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**TRANSITION PLANNING
AND POST-SECONDARY ACHIEVEMENT**

**A Study Presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Department of Occupational
and Technical Studies
Old Dominion University**

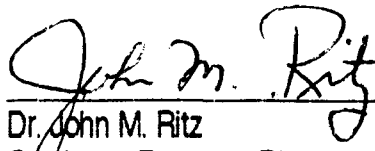
**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Education**

**by
Antonia L. Thompson
August 1995**

SIGNATURE PAGE

This research paper was presented by Antonia L. Thompson under the direction of Doctor John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Education. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment for the requirements for the Masters of Science in Education degree.

Approved by:



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8-7-95
Date

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The passage of the Individual's with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1990 formally merged transition into Special Education. IDEA amended existing Federal Special Education Laws and made mandatory transition services and planning for all youth with disabilities by age 16 and younger when appropriate (P.L. 101- 476).

The idea that special education students need special transition planning is not new. Wehman, Kregel and Barcus (1985) held the view of transition as a systematic process that ultimately led to employment. Today, transition and transition planning are much more. Transition services/planning today are, by definition, a coordinated set of activities for a student designed as an outcome oriented process which promotes movement from school to post-school activities (Dragan, 1994, p. 1). Local Education Agencies have been given the responsibility of helping the disabled successfully transition from high school to adult life by providing additional support and services but not just in respect to jobs.

The four major goals of transition planning are employment, independent living, social/personal relations and self advocacy. Many of our youth with disabilities have not, however, been successful in understanding or achieving those goals. Research studies have shown that youth with disabilities suffer from economic, educational and social adjustment problems during their post-secondary careers far more than their non-disabled peers, despite services being in place (Fairweather and Shaver, 1990, p. 337). Why? What deleterious factors prevent this group from achieving their expected success? Not all

are unsuccessful. Some students experience a very successful post-secondary transition and achieve their desired goals. Why? What is the link between secondary Special Education programming, specifically transition planning and student post-secondary achievement? Is system failure to blame or is student failure? This research study will seek the answers to these questions.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to determine the relationship between transition planning and the achieved post-secondary outcomes of mildly disabled students in Suffolk City Public Schools.

Research Goals

To solve this problem, the following questions related to the study were selected:

1. What are the components of the Individualized Transition Plan?
2. What pre-exit programs, services and activities are available to the mildly disabled?
3. What are the post-secondary services, programs and activities of the mildly disabled?
4. What influences post-secondary participation and outcomes?

Background and Significance

The long-term follow-up needs of the severely disabled have been well documented, while the post-secondary needs of the mildly handicapped population have not. Halpern (1987) noted in his writings the scarcity of research pertaining to the specific transition needs and outcomes of the mildly handicapped population. It is commonly assumed that the mildly handicapped have an easier time in their transition from school to their post-secondary life

(Neubert, Tilson and Ianacone, 1989, p. 494). Sufficient research is lacking to either support or negate this theory.

The lack of research regarding the types, quality and degree of transition planning available is precisely why there is such a need for investigation in this area. Existing follow-up studies have primarily focused on "where" (employment, school, jail, etc.) a specific group is in regard to their post-secondary careers but not on how they got there. The relationship between transition planning and achieved outcomes is an area of concern that warrants additional study.

Limitations

Limitations recognized in regard to this study were:

1. The population was limited to the students from Suffolk City Public Schools in the years 1989-1993.
2. Participation was limited to the mildly disabled.
3. The types of services received by students varied.

Assumptions

This study assumes the following factors to be true:

1. In accordance to federal guidelines all participants had a working transition plan as part of their I.E.P.
2. All participants had received a complete vocational assessment through Suffolk City Public Schools.
3. All participants completed at least two years of their high school education.
4. The term mildly disabled refers to a disabled student with a full scale I.Q. of 60 and above as measured on the WISC-R.
5. The study participants did not receive equal amounts or types of transition services.

Procedures

This study will be a descriptive study conducted in survey form. The sample population will consist of 60 former special education students (a combination of the city's two high schools) who have been exited for at least one year and who have completed at least two years of their high school education. Each participant will meet the eligibility criteria for mildly disabled.

Survey data will be collected via written questionnaire and if necessary through a follow-up telephone interview with the participant. The survey will include information concerning demographics, gender, specific disability, type of exit from high school, age and present occupation or placement. Items concerning transition planning while in school will include employment and vocational classes taken, information concerning instruction in life management skills and questions in regard to self-advocacy. Post-secondary settings to be examined will include parent and community involvement with the exiter, placement in competitive employment and opportunities for "adult" roles. The survey will conclude with student recommendations on transition needs for the mildly disabled student.

