1-1-2003

Linking transition best practices to student outcomes for students with mental retardation

Deborah Joy Kennedy
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/rtds

Repository Citation
Kennedy, Deborah Joy, "Linking transition best practices to student outcomes for students with mental retardation" (2003). UNLV Retrospective Theses & Dissertations. 2550.
https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/rtds/2550

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Scholarship@UNLV. It has been accepted for inclusion in UNLV Retrospective Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.
NOTE TO USERS

Duplicate page number(s); text follows.
The manuscript was scanned as received.

124

This reproduction is the best copy available.

UMI®
LINKING TRANSITION BEST PRACTICES TO
STUDENT OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS
WITH MENTAL RETARDATION

by

Deborah Joy Kennedy

Bachelor of Science
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
1994

Master of Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
1997

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Special Education
Department of Special Education
College of Education

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
December 2003
Dissertation Approval
The Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

October 20, 2003

The Dissertation prepared by

Deborah Joy Kennedy

Entitled

Linking Transition Best Practices to Student Outcomes for

Students with Mental Retardation.

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College

Examination Committee Member

Examination Committee Member

Graduate College Faculty Representative
ABSTRACT

Linking Transition Best Practices to Student Outcomes for Students with Mental Retardation

by

Deborah Joy Kennedy

Dr. Tom Pierce, Examination Committee Chair
Associate Professor of Special Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The purpose of this study was to focus on best practice components in transition programs for students with mental retardation. This was accomplished by determining: (a) post school outcomes; (b) the extent to which the transition plan reflected current best practices; (c) which predictor variables were the most important in predicting positive outcomes; and (d) the extent of student, parent, and agency involvement in the transition process.

The participants in this study (n = 16) were parents of students with mental retardation who graduated, dropped out, or aged out in the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 school years in a southwestern state. The study included three data collection systems; a demographic survey, the student's individualized education program (IEP), and a family interview.

iii
The results from the demographic survey indicated that: (a) employment options continue to be sheltered employment or unemployment, (b) students continue to live at home or with relatives, and (c) most adolescents continue to access community facilities.

The results from the individualized education program (IEP) rating form indicated that: (a) vocational training was documented in almost all of the IEPs, (b) social skills was documented in about half of the IEPs, (c) none of the IEPs referred to paid work experience, (d) almost all the students and parents attended the IEPs, (e) only two IEP meetings had agencies in attendance the student’s final year, and (f) student, parent, and school personnel were listed as the persons responsible for delivering supports in the majority of the transition plans.

The results from the family interview indicated that: (a) student involvement in transition planning was minimal, (b) parents went to the IEP meetings, but were not an integral part of the team, (c) there was a lack of agency support, and (e) although almost all of the students expressed their vision for the future, goals were not written addressing these desires, and visions never materialized after the student exited high school.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................ iii

LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................ vii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ....................................................................................................... ix

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................... 1
  Statement of the Problem .............................................................................................. 14
  Research Questions ...................................................................................................... 15
  Purpose of the Study ...................................................................................................... 19
  Significance of the Study .............................................................................................. 20
  Limitations .................................................................................................................... 22
  Definition of Terms ........................................................................................................ 22

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE ............................................... 25
  Essential Components of Transition Planning ............................................................. 26
  Best Practice Components .......................................................................................... 29
  Emerging Best Practices .............................................................................................. 40
  Exemplary Transition Programs .................................................................................. 43
  Summary ........................................................................................................................ 46

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY .................................................................................... 47
  Design and Procedures ................................................................................................. 49
  Instrumentation ............................................................................................................ 54
  Data Collection and Analysis ...................................................................................... 58

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS ................................................................................................. 60
  Student Demographic Survey ...................................................................................... 61
  Individualized Education Program (IEP) Rating Checklist .......................................... 85
  Family Interview ......................................................................................................... 97

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1  Studies Identifying Best Practices in Transition ................................. 16
Table 2  Frequency and Percentage of Selected Demographic Characteristics .... 62
Table 3  Frequency and Percentage Reason for Student's Exit From High School . 65
Table 4  Frequency and Percentage of Type of Curriculum ................................ 66
Table 5  Frequency and Percentage of Skill Areas Taught in the Functional Program . 67
Table 6  Frequency of Job(s) Parent Identified Student was Trained to do When He or She Left School .......................................................... 68
Table 7  Frequency and Percentage of Students Employed While in School ....... 70
Table 8  Frequency and Percentage of Students Employed During the Summer .... 71
Table 9  Frequency and Percentage of Categories that Best Describes the Student's Current Employment Status .................................................. 72
Table 10 Frequency and Percentage of Jobs Student Held Since Leaving School...... 73
Table 11 Frequency of Reported Job Titles .......................................................... 74
Table 12 Frequency and Percentage of Assistance in Locating Employment .......... 75
Table 13 Frequency and Percentage of Hours Worked in a Week for Pay .......... 76
Table 14 Frequency and Percentage of Hourly Salary ........................................... 77
Table 15 Frequency and Percentage of Fringe Benefits Received by Employed Students .......................................................... 78
Table 16 Frequency and Percentage of Length of Employment ......................... 79
Table 17 Frequency and Percentage of Level of Job Satisfaction ........................ 79
Table 18 Frequency of Obstacles to Employment of Those Who are Currently Unemployed .......................................................... 80
Table 19 What School Could Have Done to Help with Employment of Those that Are Unemployed .......................................................... 81
Table 20 Frequency and Percentage of Current Living Arrangement ................. 82
Table 21 Frequency and Percentage of Facilities Frequented One or More Hours a Week .......................................................... 83
Table 22 Frequency and Percentage of Activities Participated in Regularly .......... 84
Table 23 Frequency and Percentage of Groups or Clubs Attended ....................... 85
Table 24 Frequency and Percentage of Individuals Child Spends Most Time with During Leisure Activities .................................................. 86
Table 25 Frequency and Percentage of Groups of People Child Spends Most Time During Leisure Activities .................................................. 87
Table 26 Frequency and Percentage of Satisfaction with Child’s Life in General .......88
Table 27 Frequency and Percentage of Team Members Who Attended IEP Meeting .91
Table 28 Frequency and Percentage of Persons or Agencies Responsible for
Delivering Supports for Instruction .............................................................94
Table 29 Frequency and Percentage of Persons or Agencies Responsible for
Delivering Supports for Related Services ...................................................95
Table 30 Frequency and Percentage of Persons or Agencies Responsible for
Delivering Supports for Community Experiences ......................................96
Table 31 Frequency and Percentage of Persons or Agencies Responsible for
Delivering Supports for Employment and Other Post-School Adult
Living Objectives .........................................................................................97
Table 32 Frequency and Percentage for Persons or Agencies Responsible for
Delivering Supports for Daily Living Skills and Functional Vocational
Evaluation .....................................................................................................98
Table 33 Frequency and Percentage of Vocational Training, Paid Work Experience,
and Social Skills Training ............................................................................99
Table 34 Participants .....................................................................................101
Table 35 IEP/Transition Meeting Involvement .................................................103
Table 36 Student Visions for the Future and Actual Outcomes .........................105
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to many people who have inspired me these past few years. Without the support of my family, friends, and professors this dream would never have become a reality.

