

1995

## A Study of Teacher Attitudes Toward Establishing Vocational Education Programs for Disabled Students in Middle School

Dazzerene Wade  
*Old Dominion University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots\\_masters\\_projects](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots_masters_projects)



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Wade, Dazzerene, "A Study of Teacher Attitudes Toward Establishing Vocational Education Programs for Disabled Students in Middle School" (1995). *OTS Master's Level Projects & Papers*. 350.  
[https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots\\_masters\\_projects/350](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots_masters_projects/350)

This Master's Project is brought to you for free and open access by the STEM Education & Professional Studies at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in OTS Master's Level Projects & Papers by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@odu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@odu.edu).

**A STUDY OF TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD  
ESTABLISHING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION  
PROGRAMS FOR DISABLED STUDENTS IN MIDDLE  
SCHOOL**

**A RESEACH PAPER PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE  
FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL  
AND TECHNICAL STUDIES AT OLD DOMINION  
UNIVERSITY**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN EDUCATION  
DEGREE**

**BY  
DAZZERENE WADE RA**

**AUGUST, 1995**

## APPROVAL PAGE

This research paper was prepared by Dazzerene Ra under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Education. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science of Education..

APPROVAL BY: John M. Ritz DATE 7-21-95

Dr. John M. Ritz  
Advisor and Graduate Program Director

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

A very special thanks to my husband, Sudan, for all his unending patience and enduring support, and of course, for tending to our children. To him, I owe my utmost appreciation for his faith, patience and love.

I wish to acknowledge my children, Sudan and Corine for their patience and my dear friend Katy for her help and support.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	<b><u>PAGE</u></b>
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Tables	v
Chapters	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Research Goals	4
Background and Significance	4
Limitations	8
Assumptions	8
Procedures	9
Definition of Terms	10
Overview of Chapters	15
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	16
Legislation	17
A Need to Establish Vocational	21
Education Prior to High School	
Curriculum	26
Vocational Programs	31
Summary	32
III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES	35
Population	35

Instrument Design	36
Method for Collecting Data	36
Statistical Analysis	37
Summary	38
 IV. FINDINGS	 39
Analysis of Data	40
Summary	58
 V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	 59
Summary	59
Conclusion	60
Recommendations	63
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 66
 APPENDIX	 71
Appendix A	72
Survey	
 Appendix B	 76
Cover Letter to Teachers	

## **Table of Tables**

	<b>page</b>
<b>Table 1. Respondents' Individual Status</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Table 2. The Need to Establish a Vocational Education Program in Middle School</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Table 3. The Need To Integrate Functional Skills and Real Life Community Work Experiences Into Existing Curricula</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Table 4. Vocational Education Programs Appropriate for Middle School Disabled Students</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Table 5. Skill Needed For Transition To Secondary Vocational Education</b>	<b>55</b>

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

For the past few decades legislation has emphasized the need to prepare disabled students to lead independent lives. Employment is the crucial factor in the lives of all Americans who become economically self-sufficient. However, research suggests that students with disabilities are at a greater risk of dropping out of school. Moreover, students with disabilities who exit secondary educational systems experience uncertain employment, dependent living arrangements, few opportunities for post secondary education or training, a lack of community integration, and relatively few social and recreational opportunities (Harnisch and Snauwaert, 1992, p. 1). Among youth with disabilities, the highest rates of dropping out from school prior to graduation are for those with emotional disturbances and learning disabilities (Eleventh Annual Report to Congress, 1989). Society suffers as well because unemployment and lost earnings lower tax revenues and



increases demands on social services (Rumberger, 1987, p. 102).

Vocational education is an important issue among special education teachers in Virginia Beach middle schools. A large percentage of special education teachers have expressed dissatisfaction with the present curriculum for disabled students in self-contained classes. The current curriculum content focuses on remedial academics with little emphasis placed upon functional skills. Instructional design does not incorporate the issues of maintenance and generalization or whether the skills being taught in the classroom will be used in the community and workplace.

One observer suggests disabled students can be prepared better with programs of early intervention, focusing on career options (Meers, 1993, p. 3). Early intervention vocational education can give disabled students a sense of purpose, knowledge about the world of work and social and employability skills that are relevant to occupational situations in which they are deficient (Cress, 1992, p. 173). These skills are important for obtaining and maintaining

employment (Clement-Heist, Siegel, Gaylord-Ross, 1992, p. 336). Intervention based on student factors (for example, socio-economic status, living in an urban area and ethnicity) as well as school and community are needed because some students exit prior to high school. Strategies must be developed that are successful with students at both junior and senior high levels (Office of Special ED and U. S. Dept. of ED, 1991, p. 2). If disabled students are to be self-sufficient and self-supporting members of our society, the need for vocational education in middle schools is an important issue.

### **Statement of the Problems**

The problem of this study was to determine teacher attitudes toward establishing a vocational education program for disabled students in middle school.

## **Research Goals**

The research goals of this study were to:

1. Determine the need to establish a vocational education program in Virginia Beach Middle Schools for disabled students.
2. Provide justification for integrating functional skills and real life community work experiences into existing curriculum.
3. Define the types of vocational education programs that are appropriate for middle school disabled students.
4. Outline the skills needed for student transition from middle school vocational education programs to secondary vocational education programs.

## **Background and Significance**

Over the past two decades, numerous changes in legislation have been passed to assure transitional programming for disabled children and special populations. The transition movement of the 1980's was preceded by the

following two movements: 1) The career education movement in the 1970's and (2) the cooperative work study movement in the 1960's (Halpern, 1992, p. 202).

The Education for All Handicapped Act of 1975 (Public Law 94 - 142 Section 641) (a) addressed dropout prevention for junior high age youth with disabilities. The Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1990 changed the title of the earlier law to the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), (P. L. 101 - 476). IDEA defines who should participate, when they should participate and who should provide services. IDEA mandated transition services for students with severe disabilities to include community experience, the development of employment and post school adult living objectives. Moreover, a transition plan must be developed for a student no later than age 16 and in some cases at age 14 or younger. The transition plan is a part of the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) (P. L. 101- 476).

The Rehabilitation Act Amendment of 1992 (P. L. 102 - 569) mandates a state plan requiring that the state rehabilitation agency address the development of policies that

will assure coordination between rehabilitation agencies and state agencies for students with severe disabilities (Inge and Wehman, 1993, p. 3).

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act of 1990 (P. L. 101 - 302) defined special populations and provided the following assurances: 1) information regarding vocational education opportunities to parents beginning in the ninth grade, 2) assist in fulfilling the transitional service requirements of IDEA, 3) provide supplementary services including curriculum, equipment and classroom modifications, supportive personnel, instructional aids and devices, 4) provide guidance, counseling and career development activities and 5) provide counseling and instructional services designed to facilitate the transition from school to post-school employment and career opportunities.

Although the legislation mandates extended services for transition to work, many secondary disabled students are unable to obtain and maintain a job because they lack job related social skills and an awareness of the job market. The need for early intervention vocational education is an

important issue that hinges on the success of transition to work for secondary disabled students. Mithaug, Martin, Agran and Rusch (1988, p. 12) reported: "The future for secondary students in special education is not very bright. It is clouded with increased probabilities for dropping out of school, unemployment or underemployment, low earnings, and dependent living situations. Furthermore, it appears that special education programs have not taught students the adjustment skills to solve their own problems".

IDEA addresses a transition plan that can be developed at age 14 or younger if needed (P. L. 101 - 476). It is the opinion of this writer that 14 or younger implies that transition plans that include vocational education should be implemented for middle school students with disabilities.

Early intervention through a vocational education program is a consideration far more cost effective if disabled students are educated for competitive employment than to train them through other programs once they exit secondary education (Sarkes and Scott, 1986, p. 7).

## **Limitations**

The limitations of this study were as follows:

1. The study was limited to middle school self-contained special education teachers and supportive employment coordinators.
2. The study was limited to disabled students in educable mentally retarded, learning disabilities and emotionally disturbed in a self-contained class.
3. The study was limited to Virginia Beach Schools.