Definition of Terms

The following terms have these meanings.

1. IDEA- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act also known as P.L. 101-476.
2. I.E.P. - Individualized Educational Program.
3. LEA- Local Education Agency.
4. Mildly Disabled - For the purposes of this study it refers to a disabled student with a full scale I.Q. of 60 and above as measured on the WISC-R.

5. Transition Plan- A coordinated set of activities for a student designed within an outcome -oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-secondary activities.
6. WISC-R - The Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children, Revised.

Summary and Overview

The successful transition of students from high school into fully functional citizens of our society is the goal of education. Transition planning establishes a framework to assist the mildly disabled student in reaching that goal. However, research implies that the quality of life outcome of many mildly disabled youths are not being achieved as expected. This area of concern was the study's purpose to determine the relationship between transitional planning and achieved outcome.

To research this problem, survey methodology will be used. A researcher made questionnaire and follow-up telephone interview will function as data collecting instruments. Limitations to the study as well as assumptions were identified and reported. Terms specific to this study were identified, defined and recorded.

The Review of Literature, to follow, will lend further credence to this study and its importance to Special Education issues and research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter II presents literature concerning transition and transition services and relates these concepts to students post-secondary achievements. This chapter focuses on the specific considerations for the development of the Individualized Educational Plan, the pre-exit curriculum that is available to the secondary mildly disabled and the influences on post secondary achievements and outcomes.

Considerations for the Development of the I.T.P.

Transition is the passing or moving from one place or condition to another. For students with mild disabilities, successful transition from high school to the "real world" cannot be assumed or taken for granted. For them, this movement requires specific comprehensive, coordinated programming. The transition plan is that program. Established as a result of IDEA, the goal of transition planning and transition services is to prepare students to be fully participating members of their communities (Dragan, 1994, p. 1).

To meet federal requirements, the expected plan must be developed as a coordinated effort of everyone involved: parents, student, teachers and other service providers. It is based on student needs, preferences and interests. The transition plan should, therefore reflect expected instruction, community experiences, employment and functional living skills to be a part of the transition services and the agency responsible for providing them.

Two models were found to be used as the primary guides in developing transition programs. They were the OSERS (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services) Model and the Halpern Revised Model (Wehman,

1985, p. 27). The OSERS model was an earlier employment based model. The Halpern was a revised model based on providing for quality of life.

The services which are the foundation of transition according to the OSERS model includes several key programming components or bridges considered critical characteristics for an appropriate program. They are (a) functional curriculum, (b) integrated schools, and (c) community-based service delivery (Wehman, 1985, p. 27). Functional curriculum reflects skills required in actual local employment situations. Curriculum content is generalizable to potential jobs and facilitates movement into the labor force. Integrated school services emphasizes the need for training and working in the community rather than in sheltered facilities. The intent is to not only expose the mildly disabled to community and work expectations but also to expose future coworkers to their potential as reliable employees. Community-based instruction allows students an opportunity to practice and gain experience in real job situations (Wehman, 1985, p. 28).

According to Halpern (1985), there are at least two other dimensions of adult adjustments that are of equal importance to transition and should be considered in transition planning. These dimensions include the quality of a person's residential environment and the adequacy of his or her social and interpersonal network. This model, suggested by Halpern, is composed of three pillars representing employment, residential environment and social and interpersonal networks. It focuses not on employment as success but instead on community adjustment. Success in one area does not imply success in another as each pillar must carry its own weight for true successful transition, lest the entire structure collapses (Halpern, 1985, p. 481).

To make the move from school to the "real world" successful, Martin,

Marshall and Maxson (1993) believe the I.T.P. should contain components of self-determination skill training. Successful people assess their needs, determine goals, plan actions, act, monitor their performance and make any necessary adjustments (Milthaug, Martin and Agran, 1987; Martin, Marshall and Maxson, 1993, p. 53). The transition planning process would provide opportunities for student self-management and self-advocacy in pursuit of transition program goals.

The I.E.P. in conjunction with the I.T.P. integrates school, community, and interagency services to establish the coordinated set of activities that will ensure students get the help they need to pursue their goals. Transition planning is only a part of the overall process. The achievement of satisfactory transition outcomes depends on the quality and appropriateness of both the high school curriculum and the transition services provided (Benz, 1987, p.507).