First I would like to thank my family. To Larry, my husband, without your support and encouragement I never would have been able to achieve what I have today. You lightened my load by taking over all the mundane chores and never once complained. To Jennifer, my daughter, thank-you for bringing so much joy to my life. And finally to my mom, thank you for convincing me I wasn’t too old to go to back to school.

To Karen Kennedy, Debbie Dondero, Monica Brown, and Nicole Dobbins, thank you for your support, friendship, and allowing me to blow off steam. I am also forever grateful to the Special Education Department whom I truly consider my second family.

I especially want to thank my committee, your expertise and devotion inspires me everyday. Thank-you Dr. Kyle Higgins for always encouraging me to get out of my comfort zone and to be the best I can be. Thank-you Dr. Susan Miller for your encouragement and support. I have learned so much from both of you through the years. Dr. Eunsook Hong, thank-you for helping me get through two very difficult classes and your guidance in the methodology of my study.
Dr. Pierce, to you I owe the greatest thanks. Your compassion for this profession influenced my decision to go into this field and has changed my life. Your confidence in me has encouraged me to attempt things I never thought I was capable of. You have seen me through some rough times and have always been a source of strength. You are my mentor and my friend, thank-you.

x
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The transition from school to work can be difficult for students with and without disabilities (Halpern, 1993). Many choices must be made, including employment options, living arrangements, and social relationships that often have life-long consequences (Will, 1984a). Transition is a scaffold between the security and structure of school life and the independence and risks of adult life (Will, 1984a).

Employment has been considered an important outcome of education and transition for the last two decades as represented in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) transition model equating successful transition to employment (Will, 1984a). A lack of vocational skills and the inability to know how to find a job are major concerns for individuals with all types of disabilities (Hess, Kregel, & Wehman, 1992). Employment is important in fostering self-esteem and earning wages as both contribute to greater independence (Hess, Kregel, & Wehman, 1992). Successful transition promotes employment and enables individuals to become respected citizens (Giordano & D’Alonzo, 1994).
History and Legislation

Work training programs for persons with disabilities began in the early 1940s when John Duncan developed a systematic program to help people with disabilities become prepared for jobs in society (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoel, 2000). Duncan noted that prior to training, the performance IQs were about 30 points higher than verbal IQs among students at his school in Lankhills, Hampshire, England before training. With this knowledge he analyzed jobs in the community and arranged needed skills in hierarchical order and designed a program that focused on concrete thinking.

This system was incorporated in a program developed by Richard Hungerford who was the director of the Bureau for Children with Retarded Mental Development in New York in the early 1940s. Hungerford published a series of journals called *Occupational Education* that provided teachers with instructions for teaching job skills in various trades (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoel, 2000). These methods have been expanded and refined and continue to be used in many technical manuals.

In 1963, the Vocational Education Act of 1963 (P.L. 88-210) was passed with the intent that persons with disabilities would be included in vocational training and would learn specific work skills from experts in the field (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoel, 2000). Vocational education focused on training of specific job related technical skills within a vocational program (Gajar, Goodman, & McAfee, 1993). However, funding was minimal and few students with disabilities were served.
The transition concept was introduced in the early 1970s with the emergence of career education (Kochhar & West, 1995). The focus of career education was to help students in the acquisition of a meaningful life rather than making a living (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000). Career education considered all the roles one plays during the life span, including learner, citizen, family member, consumer, and social-political being and how these roles are constantly changing (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000).

Although the concept of career education was nationally accepted, it was not nationally implemented (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000). Reichard (1979) analyzed programs in five states and found the four major reasons career education was not being implemented were (a) career education was often viewed as vocational education, (b) no uniform guidelines or definitions were in place, (c) lack of materials, and (d) philosophical differences between administrators and teachers.

In 1975, the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA, P.L. 94-142) was passed and formulated the future of special education. Although the term “transition services” was not added until the Reauthorization of P.L. 94-142 in 1990, the goal that students with disabilities were entitled to lead productive adult lives and be integrated into a heterogeneous society was clear.

After the Amendments to the Education of the Handicapped Act (P.L. 98-199) were enacted, many states willingly developed transition supports and services for youth with disabilities and by the end of the 1980s, all states had some form of transition mandate.
(Kochhar & West, 1995). This legislation did not, however, provide a definition, did not include the extensive characteristics of transition services, and did not define the role of interagency responsibilities (Wehman, 1992).

