participate in social activities (Wagner et al., 1993).

The majority of respondents (5) had a valid driver's license, 1 did not have a license but planned to obtain one, and 1 did not have a valid license and did not plan to obtain one. In addition, the majority of former students (5) reported participating in a leisure time activity such as going to a movie, theater, concert or sporting event within the past 6 months. Two former students have attended a community service activity (i.e. Lions, 4-H, Habitat for Humanity), 4 attended religious activities (i.e. church services/events), and 1 has voted in the past 6 months. One young adult indicated getting a ride to a social event is a barrier to his/or her participation.

### ***Contact with Adult Agencies in High School***

The school district reports that 1 of the Individual Education Programs (IEPs) developed for a former student's senior year indicated a need for involvement from an outside agency, contained a statement of interagency responsibility, and specified needed linkages. Of the one agency invited, a representative attended the student's IEP meeting. Grigell, Test, Beattie and Wood (1997) found that when planning transition statements, the school interdisciplinary team consisted of the special education teacher 90% of the time, and a transition specialist, technical education teacher, or community-based education coordinator was present at less than 10% of the meetings.

### ***Adult Agency Involvement/Support Services***

To help youth participate in young adult living and leisure activities, none of the respondents reported utilizing the support of a one-on-one personal care assistant (i.e. aide, service coordinator, or manager). None of the young adults reported working with a counselor or social worker to maintain an independent living arrangement nor were they

receiving services from an adult agency [e.g. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Human Services].

### ***Suggestions by Former Students for Improving Participation in Leisure Activities***

Respondents were asked for suggestions for adding activities or classes that may be valuable in improving outcomes in leisure and social activities, community participation, and independent living for future students. Please refer to Appendix G for those suggestions.

### **Postsecondary Education**

Postsecondary education includes any type of formal education program after high school. Former students may be enrolled in a 2-year or 4-year academic college or technical training program. A technical college offers training that leads to specific certification in a field of study. Postsecondary education may also include a formal apprenticeship program or the military. Adult education and job training are not considered formal postsecondary education programs, and generally do not lead to a degree or general employability skill development, but are included in this study as types of postsecondary education. Furthering one's education after high school is an avenue to higher wages and better long-term career prospects. Postsecondary education is of particular concern because the economy of the future is likely to demand that workers be more highly skilled and able to change (Wagner et al., 1993).

### ***Participation in Postsecondary Education***

Three of the former students are attending or have attended some type of postsecondary education or job training program. Nationally, only 27% of those students



with disabilities who complete high school are enrolled in postsecondary education compared to 68% of the general student population (Wagner et al., 1993).

Of those students pursuing postsecondary education, 2 attended a 4-year community college and 1 attended a job-training program. Further, one of those students participated in more than one type of postsecondary programming by attending adult education classes prior to enrolling in college. Of the 3 students participating in postsecondary education, 3 reported they were also employed. NLTS (1993) data suggests that, among youth with disabilities out of high school up to 3 years, only 16% enrolled in academic programs and 15% enrolled in technical programs.

### ***Postsecondary Participation by Gender and Disability***

Participation in postsecondary education is relatively equal with 1 male attending adult education classes in the past and currently attending a 4-year college, 1 female attending a 4-year college, and 1 male attending a job training program. The youth with a cognitive disability (1) was most likely to attend a job-training program. Those former students with a learning disability represent the greatest majority of students participating in all types of postsecondary education with 2 attending a 4-year college and 1 having attended adult education classes in the past. The NLTS data (Wagner et al., 1993) indicate that nationally, students with low incidence disabilities are most likely to participate in postsecondary college and technical training.

### ***Self-Advocacy and Disclosure***

Disclosing one's disability status to those who can provide needed accommodations is an activity of self-advocacy or self-determination. Transition also includes self-determination and self-advocacy skills. A broader transition curriculum prepares students

to become citizens in an inclusive, adult world. Self-determination is defined as “acting as the primary causal agent in one’s life and making choices and decisions regarding one’s quality of life free from undue external influence or interference” (Kampa & Sorensen, 2001, p. 15). A person is self-advocating when they:

- ❖ “act according to their own wishes and preferences unrelated to outside interference;
- ❖ self-regulate, i.e. making decisions about which skills to use and when;
- ❖ are in charge of their own outcomes; and
- ❖ realize people will use the information to build on their strengths and work on limitations” (Kampa & Sorensen, 2001, p. 15).

Two of the 3 young adults who attended postsecondary education identified themselves as having a learning disability to someone at their place of postsecondary education. One male and 1 female identified their disability status to a disability specialist.

### ***Accommodations and Assistive Technology***

Of the 3 students attending postsecondary education, 1 student with a learning disability reported using some type of accommodation or assistive technology device. The former student reported using the following accommodation and assistive technology at his/or her place of postsecondary education including extended time on assignments and tests, and books on tape.

### ***Goal of Postsecondary Education While in High School***

Of the 3 students participating in postsecondary education, 2 had IEP transition plans indicating it was the student’s intention to begin postsecondary education rather than begin employment following graduation from high school. This indicates the importance of planning for postsecondary education while the student is still in high school if it is the student’s intent to continue his/or her education.

### ***Vocational and Technical Preparation While in High School***

The school-to-work courses had the highest rate of participation with 6 of the 7 former students participating. More than half of the former students participated in graphic arts (5 students), and/or trade and industry (4 students) (e.g. woodworking, metals, mechanics, electronics) courses during their last 2 years of high school. Two students participated in agriculture education, and home economics/family and consumer education. Finally, one student attended a health occupations class while one student attended a business, office, or marketing class.

### ***Suggestions by Former Students for Improvement in Postsecondary Education Participation***

Respondents were asked for suggestions for their previous high school for adding activities or classes that may be valuable in improving outcomes for future students in the area of postsecondary education. Please refer to Appendix G for those suggestions.

### **Employment**

Two outcomes of employment were considered: (1) whether the former student held a competitive job outside the home for which he or she was paid; and, (2) the compensation and benefits the youth received for their work. For this study, employment was identified as working for pay. Underemployment was identified as earning less than \$8 per hour and working less than 20 hours per week of paid employment.

### ***Type of Employment***

Seven respondents currently reported being employed for pay including the students participating in postsecondary education. Five of the former students reported being employed in the community, 1 former student by a family-owned business, and 1 former student by some other place of employment. Most former students (3) were

employed by a factory or production company. In addition, 1 participant indicated employment in agriculture, 1 participant is employed in childcare, and 2 were employed within other types of employment.

### ***Employment by Gender and Disability***

Male and female youth employment is comparable with 4 males and 3 females working including 2 students with a cognitive disability, 4 with a learning disability, and 1 with autism. The male youth were more likely to receive a raise in pay than the female youth with 2 males receiving a raise compared to no females. Further, one student with a learning disability and one student with autism were comparable in their likeliness to receive a raise in pay.

The percentage of male youth who receive benefits is also comparable to female youth with 1 male and 1 female each receiving benefits. Students with learning disabilities (2) were more likely to receive benefits through their current employment than students with a cognitive disability or autism. On the national level, 55% of youth with disabilities were competitively employed when they had been out of high school education for up to 3 years (Wagner, 1993). Employment rates for youth with learning disabilities resembled that of peers in the general population. Only 16% of youth with multiple disabilities and 25% of deaf youth attained competitive employment. In addition, one-half of youth with disabilities who have been out of high school up to 3 years reportedly receive no competitive compensation (Wagner, 1993).