Pre-exit Programs and Services

Transition literature has for the last few years focused on the availability of vocational programs and transition-oriented services for the mildly disabled. The preparation of students with special needs for transition is now a priority for educators. A critical part of transition planning involves vocational preparation and training (Bisconer, 1993, p. 21). Fairweather (1989) found in his research that most LEA's offer some type of these services either traditional or non-traditional to their special needs population. The recent passing of legislation supporting transition programming will mean even more of an increase in transition-related programs. It will be the schools responsibility to provide and implement the transition-services of the future, just as they must do now. The goal of these programs is to assist the mildly disabled in becoming more successful in work, community and residential environments (Halpern, 1985;

Repetto, 1993, p. 29)

In Fairweather's study conducted in 1989, training and educational opportunities for the mildly disabled were divided into four traditional programs: (a) vocational education, (b) counseling, (c) occupational and physical training and (d) vocational rehabilitation agency assignment of a staff member to the LEA. Available transitional services were also divided into two non-traditional programs: (a) the availability of an LEA staff member whose primary function was to help students find jobs and (b) the existence of a transition-oriented program for special education students. These divisions were selected because each had been linked previously to successful transition.

More recently, seven categorized pre-exit services available to the mildly disabled have emerged from the development of a database on transition-related programs in the state of Florida (Repetto, 1993, p. 27). The groupings were defined based on common program components. The seven groupings were transition, employment training I, employment training II, employment training III, employment training IV, vocational education and post-secondary. This study's methodology was patterned after a previous study by Repetto and White (1990), the findings of which were a comprehensive description of state level transition policies throughout the U.S.

Little has been written regarding core academics and its place in transition planning. Not all mildly disabled students will immediately join the nation's work force. The outcome-oriented process for some will be post-secondary education at a 2 or 4 year school. Pre-exit programming for them needs to document the services needed and provided in pursuit of those goals (Bursuck, Rose, Cowen and Yahaya, 1989, p. 237). These services are inclusive of academic counseling and standardized testing. Developmental curriculum does

not necessarily mean remedial academics. OSERS provides an excellent description of the areas that need to be addressed in any comprehensive program model. These begin with the identification and utilization of appropriate curriculum content (Halpern, 1985, p. 483). Individuals with mild disabilities have a host of pre-exit training and education options available to assist them in their post-secondary adjustments, beginning with the traditional and non-traditional programs outlined by Fairweather in 1989 to the nationally recognized programs of Repetto in 1993. Although program policies do not always equate to programming practices or implementation, the quantity of transition-related services are not lacking, though the coordination of services might be.

Post-secondary Activities of the Mildly Disabled

The period of transition is usually accompanied by a strong sense of floundering as young people attempt to sort out lessons of their childhood and move into effective adult roles (Halpern, 1993, p. 486). Federal policy makers, educators and parents voice concerns about this period of indecisiveness, blaming it on pre-exiting education not being sufficient to prepare individuals for post-secondary social and economic independence (Fairweather and Shaver, 1990, p. 332). If program exiters are not attaining their planned goals and outcomes as stated in the I. T. P., what then are they doing? What are the post-secondary activities in which they are involved?

Halpern (1985) identified post-secondary factors each of which fit one of three components of his transition model: employment, social-interpersonal and residential. Additional factors have been identified and have been placed under the areas of community access and utilization, personal independence, post-secondary education and training and "other" (Johnson and Rusch, 1993,

p. 4).

In regard to post-secondary education and training, youths with mild disabilities enroll in post-secondary vocational programs at about the same frequency as non disabled youths. Mildly disabled youths are less likely to take community college and four year college courses (Fairweather and Shaver, 1990, p. 339). This trend is identical among all high school exiters. Male mildly disabled individuals are also more likely to pursue post-secondary training.

Sitlington, Frank and Carson (1992) reporting from their study on current status of mildly disabled high school graduates found that 90% were single. The most common place of residence for the population as a whole was with parents or relatives and most were involved in some type of leisure activity. Anywhere from 3% of the males to 21% of the females were otherwise engaged.

The employment patterns of the mildly disabled are the most important to some as it is an outgrowth of special education (Welham, 1985, p. 31). It is also very misleading. While up to 60% of the mildly disabled are employed, very few work full-time. Only 18% of the full- or part-time employed earn above minimum wage. Employee benefits are received by less than one-half as are health or medical insurance which leads to another post-secondary activity--underemployment.

There is a wide variety of post-secondary activities both appropriate and inappropriate in which the mildly disabled are involved. Educators must be aware of all the various achievement outcomes that are possible when coordinating the transition program. The attainment of students goals is dependent upon this awareness.

Influences on Post-secondary Participation and Outcome

Many influences appear to affect the transition from high school to adult

world, for better or worse (Halpern, 1993, p. 486). In an attempt to analyze the importance of transition planning efforts on post-secondary achievements and outcomes, models for identifying and examining variables were developed. Using the Rusch and Phelps (1987) model, four levels of variables were identified. They included: (a) the individual and his family, (b) the program, (c) the organization and (d) the community.