## **Assumptions**

The following statements are assumed to be true for this study:

1. The belief that participants' responses to questionnaire items are based on their real or true feeling.
2. Vocational education programs in middle school are the foundation for success in secondary vocational programs.
3. Early intervention vocational programs can better

prepare disabled students for transition from school to work and adult life.

### **Procedure of the Study**

The subjects of this study are disabled students in learning disabled, emotionally disturbed and educable mentally retarded self-contained classes. Special education self-contained teachers in middle school and supportive employment coordinators in Virginia Beach City Public Schools will be surveyed. The instrument used in this study will be a questionnaire. The questionnaire will require respondents to respond to statements from which data will be obtained. Responses will be tabulated and findings will be reported.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms were used throughout this study.

1. Career Education - is the totality of experiences through which one learns to live a meaningful, satisfying work



life.

2. Carl D. Perkins Vocational Applied Technology Education Act Amendments of 1990 (P. L. 101 - 392) - This act defines special population and provides several assurances to them.
3. Cooperative Work Study - A program to create an integrated, academic, social and vocational curriculum, accompanied by appropriate work experience designed to prepare students with mild disabilities for community adjustment.
4. Community-Based Vocational Instruction (CBI) - the type of training that uses the facilities, materials, persons, and/or tasks within a business to teach and assess students' work and related tasks. In this sense, the actual business environment is considered an extension of the classroom. Teachers, counselors, and support staff perform their instructional and evaluation roles within the context of this business environment (Pumpran, Shepherd and West, 1988).
5. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975

(P. L. 94 - 142) - this law provided a free and appropriate public education for every handicapped person between the ages of 3 and 21.

6. **Seriously Emotionally Disturbed (ED)** - A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree, which adversely affects educational performance: (1) an inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; (2) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; (3) inappropriate types of behavior or feeling under normal circumstances; (4) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; and (5) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. The term includes individuals who are schizophrenic or autistic. The term does not include individuals who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they are seriously emotionally disturbed.
7. **Functional Curriculum** - A curriculum that promotes the

acquisition of life skills and survival skills needed for successful independent living. Usually a functional curriculum contains domains such as domestic, vocational, recreational/leisure and community activities.

8. Handicapped or Disabled - Individuals who are mentally retarded, hard-of-hearing, deaf, speech or language impaired, visually handicapped, seriously emotionally disturbed, orthopedically impaired, or other health impaired persons, or persons with specific learning disabilities, who by reason thereof require special education and related services, and who, because of their handicapping condition, cannot succeed in the regular vocational education program without special education assistance. (P. L. 98 - 524)
9. Individualized Education Program (IEP) - Program for handicapped learners, mandated by P. L. 94 - 142, planned cooperatively with support personnel. The IEP must have the present level of educational performance, annual goals and short-term objectives, amount of time spent in

regular educational programs, necessary support services, and an annual review date.

10. The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

P. L. 101 - 476 - This act defines transition as a coordinated set of activities based upon individual student's need, designed within an outcome oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post school activities, continuing adult education and services, and independent living.

11. Learning Disabilities - A student with a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which manifests itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculation.

12. Mentally Retarded - Significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, which adversely affects (an individual's) educational performance. (P. L. 94 - 142,

121 a. 5)

13. The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 (P. L. 102 - 569) - same as P. L. 101 - 476
14. Self-Contained Class - a disabled learner who spends fifty percent or more in a special education class.
15. Transition - a formal planned process involving disabled learners, parents, school personnel and community agency representatives, which results in the preparation and implementation of a plan to assist disabled learners in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes required to enter and succeed in post secondary vocational education and/or sustained employment.
16. Vocational Education - organized educational programs which are directly related to the preparation of individuals for paid or unpaid employment.

### **Summary and Overview**

Addressing the issues of vocational education for middle

school disabled self-contained students is an enormous task that will call for a commitment from parents, administration, community, rehabilitation agencies, and special and vocational education teachers. The key to increased commitment involves a joint partnership working together to establish vocational education in middle schools for disabled students.

Chapter II will examine literature relating to this study including legislation, studies supporting the problem, curriculum and vocational education programs appropriate for middle school. Chapter III will explain methods and procedures used to conduct the study. Chapter IV will report findings and responses from the survey. Finally, Chapter V will summarize the study, report conclusions and make recommendations.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW of LITERATURE**

The issue of transition from school to work for disabled students has become one of the most pressing concerns in the field of vocational education. The current emphasis on transition from school to work tends to focus primarily on high school. Transitional programming needs to begin early for a number of factors. Research findings support that students with disabilities experience uncertain employment, dependent living arrangements, few opportunities for post secondary education or training and lack of community intergration (Hasazi, Gordon, and Roe, 1985; Mithaug, Horiuchi, and Fanning, 1985; Inge and Wehman, 1993). Moreover, there are consistently high unemployment rates ranging from 40 - 90% once youth with disabilities leave school (Inge et al., 1993). Secondly, 25 - 30 % of youth with disabilities drop out of school (Wolman, Bruininks and Thurlow, 1989; Inge et al., 1993). In Virginia, the drop out rate was 29.55% in 1987 - 1988 (Edgar, 1987; Wehman, 1992). Teaching Exceptional

Children News (1994) reported: "In 1990 - 1991 almost one fourth of all students with disabilities dropped out of school. Those most likely to drop out are students with serious emotional disturbances (37.2%), specific learning disabilities (22.2%) and mental retardation (21.6%)." Finally, the present curriculum lacks functional skills needed for successful transition from school to work. Inge et al. (1993) states that "we must identify curriculum which directly reflects what students need to successfully adjust in society." Therefore, it is essential that vocational education programming begins early. In this chapter, the literature will be presented under the following headings: Legislation, A Need to Establish Vocational Education Prior to High School, Curriculum and Vocational Programs.

## **Legislation**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA), P. L. 101 - 476, became the first federal law mandating



transition planning for school to post-secondary placement for students receiving special education services. P. L. 101 - 476 defined transition services as follows:

"A coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post school activities, includes post secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, (including supported employment), continuing adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based upon the individual student's needs taking into account the student's preferences and interests and shall include instruction, community experiences, development of employment and other post school adult living objectives, and when appropriate acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation" (Inge et al., 1993, p. 2).

The IDEA requires local education agencies to include transition planning and implementation in the IEP by the time a

student is 16 or at a younger age, if determined appropriate.

An addendum to the implementation of IDEA, since January 10, 1994, was to lower the age from 16 to 14 for mandatory transition planning and required schools to collaborate with other agencies earlier in the transition process (The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), 1994).

The transition provisions added to the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 do not shift the burden for transition planning from education to rehabilitation. Instead, they promote coordination and collaboration between the two systems so there will be no gap in service for eligible students. The state plan requirements for transition under P. L. 102 - 569 include the following: A. Facilitate the development and accomplishment of: 1) long-term rehabilitation goals; 2) intermediate rehabilitation objectives; and 3) goals and objectives related to enabling a student to live independently before the student leaves a school setting, to the extent the goals and objectives described in clause (1) through (3) are included in an individualized education program of the student, including

the specification of plans for coordination with the educational agencies in the provision of transition services;

B. Facilitate the transition from the provision of a free appropriate public education under the responsibility of an educational agency to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under the responsibility of the designated state unit, including the specification of plans for coordination with educational agencies in the provision of transition services authorized under section 103(a)(14) to an individual, consistent with the individualized written rehabilitation program of the individual; and C. Provide that such plans, policies, and procedures will address:

1) Provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; 2) Procedures for outtranks to and identification of youth in need of such services; and a timeframe for evaluation and follow-up of youth who have received such services (Sec. 101(a)(24)). (Inge et al., 1993, p.4).

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act of 1990 (P. L. 101 - 392) defines special populations and

provides several assurances to them. On August 14, 1992, the U. S. Department of Education published final regulations implementing the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act Amendments of 1990 (P. L. 101 - 392). The key provisions stated that the local vocational programs will be required to support the transition initiatives contained in special education legislation and hold vocational programs that receive Perkins funds accountable to the full participation mandates, rather than just projects that are funded with Perkins dollars (National Transition Network Policy Update, Fall 1993).