### ***Rate of Pay by Gender and Disability***

One male with a cognitive disability earned between \$8 and \$9.99 per hour. Students of all disability categories earned comparable rates of pay. Two males and 3

females earned less than \$8 per hour including 3 students with learning disabilities, 1 student with a cognitive disability, and 1 student with autism. Overall the majority of the youth earned less than \$8 per hour. One of the youth was unsure and/or refused to respond.

### ***Underemployment***

Of those former students who are currently employed, 3 have been employed for at least 6 months and 4 less than 6 months. At their current job, the majority of the students are working more than one year (2 students) or less than one month (2 students). Further, 1 former student has been employed for 1 to 3 months, 1 former student for 3 to 6 months, and 1 former student for 6 to 12 months. Further, the majority of the youth (4 students) work more than 37 hours per week and 6 students earning up to \$9.99 per hour. More specifically, 1 youth reported working 16 to 20 hours per week while another indicated working less than 16 hours per week.

When evaluating current hourly wages, 3 student are earning less than \$5.75 per hour, 2 students are earning between \$5.75 and \$7.99, and 1 student indicated earning between \$8 and \$9.99 per hour while working. One of the respondents did not know and/or refused to answer how many hours worked per week and current hourly wage. Overall, 1 student was considered underemployed due to working less than 20 hours per week and earning less than \$8 per hour.

### ***Employment Assistance***

Of those employed, 1 participant found his/or her own job, 4 participants had help from family or friends, 1 participant had assistance from an adult service agency and 1 participant found his/or her job using some other form of assistance. One former student

indicated he/or she has talked to a work force center in the past while the majority of former students (6) indicated they have talked to family and friends about needed employment. This indicates the importance family and friends have in guiding and advising youth with disabilities even after high school.

### ***Employment and Postsecondary Education***

Three of the former students are currently employed and currently attending postsecondary education. The majority of the students are currently employed and not attending postsecondary education.

### ***Participation in High School Work Experiences by Gender and Disability***

All seven of the former students had a paid work experience while in high school and are now currently employed. The majority of the students (6) were employed while in high school for six months or more. Length of employment was relatively equal when compared by gender. More specifically, 2 males and 1 female were employed for 12 months or more, 1 male and 2 females were employed for 6 to 12 months, and 1 male was employed for less than 6 months. Of the 2 former students with a cognitive disability, 1 participant was employed for 12 months or more during high school while the other participant was employed for 6 to 12 months. In addition, of the 4 former students with learning disabilities, 2 participants indicated working for 12 months or more while in high school while 1 participant specified working 6 to 12 months and 1 other participant worked less than 6 months. Finally, the former student with autism worked during high school for 6 to 12 months.

### ***Types of High School Work Experiences***

The most common type of high school job exploration was ***paid community*** work experience (4 male students) and ***non-paid in-school*** experience (2 male and 2 female students). ***Non-paid*** job exploration ***in the community*** (1 male and 1 female student) (e.g. job shadowing, informational interviewing, site visits, mentoring, service-learning and volunteering), ***paid in-school*** work experience (1 male student), summer employment programs (1 male student), and sheltered workshops (1 female student) were comparably utilized by former students.

One former student with autism was more likely to participate in a summer employment program while one former student with a cognitive disability was more likely to participate in a sheltered workshop than other study participants. In addition, the one former student with autism was also involved in ***paid community*** work experience while students with a cognitive disability participated in ***non-paid in-school*** work experience (1 student), ***paid in-school*** work experience (1 student), and ***paid community*** work experience (1 student). Of the participants with learning disabilities, 3 former students partook in ***non-paid in-school*** work experience, 2 former students partook in ***non-paid community*** work experience, and 2 former students partook in ***paid community*** work experience.

### ***Suggestions by Former Students for Adding Activities or Classes to Enhance Employment***

Respondents were asked for suggestions for their previous high school for adding activities or classes that may be valuable in improving outcomes in leisure and social

activities, community participation, and independent living for future students. Please refer to Appendix G for those suggestions.

### **Summary Results from Student Surveys**

This study evaluated the major post high school outcomes for youth exiting high school. Results indicate that all 7 former students in the study are employed and 3 of those former students are also attending postsecondary education while working. Four of the employed youth in the study currently work more than 37 hours per week while 3 youth currently work 20 hours or less per week. Six of the 7 employed youth in the study earn less than \$9.99 per hour and 3 of employed youth in the study earn less than \$5.75 per hour. Five of the former students in the study continue to live at home with their parents and 2 former students live in another location.

### ***Possible Areas District Staff Might Consider when Reviewing these Data***

Since some students do not disclose their disability status to any one in their place of postsecondary education, receive accommodations, and/or use assistive technology, the district may wish to consider student self-advocacy and self-determination as an important part of transition instruction. Due to few youth (1 student) discussing needed employment options with the agencies that can assist them in finding jobs, the district may wish to familiarize students with these agencies as part of a class or the student's transition plan. Since all seven of the former students are not living independently from a parent or relative, the district may wish to discuss housing options and budgets as part of a class or student's transition plan. In addition, the district may wish to review the suggestions former youth have for their former place of high school education; they are rich with good ideas.



### **Summary Results from Teacher and Parent Focus Groups**

Several similarities were discovered when analyzing the improvement suggestions from the student or proxy by telephone interview surveys, and the teacher and parent focus group responses. First, several services were indicated by the teacher and parent focus groups as being beneficial to students' transition into adult life including the availability of various extracurricular activities including sports, clubs, and dances. Further, the past availability of the summer youth work program and the school-to-work program were also helpful.

Individuals from all three groups agreed that there was a need by the high school to provide class time or an individual class to allow student practice working with money. Survey responses indicated a need for greater class time on budgeting and balancing a checkbook. Teachers replied that there was a need for a model store for students to practice working at a cash register and with business equipment as well as making appropriate change for larger bills. The parent focus group desired a class teaching basic living skills such as practicing to balance a checkbook and budgeting their money during a week for rent, groceries, and bills.

Concurrently, all three groups proposed the need for a basic living skills program involving daily duties. Duties parents' specified included practice finding a job, exploring job benefits, understanding insurance, hooking-up their electricity, and changing a car's tire or oil. Teachers verbalized a need for utilizing an old church for an independent living center where special and general education students could learn basic living skills. The teachers further indicated the helpfulness of a special education classroom furnished like an apartment to teach an independent living class.

In addition, all groups verbalized a need for more availability of supervised school and community activities, entertainment, work, or volunteer places during the evening hours. Also, other group suggestions included a need for a class or class time involving job attainment skills. Students suggested focusing on interviewing and portfolios while teachers suggested focusing on interviewing, letter writing, reviewing English rules, understanding business styles, and listening to guest speakers from businesses. Parents verbalized a need to allow students to practice completing job application forms, constructing resumes, participating in mock interviews, presenting their abilities to employers, and understanding appropriate dress.