Even though vocational education and career education had been a part of special education for many years, the need for a more systematic approach became apparent in the 1980s (Will, 1984b). Follow-up studies indicated unacceptable high rates of unemployment. Madeline Will, then Assistant Secretary of Education of the United States Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), challenged educators and offered a commitment from OSERS to break down barriers of communication, one of which was the barrier between the school and the workplace. Will contended resolving this barrier would resolve barriers to independent living, transportation, and pursuit of leisure time activities. Halpern (1985) maintained that community adjustment needed to be added to the OSERS transition model, in that employment did not correlate with community adjustment.

Halpern (1993) conceptualized postschool outcomes in a broader sense. Consequently, he developed alternate domains to evaluate and structure transition programs. Halpern developed three quality of life domains (the physical and material well-being domain, the performance of adult roles domain, and the personal fulfillment domain) and fifteen outcomes for the domains. The physical and material well-being domain included basic rights that should be available to everyone. These rights included
freedom from severe hunger or homelessness, a sufficient regular income to avoid poverty, and a safe living environment. The performance of adult roles domain involved ways an individual interacts with the environment and included community access, employment, leisure, personal relationships, citizenship, and social responsibility. These roles enhanced a person's quality of life, but everyone did not need to be involved at the same level. Individuals chose the roles according to their needs, interests, and preferences. The personal fulfillment domain dealt with happiness, satisfaction, and a sense of general well being that did not always coincide with success.

The first federal law requiring transition services was mandated in 1990. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, P.L. 101-476) defined transition services and provisions. Individualized education programs (IEPs) for students 16 or older were required to include an explanation of transition services. This requirement was intended to ensure that students received support in either finding employment or postsecondary education upon graduation.

Other policy initiatives that supported transition services at that time were the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA, P.L. 101-336) and the Rehabilitation Act Amendment of 1992 (P.L. 102-569). ADA mandated that existing work facilities be made accessible to individuals with disabilities. Employers were required to provide job restructuring, modify work schedules, acquire or modify equipment or devices, modify exams, adapt training materials or policies, and make other similar accommodations. The
reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act (1992) focused on youth with disabilities who were in the process of transitioning from school to employment or postsecondary training. The Act concentrated on services to students with severe disabilities because of their difficulty in preparing for and entering competitive employment.

Another mandate that attempted to ensure students with disabilities transitioned successfully from school to work was the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-239). The intent of this Act was to provide states with start-up money to develop systems that would help students prepare and make transitions from school to work, post-secondary education, or advanced training. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act determined school-to-work programs were needed by all students, but specifically mentioned individuals with disabilities be included in these reform efforts.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (P.L. 105-17) mandated new transition related requirements. IDEA '97 required that the IEP include a statement of the student’s course of study no later than age 14 (or younger if determined appropriate). A statement of interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages was required to be included by the time the student reached the age of 16.

**Research Studies Leading to Reform**

Despite policy initiatives and legislation, data from follow-up studies for students with disabilities have been discouraging. The following studies have
been chronologically arranged to demonstrate the steps toward reform.

Mithaug, Horiuchi, and Fanning (1985) investigated the relationship between school programs and postschool outcomes. Trained interviewers met with 234 special education students who graduated in 1978 and 1979 in Colorado. Students who participated in this follow-up survey included individuals with mental retardation, emotional/behavioral disturbances, physical impairments, and perceptual/communication disabilities. Results of the interview indicated that 187 (80%) of the students identified their course of study in high school as vocational and 47 (20%) identified their course of study as college preparatory. At the time of the interview, 161 (69%) were employed and 192 (82%) had held at least one job since graduation. However, many had held two, three, four, or five different jobs since exiting high school. The average number of jobs for the sample was 3.1. Of the 192 who had held a job, 61 (32%) reported working full-time and 56 (29%) part-time. Furthermore, 83 (43%) stated that they earned less than $3/hour and 25 (13%) less than $4/hour. One hundred-fifty (64%) reported that they lived with their parents. Students reported that they viewed their educational experiences in the special education programs positively, but, felt they needed more training in the areas of vocation, independent living, and social skills. In the area of personal fulfillment, the majority of students (64%) responded they were satisfied with life, 56 (24%) reported they were okay or neutral, and 35 (15%) stated they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. A specific breakdown by exceptionality was not provided.
Wehman, Kregel, and Seyfarth (1985a) identified professionals familiar with the schools and agencies to survey parents of children with mild (183) and moderate, severe, or profound (117) mental retardation who exited school between 1979 and 1983 in Virginia. The intent of the study was to assess employment status, school vocational programs, and key factors influencing employment or unemployment. Findings indicated that only 86 (28.6%) of the students were employed full-time, 21 (7%) part-time, and 18 (6%) in a sheltered workshop. Of the 125 students who were employed, 31 (25%) earned monthly earnings between $15 and $200, 60 (48%) between $201 and $500, 21 (17%) between $501 and $700, and 38 (30%) received fringe benefits. Only 14 out of 116 (12%) participants with moderate to severe mental retardation were competitively employed. Two hundred-seventy (69%) of the total sample indicated they had received some sort of vocational training during their high school years, however few participated in a formal vocational education program. Furthermore, 227 (75.7%) reported never receiving services from a rehabilitation counselor.

Subsequently, Wehman, Kregel, and Seyfarth (1985b) reported data from the larger study, surveying the parents of the 117 individuals with moderate, severe, or profound mental retardation. The purpose of this follow up study was to ascertain the employment status of the individuals with severe disabilities as well as the types of services received by them. Results indicated that only 25 (21.4%) out of the 117 were employed and 14 of the jobs were in part or full-time competitive employment while 11 were in sheltered
workshops. Two of the participants earned between $501 and $700 per month, six earned between $101 and $500, and the rest of the participants earned less than $100 per month. One hundred-one (86%) of the total sample (117) reported they had not earned more than $1000 since leaving high school. Ninety-three of 117 (79%) participants indicated they had received no rehabilitation services and 82 of the 117 (70%) had never received local services for people with mental retardation.