Based on these indicators, McGee (1990) identified barriers to achieving transition goals as (a) exiting from school without sufficient or clear goals, (b) lack of pre-service or in-service training, (c) lack of cooperative management and sufficient resources and (d) lack of employer awareness at the individual, program, organization and community levels.

Barriers to goal attainment identified by Rubin (1991; Johnson and Rusch 1993, p. 8) included deficiencies at most levels of the OSERS Transitional Model. Student attrition and lack of parent collaboration were cited at the program level. Lack of available residential services and collaboration among service providers at the organizational level were identified. A final barrier that was identified was lack of transportation resources at the community level.

Rusch, et. al. (1992) examined barriers to goal attainment and found that at the individual level barriers related to delivery of services, employment-related projects, presented barriers at the student family level. Personnel issues and lack of collaboration were considered barriers at the program and organizational level (Johnson and Rusch, 1993, p. 12).

DeStafano and Shauwert (1989) recognized that federal and state policies in their drive for efficiency rather than quality, functioned also as a major barrier to the effective transition of students with disabilities. They cited the insufficient appropriation of funds, multi-agency involvement, consensus,

policy specificity, resource allocation and local influences as potential barriers.

Several barriers to successful achievement of transition goals have been identified in the literature. These barriers are found in all components of the transition plan models.

Summary

A review of literature revealed that there are many components of the transition plan that must be considered in the development of the individualized plans. Knowledge of these components is an essential part of successful student transition from high school to the adult world. There are available to the mildly disabled student several training and education options for integration of these components, options that would likely decrease the incidence of negative achievement by reducing barriers to positive achievement outcomes.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between transition planning and achieved post-secondary outcomes of mildly disabled students. The study also attempted to determine what factors were most common among successful exiters and those factors that were most common to the least successful exiters. This study involved a representative group of the mildly disabled post-secondary population from the Suffolk City Public School District in Suffolk, Virginia. This chapter outlines the research methods and procedures used to determine the relationship between transition planning and achieved post-secondary outcomes. It includes information on the population, instrument design, method of data collection, statistical analysis and a chapter summary.

Population

The population of this study was composed of 60 post high school special education students identified as mildly disabled. The group was selected from the two public high schools in Suffolk, Lakeland High and Nansemond River High. They were selected through a stratified random sample. The population was selected from this school district because of subject availability and because established sampling parameters were met. This school district was selected for study to provide a rural perspective on the significance of transition planning and its relationship to post-secondary outcomes.

Instrument Design

A survey was designed to gather information from participants on their pre- and post-secondary experiences. This included experiences with vocational education, guidance/counseling, employment, and follow-up services.

The instrument consisted of both closed and open-form questions, to obtain the greatest depth of responses from participants. The closed response questions were meant to determine those components of transition planning the participant's felt were most and least important to their post-secondary outcomes. A rank order could be established using the scores from the responses. The open-form questions were provided so participants could make suggestions on skills and experiences they believed mildly disabled persons should have as a part of their transition plan to aid successful transition and outcomes. A sample of the instrument is found in Appendix A.

Data Collection

In an attempt to collect data for this study, the post-secondary students to be sampled had to be identified. This was done using the school district's old case management lists. A cover letter was then sent to the last known address of those students selected to solicit their assistance in completing the study. The survey was sent to the same person and address one week later. Two weeks later, a follow-up phone call was made to all those participants who received surveys to thank them for their cooperation or to again request their assistance.

Statistical Analysis

The data collected from the survey respondents was analyzed and rank ordered according to the research goals of the study. The ranking of the pre-exit program, services and activities was determined by totaling the scores of each area. The same type of calculations were done for post-secondary statements to determine their ranking. The open-form question responses were listed and a rank order established using response percentages. The completed findings for the survey, total ranking of each area and responses to the

open-form questions are presented in Chapter IV.

Summary

This chapter presented the methods and procedures used to obtain the data for this study. A survey of mildly disabled former students in Suffolk City Public Schools was conducted by the researcher. The data was then analyzed, coded, and appropriate calculations performed to determine rank order. The results of this survey will be presented in statistical and tabular form in Chapter IV, entitled Findings.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings of the survey conducted using former students of Suffolk City Public Schools labeled mildly disabled. The objective of the research study was to determine the availability of transition planning services before and after graduation and to see if their availability affected student post-secondary achievement.