Next, student surveys and teacher responses showed likeness involving the desire for a summer school program to help credit deficient students. Students also suggested the need for night classes. Both groups further indicated an aspiration to have the greater exploration and support of student vocational interests. The teacher group wanted the availability of school funding to send a student to be assessed for vocations or independent living needs by the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation when needed. Student surveys and teachers additionally vocalized the need for transportation. Surveys advocated the need for transportation to sheltered workshops while in high school while teachers advocated transportation to workplace environments other than those in the immediate community in high school.

Finally, the student survey responses and the parent focus group suggestions showed similarities. Both groups stated a need for more information about the community organizations that are available. Teachers indicated that student's were in connection with many community assistance agencies while in high school.

Reciprocally, students and parents indicated little involvement with community agencies and students indicated they instead refer to family and friends when needing assistance. Additionally, students and focus group parents agreed there was a need for the availability of a job fair to students.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate post-high school outcomes of former graduates with disabilities in a western Wisconsin school district during April 2002. A secondary, but equally important purpose of the research was to explore teacher and parent perceptions of school transition services provided to former students with disabilities.

#### Discussion

According to the results of the present study, all of the former students are employed and live with their parents or a relative. The majority of the young adults are working full-time and earn less than \$10 per hour while nearly ½ are attending postsecondary education and working. Several similarities were also discovered when analyzing the improvement suggestions from the student, or parent proxy via telephone interviews, and the teacher and parent focus group responses.

Mithaug (1994) reminds us that “schools are not merely required to provide educational services for students with disabilities, but that they should strive to ensure that the results of services are to the students’ benefit” (cited in Grigal et al., 1997; p. 367). Sequentially, the teacher and parent focus groups indicated that the school offers a variety of student extracurricular activities and students have benefited from past offering of the summer youth work program and the school-to-work program.

Individuals from all three groups agreed that there was a need by the high school to provide class time or an individual class allowing students to practice managing

money, independent living, and job attainment skills. Further, they saw a need for more school and community entertainment during the evening hours.

Teachers and parents indicated a need for a summer school program, further exploration and support of student career interests, and transportation. In addition, the students and parents had little involvement with community agencies, students often referred to family and friends for information, although there was a request for more information about the availability of community programs. Finally, both students and parents also agreed there was a need for the availability of a job fair to students.

The results agree with the research by Kampa and Sorensen (2001), Love and Malian (1997), U.S. Dept. of Education (1993), and Sitlington et al. (1993). In these studies, the majority of the former high school students with disabilities were employed, working full-time, earning less than \$10 an hour, and continuing to live with parents or relatives. Some of these findings also indicated that the young adults frequently received job search assistance and information for family members or friends rather than a community agency.

### Conclusions

The variables used in this study were gender and disability. Data was collected, at a public rural western Wisconsin school, from former students exiting their high school program between May 2000 and May 2001. Additionally, the perceptions of teachers and parents of former students with disabilities were assessed.

Former students were chosen based on sorted special education files and surveyed by telephone to evaluate their independent living, postsecondary education, employment outcomes, and perceptions. The district's school psychologist/and director of special

education selected potential teachers while parents were selected from sorted special education files. Teachers and parents participated in focus group discussions. Surveys and focus groups were conducted during April 2002.

The results showed that the school has provided transition services that have been beneficial to students with disabilities although there continues to be a need for improvement. All former students evaluated were currently employed and continued to live with parents or relatives. Students, teachers, and parents agreed that the teaching of further basic living skills was needed.

From the data collected, the researcher concludes that future students may benefit from further independent living instruction in high school. The young adults surveyed also frequently consulted family and friends for information rather than community organizations. In relation, parents were unsure about available community organizations. Therefore, it might be beneficial for the district to coordinate regular in-services for students, parents, and teachers that allow community agency representatives to advocate their function and answer questions.

Monetary management, career exploration, and job attainment skills were concerns. Additional class curriculum practicing these skills may help future students feel more competent when seeking a job, maintaining that job, and conducting their earnings. An annual or semi-annual job fair advertising the area employment opportunities may also be beneficial. Summer school, extended transportation options, and an after school program may be explored by the district as additional funds become available.

## Recommendations

Considering the preceding results and conclusions, the following recommendations could be considered.

1. Increasing the number of subjects to allow for a more accurate analysis. The percentages and individual perceptions are less likely to be skewed by a single individual's responses.
2. Duplicating this study within the same school district along with several public rural, suburban, and urban school settings in Wisconsin to compare intra-district and inter-district results. This would allow the research to evaluate the similarities and/or differences between the percentages and individual perceptions.
3. Comparing the student transition of a larger sample based on gender, ethnicity, and disability to identify similarities and differences. The public high school in the current study encompassed a limited number of subjects.

After completing this study, a recommendation for our schools would be to continue to assess former student outcomes to improve transition programming.

Simultaneously, by collaborating with teachers, parents, and community agencies, schools can heighten transition plan effectiveness.

## REFERENCES

- Benz, M. R., Lindstrom, L., & Yovanoff, P. (2000). Improving graduation and employment outcomes of students with disabilities: Predictive factors and student perspectives. *Exceptional Children, 66*(4), 509-529.
- Bergquist, B. L. (1995). *Verifying the need to develop a transition program in the Ellsworth School District for students with disabilities and identifying skills to incorporate into a functional curriculum*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Wisconsin – Stout, Menomonie.
- Blackorby, J. & Wagner, M. (1996). Longitudinal post school outcomes of youth with disabilities: Findings from the national longitudinal transition study. *Exceptional Children, 62*(5), 399-413.
- Cayne, B. S. (Ed.). (1989). *The new lexicon Webster's dictionary of the English language* (Encyclopedic ed.). New York: Lexicon.
- Corsini, R. J. (Ed.). (1994). *The encyclopedia of psychology* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Vol. 3). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Department of Public Instruction (DPI). (2002). *Carl D. Perkins state plan goals and objectives*. Madison: Author. Retrieved June 6, 2002, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsis/let/stplangl.html>.
- Department of Public Instruction (DPI). (2001). *Updated Wisconsin school laws* (Local educational agency duties, 115-23). Madison: Author.
- Department of Public Instruction (DPI). (1999). *Overview of transition services and developing IEPs which incorporate them*. (IDEA Final Rules Edition). Madison: Author.



- Doren, B. & Benz, M. R. (1998). Employment inequality revisited: Predictors of better employment outcomes for young women with disabilities in transition. *Journal of Special Education, 31*(4), 425-442.
- Dunn County Transition Council. (1992). *Mission statement for the Dunn County Transition Council*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Dunn County Transition Council, Menomonie, WI.
- Fox, S. C. (2001). *Parents' perception and knowledge level of transition services and programming needs*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Wisconsin – Stout, Menomonie.
- Grigal, M., Test, D. W., & Wood, W. M. (1997). An evaluation of transition components of individualized education programs. *Exceptional Children, 63*(3), 357-372.
- Harrison, B. L. (1995). *A comprehensive plan for a school-to-work transition program for the School District of Phillips, Wisconsin*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Wisconsin – Stout, Menomonie.
- Hitchings, W. E., Luzzo, D. A., Ristow, R., & Horvath, M. (2001). The career development needs of college students with learning disabilities: In their own words. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 16*(1), 1-19. Retrieved June 15, 2002, from Academic Search Elite database on the World Wide Web:  
<http://www.epnet.com>.
- Johns, D. (1993). Checkers and chess: What's in a game? The transition from high school to college. *About Teaching – A Newsletter of the Center for Teaching Effectiveness, 45*, 1-2. Retrieved June 15, 2002, from the World Wide Web:  
<http://www.udel.edu/cte/aboutteach/nov93/3.html>.