### **A Need to Establish Vocational Education Prior to High School**

In this section, the review of literature will answer the question: Why Start Early? It is imperative to begin this process early. This allows time for students with disabilities to acquire social and employable skills needed to gain

successful employment.

The National Transition Network (Parent Brief, No. 3, Winter 1993) reported: "many families, as well as professionals, believe transition planning should begin at age 14 or younger".

The issue of beginning transition planning at age 14 or younger posed new challenges for the U. S. Department of Education. In revising the regulations concerning age, the U. S. Department noted, "the provision of these services could have a significantly positive effect on the employment and independent living outcome for many of these students" (IDEA, Section 300.346 (b) Note 3).

Congress was concerned that starting at age 16 may be too late for many students, especially those at risk of dropping out of school and those with more severe disabilities. Students who stay in school until the age of 18 may need more than two years of transition services. So initiating services at a younger age will be critical (House Report No. 101 - 544, 1990).

Another concern is the special educator's responsibility

to provide career/vocational education to students with disabilities at both elementary and secondary levels. Moore, Agran and McSweyn (1990) noted, "teachers of students being served in elementary level self-contained and resource room programs apparently have failed to realize the importance of providing such education for students". Moore, et al., (1990) conducted a research study to assess the extent to which special education teachers were providing vocational/career education to younger students with disabilities. Results of the Moore, et al., (1990) survey from one state indicated that elementary and middle school teachers seldom provided their students with opportunities to take part in career awareness and career exploration activities. These components of education services were vital to the transition process (Grennan, 1982). According to Moore, et al. (1990), teacher preparation must include methods for providing vocational training. It is imperative that training in vocational skills be provided at an early age to give students with disabilities the opportunities to succeed upon leaving school.

There seems to be considerable support for beginning career development at the elementary level. However, writers in the career development field have consistently believed that the foundation for successful future employment should be built during the elementary years and continued on through the middle and high school years (Brolin, 1978 and 1994; Clark, 1979; Gillet, 1980). Another group of writers suggest that every grade level builds one on another in transition preparation just as in academic preparation (Clark, Carlson, Fisher, Cook and D'Alonzo, 1991; Polloway, Patton, Epstein and Smith, 1989; Polloway, Patton, Smith and Rodrique, 1991).

Clark (1979) addressed the issue of early transitional programming by preparing a career education curriculum which included components for kindergarten-aged children with disabilities. In practice, the perspective of lifelong career development should include students' curricula from kindergarten through senior high programs (Clark and Kolstoe, 1990).

The Division of Career Development and Transition's

(DCDT) position on the growth and development of transition over the past three decades adopts the following definition as a framework for guiding future work in this area.

"Transition refers to a change in status from behaving primarily as a student to assuming emergent adult roles in the community. These roles include employment, participating in post-secondary education, maintaining a home, becoming appropriately involved in the community, and experiencing satisfactory personal and social relationships. The process of enhancing transition involves the participation and coordination of school programs, adult agency services, and natural supports within the community. The foundations for transition should be laid during the elementary and middle school years, guided by the broad concept of career development. Transition planning should begin no later than age 14, and students should be encouraged, to the full extent of their capabilities, to assume a maximum amount of responsibility for such planning" (Halpern, 1994, p. 117).

The Division on Career Development (DCD) in a position



statement entitled Career Development for Students with Disabilities in Elementary Schools (Clark, et al., 1991) made the following point:

"Career development and transition education should be designed and implemented for every identified elementary aged child with a disability. This rationale is not only defensible from a logical instructional sequence, but also from a reality perspective that after age 16 there is no guarantee that students will remain in school to benefit from carefully designed programs. A commitment to life-centered career development and transition preparation for students at secondary level is inadequate, it is counterproductive. Such an approach ignores the possibility that school programs have not succeeded in the past because of providing too little, too late. Also, this approach ignores data supporting early intervention with children who have disabilities or who are at risk".

## **CURRICULUM**

Halpern (1992) states, "that after 30 years of programs that have been designed to prepare young people with disabilities for adult roles, we are still deficient in what we teach, how we teach, and where we teach. Curriculum content focuses too much on remedial academics and not enough on functional skills. Instructional design often ignores the issues of maintenance and generalization. The location on instruction is frequently in the classroom, even though a community-based setting would be appropriate".

The current curriculum content for students with disabilities tends to focus on remedial academics. Research studies have indicated this type of curriculum is inadequate because students with disabilities experience disadvantages in attaining post-secondary education; gaining competitive employment, integrating into the community, social competence and independent living.

The skills needed for students with disabilities to succeed in adult life can be acquired from a functional

curriculum. Research indicates that students with disabilities are deficient in the following areas:

1) interpersonal skills such as work habits, attitudes, and social communication skills, 2) job-related basic/functional academic skills and 3) specific vocational skills to perform more than entry-level positions (Okolo and Sitlington, 1986; Edgar, 1987; Clement-Heist, et al., 1992). A functional curriculum consisting of the following components would address these areas: 1) socialization skills, 2) communication skills, 3) financial management skills, 4) values clarification skills and 5) job procurement and retention skills (Wircenski, 1982).

Professionals have advocated increased emphasis on vocational/career preparation, social skills training, functional academic skills, basic self-help/life skills and community integration/living skills for some time (Edgar, 1987; Moore et al., 1990; Polloway et al., 1989; Polloway et al. 1991; Brolin, 1993; Halpern, 1992).

Students with mild disabilities in middle and high school settings often continue to receive academic instruction.

Polloway et al. (1989) indicated drawbacks to an academic remediation/basic skills approach extended beyond the elementary level. First, the remediation approach focuses entirely on deficit areas of the students. Second, the skills often fail to generalize to general classrooms or to various post-secondary environments.

Krom and Prater (1993) noted, "with the passage of P. L. 101 - 476 and increased attention in recent years towards functional curriculum and transition to post-secondary life, one would expect vocational and life skills reflected on the IEP's of students with mild disabilities at the secondary level". Krom et al. (1993) conducted a research study to examine IEP annual goals of intermediate age students with mild disabilities (Grades 7 and 8) in one school district and compared those goals with teacher's self-report of subjects and content taught. Results of the Krom et al. (1993) survey indicated IEP annual goals were remedial academics and students received minimal, if any, instruction in the areas of vocational skills, basic living skills and behavior/social skills. Results on teacher's self-report indicated that students

were receiving special education instruction in areas in which they had no IEP annual goals and annual goals were written to fit the content of the curriculum they taught.

IEPs should be used as a strategic plan to assist students in the move from school to post-secondary environments (Krom et al., 1993). Clark et al. (1991) stated,

"each student's IEP should go beyond basic academic needs, to provide for instruction and guidance as needed for: 1) developing age-appropriate functioning in independent daily living tasks, including knowledge and skills needed at home, at school, and in the community; 2) developing positive values and attitudes and age-appropriate behaviors for participating confidently in the home, at school and in the community; 3) establishing and maintaining positive, age-appropriate interpersonal relationships in the home, at school and in the community; and 4) developing awareness of occupational alternatives, orientation to the realities of the work world, and achieving age-appropriate, gross and fine motor skills."

Research suggests post-secondary outcomes of students with mild disabilities indicate that waiting until high school to provide life skills may be too little, too late (Krom et al., 1993).

### **Vocational Programs**

P. L. 101 - 476 mandated transition services for students with severe disabilities to include community experiences. This emphasis on preparing students to live and work in the community requires school systems to develop community based training programs. In terms of employment, this means that students need to participate in unpaid community work experiences such as vocational assessment, vocational exploration and vocational training (Moon, Kieman and Halloran, 1990). Community based vocational training has been defined as the type of training that uses the facilities, materials, persons, and/or tasks within a business to teach and assess students' work and related tasks. In this sense, the actual business environment is considered an extension of the

classroom. "Teachers, counselors and support staff perform their instructional and evaluation roles within the context of these business environments " (Pumpian, Shepard and West, 1988).