In this chapter the information gathered through the survey instrument will be reported. The reporting of these findings will involve data specific to the participants responses of three sets of statistics-- the combined responses of all participants, drop-out only responses and graduate only responses. Data concerning the open-ended questions that were a part of the survey instrument will also be included.

Participation Percentages

This survey was distributed to 60 qualifying graduates of the Suffolk City School System. This distribution included former students from both public high schools, Lakeland High School and Nansemond River High School, located in Suffolk, Virginia.

A total of 42 graduates participated in this study. Sixty percent or 9 of the 15 surveys sent to females were returned. Seventy percent or 33 of the 45 surveys sent to males were returned. This represents a total participation rate of 70% or 42 of 60 (Table I).

TABLE I PARTICIPATION PERCENTAGES			
GENDER	No. of Surveys Sent	No. of Surveys Received	Percent Received
Male	45	33	73%
Female	15	9	60%
Total	60	42	70%

**Data on Pre-exit and Post-secondary Programs,
Services and Activities**

The statements in Part II of the survey were intended to illicit from participants their responses to the availability of transition programs, services and activities while they were in high school. The questions in Part III of the survey were designed to determine post high school availability of transition programs, services and activities. Using these statements the most and least available programs and services could thereby be determined and a pattern to achievement outcomes established.

Table II presents total participant response data concerning the pre-exit and post-secondary availability of programs, services and activities. To determine the rank order of each statement from Part II, the rating for each response was added-up for the 42 total surveys. The higher the rating the more available that program/service was determined to be. Statements were then ranked from 1-12 according to total points received. The same calculation and ranking system was used for Part III statements.

In Part II of the total (male and female) response rankings, Statement 4, opportunities for participation in vocational classes, and Statement 8,

social/peer interaction were the highest ranking statements with a total rating of 157. The second highest ranking statement was Statement 2, teacher guidance/support, with a total rating of 151. The third highest ranking statement

<p style="text-align: center;">TABLE II TOTAL RESPONSES Pre-exit and Post-secondary Services, Programs and Activities</p>			
Pre-exit Statement and Rank	Total Points	Post-secondary Statement and Rank	Total Points
1-Opportunities to participate in vocational class & Social /peer interaction	157	Skills necessary to communicate needs and lobby for self	157
2-Teacher guidance/support	151	Personal decision-making opportunities	149
3-Skills necessary to recognize personal needs	138	Skills necessary for awareness of needs	147
4-Self-motivation & Career counseling	134	Opportunities to perform adult roles	143.5
5-Opportunities for personal decision-making.	133.5	Overall self-motivation	140
6-School Services	129	Employment Opportunities	137.5
7-Parent involvement /guidance	128	Opportunity to maintain quality of life	135
8-Academics	127	Parental involvement	133
9-Employment	108	Application of curriculum	132
10-Legal Rights	100.5	Access to career goal	122
11-		Community Support	112
12-		Counseling and Follow-up	96

was Statement 11, skills necessary to recognize personal needs, which had a total rating of 138. The fourth highest ranking statements were Statement 1,

career counseling in high school and Statement 9, your self-motivation, each with a total rating of 134. The fifth ranking statement was Statement 7, opportunities for personal decision-making with a rating of 133.5. The sixth ranking statement was Statement 10, availability and quality of school services overall, which had a rating of 129. The seventh ranking statement was Statement 6, parent involvement/ guidance in education, which had a rating of 128. The eighth ranking statement was Statement 3, basic/core academic curriculum, which had a rating of 127. The ninth ranking statement was Statement 5, employment while in high school, which had a rating of 108. The tenth and lowest ranking statement was Statement 12, information on legal rights, which had a rating of 100.5

Of the twelve statements from Part III, Statement 12, skills necessary to communicate needs and lobby for self, ranked the highest with a rating of 157. The second ranking statement was Statement 8, personal decision-making opportunities with a rating of 149. The third ranking statement was Statement 10, skills necessary for awareness of needs, which had a rating of 147. The fourth ranking statement was Statement 3, opportunities to perform adult roles. The forth ranking statement was Statement 9, overall self-motivation with a rating of 140. The sixth ranking statement was Statement 7, post high school employment opportunities, which had a rating of 137.5. The seventh ranking statement was Statement 11, opportunity to maintain quality of life, which had a rating of 135. The eighth ranking statement was Statement 5, parental involvement, with a rating of 133. The ninth ranking statement was Statement 2, opportunities for application of high school curriculum to the "adult" world, which had a rating of 132. The tenth ranking statement was Statement 6, access to career goal, which had a rating of 122. The eleventh ranking statement was Statement

4, community encouragement and support, with a rating of 112. The lowest ranking statement was Statement 1, counseling and follow-up services, which had a rating of 96.