- Johnson, D. R., McGrew, K. S., Bloomberg, L., Bruininks, R. H., & Hung-Chih, L. (1997). Results of a national follow-up study of young adults with severe disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 8*, 119-133.
- Kampa, M. & Sorensen, C. (2001). *Final report: Wisconsin statewide post high school outcomes survey of individuals with disabilities: A status report of students with disabilities who exited high school between December 1999 and December 2000*. Turtle Lake: Cooperative Educational Services Agency #11.
- Keys, D. J. (1998). *Collaboration efforts between special educators and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in school to work transition of students with disabilities*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Wisconsin – Stout, Menomonie.
- Lehmann, J. P. (1999). Students' participation in transition-related actions: A qualitative study. *Remedial & Special Education, 20*(3), 1-16. Retrieved June 15, 2002, from Academic Search Elite database on the World Wide Web: <http://www.epnet.com>.
- Levinson, E. M. & Ohler, D. L. (1998). Transition from high school to college for students with learning disabilities: Needs, assessment, and services. *High School Journal, 82*(1), 1-9. Retrieved June 15, 2002, from Academic Search Elite database on the World Wide Web: <http://www.epnet.com>.
- Lijewski, C. L. (1995). *Vocational evaluation: Its effectiveness and utilization in transition from school to work*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Wisconsin – Stout, Menomonie.

- Love, L. L. & Malian, I. M. (1997). What happens to students leaving secondary special education services in Arizona? *Remedial & special education, 18(5), 1-15*. Retrieved June 15, 2002, from Academic Search Elite database on the World Wide Web: <http://www.epnet.com>.
- Lovitt, T. C. (1999). Parents of youth with disabilities: Their perceptions of school programs. *Remedial & Special Education, 20(3), 1-14*. Retrieved June 15, 2002, from Academic Search Elite database on the World Wide Web: <http://www.epnet.com>.
- Malian, I. M. & Love, L. L. (1998). Leaving high school: An ongoing transition study. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 30(3), 4-10*.
- Minnesota Workforce Center (MNWFC) (2002). *Workforce Investment Act*. Author. Retrieved July 2, 2002, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.mnworkforcecenter.org/wia/>.
- North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (2002). *School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994*. Author. Retrieved July 2, 2002, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/stw/sw3swopp.htm>.
- Quadland, C. & Rybacki, S. R. (1998). *Parent's guide to transition for youth with disabilities*. Washington, D.C.: Department of Public Instruction.
- Rojewski, J. W. (1999). Occupational and educational aspirations and attainment of young adults with and without LD 2 years after high school completion. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 32(6), 533-552*.
- Sitlington, P. L., Frank, A. R., & Carson, R. (1993). Adult adjustment among high school graduates with mild disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 59(3), 221-233*.

- Stowitschek, J. J. (2001). Patterns of collaboration in secondary education for youth with special needs profiles of three schools. *Urban Education, 36(1), 1-22*. Retrieved June 15, 2002, from Academic Search Elite database on the World Wide Web: <http://www.epnet.com>.
- Thoma, C. A., Rogan, P., & Baker, S. R. (2001). Student involvement in transition planning: Unheard Voices, *Education and Training In Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, 36(1), 16-29*.
- United States Department of Education (U.S. Dept. of Education) (2002). *Lesson 1: History & impact: Twenty-five years of progress in education children with disabilities through IDEA*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved June 24, 2002, from the World Wide Web: [http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/Policy/IDEA25th/Lesson1\\_History.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/Policy/IDEA25th/Lesson1_History.html).
- United States Department of Education (U.S. Dept. of Education) (2000). *To assure a free appropriate public education of all children with disabilities: Twenty-second annual report to congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved June 24, 2002, from the World Wide Web: <http://www/ed/gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP>.
- United States Department of Education (U.S. Dept. of Education) (2000). *Twenty-second annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: Executive Summary*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved June 24, 2002, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/Products/OSEP2000AnIRpt/ExecSumm.html>.

- United States Department of Education (U.S. Dept. of Education) (1995). *To assure the free appropriate public education of all children with disabilities: Post-school results*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved June 24, 2002, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/OSEP95AnlRpt/ch3b.html>.
- United States Department of Education (U.S. Dept. of Education) (1993). *The national longitudinal study*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved June 24, 2002, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP>.
- United States Department of Justice (U.S. Dept. of Justice) (2001). *A guide to disability rights laws*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved June 24, 2002, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/cguide.htm>.
- Wagner, M. (1993). *The secondary school programs of students with disabilities. A report from the national longitudinal transition study of special education students*. Washington, D.C: Special Education Programs. Retrieved June 24, 2002, from ERIC database on the World Wide Web: <http://www.edrs.com>.
- Way, W. L. & Rossman, M. M. (1996). Family contributions to adolescent readiness for school-to-work transition. *Journal of Vocational Education Research*, 21(2), 5-36.
- Whitney-Thomas, J. & Hanley-Maxwell, C. (1996). Packing the parachute: Parents' experiences as their children prepare to leave high school. *Exceptional children*, 63(1), 75-87.

APPENDIX A  
Student or Proxy Permission Form

Dear Graduate, Parent, or Guardian,

Hello, my name is Kari Tauschek and I am currently a graduate student in the School Psychology program at UW-Stout. During the past year, I have worked with the district school psychologist and have received permission to help evaluate school programs. As part of my graduation requirement, I need to conduct a research study. **The study that I wish to conduct involves examining the outcomes of high school graduates who received special education while in school. Information obtained in this study will benefit future students by helping to improve special education curricula and programs in your district.** Questions would include information about where the graduate is working, where they live, and how they occupy their free time. In all, your participation is expected to take no more than 15 minutes. There are no anticipated social or emotional risks by completing the survey.

**All of the responses will be confidential. No names, identification numbers, school name, or location will be documented.** A research paper will be written about the results of the study, but it will not contain identifying material about you.

Any questions that you have about this study, please contact me at (715) 233-1375 or via e-mail at [tauschekk@post.uwstout.edu](mailto:tauschekk@post.uwstout.edu). You may also contact my research advisor, Dr. Ed Biggerstaff, at (715) 232-2410.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary; you may stop your participation at any time without penalty.

**You will be contacted to complete the survey by telephone. Or, if you cannot be reached by telephone an in-person interview can be arranged.**

I have read the above and as a graduate, parent, or guardian, I give my consent for my participation in this study.

---

**Signature**

---

**Date**

---

**Phone number to contact you**

---

**Best days and times to call**

Thank you for your time!

APPENDIX B  
Teacher Focus Group Permission Form

Dear Teacher,

Hello, my name is Kari Tauschek and I am currently a graduate student in the School Psychology program at UW-Stout. During the past year, I have worked with the district school psychologist and have received permission to help evaluate school programs. As part of the graduation requirement, I need to conduct a research study. **The study that I wish to conduct involves examining the outcomes of high school graduates who received special education services while in school. Information obtained in this study will benefit future students by helping to improve special education curricula and programs in your district.** With your permission, you would participate in an informal, teacher discussion group at the district high school one time only. Discussion questions would include information about agencies used by your students, and strengths and improvement needs of the current program. In all, your participation is expected to take from 30-60 minutes. There are no anticipated social risks by participating in the group.