From the larger study by Wehman, Kregel, and Seyfarth (1985a); Kregel, Wehman, Seyfarth, and Marshall (1986) examined the community integration of the 300 students with mild (183), moderate/severe (117) mental retardation after they exited high school. Data from surveys indicated that only 21 (11%) of individuals with mild mental retardation lived independently, 151 (83%) with a parent or relative, and 11 (6%) in an alternative living arrangement. Of the 117 individuals with moderate to severe mental retardation, 3 (3%) lived independently, 108 (92%) with a parent or relative, and 6 (5%) in an alternative living arrangement. One hundred-twenty (66%) of individuals with mild mental retardation frequented restaurants, 149 (81%) retail stores, 73 (40%) post offices, and 68 (37%) banks. The percent of individuals with moderate or severe mental retardation who frequented these places was somewhat smaller, 20 (17%) restaurants, 47 (40%) retail stores, 10 (9%) post offices, and 8 (7%) banks. Individuals with mild mental retardation engaged in social activities outside the home, which included visiting homes of friends 147 (80%), outdoor recreation activities 51 (28%), and indoor recreation
activities 53 (29%). The percent of individuals with moderate/severe mental retardation who engaged in the same activities ranged from visiting homes of friends 59 (50%), to outdoor recreation activities 32 (27%), and indoor recreation activities 33 (28%). One hundred seventy-nine (60%) reported they spent their free time with family members, 67 (22%) with friends, 10 (3%) with the public, 3 (1%) alone, and 41 (14%) reported spending an equal amount of time with family, friends, alone, and in public. The majority of leisure interests were passive and home-based.

Schalock et al. (1986) conducted a 5-year follow-up study of 108 students with specific learning disabilities (65), mild mental retardation (31), and moderate mental retardation (12) who graduated from high school during 1979 to 1983. All students had been placed in a job-exploration training site during the last two years of high school. The purpose of the study was to evaluate postschool outcomes in the areas of employment and living arrangements and to determine the relationship between those outcomes and 19 predictor variables (e.g., student characteristics, school variables, and county characteristics). Data were collected through student interviews and/or family members. Outcome data pertaining to students with learning disabilities indicated 47 (72%) were employed, 12 (18%) were unemployed, 5 (8%) were attending a technical or state college, and 1 (2%) was in a prison/mental health facility. Thirty-five (54%) were living at home, 14 (22%) were living semi-independently (e.g., apartment, dormitory) and only 16 (25%) were living independently. Outcome data pertaining to students with mental
retardation indicated 18 (58%) individuals with mild mental retardation were employed, 11 (35%) unemployed, 1 (3%) attended post secondary education, and 1 (3%) was in a program for persons with mental retardation. For individuals with moderate mental retardation only 3 (25%) were employed, 4 (33%) were unemployed, 4 (33%) were in a program for persons with mental retardation, and 1 (8%) was in a mental health facility.

Data on current living environment indicated of those with mild mental retardation 22 (71%) were living at home or group home, 2 (6%) were living semi-independently, and 7 (23%) were living independently. Of those with moderate mental retardation 9 (75%) were living at home or group home, 2 (17%) were living semi-independently, and only 1 (8%) was living independently.

Sitlington and Frank (1989) investigated the adjustment of individuals with mental retardation one year after their graduation. Trained professionals interviewed 677 students with mental retardation (615 graduates, 62 dropouts) one year after they exited from high school special education programs in the state of Iowa in 1985 and 1986. The Iowa Department of Education definition of mental retardation used one standard deviation below the mean rather than the more common definition of two standard deviations, therefore a larger proportion of students were labeled as having mental retardation in this study than in other similar studies. Data were reported according to the instructional program model (e.g., resource room, self-contained, combination). Results indicated that 402 (67%) of the 615 participants that graduated were employed. Two
hundred eighty-five (71%) were competitively employed, 87 (21.6%) worked in sheltered workshops, and 30 (7.5%) were engaged in community-based employment. The average wage for the total sample was $3.21 ($3.35 was minimum wage) and 81% of the jobs were considered low status jobs (e.g., laborers, service workers). Four hundred-nineteen (68%) lived with their parents. A large percentage of the participants, 553 (90%), were active in one or more leisure time activities.

Hasazi, Johnson, Hasazi, Gordon, and Hull (1989) compared 67 students with disabilities to 66 vocationally oriented students without disabilities who exited high school during the 1984-85 school year in Vermont. The purpose of this study was to compare employment status of students with and without disabilities. Disabilities included mental retardation, learning disabilities, and emotional disorders. The youth were interviewed in 1986 and again in 1987. Employment outcomes (e.g., hours worked, wages, skilled or unskilled jobs, fringe benefits, and means of finding employment) were studied in relation to vocational training, employment experiences, and gender. Results indicated that in 1986, 13 (41.9%) of the males and 2 (20%) of the females with disabilities were employed full-time compared to 38 (84.4%) of the males and 6 (42.9%) of the females without disabilities. In 1987, 20 (54.1%) of the males and 1 (7.7%) of the females were employed full-time compared to 38 (82.6%) of the males and 8 (57.1%) of the females without disabilities. There was no significant difference between students
with or without disabilities regarding residence status. During the first year following exit from high school, both groups were living in some form of dependent living arrangement.

The National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students (Valdés, Williamson, & Wagner, 1990) found that 47 out of 436 (10.9%) of students with mental retardation over the age of 19 worked in full-time competitive employment, 50 out of 436 (11.5%) worked in part-time competitive employment, and 220 out of 436 (50.5%) were unemployed. The remaining participated in volunteer work (21), workstudy programs (59), and sheltered employment (39). Of those who were employed, the average salary was $3.30 an hour. In the area of community adjustment, 4 out of 457 lived alone, 13 out of 457 with a spouse or roommate, and 1 out 457 in a dorm. The remaining 439 were either living with their parents; other family members; in a group home; in a mental health facility, institution for the disabled, hospital; or a correctional facility.