Community based vocational training has been an important component of secondary programming for students with severe disabilities (Four Runner, 1994). Students with mild disabilities can benefit from this program at the middle school level. Some special education teachers in Virginia Beach middle schools have implemented community based training this year for students in ED, EMR and LD self-contained classes.

Education for Employment (EFE) is a program designed to help the special needs students prepare for successful employment. Instruction includes developing goals and values important for employment, occupational preparation and human relations (Netherton, 1994). Students with disabilities in middle school can benefit from this program. This program can assist students with real life experiences.

## **Summary**

The review of literature covered four areas including Legislation, A Need to Establish Vocational Education Prior to High School, Curriculum and Vocational Programs. The laws for students with disabilities provide safeguards to protect their rights. IDEA states that students with disabilities must receive an appropriate education and transition planning to prepare them for the real world. The amendments to the Rehabilitation Act provide guidance to all agencies in how to support persons with disabilities. The Perkins Act promotes vocational opportunities.

Research is telling us that transition planning at age 16 is too late. A large percentage of students with disabilities are dropping out of school as they transition from middle school to high school. Students with disabilities need more time to prepare for transition from school to work. Post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities are bleak. Also, research studies indicate that the foundation for vocational training needs to begin in elementary and continue



through high school.

The current curriculum does not prepare students with disabilities for the challenges and demands of adult life.

Community based training and Education for Employment are two vocational programs that can benefit students with disabilities at the middle school level. Chapter III will examine the methods and procedures used during the study.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Methods and Procedures**

The problem of this study was to determine teacher attitudes toward establishing a vocational education program for disabled students in middle school. In this chapter, the population, instrument design, methods of collecting data and statistical analysis are discussed.

#### **Population**

The population for this study consists of Virginia Beach middle school special education teachers who teach educable mentally retarded students, learning disabled students and emotionally disturbed self-contained classes and supportive employment teachers. It included 50 teachers from grades 6 to 8 and represented the following middle schools: Bayside, Independence, Kempsville, Larkspur, Plaza, Princess Anne, and Virginia Beach.

## **Instrument Design**

In determining teacher attitudes toward establishing a vocational education program for disabled students in middle school, a questionnaire consisting of both closed and open questions was developed. The items in the questionnaire concerned curriculum and vocational issues such as: 1) How a functional skills curriculum can prepare the disabled student for transition to adult life, 2) How important is the need to begin vocational education programs in middle school, and 3) How vocational education programs in middle school can prepare disabled students for high school vocational education programs. The questionnaire is located in Appendix A.

## **Method For Collecting Data**

Selected special education teachers and supportive employment teachers in Virginia Beach middle schools were sent the survey instrument and a cover letter in May 1995 explaining the purpose of the survey. The cover letter

requested that the completed survey be returned in two weeks and a pre-addressed, stamped envelope was included. A copy of the cover letter is located in Appendix B. The teachers were asked to rate a series of questions on the survey instrument using a Likert type scale.

### **Statistical Analysis**

The mean which is one of the measures of central tendency will be used. The responses on the Likert scale has five categories. The findings will include the number and percentages of responses in each of the five categories-- Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), and No Answer (NA). The results were calculated as follows: responses under Strongly Agree will be assigned a value of 4, those under Agree will be assigned a value of 3, those under Disagree a value of 2, those under Strongly Disagree a value of 1 and No Answer received a value of 0. The mean is simply the average of these values.

## **Summary**

Chapter III presented the methods and procedures that were used to obtain the necessary data for this study. A questionnaire was used as a sole indicator in collecting data. The findings of this questionnaire will be presented in Chapter IV.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Finding**

The purpose of this study was to determine teacher attitudes toward establishing a vocational education program for disabled students in middle school. The instrument used in obtaining data was a questionnaire consisting of two parts. Part I was designed to gather information on the respondents individual status. Part II consisted of thirty-one questions which were separated into four sections. The first section requested data regarding the need to establish a vocational education program in the middle school for disabled students. The second section of the survey determined the need to integrate functional skills and real life community work into the existing curriculum. The third section addressed selected appropriate vocational education programs for disabled students in the middle school. The final section of the survey identified skills needed for transition to secondary vocational education programs. Also, respondents

were given an opportunity to write concerns and comments not included in the questionnaire.

The respondents were asked to answer a series of questions on the survey instrument using a Likert type scale of 4-1, "4" indicating strongly agree (SA) and "1" indicating strongly disagree (SD). A "Not Applicable" response was not included in the mean ratings of each item.

A sample of fifty special education personnel including forty-eight special education teachers, one speech therapist, and one transition specialist in Virginia Beach Public Schools were selected. Forty-eight special education teachers and two others received questionnaires. All fifty questionnaires were returned to the researcher. A response return of one hundred percent (100%) was completed.

### **Analysis of Data**

Research goals stated in the form of objectives provided directions to this study. The research goals listed in Chapter I were:

1. Determine the need to establish a vocational education program in Virginia Beach Middle Schools for disabled students.
2. Provide justification for integrating functional skills and real life community work experience into existing curriculum.
3. Define the types of vocational education programs that are appropriate for middle school disabled students.
4. Outline the skills needed for student transition from middle school vocational education programs to secondary vocational education programs.

The data compiled in the previous chapters of this study gave answers to the research goals. This chapter also provides answers to research goals and makes use of five tables to further explain individual respondent opinion and each research goal.



Table I indicates basic information on the respondents individual status. This data revealed that twenty-eight respondents were teachers of specific learning disabled (SLD), ten respondents were teachers of seriously emotionally disturbed (SED), five respondents were teachers of educable mentally retarded (EMR), and two respondents were supported employment teachers as well as five other respondents (two cross-category SLD/SED teachers, one transition specialist, one speech therapist and one trainable mentally retarded (TMR) teacher responded to the survey. Of those responding, five were first year teachers, sixteen teachers had been teaching between two to seven years, eleven had been teaching between eight to twelve years and eighteen had taught thirteen or more years. Nine teachers spent one bell on vocational skills per day, two teachers spent two bells on vocational skills per day, three teachers spent three or more bells on vocational skills per day and thirty-six teachers spent no time on vocational skills. Twenty-one teachers had one year of vocational training, three had two years, two had three years, five had four years while nineteen teachers had none.

TABLE I

Respondents Individual Status

1. Indicate your current teaching assignment in Special Education.					
a. SLD	b. SED	c. EMR	d. Supported Employment	e. other	
28	10	5	2	5	
2. Indicate the total year of employment in Special Education.					
a. First Year	b. 2 - 7	c. 8 -12	d. 13 or more		
5	16	11	18		
3. Indicate your current curriculum program.					
a. Remedial academics	b. functional	c. inclusion	d. other		
22		12	10	6	
4. Indicate the amount of time spent on vocational skills in your classroom per day.					
a. 1 bell	b. 2 bells	c. 3 or more	d. none		
9	2	3	36		
5. Indicate the amount of training in vocational education.					
a. 1 year	b. 2 years	c. 3 years	d. 4 or more	e. none	
21	3	2	5	9	
6. Which school are you currently assigned to?					
Bayside	Independence	Kempsville	Larkspur	Plaza	
13	1	5	9	1	
Princess Anne	Virginia Beach	Special Education Annex			
8	5	3			

Respondents were from the following middle schools:

Bayside (13), Independence (1), Kempsville (5), Larkspur (9), Plaza (1), Princess Anne (8), Virginia Beach (5), Lynnhaven (5) and Special Education Annex (3).