**All of the responses will be confidential. No names, identification numbers, school name, or location will be documented.** A research paper will be written about the results of the study, but it will not contain identifying material about you.

Any questions that you have about this study, please contact me at (715) 233-1375 or via e-mail at [tauschekk@post.uwstout.edu](mailto:tauschekk@post.uwstout.edu). You may also contact my research advisor, Dr. Ed Biggerstaff, at (715) 232-2410.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary; you may stop your participation at any time without penalty.

I have read the above and as a teacher, I give my consent for my participation in this study.

---

**Signature**

---

**Date**

APPENDIX C  
Parent Focus Group Permission Form

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Hello, my name is Kari Tauschek and I am currently a graduate student in the School Psychology program at UW-Stout. During the past year, I have worked with the district school psychologist and have received permission to help evaluate school programs. As part of the graduation requirement, I need to conduct a research study. **The study that I wish to conduct involves examining the outcomes of high school graduates who received special education services while in school. Information obtained in this study will benefit future students by helping to improve special education curricula and programs in your district.** With your permission, you would participate in an informal, parent discussion group at the community center one time only. Discussion questions would include information about agencies used by your son/or daughter, and strengths and improvement needs of the current program. In all, your participation is expected to take from 30-60 minutes. There are no anticipated social risks by participating in the group.

**All of the responses will be confidential. No names, identification numbers, school name, or location will be documented.** A research paper will be written about the results of the study, but it will not contain identifying material about you.

Any questions that you have about this study, please contact me at (715) 233-1375 or via e-mail at [tauschekk@post.uwstout.edu](mailto:tauschekk@post.uwstout.edu). You may also contact my research advisor, Dr. Ed Biggerstaff, at (715) 232-2410.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary; you may stop your participation at any time without penalty.

I have read the above and as a parent or guardian, I give my consent for my participation in this study.

---

**Signature**

---

**Date**

Thank you for your time!



APPENDIX D  
Student File Evaluation and Survey

WISCONSIN POSTSECONDARY OUTCOMES STUDY FOR  
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES  
April 2002

**I. Demographic and Student Data**

Name of person completing this form \_\_\_\_\_

Title of person completing this form \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

**The following student information is based on the December 1, 2000  
Federal Data Collection**

Student's Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_

School District of Residence \_\_\_\_\_

Building \_\_\_\_\_ LEA Code \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street      Apt. #      City      State      Zip Code

Student's Phone Number  
 (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Area Code      Number      Extension

**Date of Birth** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
month      day      year

**Gender**

\_\_\_\_\_ Male  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Female

**Ethnic Background**

\_\_\_\_\_ Asian  
 \_\_\_\_\_ African American/Black  
 \_\_\_\_\_ American Indian  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic  
 \_\_\_\_\_ White

**Exit status** of the student

- Regular high school diploma
- Certification of completion/differentiated certificate
- Terminated at maximum age of eligibility
- Diploma from an Alternative School
- High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED)
- Drop out

**Date of Exit** (mm/dd/yy) \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Disability** (*select only one*)

- Autism
- Cognitive Disability
- Deaf/Blind
- Emotional/Behavioral Disability
- General Education student**
- Hearing Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech and Language
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment

**Secondary Disability/Disabilities** (*select as many as apply*)

- Autism
- Cognitive Disability
- Deaf/Blind
- Emotional/Behavioral Disability
- Hearing Impairment
- None/NA**
- Other Health Impairment
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech and Language
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment



## II. IEP REVIEW

***DISTRICT RESPONDENT: PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING REQUESTED INFORMATION USING THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP) DEVELOPED FOR THE STUDENT'S SENIOR OR LAST YEAR OF SCHOOL.***

1. If this student is identified as having a **Cognitive Disability** (CD), please indicate if the disability is:
  - Mild/Moderate
  - Severe/Profound
  - Not Applicable
  
2. Did the student **attend** one or more IEP meetings during their **senior** year of school?
  - yes
  - no
  
3. If no, how were the student's **interests and preferences** indicated?
  - Interests and preferences are listed/described in the IEP
  - Indicated in the IEP that they were discussed prior to the meeting but not listed
  - Not Applicable
  
4. Is a **course of study** statement was found on the student's IEP?
  - yes
  - no
  
5. A statement of **needed transition services** included one or more of the items in Q #6:
  - yes
  - no
  
6. Check the following **content items** included in the IEP that was developed for the student's senior year:
  - None found
  - Self-determination/Self-advocacy
  - Academic and life-long learning
  - Daily Living
  - Health and physical care
  - Leisure/Social
  - Mobility
  - Money management
  - Employment/work study:
    - paid     unpaid
    - in-school     in the community

7. Did the IEP developed for the student's senior year indicate a need for involvement from any **outside agency**?

- Yes  
 Outside agency not necessary

8. If yes, did the other **agency attend** the IEP meeting?

- yes  
 no

9. Does the IEP contain a **statement of interagency responsibilities** or any needed linkages?

- yes  
 no

---

Please add **additional comments** regarding the student's IEP or transition needs, if desired:

### III. Student Interview

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm calling from the \_\_\_\_\_ School District. We are asking questions of high school graduates who received special education while they were in school. The answers will be used to help your school districts better plan classes and activities for students with disabilities. May I please speak with \_\_\_\_\_, or someone who can proxy for him/her? The survey will only take a short time and the responses are completely confidential.

**Before we begin, I would like to assure you that this interview is completely voluntary, strictly confidential, and that we really appreciate your help. You may contact Dr. Ed Biggerstaff, UW-Stout Research Advisor, at 715-232-2410 or at biggerstaffe@uwstout.edu if you have any questions about this study.**

PreQ1: Person responding to the questions is:

- Former student .....1
- Parent .....2 **Go to PreQ2**
- Guardian.....3 **Go to PreQ2**
- Other .....4 **Go to PreQ2**

PreQ2: Why is the former student unable to respond to this survey himself or herself?

- Is unable to communicate responses.....1
- Is unable to be located.....2
- Other .....3
- Not Sure/Refused.....4
- Not Applicable .....5

### POSTSECONDARY LIVING

#### Independent Living

Q1. Where are you **currently living**?

- Parent's home .....1
- Rental apartment/own home .....2
- Dormitory – college setting .....3
- Residential, treatment, detention .....4  
or correctional facility or hospital
- Group home .....5
- Foster home.....6
- Military housing .....7
- Other .....8
- Not Sure/ Refused.....9

Q2. With **whom** do you live?

Alone.....	1
With spouse or roommate(s).....	2
With parent.....	3
With another family member or relative.....	4
With other residents/patients.....	5
Other .....	6
Not Sure/ Refused.....	7

Q3. How **long** have you lived in this location?

Is unable to communicate responses.....	1
Is unable to be located.....	2
Other .....	3
Not Sure/Refused.....	4

### Community Participation/Recreation

Q4. Do you get together **socially** with friends or family members, other than those you live with?