Specific Data Concerning Non-Graduate Response Ratings

In the analysis of survey results, combining responses of non-graduates, the following rankings were obtained. Non-graduates represented 6 participants or 14% of the total survey respondents. Ranked first for this group among Part II statements was Statement 8, peer/social interaction, with a rating of 22. Followed by Statement 2, teacher guidance/support, which had a rating of 20. The third ranking statement was Statement 4, opportunities to participate in vocational classes, with a rating of 19 and Statement 7, opportunities for personal decision-making also with a 19. Ranked fourth were Statement 1, career counseling in high school and Statement 11, skills necessary to recognize personal needs, each with a rating of 18. Statements 3, basic/core curriculum, Statement 6, parental involvement /guidance in education and Statement 10, availability and quality of school services were tied for fifth in ranking with a rating of 17. In the sixth rank order was Statement 9, your self motivation with a rating of 16. The seventh ranking statement was Statement 12, information on legal rights, which had a 14. The last ranking statement among non-graduates was Statement 5, employment in high school with a rating of 13.

Among the post-secondary statements, Statement 12, skills necessary to communicate needs and lobby for yourself and Statement 3, opportunities to perform in adult roles ranked number 1, with a rating of 23. Personal decision-making opportunities, Statement 8 ranked second, with a rating of 20. Ranked third was Statement 10, skills necessary for awareness of needs, with a 19.

There was a tie at fourth between Statement 9, overall self-motivation and Statement 5, parental involvement, with a rating of 18. The fifth ranking statement was Statement 11, opportunities to maintain quality of life, which had a rating of 17. There was a tie for sixth ranking also between Statement 2, opportunities for application of high school curriculum to the adult world and post high school employment opportunities, each with 16. The seventh ranking statement was Statement 6, access to career goal and the lowest ranking statement was Statement 1, counseling and follow-up services with a 9. (Table III).

The mean age of all non-graduates was 20.6. The average number of years out of high school was 2.2 years.

Specific Data Concerning High School Graduates' Response Ratings

Graduate only response ratings (Table IV) vary little from the total participant rankings. There were some rank order changes in Part III, mostly due to a 1 or 2 point difference in totals. Among the graduates the statement rankings were as follows for Part II. Ranked 1, Statement 4, opportunities for participation in vocational classes, with a 138. Ranked second, Statement 8, social/peer interaction, which had a 135. Ranked third, was Statement 2, teacher guidance/support with a 131. The fourth ranked statement was Statement 11, skills necessary to recognize personal needs, which had a 120. The fifth ranked statement was Statement 9, your self-motivation. Statement 1, career counseling in high school ranked sixth with a rating of 116. Statement 7, opportunities for personal decision-making ranked seventh with a 114.5. Ranked eighth was Statement 10, availability and quality of services, with a 112. Statement 6, parent involvement in education, ranked ninth with a rating of 111. The tenth ranked statement was Statement 3, basic/core academic

TABLE III Non-Graduate Response Rankings			
Pre-exit Statement and Rank	Total Points	Post-Secondary Statement and Rank	Total Points
1-Social/peer interaction	22	Opportunities to perform adult roles & Skills necessary to communicate needs and lobby for self	23
2-Teacher guidance support	20	Personal decision-making opportunities	20
3-Opportunities for participation in vocational classes & Opportunities for personal decision-making	19	Skills necessary for awareness of needs	19
4-Career counseling & Skills necessary to recognize personal needs	18	Parental involvement & Self-motivation	18
5-Parent involvement /guidance, basic/core curriculum & availability of services	17	Opportunity to maintain quality of life	17
6-Self-motivation	16	Employment opportunities & Application of high school curriculum to the "adult" world.	16
7-Information on legal rights	14	Access to career goal	14
8-Employment in high school	13	Community encouragement and support	13
9-		Counseling and follow-up	9

curriculum with a rating of 110. The eleventh ranked statement was Statement 5, employment while in high school and ranked last was Statement 12, information on legal rights with a rating of 86.5.

Post-secondary programs, services and activities were ranked as follows for Part III. Ranked first was Statement 12, skills necessary to communicate needs and lobby for yourself. Ranked second, Statement 8, personal decision-making opportunities. Statement 10, skills necessary for awareness of needs, was ranked third. The fourth ranking statement was Statement 9, overall motivation. Statement 3, opportunities to perform adult roles was ranked fifth.