Brown (2000) conducted telephone interviews with parents of special education students identified as having moderate/severe mental retardation who had exited school in the years 1985, 1990, and 1995 in the state of Washington. The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of the transition mandate on outcomes for students with moderate/severe mental retardation. Outcomes included employment, education, postsecondary training, and independent living. Twenty-three graduates were surveyed six years after graduating in 1985, 18 graduates one year after graduating in 1990, 17 graduates six years after graduating in 1990, and 14 graduates one year after graduating
in 1995. Data from this follow-up study indicated that the employment rates for students with moderate/severe mental retardation after being out of school for a year were 9 out of 18 (50%) for 1990 graduates and 6 out of 14 (43%) for the 1995 graduates. No students were living independently one year after graduating in 1990 and only one student living independently one year after graduation in 1995. The outcome for students who had been out of school for five years was just as disappointing, with 2 out of 23 (8%) living independently from the 1985 cohort and 0 in the 1990 cohort.

In summary, researchers investigating postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities have either focused on various disabilities or evaluated the relationship between specific outcomes and various educational experiences. Although the methodology of these studies may be different, the results are similar. Even though students with specific learning disabilities are doing better than students with more severe disabilities (Schalock et al., 1986), the results are disappointing. Generally, students with disabilities have low employment rates, are under paid, and are dependent upon others for shelter.

Statement of the Problem

Students who exit from special education continue to have high unemployment rates and poor community adjustment despite individualized transition plans and federal transition mandates. This is especially true for students with mental retardation (Valdés,
Williamson, & Wagner, 1990). Students with mental retardation are leaving school with transition needs being unmet (Benz & Halpern, 1993). To date there is no research applying all six transition best practices (vocational intervention, parent involvement, paid work experience, social skills curriculum, interagency collaboration, and student involvement) to student postschool outcomes of employment, living arrangements, and community adjustment solely for students with mild to profound mental retardation. Studies have either included all disabilities, only individuals with specific classifications of mental retardation, or have examined only a select few of the best practice components (see Table 1).

Research Questions

Student Outcome

- What is the employment status of students with mental retardation after exiting high school? Where are students with mental retardation living after they exit high school?
- Do students with mental retardation access facilities within the community after they exit high school?

Transition Planning

- Did transition programs include vocational training, social skills training, and paid work experience?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>VT</th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>PW</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>AI</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benz &amp; Halpern (1993)</td>
<td>MR (mild to severe), SLD, SED</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell, Hensel, Hudson, Schwartz, &amp; Sealander (1987)</td>
<td>MR (mild to severe), LD, ED, VI, HI, PI, MD</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colley &amp; Jamison (1998)</td>
<td>MR (mild to severe), LD, ED</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getzel &amp; deFur (1997)</td>
<td>High incidence vs. low incidence disabilities</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gill &amp; Edgar (1990)</td>
<td>MR (mild), LD, ED, HI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasazi, Gordon, &amp; Roe (1985)</td>
<td>MR (mild), LD, ED</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>VT</th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>PW</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>AI</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heal, Gonzalez, Rusch, Copher, &amp; DeStefano (1990)</td>
<td>MR (mild to profound)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hudson, Schwartz, Sealander, Campbell, &amp; Hensel (1988)</td>
<td>MR (mild to severe), LD, ED, MD, VI, HI, PI</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mithuag, Horiuchi, &amp; Fanning (1985)</td>
<td>MR, ED, PI, communication</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample (1998)</td>
<td>SED</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schalock, Holl, Elliott, &amp; Ross (1992)</td>
<td>MR (mild to severe), SLD</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scuccimarra &amp; Speece (1990)</td>
<td>MR (severity unknown), LD, ED, PI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitlington &amp; Frank (1989)</td>
<td>MR (mild to severe)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spruill &amp; Kallio (1994)</td>
<td>MR (mild), LD, ED</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Table 1 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>VT</th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>PW</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>AI</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thoma, Rogan, &amp; Baker (2001)</td>
<td>MR (moderate &amp; severe), MD</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wehman, Kregel, &amp; Seyfarth (1985a)</td>
<td>MR (mild to profound)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wehman, Kregel, &amp; Seyfarth (1985b)</td>
<td>MR (moderate to profound)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wehmeyer &amp; Schwartz (1997)</td>
<td>MR (mild), LD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wehmeyer &amp; Schwartz (1998b)</td>
<td>MR (mild to moderate)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Best Practices; VT=Vocational Training; PI=Parent Involvement; PW=Paid Work Experience; SS=Social Skills Training; AI=Agency Involvement; SD=Self-Determination; SI=Student Involvement

Disabilities: MR=Mental Retardation; MD=Multiple Disabilities; LD=Learning Disabilities; ED=Emotional Disturbance; SED=Significant Emotional Disturbance; SLD=Specific Learning Disabilities; HI=Hearing Impaired; VI=Visually Impaired; PI=Physically Impaired
• What persons or agencies were responsible for delivering supports for coordinated activities in the transition plan?

• Which of these predictor variables (e.g., vocational training, social skills training, parent involvement, student involvement, paid work experience, interagency involvement) were the most important in predicting employment outcomes, living arrangements, and community participation?

**Involvement**

• To what extent was the student involved in planning his or her transition program?

• To what extent was the parent involved in planning the transition program?

• To what extent were agencies involved in transition from school to adulthood?