Yes .....	1
No.....	2
Not Sure/ Refused.....	3

Q5. Do you have a **driver's license**?

Yes, it is a valid license.....	1
Yes, but it is a suspended license.....	2
No, but I plan to pursue obtaining a driving license .....	3
No, and I do not intend to pursue obtaining a driving license.....	4
Medically Restricted.....	5
Not Sure/ Refused.....	6

Q6. Have you participated in or attended the following **activities** in the past 6 months?

Yes .....	1
No.....	2

Which activities?	Yes
Q6a Leisure Time Activities (i.e. Movies, Concerts, Sporting Events)	1
Q6b Community Service Activities (i.e. Lions Club, 4-H, volunteering, helping with youth groups)	1

Q6c Religious Activities (i.e. Church Services/Events)	1
--	---

Q6d Voting	1
------------	---

Q7. Is **getting a ride** a barrier to participating in community activities?

Yes .....1  
 No.....2  
 Not Sure/ Refused.....3

### **Adult and Daily Living**

Q8. Do you use the support of a one-on-one **personal care assistant** (e.g. aide, service coordinator or manager) to help you participate in young adult life settings (e.g. independent living, leisure activities, grocery shopping)?.....

Yes .....1  
 No.....2  
 Not Sure/ Refused.....3

Q9. Are you currently working with a **counselor or social worker** to maintain your independent living arrangement?

Yes .....1  
 No.....2  
 Not Sure/ Refused.....8

Q10. Are you currently receiving services from an **adult agency** provided by the county, city or community (e.g. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation [DVR], Human Services, Center for Independent Living)?

Yes .....1  
 No.....2 **GOTO Q12**  
 Not Sure/ Refused.....8 **GOTO Q12**

Q11. Which services are you receiving?

---

Q12. What **suggestions** would you have for your previous high school for adding activities or classes to improve participation of students in leisure, community participation, or independent living after leaving high school?

\*\*\*\*\*



**POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION/TRAINING**

Q13. Have you participated in the following **educational or training** since leaving high school?

Still pursuing degree .....1

Completed program/degree.....2

<i>Indicate up to 3 of the following that apply:</i>	<b>Yes</b>
Q13a 2-year community college <b>related</b> to High School vocational education program	1
Q13b 2-year community college <b>unrelated</b> to High School vocational education program	1
Q13c 4-year community college <b>related</b> to High School vocational education program	1
Q13d 4-year community college <b>unrelated</b> to High School vocational education program	1
Q13e Vocational or technical program	1
Q13f Adult education classes	1
Q13g Formal apprenticeship	1
Q13h Job training program	1
Q13i. Military	1
Q13j. Never attended educational/training program	1

Q14. What is your **current educational or vocational training status**?

- Still pursuing degree .....1
- Completed program/degree.....2
- Attended but discontinued the program.....3
- Other .....4 **GOTO Q18**
- Not Sure/ Refused.....5 **GOTO Q18**

Q15. To whom have you **first identified yourself** as having a disability at your place of post-high school training?

- Counselor/Advisor .....1
- Teacher.....2
- Disability specialist.....3
- No one.....4
- Not Sure/ Refused.....5
- Not Applicable .....6

Q16a. Are you currently using **accommodations or assistive technology** at your place of post-high school training (i.e. computers, spelling, magnifier, calculator, voice box, etc.)?

- Yes .....1
- No.....2 **GOTO Q17**
- Not Sure/ Refused.....3 **GOTO Q17**

Q16b. What types of accommodations or assistive technology are you using?

---

Q17. Was it your intention in high school to **begin post-secondary training** rather than begin employment following graduation?

- Yes .....1
- No.....2
- Not Sure/ Refused.....3

Q18. What suggestions would you have for your previous high school for adding activities or classes to enhance the participation of students in post-high school education?

\*\*\*\*\*

**EMPLOYMENT**

Q19. Do you currently do any work for which you are **paid** (do you currently have a job)?

- Yes .....1  
 No.....2 **GOTO 28**  
 Not Sure/ Refused.....3 **GOTO 28**

Q20. Where are you working (if respondent has more than one job, answer for the position they attend most)?

- In the community .....1  
 Family-owned business.....2  
 Sheltered work-shop .....3  
 Your own business.....4  
 Other .....5  
 Not Sure/ Refused.....6  
 Not Applicable .....7

Q21. What **type of work** are you primarily involved in/what do you do?

- Agriculture .....1  
 Construction .....2  
 Factory .....3  
 Retail/Sales .....4  
 Clerical/Office.....5  
 Maintenance/Repairer .....6  
 Child Care/Cleaning.....7  
 Management/Supervisory .....8  
 Logging/Fishing/Trapping .....9  
 Computer/Office Equipment.....10  
 Transportation .....11  
 Protective Services.....12  
 Nursing/Medical/Health Care .....13  
 Engineering/Mathematics .....14  
 Education .....15  
 Other .....16  
 Not Applicable .....17

Q22. How **long** have you been employed at this job?

- Less than one month .....1  
 1 – 3 months.....2  
 3 – 6 months.....3  
 6 – 12 months.....4  
 More than one year .....5  
 Not Sure/ Refused.....6  
 Not Applicable .....7

Q23. How many **hours** do you work per week?

More than 37 hours (full time).....	1
21 – 37 hours per week .....	2
16 – 20 hours per week .....	3
Less than 16 hours per week.....	4
Other .....	5
Not Sure/ Refused.....	7
Not Applicable .....	8

Q24. What is your current **hourly wage**?

Less than \$5.75 .....	1
\$5.75 to \$7.99 .....	2
\$8.00 to \$9.99 .....	3
\$10.00 to \$15.00 .....	4
Above \$15.00.....	5
Not Sure/ Refused.....	6
Not Applicable .....	7

Q25. Have you received a **raise** in pay since beginning your present job?

Yes .....	1
No.....	2
Not Sure/ Refused.....	3

Q26. Do you receive **benefits** from your employer (e.g. sick leave, paid vacation, health insurance, retirement)?

Yes .....	1
No.....	2
Not Sure/ Refused.....	3

Q27 Who primarily **helped you** find your job?

I found it on my own.....	1
Family .....	2
Friend .....	3
Adult services provider (e.g. DVR, human services, job service) .....	4
School personnel.....	5
Other .....	6
Not Sure/ Refused.....	7
Not Applicable .....	8

Q28. To whom have you primarily **talked to** about job opportunities since leaving high school?

Work force center (e.g. job service, economic development, job center) .....	1
WIA (Workforce Investment Act) – formerly JTPA .....	2
Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.....	3
Human Services .....	4
Past school personnel.....	5
Family/Friends .....	6
Other .....	7
Not Sure/ Refused.....	8

<<<IF Q19 = 1 GOTO Q32>>>

Q29. What is the **primary reason** you are not working?

Unable to find work .....	1
Unable to find transportation to work.....	2
Receiving SSI benefits.....	3
Homemaker.....	4
Full-time student .....	5
In a correctional, detention, or residential facility .....	6
Laid Off.....	7
Recently Dismissed.....	8
Other .....	9
Not Sure/ Refused.....	10
Not Applicable .....	11

Q30. Who would you **contact** first if you wanted assistance with finding a job?