TABLE IV
GRADUATE ONLY RESPONSES

Pre-exit Statement and Rank	Total Points	Post-secondary Statement and Rank	Total Points
1-Opportunities for participation in vocational classes	138	Skills necessary to communicate needs and lobby for self	134
2-Social/peer interaction	135	Personal decision-making opportunities	129
3-Teacher guidance/support	131	Skills necessary for awareness of needs	128
4-Skills necessary to recognize personal needs	120	Your self-motivation	122
5-Overall self-motivation	118	Opportunities to perform adult roles	121.5
6-Career counseling	116	Employment opportunities	120
7-Opportunities for personal decision-making	114.5	Opportunity to maintain quality of life	118
8-School services	112	Application of high school curriculum to "adult" world	116
9-Parental involvement/guidance	111	Parental Involvement	115
10-Basic/core academics	110	Access to career goal	108
11-Employment	95	Community encouragement and support	99
12-Legal Rights	86.5	Counseling and follow-up	87

The sixth ranking statement was Statement 7, post high school employment opportunities. Ranked seventh was Statement 11, opportunities to maintain quality of life. The eighth ranking statement was Statement 2, opportunities for application of high school curriculum to the "adult " world. Statement 5, parental involvement was ranked ninth. Statement 6, access to career goals was the tenth ranking statement. Ranked eleventh was Statement 4, community encouragement and support. The lowest ranking statement was Statement 1, counseling and follow-up services.

Specific Data Concerning Open-ended Questions

Two open-ended questions were included on the survey to allow participants an opportunity to provide information regarding their concerns with the transition from high school to independent living and also to include information on influences or barriers to their being successful in post-secondary life. The data collected regarding these two questions is presented in narrative form. Of the 42 total responses to the survey, 16 responses (38%) had no concerns in regard to transition. Seven respondents (17%) cited the lack of instruction in independent living skills as a concern. Five respondents (12%) of participants felt that not knowing how to deal emotionally with the separation from the school environment presented transition problems. Five respondents (12%) felt that the lack of a definite goal was a concern in transition. Five percent (2 respondents) cited the lack of job skills as being a concern. Two participants (5%) saw a general concern with being able to handle adult responsibilities. Another two participants (5%) felt not knowing where to get needed services was a concern. The remaining six percent of responses were spread among concerns with having to work, adjustment to the work environment and repetition of high school curriculum.

In response to open-ended question Number 2, 12 responses (28%) acknowledged that family/parents were a major part of their success. Nine responses (21%) declared there were no influences on their success. Seven responses (16%) cited teachers has being major influences. Two responses (5%) cited family responsibilities as an influence on their lives. The remaining influences on success were recognized in statements such as, having a goal, having a job skill, friends and wanting to be independent.

In recognition of barriers, nine responses (21%) stated there were no barriers to their being successful. Two responses (5%) recognized their lack of education/skills as a barrier. Two participants (5%) also responded that unemployment was certainly a barrier. Being employed but not in the job I want was determined to be a barrier by another 5%. Those things that were considered barriers by at least one participant and represented the remaining percentage of responses were friends, my attitude, policies of the school system, not enough parental support and not being able to get information.

Summary

In this chapter information was given on the survey findings concerning pre-exit and post-secondary programs, services and activities. Survey results were broken down to represent total participant responses, non-graduate only responses and graduate only responses. In addition, information participants thought was important in regard to concerns with transition as well as influences and barriers to success were also presented. This information and results will be analyzed in Chapter V, Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter was to summarize the contents of the early chapters, answer the research goals based on data collected and finally to make recommendations, recommendations based on the results of the study and for future studies.

SUMMARY

The problem of this study was to determine the relationship between transition planning and the achieved post-secondary outcomes of mildly disabled students in Suffolk City Public Schools, specifically the city's two high schools. The lack of research regarding the transition needs and outcomes of the mildly disabled population warrants research into this area. To solve this problem and to give direction to the research, the following research goals were established.

1. Identify the components of the Individualized Transition Plan.
2. Determine what pre-exit programs, services and activities are available to the mildly disabled.
3. Determine what post-secondary services, programs and activities are available to the mildly disabled.
4. Identify the influences and barriers to post-secondary participation and achievement.

Data for this study was collected via a survey instrument. The survey was distributed to sixty mildly disabled students comprising the sample population. Seventy percent of the students responded. The resulting responses were then totaled to determine their rank order. This information was reported in narrative

form and supported with tables. Conclusions and recommendations regarding transition planning and achievement were then made.

CONCLUSIONS

In response to the research goals stated in Chapter 1:

1. What components are considered in the development of the Individualized Transition Program?

Based on research and student responses, the Individualized Transition Plan included several components that were key to programming, services and activities. These components were:

- A. Career Counseling
- B. Vocational Training
- C. Interpersonal Skills
- D. Self-advocacy Training
- E. Functional Curriculum

The open-ended Question 1, yielded other services students felt should be considered in transition planning. These include:

- A. Independent Living Skills
- B. Self-determination Skill Training
- C. Family Support Services.