Table II explains Section I of Part II of the questionnaire which pertained to a need to establish a vocational education program in the middle school for disabled students. Question 1, Students have vocational goals in their IEP's, had 20 respond SA or 40 percent of the respondents, 11 respond A or 22 percent of the respondents, 9 respond D or 18 percent of the respondents, 1 respond SD or 2 percent of the respondents, 9 respond NA or 18 percent of the respondents and a mean response of 2.64. Question 2, Students need to be introduced to employable skills beginning in the middle school, had 34 respond SA or 68 percent of the respondents, 14 respond A or 28 percent of the respondents, 2 respond D or 4 percent of the respondents, 0 respond for SD and NA a mean response of 3.64. Question 3, Vocational education needs to begin in the middle school and continue through high school, had 34 respond SA or 68 percent of the respondents, 15 respond A or 30 percent of

TABLE II  
A NEED TO ESTABLISH A VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM  
IN MIDDLE SCHOOL FOR DISABLED STUDENTS  
QUESTION 1 THRU 6

Item No.	Item	Re- sponse	% of Total	Emphasis of Response										MEAN
				SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	NA	%	MEAN
1.	Students have vocational goals included in their IEP's.	50	100	20	40	11	22	9	18	1	2	9	18	2.64
2.	Students need to be introduced to employable skills beginning in middle school.	50	100	34	68	14	28	2	4	0	0	0	0	3.64
3.	Vocational education needs to begin in middle school and continue through high school.	50	100	34	68	15	30	1	2	0	0	0	0	3.64
4.	Vocational education that begins in high school is too late.	50	100	28	56	11	22	9	18	1	2	1	2	3.30
5.	Vocational programs in middle schools can prepare students for transition to high school vocational programs.	50	100	34	68	14	28	2	4	0	0	0	0	3.64
6.	Students need more than 4 years to prepare for the transition from school to adult life.	50	100	30	60	14	28	4	8	1	2	1	0	3.40

the respondents, 1 respond D or 2 percent of the respondents, 0 respond for both SD and NA and a mean response of 3.64.

Question 4, Vocational education that begins in high school is too late, had 28 respond SA or 56 percent of the respondents, 11 respond A or 22 percent of the respondents, 9 respond D or 18 percent of the respondents, 1 respond SD or 2 percent of the respondents, 1 respond NA or 2 percent of the respondents and a mean response of 3.30.

Question 5, Vocational programs in the middle schools can prepare students for the transition to high school vocational programs, had 34 respond SA or 68 percent of the respondents, 14 respond A or 28 percent of the respondents, 2 respond D or 4 percent of the respondents, 0 respond for SD and NA and a mean response of 3.64.

Question 6, Students need more than 4 years to prepare for the transition from school to adult life, had 30 respond SA or 60 percent of the respondents, 14 respond A or 28 percent of the respondents, 4 respond D or 8 percent of the respondents, 1 respond for SD or 2 percent of the respondents, 1 respond NA for 2 percent of the respondents and a mean response of 3.40.

Table III explains Section II of Part II of the questionnaire. Section II of the questionnaire consists of items dealing with integrating functional skills and real life community work experiences into existing curriculum.

Question 7, Students need to be taught remedial skills to prepare them for adult life, had 16 respond SA or 32 percent of the respondents, 19 respond A or 38 percent of the respondents, 7 respond D or 14 percent of the respondents, 4 respond for SD or 8 percent of the respondents, 4 respond NA or 8 percent of the respondents and a mean response of 2.78.

Question 8, Students need to be taught functional academics to prepare them for adult life, had 28 respond SA or 56 percent of the respondents, 20 respond A or 40 percent of the respondents, 1 respond D or 2 percent of the respondents, 1 respond SD or 2 percent of the respondents, 0 respond NA and a mean response of 3.50.

Question 9, A functional skills curriculum prepares the disabled student for transition to adult life, had 24 respond SA or 48 percent of the respondents, 21 respond A or 42 percent of the respondents, 1 respond D or 2 percent of the respondents, 1 respond SD or 2 percent of the

TABLE III  
THE NEED TO INTEGRATE FUNCTIONAL SKILL AND REAL LIFE  
COMMUNITY WORK EXPERIENCE INTO EXISTING CURRICULA  
QUESTION 7 THRU 14.

Item No.	Item	Re- sponse	% of Total	Emphasis of Response										MEAN
				SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	NA	%	
7.	Students need to be taught remedial academics to prepare them for adult life.	50	100	16	32	19	38	7	14	4	8	4	8	2.78
8.	Students need to be taught functional academics to prepare them for adult life.	50	100	28	56	20	40	1	2	1	2	0	0	3.50
9.	A functional skills curriculum prepares the disabled student for transition to adult life.	50	100	24	48	21	42	1	2	1	2	3	6	3.24
10.	A functional skills curriculum promotes the the application of cognitive skills in various activities throughout life.	50	100	23	46	24	48	1	2	0	0	2	4	3.32
11.	A functional skills curriculum prepares disabled students for transition from school to work.	50	100	25	50	19	38	2	4	1	2	3	6	3.24
12.	Functional skills can foster an understanding of the demands of adult life.	50	100	26	52	20	40	2	4	2	4	0	0	3.40
13.	Students need to be given opportunities to view different occupations or careers at work (i.e., career shadowing, field trips, etc.).	50	100	33	66	16	32	1	2	1	2	0	0	3.66
14.	Students need to be trained in vocational tasks in a room other than the classroom.	50	100	28	56	19	38	2	4	1	2	0	0	3.48

TABLE III con't  
THE NEED TO INTEGRATE FUNCTIONAL SKILLS AND REAL LIFE  
COMMUNITY WORK EXPERIENCE INTO EXISTING CURRICULA  
QUESTION 15 THRU 19

Item No.	Item	Re- sponse	% of Total	Emphasis of Response										MEAN
				SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	NA	%	
15.	Students need to be trained to make purchases in the community.	50	100	30	60	18	36	2	4	0	0	0	0	3.56
16.	Students need to be trained to discriminate between various denominations of money.	50	100	36	72	13	26	1	2	0	0	0	0	3.70
17.	Students need to be trained to independently report information on task results.	50	100	24	48	22	44	0	0	0	0	4	8	3.24
18.	Students need to be aware of available transportation (i.e. bus schedules, handicap bus services, etc.).	50	100	31	62	18	36	1	2	0	0	0	0	3.60
19.	Students need to be familiar with their surrounding community.	50	100	32	64	17	34	1	2	0	0	0	0	3.62



respondents, 3 respond NA or 6 percent of the respondents and a mean response of 3.24. Question 10 A functional curriculum promotes the application of cognitive skills in various activities throughout life, had 23 respond SA or 46 percent of the respondents, 24 respond A or 48 percent of the respondents, 1 respond D or 2 percent of the respondents, 0 respond SD, 2 respond NA or 4 percent of the respondents and a mean response of 3.32. Question 11, A functional skills curriculum prepares disabled students for transition from school to work, had 25 respond SA or 50 percent of the respondents, 19 respond A or 38 percent of the respondents, 2 respond D or 4 percent of the respondents, 1 respond SD or 2 percent of the respondents, 3 respond NA or 6 percent of the respondents and a mean response of 3.24. Question 12, Functional skills can foster an understanding of the demands of adult life, had 26 respond SA or 52 percent of the respondents, 20 respond A or 40 percent of the respondents, 2 respond D or 4 percent of the respondents, 2 respond SD or 4 percent of the respondents, 0 respond NA and a mean response of 3.40. Question 13, Student need to be given opportunities to view

different occupations or careers at work, had 33 respond SA or 66 percent of the respondents, 16 respond A or 32 percent of the respondents, 1 respond D or 2 percent of the respondents, 1 respond SD or 2 percent of the respondents, 0 respond NA and a mean response of 3.66. Question 14, Students need to be trained in vocational tasks in a room other than the classroom, had 28 respond SA or 56 percent of the respondents, 19 respond A or 38 percent of the respondents, 2 respond D or 4 percent of the respondents, 1 respond SD or 2 percent of the respondents, 0 respond NA and a mean response of 3.48. Question 15, Students need to be trained to make purchases in the community, had 30 respond SA or 60 percent of the respondents, 18 respond A or 36 percent of the respondents, 18 respond A or 36 percent of the respondents, 2 respond D or 4 percent of the respondents, 0 respond for SD, 0 respond for NA and a mean response of 3.56. Question 16, Students need to be trained to discriminate between various denominations of money, had 36 respond SA or 72 percent of the respondents, 13 respond A or 26 percent of the respondents, 1 respond D or 2 percent of the respondents, 0 respond for SD and NA and a mean

response of 3.70. Question 17, Students need to be trained to independently report information on task results, had 24 respond SA or 48 percent of the respondents, 22 respond A or 44 percent of the respondents, 0 respond D, 0 respond SD, 4 respond NA or 8 percent of the respondents and a mean response of 3.24. Question 18, Students need to be aware of available transportation, had 31 respond SA or 62 percent of the respondents, 18 respond A or 36 percent of the respondents, 1 respond D or 2 percent of the respondents, 0 respond SD, 0 respond NA and a mean response of 3.60. Question 19, Students need to be familiar with their surrounding community, had 32 respond SA or 64 percent of the respondents, 17 respond A or 34 percent of the respondents, 1 respond D or 2 percent of the respondents, 0 respond for SD, 0 respond for NA and a mean response of 3.62.