Work force center (e.g. job service, economic development, job center) .....	1
WIA (Workforce Investment Act) – formerly JTPA .....	2
Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)	3
Human Services .....	4
Past school personnel.....	5
Family/Friends .....	6
Other .....	7
Not Sure/ Refused.....	8

Q31. Was it your intention in high school to **begin employment** rather than post-high school training following graduation?

- Yes .....1
- No.....2
- Not Sure/ Refused.....3

Q32. What suggestions would you have for your previous high school for adding activities or classes to enhance the participation of students in post-high school employment?

\*\*\*\*\*

**HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCES**

Q33. During your last two years of high school, did you participate in any of the following specially designed vocational classes?

- Yes .....1
- No.....2

	<i>Indicate up to 3 of the following:</i>	<b>Yes</b>
Q33a	Job exploration in school (e.g. job shadow, non-paid job)	1
Q33b	Job exploration in the community (e.g. job shadowing, informational interviewing, site visits, mentoring, service learning, volunteer)	1
Q33c	Paid in-school work experience	1
Q33d	Paid community work experience	1
Q33e	JTPA/WIA Summer Youth	1

Q33f Sheltered-workshop/work activity center	1
--	---

Q34. Did you have a **paid job** during your last two years of school?

- Yes .....1  
 No.....2 **GOTO Q36a**  
 Not Sure/ Refused.....3 **GOTO Q36a**

Q35. How many **months** were you **employed**?

- Less than 6 months.....1  
 6 - 12 months .....2  
 More than 12 months .....3  
 Not Sure/ Refused.....4

Q36. During your last two years of high school, did you participate in any of the following classes?

- Yes .....1  
 No.....2

	<i>Indicate up to 3 of the following:</i>	<b>Yes</b>
Q36a	Agriculture education	1
Q36b	Business, office and marketing education	1
Q36c	Health occupations education	1
Q36d	Home economics occupations	1
Q36e	Graphic arts education	1
Q36f	Trade and Industry (i.e. woodworking, metals, auto mechanics, electronics)	1
Q36g	School-to-work	1
Q36	None	1

**Thank you for participating in this survey. Your input is very valuable, and very greatly appreciated. Please be reminded that this information will be kept confidential, and that no individual student or school data will be disclosed. You may contact Dr. Ed Biggerstaff, UW-Stout Research Advisor, at 715-232-2410 or at [biggerstaffe@uwstout.edu](mailto:biggerstaffe@uwstout.edu) if you have any questions about this study.**



## APPENDIX E

### Teacher Focus Group Outline

Introduction: Thank you for volunteering to participate today. Before we get started I would like to introduce myself and have others within the group introduce themselves so that we all know each other better (Introductions). The reason you are gathered here today is to help the \_\_\_\_\_ High School improve their Individual Education Plan transition services for special education students.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the post high school outcomes of individuals with disabilities from the \_\_\_\_\_ School District. Data will be collected during Spring 2002, by administering the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) approved, postsecondary transition survey to a group of students with disabilities who exited \_\_\_\_\_ High School May 2000-2001. The survey evaluates several facets of student independent living, postsecondary education, and current employment.

In addition to the survey data gathered, two separate focus groups will be convened. One focus group will consist of three parents, of students with disabilities who have exited \_\_\_\_\_ High School May 1999-2001. The other focus group will consist of three high school teachers, of students with disabilities who have exited \_\_\_\_\_ High School May 2000-2001. The individuals from each focus group will give their opinions to four questions about services that have or have not been provided for their son, daughter, or student. The overall responses will be recorded and supplement the information gathered by the surveys.

The information that is found in this study will be used to assess the strengths and weaknesses of \_\_\_\_\_ instructional programs, set standards for the performance of postsecondary students, and help to improve the transition program planning. This will result in greater success for students as they move from high school to adult life.

Your answers, specific to the individual, will not be shared with anyone. No names or addresses will be reported. Common and individual responses will be presented in a report to aid the \_\_\_\_\_ schools in making programs better. Your responses are voluntary and you can withdraw from the study or retract responses any time prior to the submission of the final report. There are no anticipated social risks by participating in the group. Individuals wishing to speak to a school psychologist or counselor after the completion of the group may do so upon request. Responses will be audio recorded for transcription at a later time. The focus group will convene for approximately 30 to 60 minutes. (Consent forms signed at this time).

#### Definition of Transition Services:

- A coordinated set of activities designed for a student
- Within an out-come oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities
- Includes instruction in any or all of the following:
  - Post-secondary education
  - Vocational training

- Integrated employment and/or supported employment objectives
  - Continuing and adult education
  - Independent living
  - Adult services/post school living objectives
  - Community participation/experiences
  - Functional vocational evaluation
  - Daily living skills
- 1) What are some transition services or programs that have been beneficial to your students in their movement from high school to adult life?
  - 2) What suggestions would you have for your student's previous high school for adding activities or classes to improve participation of students in the following activities after leaving high school:
    - a) Leisure and social activities
    - b) Community participation
    - c) Independent living
    - d) Post-high school employment
  - 3) What are some other transition services that were not offered by your student's high school that you would like to see available in the future?
  - 4) What community transition agencies did your student use during and after high school?

## APPENDIX F Parent Focus Group Outline

Introduction: Thank you for volunteering to participate today. Before we get started I would like to introduce myself and have others within the group introduce themselves so that we all know each other better (Introductions). The reason you are gathered here today is to help the \_\_\_\_\_ High School improve their Individual Education Plan transition services for special education students.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the post high school outcomes of individuals with disabilities from the \_\_\_\_\_ School District. Data will be collected during Spring 2002, by administering the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) approved, postsecondary transition survey to a group of students with disabilities who exited \_\_\_\_\_ High School May 2000-2001. The survey evaluates several facets of student independent living, postsecondary education, and current employment.

In addition to the survey data gathered, two separate focus groups will be convened. One focus group will consist of three parents, of students with disabilities who have exited \_\_\_\_\_ High School May 1999-2001. The other focus group will consist of three high school teachers, of students with disabilities who have exited \_\_\_\_\_ High School May 2000-2001. The individuals from each focus group will give their opinions to four questions about services that have or have not been provided for their son, daughter, or student. The overall responses will be recorded and supplement the information gathered by the surveys.

The information that is found in this study will be used to assess the strengths and weaknesses of \_\_\_\_\_ instructional programs, set standards for the performance of postsecondary students, and help to improve the transition program planning. This will result in greater success for students as they move from high school to adult life.

Your answers, specific to the individual, will not be shared with anyone. No names or addresses will be reported. Common and individual responses will be presented in a report to aid the \_\_\_\_\_ schools in making programs better. Your responses are voluntary and you can withdraw from the study or retract responses any time prior to the submission of the final report. There are no anticipated social risks by participating in the group. Individuals wishing to speak to a school psychologist or counselor after the completion of the group may do so upon request. Responses will be audio recorded for transcription at a later time. The focus group will convene for approximately 30 to 60 minutes. (Consent forms signed at this time).