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to focus exclusively on best practice components in transition programs for students with mental retardation. This was accomplished by determining: (a) the post school outcomes (e.g., employment, living arrangements, community adjustment) of students with mental retardation (mild, moderate, severe, and profound); (b) the extent to which the transition component of the IEP reflected current best practices; (c) the predictor variables that were most important in predicting the positive outcomes of employment, living arrangements, and community participation; and (d) the extent of student, parent, and agency involvement in the transition process.
Typically, outcome data on the transition experiences of adolescents with disabilities have been used as indicators of special education program effectiveness (Brown, 2000). Post school outcome data can be used to evaluate and improve secondary transition programs, a concern identified as a challenge in implementing the transition mandate (Hasazi, Furney, & Destefano, 1999; Hughes et al. 1997). Although outcome data are important, demographic antecedents and program procedures that are relevant to the transition outcomes may be more appropriate indicators (Halpern, 1993).

Best practice components that facilitate transition from school to adult life have emerged in literature reviews (Hasazi, Furney, & Destefano, 1999; Hughes et al., 1997; Kohler, 1993; Kohler, DeStefano, Wermuth, Grayson, & McGinty, 1994; Rusch & Millar, 1998; Morningstar & Kleinhammer-Tramill, 1999). These components include vocational training, parent involvement, paid work experience, and social skills training. Other indicators of effective transition programs are interagency involvement (Kohler, DeStefano, Wermuth, Grayson, & McGinty, 1994; Sowers & Powers, 1989), and student self-determination and involvement in transition programming (Agran, Blanchard, & Wehmeyer, 2000; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997, 1998a, 1998b).

Significance of the Study

Halpern (1993) suggested collecting and evaluating data as it relates to educational practices and postschool outcomes. Specifically, these data should include: "(a) student
and family characteristics, (b) school services received (c) school outcomes achieved, (d) quality of life while in school, (e) postschool services received, and (f) quality of life after leaving school” (p. 493).

The Department of Education of a southwestern state conducted a self-assessment of special education services to determine areas of strength as well as areas in which improvement of services were needed. Reports from this state-wide assessment indicated there were limited data to understand what happens to students with disabilities upon exiting school, and little or no data available from students and families concerning the effectiveness of transition planning and overall satisfaction of services and supports received during high school.

This study provided documentation on the post-school outcomes of students with mental retardation in a southwestern state. These post school outcome data can be used to evaluate and improve secondary transition programs (Hasazi, Furney, & Destefano, 1999). Identified empirical best practice components in transition plans that were indicative of positive student outcomes for students will assist professionals in developing quality transition programs. Follow-up interviews provide professionals with information related to how students and parents perceived their involvement and agency involvement in the transition process.
Limitations

The limitations of this study were:

- The sample was smaller than anticipated \( n = 16 \), therefore generalizations can not be made about the transition process to this or any school district.

- Due to the small response rate and unavailable information regarding the severity of mental retardation (mild, moderate, severe, profound) among the subjects, a true representation of all students with mental retardation is lacking.

- The list of names supplied by the large urban school district of students exiting in the school years of 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 was inaccurate. Two returned surveys were from parents whose children had not graduated and one was from a parent whose child did not have mental retardation.

- Due to the transient nature of this school district, some of the parents had moved and were unable to be contacted.

- A limitation with all types of surveys is that those that do participate may be biased (Blackorby & Edgar, 1992).

Definition of Terms

*Adjusted diploma* is awarded to special education students who have fulfilled all requirements outlined in their individualized education programs.
Aged out refers to exiting the school system because the individual has reached maximum age for services.

Best practices in transition are practices that have been identified or supported in the literature as having a positive impact on student outcomes (Kohler, 1993).

Certificate of attendance is awarded in place of a diploma to those who have satisfied all requirements for graduation from high school, but have not passed one or more portions of the high school proficiency examination.

Competitive employment is work that is performed on a full or part-time basis and is paid at minimum wage or higher.

Dependent living is living with parents, with other relatives, in a foster or group home, supervised apartments, licensed adult home, residential school or in an institution (Brown, 2000).

Dropped out refers to exiting the school system prior to age 18 without graduating (Hasazi, Gordon, & Roe, 1985).

Employed refers to working at least 1 hour per week in a capacity that pays a wage including competitive, supported, and sheltered employment (Brown, 2000).

Graduated refers to exiting the school system with a regular diploma, adjusted diploma, or a certificate of attendance.

Independent living refers to living in a house or apartment alone, with friends, roommates, spouse or partner, or in a dormitory (Brown, 2000).
Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document that specifies a student's level of functioning and needs, the instructional goals and objectives for the student and how they will be evaluated, the nature and extent of special education and related services to be received, and the initiation date and duration of the services (Friend & Bursuck, 1999).

Mental retardation as defined by the American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR, 1992, p.1):

Mental retardation refers to substantial limitations in present functioning. It is characterized by significantly subaverage intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with related limitations in two or more of the following applicable adaptive skill areas: communication, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure and work. Mental retardation manifests before age 18.

Transition Plan is a statement of the transition service needs of a student with a disability beginning at age 14 (or younger, if determined appropriate) that focuses on the student's course of study and for each student beginning at age 16 (or younger) a statement of needed transition services for the student, including, if appropriate, a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages (IDEA, 1997).
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The main focus of this study was to determine the relationship between student postschool outcomes and high school transition programs incorporating best practice components. The literature reviewed for this study included: (a) essential components of transition planning (b) best practices in transition supported by empirical evidence, (c) emerging best practices, and (d) model transition programs.

To locate empirical research data, preliminary searches of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Academic Search Elite, and the Professional Development Collection databases were conducted. Descriptors including mental retardation, transition, disabilities, best practices, vocational education, employment outcomes, parent involvement, agency involvement, self-determination, social skills training, paid work experience, and student involvement were entered in a variety of combinations. Subsequently, indexes from pertinent journals, educational texts, and related books were searched. Overall, the searches focused on materials published from 1985 to 2002.
Essential Components of Transition Planning

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (P.L. 105-17) defined transition services as:

A coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that is designed within an outcome oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation [and] is based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests.