Table IV explains Section III of Part II of the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to answer questions concerning vocational education programs appropriate for middle school disabled students. Question 20, Students receiving service in LD, ED and EMR programs could benefit

TABLE IV  
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS APPROPRIATE  
FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL DISABLED STUDENTS  
QUESTION 20 THRU 22

Item No.	Item	Re- sponse	% of Total	Emphasis of Response										MEAN
				SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	NA	%	
20.	Students receiving services in LD, ED and EMR programs could benefit from Community-Based Vocational Training.	50	100	36	72	13	26	1	2	0	0	0	0	3.70
21.	Students receiving services in LD, ED and EMR programs could benefit from a year long vocational elective called Education for Employment (EFE). (This program is designed to help students prepare for successful employment. Instruction includes developing goals and values important for employment, occupational preparation and human relations).	50	100	37	74	12	24	1	2	0	0	0	0	3.72
22.	Pre-vocational prep programs in middle school would accelerate students for transition-to-work programs and apprenticeship programs for high school programs.	50	100	35	70	15	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.70

from Community-Based Vocational Training, had 36 respond SA or 72 percent of the respondents, 13 respond A or 26 percent of the respondents, 1 respond D or 2 percent of the respondents, 0 respond for SD, 0 respond for NA and a mean response of 3.70.

Question 21, Students receiving services in LD, ED and EMR programs could benefit from a year long vocational elective called Education for Employment (EFE), had 37 respond SA or 74 percent of the respondents, 12 respond A or 24 percent of the respondents, 0 respond SD, 0 respond NA and a mean response of 3.72. Question 22, Pre-vocational prep programs in the middle school would accelerate students for transition-to-work programs and apprenticeship programs for high school programs, had 35 respond SA or 70 percent of the respondents, 15 respond A or 30 percent of the respondents, 0 respond D, 0 respond SD, 0 respond NA and a mean response of 3.70.

Table V explains Section IV of Part II of the questionnaire. This section of the survey addressed skills needed for transition to secondary vocational education programs. Question 23, Students need to be taught basic employment vocabulary, had 30 respond SA or 60 percent of the

TABLE V  
SKILLS NEEDED FOR TRANSITION TO SECONDARY  
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS  
QUESTION 23 THRU 31

Item No.	Item	Re- sponse	% of Total	Emphasis of Response										MEAN	
				SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	NA	%		
23.	Students need to be taught basic employment vocabulary (i.e., employer, employee, job skills, etc.).	50	100	30	60	17	34	3	6	0	0	0	0	3.54	
24.	Students need to match and sort variable tasks such as filing.	50	100	20	40	20	40	5	10	0	0	5	0	3.40	
25.	Students need to be trained to change tasks on schedule without teacher prompts.	50	100	23	46	24	48	1	2	0	0	2	4	3.32	
26.	Students need to be trained to work in groups.	50	100	32	64	17	34	1	2	0	0	0	0	3.12	
27.	Students need to be trained to express preferences pertaining to tasks on which they wish to work.	50	100	25	50	23	46	1	2	1	2	0	0	3.42	
28.	Students need to be taught pre-vocational competencies (i.e., vocabulary, tools, safety, filling out forms, etc.)	50	100	32	64	16	32	1	2	1	2	0	0	3.58	
29.	There is a need to integrate functional skills and real life community or in school work experiences into existing curriculums.	50	100	31	62	16	32	2	4	1	2	0	0	3.54	
30.	Students need the following employment skills to be successful in transition from school to work: socialization, communication, financial management, and values clarification.	50	100	36	72	13	26	1	2	0	0	0	0	3.70	
31.	Employable skills can set the foundations for high school vocational programs.	50	100	33	66	16	32	1	2	0	0	0	0	3.64	

respondents, 17 respond A or 34 percent of the respondents, 3  
 respond D or 6 percent of the respondents, 0 respond SD, 0  
 respond NA and a mean response of 3.54. Question 24,  
 Students need to match and sort variable tasks such as  
 filing, had 20 respond SA or 40 percent of the respondents,  
 20 respond A or 40 percent of the respondents, 5 respond D  
 or 10 percent of the respondents, 0 respond SD, 5 respond NA  
 or 10 percent of the respondents and a mean response of 3.40.  
 Question 25, Students need to be trained to change tasks on  
 schedule without teacher prompts, had 23 respond SA or 46  
 percent of the respondents, 24 respond SA or 48 percent of  
 the respondents, 1 respond D or 2 percent of the respondents,  
 0 respond SD, 2 respond NA or 4 percent of the respondents  
 and a mean response of 3.32. Question 26, Students need to  
 be trained to work in groups, had 32 respond SA or 64 percent  
 of the respondents, 17 respond A or 34 percent of the  
 respondents, 1 respond D or 2 percent of the respondents, 0  
 respond SD, 0 respond NA and a mean response of 3.12.  
 Question 27, Students need to be trained to express  
 preferences pertaining to tasks on which they wish to work,

had 25 respond SA or 50 percent of the respondents, 23 respond A or 46 percent of the respondents, 1 respond D or 2 percent of the respondents, 1 respond SD or 2 percent of the respondents, 0 respond NA and a mean response of 3.42. Question 28, Students need to be taught pre-vocational competencies, had 32 respond SA or 64 percent of the respondents, 16 respond A or 32 percent of the respondents, 1 respond D or 2 percent of the respondents, 1 respond SD or 2 percent of the respondents, 0 respond NA and a mean response of 3.58. Question 29, There is a need to integrate functional skills and real life community or in school work experiences into existing curriculum, had 31 respond SA or 62 percent of the respondents, 16 respond A or 32 percent of the respondents, 2 respond D or 4 percent of the respondents, 1 respond SD or 2 percent of the respondents, 0 respond NA and a mean response of 3.54. Question 30, Students need the following employment skills to be successful in transition from school to work: socialization, communication, financial management and values clarification, had 36 respond SA or 72 percent of the respondents, 13 respond A or 26 percent of the respondents, 1 respond D or 2 percent of



the respondents, 0 respond SD, 0 respond NA and a mean response of 3.70. Question 31, Employable skills can set the foundations for high school vocational programs, had 33 respond SA or 66 percent of the respondents, 16 respond A or 32 percent of the respondents, 1 respond D or 2 percent of the respondents, 0 respond SD, 0 respond NA and a mean response of 3.64.

## **SUMMARY**

Chapter IV reported the findings of the questionnaire used in this research study. The findings were reported using a narrative and tables to explain how respondents answered each question. Chapter V will detail the summary, conclusion and recommendations for this study.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to determine teacher attitudes toward establishing a vocational education program for disabled students at the middle school level. The research goals answered by this study were as follows:

1. Determine the need to establish a vocational education program in Virginia Beach Middle Schools for disabled students.
2. Provide justification for integrating functional skills and real life community work experiences into existing curriculum.
3. Define the types of vocational education programs that are appropriate for the middle school disabled students.
4. Outline the skills needed for student transition from middle school vocational programs to secondary

vocational education programs.