### Definition of Transition Services:

- A coordinated set of activities designed for a student
- Within an out-come oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities
- Includes instruction in any or all of the following:
  - Post-secondary education
  - Vocational training

- Integrated employment and/or supported employment objectives
  - Continuing and adult education
  - Independent living
  - Adult services/post school living objectives
  - Community participation/experiences
  - Functional vocational evaluation
  - Daily living skills
- 5) What are some transition services or programs that have been beneficial to your son/or daughter in their movement from high school to adult life?
- 6) What suggestions would you have for your son's/or daughter's previous high school for adding activities or classes to improve participation of students in the following activities after leaving high school:
- a) Leisure and social activities
  - b) Community participation
  - c) Independent living
  - d) Post-high school employment
- 7) What are some other transition services that were not offered by your son's/or daughter's high school that you would like to see available in the future?
- 8) What community transition agencies did your son/or daughter use during and after high school?

APPENDIX G  
Student or Proxy Perceptions

**Respondents' suggestions for independent living improvement:**

- More class time on budgeting and balancing a check book
- More supervised activities or entertainment evenings
- Basic living skills program available involving daily duties

**Respondents' suggestions for enhancing the participation of students in postsecondary education:**

- Better math program that is broader and involves more one-on-one attention
- Night and summer school classes
- Greater exploration and support of student vocational interests
- Unit in business class on the pay difference by attending postsecondary education
- Transportation to sheltered workshops while in high school

**Respondents' suggestions for adding activities or classes to enhance employment:**

- Class involving interviewing and portfolios
- Keep independent living resource in community
- More information about community organizations available
- Job fair availability

APPENDIX H  
Teacher Perceptions

- 1) What are some transition services or programs that have been beneficial to your students in their movement from high school to adult life?
  - A. Job shadowing and interviewing someone on the job
  - B. Business class about job awareness of job selection and the cost of apartments
  - C. Advanced business class on portfolio writing
  - D. Special education benchmarks for different grades:
    - a. Seniors: make sure they had services set up when graduate (e.g. scholarships, child care, jobs, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Human/Social Services, Independent Living)
    - b. Junior: Interest inventories
    - c. Sophomores: Writing (e.g. thank you letters)
    - d. Freshman: Social skills
  - E. In-school driver's education
  - F. In past years, paraprofessional utilized to help students with special needs in driver's education
  - G. In past years, had an exiting English class involving interviewing, letter writing, reviewing basic English rules, understanding business styles, and listening to guest speakers from businesses
  - H. In past, summer youth program through Private Industry Council for summer work experience
  - I. Inclusion of students with special needs in general education classroom as much as possible to get students where they need to be
  - J. In past years, workplace readiness class and co-op program for student work experience
  - K. In past, school-to- work experience where student gets high school credits for working
  - L. Community work experience
  - M. School fieldtrips
  - N. Sports, drama, clubs, and dances available for all students
  - O. Community activities available such as 4-H, Future Farmer of America (FFA), and church groups
  - P. Less groups and cliques separating special education and general education students
  - Q. Technical education and foods classes
  
- 2) What suggestions would you have for your student's previous high school for adding activities or classes to improve participation of students in the following activities after leaving high school:
  - A. Leisure and social activities
    - a. More sheltered workshops for students who are lower functioning

- B. Community participation
    - a. Social workers in the community to help students with special needs receive needed support after they have graduated from high school
    - b. More community places for students to meet that provide activities, entertainment, work, or volunteer opportunities
  
  - C. Independent living
    - a. Paraprofessional to help students with special needs in driver's education
    - b. Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and other agencies communicate with the students at an earlier age on a monthly or bimonthly basis rather than once a year at the Individual Education Plan meeting to help develop connections with the student so already know about the student and can help foresee what the student needs to graduate
    - c. Health class available
    - d. More students involved in agriculture classes or new horticulture club
    - e. Funds available to buy old church and turn it into an independent living center where special education and general education students learn the basic skills to live out on their own
    - f. Special education classroom furnished like an apartment to teach an independent living class
  
  - D. Post-high school employment
    - a. Transportation by school to workplace environments other than those in immediate community while in high school
    - b. More local businesses for work experience in community
    - c. Having an exiting English class involving interviewing, letter writing, reviewing basic English rules, business styles, and listening to guest speakers from businesses
    - d. Workplace readiness class
    - e. Co-op program for work experience after workplace readiness class
    - f. Summer youth program for through Private Industry Council (PIC) for summer work experience
    - g. School-to-work program where student gets high school credits for working
- 3) What are some other transition services that were not offered by your student's high school that you would like to see available in the future?
- A. More collaboration by teachers as to what curriculum they would like to see being taught in a workplace readiness class
  - B. Alternatively, a combined class of a quarter of workplace readiness and a quarter of independent living skills would be beneficial for students
  - C. A model store for students to practice working at a cash register and business equipment, and making appropriate change from larger bills

- D. Greater involvement of students in in-school jobs such as foodservice and cleaning
  - E. Summer school for students that are credit deficient
  - F. School money available when needed to send a student for vocation assessment or independent living needs by the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
  - G. Separate driver's education class for special education students with material at a lower reading level
- 4) What community transition agencies were used by your student during and after high school?
- A. Public Health Department
  - B. Department of Vocation Rehabilitation (depending on county funding that year)
  - C. Children's Services Society employee meets with students in foster care or adjudicated delinquents on a weekly or monthly basis to help with independent living skills after high school
  - D. Social Services (sometimes helpful)
  - E. Integrated Services Program (ISP) that bring in services to help families
  - F. Adult Services to help with independent living



APPENDIX I  
Parent Perceptions

- 1) What are some transition services or programs that have been beneficial to your son/or daughter in their movement from high school to adult life?
  - A. Summer youth work program
  - B. School-to-work program
  - C. General education teacher putting in extra effort to help student with difficult subject areas
  - D. Resource room reading help on tests
  - E. Many extracurricular activities including sports, drama, and Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA)
  
- 2) What suggestions would you have for your son's/or daughter's previous high school for adding activities or classes to improve participation of students in the following activities after leaving high school:
  - A. Leisure and social activities
    - a. Class seminars explaining to students about disabilities of peers at an early age
    - b. Inclusion of students with disabilities as much as possible
  
  - B. Community participation
    - a. Less to do in the community and need to find activities for students
    - b. Students job shadowing and getting work experience during school
  
  - C. Independent living
    - a. Class for completing job application forms, resumes, and mock interviews
    - b. Class going through basic living skills that practices finding a job, exploring the job benefits, insurance, budgeting their money that week for rent, groceries, and bills, balancing a checkbook, hooking up their electricity, and changing a car's tire or oil.
  
  - D. Post-high school employment
    - a. Exploration of job benefits
    - b. Analyze and be advocates for their strengths that will make them successful in a particular job and what jobs to look for based on their strengths
    - c. Job fair availability
    - d. Appropriate dress and presentation of self when turning in application, interviewing, and when in court
    - e. Business people come into the school to talk about what they look for in employees

- 3) What are some other transition services that were not offered by your son's/or daughter's high school that you would like to see available in the future?
  - A. Learning more about the community transition agencies that are available and the criteria for eligibility
  - B. Put more emphasis on having the team make the decision for extra subject area assistance rather than one team member's test scores of the student
  - C. Not denying students from participating in extracurricular activities due to low grades
  - D. More information to teachers to learn and understand the disabilities of their students
  
- 4) What community transition agencies were used by your son/or daughter during and after high school?
  - A. Technical and community college individual student tutoring at the writing center