IDEA (1997) sets minimal standards for school districts to follow when providing transition planning and services. These standards ensure that a student's course of study promotes movement from school to post-school activities and that interagency linkages assist in the process. The law also states activities should be based on student's needs, preferences, and interests.

The focus of transition no longer targets only employment, but encompasses all aspects of community integration for persons with disabilities, including residential living, community access, friendships, and recreation (Morningstar & Kleinhammer-Tramill, 1999). Goals relating to instruction and community experiences that lead to postschool outcomes in the areas of postsecondary education and training, employment,
independent living, and community participation have become critical components of transition plans (Furney, Hasazi, & DeStefano, 1997).

Frank and Sitlington (2000) compared the results of two coordinated, follow-up studies of individuals with mental retardation who graduated from Iowa. The intent of this study was to compare students graduating in 1985, before the passage of IDEA (1990), to students who graduated in 1993, after the transition initiative, to determine if those graduating after the passage of IDEA demonstrated better outcomes and if the level of adult adjustment was satisfactory.

Results indicated 61 out of 82 (74%) of the class of 1993 were employed compared to 213 out of 322 (66%) of the class of 1985. Twenty-three out of 82 of the class of 1993 (28%) lived independently compared to 68 out of 322 (21%) of the class of 1985. The class of 1993 thought their school programs were more useful than the class of 1985, especially in the areas of preparing them for their current job and helping them keep a job. However, 29 out of 82 (35%) of the class of 1993 were not enrolled in any type of vocational program while in high school. Other areas of adult adjustment were found not to be satisfactory. Major concerns included a 19% unemployment rate for the class of 1993 compared to a 2% unemployment rate for graduates without disabilities, only 29 out of 61 (47%) of those employed were working full time, and 6 of the 29 (22%) of these individuals were working in sheltered employment settings.
In order to determine the relationship between transition planning and community adjustment, the quality of transition planning must be determined (Frank & Sitlington, 2000). Shearin, Roessier, and Schriner (1999) evaluated the transition components of 68 individualized education programs (IEPs) using a rating form developed to evaluate the quality of transition planning. The sample consisted of 33 (49%) IEPs of students with learning disabilities, 25 (37%) of students with mental retardation, and 10 of various disabilities (e.g., health, emotional disturbance, speech and language).

Areas identified and rated in the IEPs were postsecondary education, postsecondary employment, residential options, and daily living skills. Also rated were persons (e.g., special education teacher, general education teacher, parent) and nonschool agencies (e.g., rehabilitation services, mental health center) identified as responsible for delivering supports.

Results indicated 29 (43%) of the individualized education programs (IEPs) did not address employment and 45 (66%) of the plans did not list residential goals. However, most of the plans included goals or justification statements concerning recreation (52), community functioning (51), domestic (50), and transportation considerations (48). On 38 (56%) of the IEPs the student was listed as responsible for delivering supports and services, parents were listed on 36 (53%) and nonschool agencies were listed on 8 (12%). The results of this study revealed the majority of the plans did not include
the minimal requirements IDEA identified as critical for a student’s successful transition from school to adulthood.

Best Practice Components

Despite legislation and policy initiatives, progress in creating comprehensive and acceptable secondary education and transition services has been slow (Johnson, Stodden, Emanuel, Luecking, & Mack, 2002). Follow-up studies have essentially focused on analyzing students’ outcomes with little attention paid to the correlation between transition practices and postsecondary outcomes (Johnson & Rusch, 1993). Furthermore, there has been little empirical evidence to support relationships between identified best-practices and post-school outcomes (Johnson & Rusch, 1993; Kohler, 1993). Best practices are components of successful transition that are supported by empirical evidence.

Kohler (1993) set out to review and analyze literature pertaining to transition best practices that had a positive impact on student outcomes. The focus of the study was changed to a review of transition-related literature because empirically supported evidence was scarce. Documents used were follow-up studies of students with disabilities, pseudo- and quasi-experimental studies, and theory-based articles. Documents were identified applying the criteria (a) focus was related to transition
outcomes; (b) focus pertained to youths across all disabilities; and (c) evidence and/or recommendation(s) pertaining to transition-related practices was presented by the author(s). Documents were then divided into (a) follow-up studies, (b) pseudo- and quasi-experimental studies; and (c) theory-based or opinion articles and then further categorized into practices substantiated by study results or practices implied by authors.

Forty-six studies met these criteria and were used in the review. Vocational training (Hudson, Schwartz, Sealander, Campbell, & Hensel, 1988; Gill & Edgar, 1990), social skills training (Campbell, Hensel, Hudson, Schwartz, & Sealander, 1987; Hudson, Schwartz, Selander, Campbell, & Hensel, 1988; Heal, Gonzalez, Rusch, Copher, & DeStefano, 1990), paid work experience (Hudson, Schwartz, Selander, Campbell, & Hensel, 1988; Scuccimarra & Speece, 1990), parent involvement (Hudson, Schwartz, Selander, Campbell, & Hensel, 1988; Heal, Gonzalez, Rusch, Copher, & DeStefano, 1990), and employability skills training (Campbell, Hensel, Hudson, Schwartz, & Sealander, 1987) were the predictors validated by study results in at least two studies. Interagency collaboration and service delivery, although not validated, were implied as best practice in nine of the pseudo- or quasi-experimental studies.

Vocational education is an important predictor of employment. Hudson, Schwartz, Sealander, Campbell, and Hensel (1988) examined individuals who had successfully transitioned from school to work to identify the strategies they used. Trained vocational
education consultants interviewed fifty participants from Florida. All disabilities were represented, all participants were between the ages of 19 and 25, and had been employed a minimum of 3 months. Participants were interviewed using an instrument divided into three components, education, employment, and personal information.