A questionnaire instrument was designed and administered to fifty participants in Virginia Beach Public School System. Fifty questionnaires (100 percent) were returned and the results were tabulated. The data was then presented in table form. Based on this data, conclusions and recommendations were made for the Virginia Beach Public School system.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the research objectives the following conclusions are made:

1. Determine the need to establish a vocational education program in Virginia Beach Middle Schools for disabled students.

Sixty-eight percent of the participants responding to the survey strongly agree that vocational education needs to begin in middle school for disabled students.

2. Provide justification for integrating functional skills and real life community work experiences into existing curriculum.

Sixty-six percent of the participants responding to the survey strongly agree that students need to be given opportunities to view different occupations or careers at work. Fifty-six percent of the respondents strongly agree that students need to be taught functional academics and a need to be trained in vocational tasks in a room other than the classroom. Fifty-two percent of respondents strongly agree that functional skills can foster an understanding of the demands of adult life. Fifty percent of the respondents strongly agree a functional skills curriculum prepares disabled students for transition from school to work. Forty-eight percent of the respondents strongly agree a functional skills curriculum prepares the disabled student for transition to adult life. Forty-six percent of the respondents strongly agree cognitive skills in various activities

throughout life. The participants responding to the survey indicated a need to integrate functional skills and real life community work experiences into existing curriculum for the purpose of preparing disabled students for successful transition to adult life.

3. Define the types of vocational education programs that are appropriate for middle school disabled students. Seventy-four percent of the participants responding to the survey strongly agree that disabled students could benefit from a year long vocational elective call Education for Employment (EFE). Seventy-two percent of the respondents indicated Community-Base Vocational Training would be appropriate and seventy percent of the respondents strongly agree that pre-vocational prep programs would be appropriate. This indicated that the participants found that all three vocational education programs listed were appropriate and could benefit disabled students in middle school.
4. Outline the skills needed for student transition from middle school vocational education programs to

secondary vocational education programs.

The participants responding to the survey outlined the following skills needed for transition to secondary vocational programs and school-to-work: seventy-two percent strongly agree that socialization, communication, financial management and values clarification are important skills, sixty-six percent strongly agree that employable skills can set the foundation for high school vocational programs, sixty-four percent strongly agree that students need to be taught pre-vocational competencies and trained to work in groups. This indicated that a large number of participants strongly agree these skills are the foundation for disabled students to be successful in secondary vocational programs.

### **Recommendations**

The writer of this research recommends the following procedures be undertaken by the Virginia Beach Public School

## System.

1. Based upon this study, it is suggested that vocational education needs to begin in the middle school for disabled students.
2. In terms of curricula needs, a shift from academics to more functional and vocational skills appears warranted at the middle school level for disabled self-contained students.
3. It is highly recommended that the Virginia Beach Public School System consider implementing the Education for Employment (EFE), Community-Based Training and other vocational programs at the middle school level for disabled students.
4. It is recommended that middle school and secondary teachers work together to develop an appropriate curriculum for preparing disabled students for transition to secondary vocational programs.

In addition to the preceding suggestions, the results of this study can provide educational planning and special

education administrators with a benchmark for examining issues related to the importance of beginning vocational education in middle school for self-contained students.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brolin, Donn E.. "Life Center Career Education", Teaching Exceptional Children (Spring 1994) p. 55.

Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act of 1990, Public Law 101 - 392.

Clark, Gary M.. Career Education for The Handicapped Child in the Elementary Classroom. Denver, CO: Love, 1979.

Clark, G.M. and Kolstoe. O.P.. Career Development and Transition Education for Adolescents with Disabilities. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1990.

Clark, G., Carlson, B., Fisher, S., Cook, I., and D'Alonzo, B.. "Career Development for Students with Disabilities in Elementary Schools: A Position Statement of the Division on Career Development", Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 14:2 (Fall 1991) pp. 109 - 118.

Clement-Heist, K. Siegel, S., and Gaylord-Ross, R.. "Simulated and In Situ Vocational Social Skills Training for Youths with Learning Disabilities", Exceptional Children (February 1992) pp. 336 - 345.

Council for the Exceptional Children, The Issues in the Implementation of IDEA. Reston, VA: Department of Public Policy, January 11, 1994.

Cress, Katherine. "Why Not Ask The Students? Urban Teenagers Make the Case for Working", Phi Delta Kappan (October 1992) pp. 172 - 176.

Dymond, Stacy." Community-Based Vocational Training and the Labor Laws". Four Runner - Newsletter of the Severe Disabilities Technical Assistance Center (SD TAC). Vol.10. No. 2. Richmond, Virginia Commonwealth University, October, 1994.

Edgar, E.. "Secondary Programs in Special Education: Are Many of Them Justifiable?", Exceptional Children, 53 (1987) pp. 555 - 561.

Gillet, Pamela. Of Work and Worth: Career Education for Exceptional Children and Youth, Salt Lake, UT: Olympus Publishing, 1981, pp. 329 - 338.

Greenan, J. P., "Problems and Issues in Delivering Vocational Education Instruction and Support Services to Students with Learning Disabilities", Journal of Learning Disabilities, 15 (1982) pp. 231 - 235.

Halpern, Andrew S.. "Transition of Youth with Disabilities to Adult Life: A Position Statement of the Division on Career Development and Transition, The Council for Exceptional Children", Career Developmental Individuals, 17:2. (Fall 1994) pp. 115 - 124.

Halpern, Andrew S.. "Transition: Old Wine in New Bottles", Exceptional Children (December/January 1992) pp. 202 - 211.

Harnisch, D. L. and Snawaert, D.. Exiting School: Who is Caring About the Youths with Disabilities. Champaign, IL: Transition Research Institute at Illinois, University of Illinois, 1992.

Harnisch, D. L., Wermuth, T.R., and Zheng, P.. Identification and Validation of Transition Quality Indicators: Implication for Education Reform. Champaign, Ill: Transition Research Institute at Illinois, University of Illinois, 1992.

Hasazi, S. B., Gordon, L.R., and Roe, C.A.. "Factors Associated with the Employment Status of Handicapped Youth Exiting High School from 1979 to 1983", Exceptional Children, 51 (1985) pp. 455-469.

House Report No. 101-544, 1990.

Individual with Disabilities Education Act of 1990, Public Law 101-476.

Inge, Katherine J. and Wehman, Paul. Vocational Options Project: Designing Community-Based Vocational Programs for Students with Severe Disabilities. Richmond, VA: Virginia Commonwealth University, 1993.

Krom, Dawn M. and Prater, Mary A.. "IEP Goals for Intermediate-Aged Students with Mild Mental Retardation", Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 16:1 (Spring 1993) pp. 87-95.

Meers, Gary. "On Their Own; Preparing Disabled Students for Independent Living and Productive Careers", The Vocational Education Journal, 68:8 (November/December 1993) p. 30.

Mithaug, D. E., Horiuchi, C. N., and Fanning, P. N.. "A Report on the Colorado Statewide Follow-Up Survey of Special Education Students", Exceptional Children, 51(1985) pp. 397-404.

Moon, M. S., Kiernan, W., and Halloran, W.. "School-Based Vocational Programs and Labor Laws: A 1990 Update", The Journal for the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 15:3 (1990) pp. 177-185.

Moore, Stephen C., Agran, M. and Mc Sweyn, C. A.. "Career Education: Are We Starting Early Enough?", Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 13:2 (Fall 1990) pp. 129-133.

National Transition Network. "Transition Planning: What are, the Ages?", Parent Brief, No. 3, University of Minnesota, Winter 1993.

Netherton, David L.. The EEE/WECEP Teacher/Coordinator Handbook. Norfolk, VA: Old Dominion University, July 1994.

Okolo, C.M., and Sitlington, P.. "The Role of Special Education in LD Adolescents' Transition from School to Work", Learning Disability Quarterly, 9 (1986) pp. 141-155.

Polloway, E. A., Patton, J. R., Epstein, M. H. and Smith, T. E.. "Comprehensive Curriculum for Students with Handicaps", Focus on Exceptional Children, 21:8 (1989) pp. 1-12.