2. What pre-exit programs, services and activities are available to the mildly disabled?

According to the research, the most available pre-exit programs, services and activities were: opportunities for participation in vocational classes (157) and social/peer interaction (157). These were followed by teacher guidance/support (151) and skills necessary to recognize personal needs (138). Other available pre-exit programs, services and activities in their rank

order were career counseling, opportunities for personal decision-making, self-motivation, overall school services, parent involvement/guidance in education, basic/core academic curriculum, employment opportunities and information on legal rights.

3. What post-secondary programs, services and activities are available to the mildly disabled?

Survey research showed that according to post-secondary rankings, skills necessary to communicate needs and lobby for one's self were thought to be the most available. Personal decision-making opportunities ranked second. The other post-secondary programs, services and activities ranked in order of identified availability were skills necessary for awareness of needs, opportunities to perform adult roles, overall self-motivation, employment opportunities, opportunity to maintain quality of life, parental involvement, opportunity for application of high school curriculum to the adult world, access to career goal, community encouragement and support. Ranked least available at the post-secondary level was counseling and follow-up services.

4. What influences post-secondary participation and achievement?

Responses offered for open-ended Question 2 provided research data which showed that twenty-eight percent of participants acknowledge family and parents as having the greatest influence on their post-secondary positive achievement. Twenty-one percent of the participants recognized no influences on their post-secondary achievement. Teachers were seen as positive influences by 16% of the respondents. Other major positive influences to participation and outcome were family responsibility, having a goal, having a job skill, friends and wanting to be independent.

The research showed that barriers to post-secondary participation and

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APPENDICES

- A. Survey of Pre-exit and Post-secondary Programs, Services and Activities
- B. Survey Cover Letter for Students

A SURVEY OF PRE-EXIT AND POST-SECONDARY ACTIVITIES**I. Personal Information**

Directions: Fill in the blanks with the appropriate information.

1. Your age _____
2. Your sex _____
3. Number of years out of high school _____
4. Type of exit form high school: graduated _____
expelled _____
dropped out _____
other _____
5. Your present occupation or placement _____

II. Pre-exit Programs and Services

Directions: Rate each statement according to its past availability. 4 = very available
3 = available
2 = somewhat available
1 = not available

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Career counseling in high school. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. Teacher guidance/support. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. Basic/core academic curriculum. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. Opportunities for participation in vocational classes. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. Employment while in high school. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. Parent involvement/guidance in education. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. Opportunities for personal decision-making. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. Social/peer interaction. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. Your self-motivation. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. Availability and quality of school services. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. Skills necessary to recognize personal needs. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. Information on legal rights. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

III. Post-secondary Programs and Services

Directions: Rate each statement according to its current availability: 4 = very available
3 = available
2 = somewhat available
1 = not available

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Counseling and follow-up services. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. Opportunities for application of high school curriculum to the "adult" world. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. Opportunities to perform adult roles. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. Community encouragement and support. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. Parental involvement. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. Access to career goal. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. Post high school employment opportunities. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. Personal decision-making opportunities. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. Overall self-motivation. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. Skills necessary for awareness of needs. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. Opportunity to maintain quality of life. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. Skills necessary to communicate needs and lobby for yourself. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

IV. Additional Information

Directions: Please respond to the following open-ended questions.

1. What do you feel are special concerns regarding the transition of mildly disabled students from high school to independent living?

2. What have been major influences or barriers to your achieving your desired career goals?

APPENDIX B

A.L. Thompson
3301 Nansemond Pkwy.
Suffolk, VA 23434

Student name
Street Address
City

Dear former student of Suffolk City Schools,

I am writing this letter to introduce myself as a graduate student of Old Dominion University involved in a research study regarding transition plans and achievement outcomes. The study's purpose is to determine how achievement after high school is affected by the programs, services and activities offered. The data for this study will be gathered using former students from the Suffolk City School District identified as mildly disabled.

To obtain this information, a list of before and after high school services, programs and activities was developed. The idea being to determine what you the student sees as being the most and least available by establishing a ranking of them.

You can see now, why your input in this research is so valuable, only you as a former student can provide this type of information.

I have enclosed with this letter a copy of the survey and a self-addressed, stamped envelope in which you are to return the completed survey. I will take this time also, to thank you for your cooperation and assistance in this research. My work could not be completed without you.

Sincerely,

A.L. Thompson