Polloway, E. A., Patton, J. R., Smith, J. D. and Roderique, T. W.. "Issues in Program Design for Elementary Students with Mild Retardation: Emphasis on Curriculum Development", Education and Training in Mental Retardation, 26 (1991) pp. 142-150.

Pumpian, I., Shepard, H., and West, E.. Negotiating Job-Training Stations with Employers. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks Publishing Co., 1988.

Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992, Public Law 102-569.

Rumber, R. W.. "High School Dropouts: A Review of Issues and Evidence", Review of Educational Research, 57 (1987) pp. 101-121.

Sarkes, M. D. and Scott, J. L.. Vocational Special Needs. Homewood, IL: American Technical Publishers, Inc., 1986, p. 7.

United States Department of Education. School Dropout Prevention- Interventions to Support Junior-High School-Aged Students at Highest Risk of Dropping Out of School. Washington, DC: Office of Special Education Programs, November, 1991.

United States Department of Education. The Tenth Annual Report to Congress. Dropout Rates. Washington, DC: United States Department of Labor, 1988.

Wehman, Paul. "Transition for Young People with Disabilities: Challenges for the 1990's", Education and Training in Mental Retardation (June 1992) pp. 112-118.

Wircenski, Jerry L.. Employability Skills for the Special Needs Learner. Rockville, MD: Aspen Systems Corporation, 1982, pp. 18-19.

Wolman, C., Bruininks, R. H. and Thurlow, M.L.. "Dropouts in Regular Education and Special Education", Remedial and Special Education, Vol. 10 (1989) pp. 10-19.

## **APPENDIX**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Vocational Education Needs Assessment Questionnaire for Establishing Vocational Programs in Middle Schools for Disabled Students**

# **Vocational Education Needs Assessment Questionnaire for Establishing Vocational Programs in Middle Schools for Disabled Students**

## **DIRECTIONS:**

The following statements assess the extent to which disabled students in middle schools need to prepare for transition from school to work before entering high school. The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine a need to begin vocational education in middle schools for disabled students. The responses to the items listed are Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) and No Answer (NA). An additional space will be provided at the end of the instrument for respondents to write in any concerns or additional comments. Respondents are asked to circle their answers.

## **Part I: Individual Status**

1. Indicate your current teaching assignment in Special Education.  
(a) Specific Learning Disabled (SLD)  
(b) Seriously Emotionally Disturbed (SED)  
(c) Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR)  
(d) Supported Employment  
(e) Other
2. Indicate the total years of employment in Special Education.  
(a) First year      (b) 2 - 7      (c) 7 - 12      (d) 13 or more
3. Indicate your current curriculum program.  
(a) remedial academics      (b) functional academics  
(c) inclusion      (d) other
4. Indicate the amount of time spent on vocational skills in your classroom per day.  
(a) 1 bell      (b) 2 bells  
(c) 3 or more bells      (d) none
5. Indicate your amount of training in vocational education.  
(a) 1 year      (b) 2 years      (c) 3 years      (d) 4 or more years
6. Which school are you currently assigned to?  

---
7. Please list your name so that I may follow up with those who have not responded. 

---



## **Part II: Vocational Education Needs Assessment for Disabled Students in Virginia Beach Middle Schools**

### **Section I: The Need to Establish a Vocational Education Program in Middle School for Disabled Students.**

1.	Students have vocational goals included in their IEP's.	SA	A	D	SD	NA
2.	Students need to be introduced to employable skills beginning in middle school.	SA	A	D	SD	NA
3.	Vocational education needs to begin in middle school and continue through high school.	SA	A	D	SD	NA
4.	Vocational education that begins in high school is too late.	SA	A	D	SD	NA
5.	Vocational programs in middle schools can prepare students for transition to high school vocational programs.	SA	A	D	SD	NA
6.	Students need more than 4 years to prepare for the transition from school to adult life.	SA	A	D	SD	NA

### **Section II: The Need to Integrate Functional Skills and Real Life Community Work Experiences Into Existing Curricula.**

7.	Students need to be taught remedial academics to prepare them for adult life.	SA	A	D	SD	NA
8.	Students need to be taught functional academics to prepare them for adult life.	SA	A	D	SD	NA
9.	A functional skills curriculum prepares the disabled student for transition to adult life.	SA	A	D	SD	NA
10.	A functional skills curriculum promotes the the application of cognitive skills in various activities throughout life.	SA	A	D	SD	NA
11.	A functional skills curriculum prepares disabled students for transition from school to work.	SA	A	D	SD	NA
12.	Functional skills can foster an understanding of the demands of adult life.	SA	A	D	SD	NA

13.	Students need to be given opportunities to view different occupations or careers at work (i.e., career shadowing, field trips, etc.).	SA	A	D	SD	NA
14.	Students need to be trained in vocational tasks in a room other than the classroom.	SA	A	D	SD	NA
15.	Students need to be trained to make purchases in the community.	SA	A	D	SD	NA
16.	Students need to be trained to discriminate between various denominations of money.	SA	A	D	SD	NA
17.	Students need to be trained to independently report information on task results.	SA	A	D	SD	NA
18.	Students need to be aware of available transportation (i.e. bus schedules, handicap bus services, etc.).	SA	A	D	SD	NA
19.	Students need to be familiar with their surrounding community.	SA	A	D	SD	NA

**Section III: Vocational Education Programs Appropriate for Middle School Disabled Students.**

20.	Students receiving services in LD, ED and EMR programs could benefit from Community-Based Vocational Training.	SA	A	D	SD	NA
21.	Students receiving services in LD, ED, and EMR programs could benefit from a year long vocational elective called Education for Employment (EFE). (This program is designed to help students prepare for successful employment. Instruction includes developing goals and values important for employment, occupational preparation and human relations).	SA	A	D	SD	NA
22.	Pre-vocational prep programs in middle school would accelerate students for transition-to-work programs and apprenticeship programs for high school programs.	SA	A	D	SD	NA

**Section IV: Skills Needed For Transition to Secondary Vocational Education Programs.**

- |     |   |    |   |   |    |    |
|-----|---|----|---|---|----|----|
| 23. | Students need to be taught basic employment vocabulary (i.e., employer, employee, job skills, etc.).  | SA | A | D | SD | NA |
| 24. | Students need to match and sort variable tasks such as filing.  | SA | A | D | SD | NA |
| 25. | Students need to be trained to change tasks on schedule without teacher prompts.  | SA | A | D | SD | NA |
| 26. | Students need to be trained to work in groups.  | SA | A | D | SD | NA |
| 27. | Students need to be trained to express preferences pertaining to tasks on which they wish to work.  | SA | A | D | SD | NA |
| 28. | Students need to be taught pre-vocational competencies (i.e., vocabulary, tools, safety, filling out forms, etc.)   | SA | A | D | SD | NA |
| 29. | There is a need to integrate functional skills and real life community or in school work experiences into existing curriculums.   | SA | A | D | SD | NA |
| 30. | Students need the following employment skills to be successful in transition from school to work: socialization, communication, financial management, and values clarification. | SA | A | D | SD | NA |
| 31. | Employable skills can set the foundations for high school vocational programs.  | SA | A | D | SD | NA |

**Please write in any concerns or comments not included in this questionnaire in providing vocational education for middle school disabled students.**

32. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
33. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Cover Letter To Teachers**

May 31, 1995

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am conducting a research study to determine teacher attitudes toward establishing vocational education programs for LD, EMR, and SED self-contained students in middle schools. This is a partial fulfillment of the Master's Degree in Occupational and Technical Studies at Old Dominion University. This data is a very important part of completing the Master's Degree Program that I am pursuing at Old Dominion University.

Please complete the enclosed survey and return by June 9, 1995. I am very grateful for your cooperation and assistance in completing this survey in such a short time.

If you have any questions or need to speak to me I may be reached at the following telephone numbers: School : 473-5064 or Home : 426-2552.

Many thanks for helping me complete this research study.

Cordially yours,

Dazzerene Ra  
Bayside 6th Grade Campus