Results indicated that the average length of employment was 21.5 months, 38.4 hours per week, and 7.6 hours per day. Twenty-six (52%) lived independently, 24 (48%) lived at home, and 33 (66%) participated in leisure and recreational activities. A specific breakdown by exceptionality was not provided for these data. In the area of education, 24 (48%) participants reported that job training was responsible for their success in their current employment, 41 (82%) reported social skills training, and 30 (60%) reported academic skills were responsible.

Gill and Edgar (1990) compared the employment status of 120 students with mild mental retardation, learning disabilities, behavior disorders, and health impairments who had graduated from vocational programs to a baseline group of 120 similar students with disabilities who had not taken a vocational program, and a cohort sample of 564 representing 60% of the population. Results indicated there was no significant difference between the baseline group and the vocational program graduates on employment rates, except for students with learning disabilities, who were employed at a significantly higher level than the baseline group. Graduates of the vocational program were also

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
working in more skilled occupations. When the vocational graduates were compared to a sample of 60% of the population of students with similar disabilities, the graduates of the vocational program were employed at a significantly higher level.

Another study focusing primarily on vocational training and work experience as predictors of employment success was conducted by Scuccimarra and Speece (1990). The purpose of the study was to describe the economic and social status of young adults with mild disabilities who had been enrolled in a self-contained special education program that included a work study component. Sixty-five students who exited high school in 1984 were surveyed. Subjects included students with learning disabilities (56), mental retardation (5), emotional disturbance (2), and physical impairment (2).

Data collected included demographic background, employment history, and postschool social adjustment, which included marital status, place of residence, types and frequency of social activities, friendship patterns, and satisfaction with social life.

Findings indicated 51 (78.5%) of the respondents were employed with 41 (80.4%) employed full-time. Thirty-three (64.7%) earned between $3.36 and $5.00, 7 (13.7%) earned minimum wage of $3.35, and 11 (16.9%) earned more than $5.00 per hour. There appeared to be an association between working summer jobs during high school and obtaining employment after high school. Fifty-two (80%) of those who had subsidized summer jobs and 58 (89%) of those who had unsubsidized summer jobs were currently
employed compared to the 36 (55%) of those employed who did not work during the summer.

Spruill and Kallio (1994) surveyed 69 former special education students with the disability categories of learning disabilities (48), mild mental retardation (12), and emotional disturbances (9). The purpose of the study was to determine how postschool employment correlated with high school experiences. Of the total sample, 58 (84%) of the subjects had been enrolled in at least one vocational course during high school. Thirty-nine of the subjects worked during the school year and 62 worked in the summer months.

Spruill and Kallio found there was a high correlation between postschool employment and high school experiences. Students who worked during the summer were more likely to be employed in the competitive job market. Furthermore, students who had taken vocational courses were making the highest wages and credited the program for helping them obtain their current positions. However, only 5 out of 12 (42%) of students with mental retardation were employed compared to 42 out of 48 (88%) of students with learning disabilities, and 6 out of 9 (67%) students with emotional disturbance.

Colley and Jamison (1998) investigated program components that contributed to employment and postsecondary education success, community living experiences, and effectiveness of transition planning with regard to postschool outcomes. Former students
of all disability groups were interviewed including 418 (58%) with learning disabilities, 112 (15%) with mental retardation and 94 (13%) with emotional disturbance who had been out of school nine months. The interview questions related to information about employment experiences while in high school, work experiences after leaving high school, beneficial high school classes, and high school experiences. Of the 720 former students, 338 (47%) were working, and 296 (88%) were competitively employed. Out of 579 students with work experience, 301 (52%) were working full time as compared to 42 out of 141 (30%) without work experience.

Results of this study also revealed students who had paid or unpaid work experiences in high school made higher wages, worked more hours, and had worked most of the time since exiting high school. Furthermore, students who received vocational education in high school were more often working full-time in competitive jobs.

Benz, Lindstrom and Yovanoff (2000) examined the relationship between education and postschool employment and research based factors associated with positive outcomes. Participants included secondary students from various disability groups who had participated in the Youth Transition Program in Oregon and who had exited high school up through the 1997/98 school year. The foundation and framework of the Youth Transition Program was based on best practice factors associated with better postsecondary employment for students with disabilities including participation in
vocational education classes and participation in paid work experiences in the community. The researchers found that students who held two or more jobs while in the program were almost two times more likely to be employed or continuing their education when they graduated.

Wehman et al. (1989) published one of the few studies that included only students with mental retardation who were still in school. Wehman et al. collected data on 34 students with mild to severe mental retardation who ranged in age from 17 to 22 years old in Virginia. The purpose of the study was to describe the transitioning progress of students with mental retardation into competitive employment positions before they exited special education. The study involved examination of transition programs at five different schools. None of the students had worked previously and the majority did not have vocational training. Most parents in the study considered job placement options to be adult activity centers or sheltered workshops.

Vocational intervention was provided directly at the job site when the student was hired. Outcome data indicated that 11 out of 13 students who attended an integrated school and 14 out of 21 students who attended a segregated school remained in their jobs longer than six months. The average length of employment for the 39 placements (5 students changed placements) was nine and one-half months. A possible contributing factor to the success of these students in their competitive employment positions was
their placement in jobs while they were still in school. Another outcome of this study was
the change in parental expectations from wanting their child in sheltered placements to
wanting their child in competitive settings. These parents also exhibited strong support in
the transition process of their child.

Benz and Halpern (1993) described the vocational programs and transition planning
services that were needed and received by students with disabilities their last year of high
school. Although the study included all disabilities, findings indicated in the area of
transition planning needs, students with mental retardation had the greatest need as
compared to students with emotional and learning disabilities. These areas included
vocational training, independent living skills, income subsidy, social skills, and resident
placement. Furthermore, students with mild mental retardation had the greatest need for
remedial academics.

Although study results indicated that students with mild mental retardation had the
greatest need for vocational instruction and work experience, they were among the least
likely to receive this instruction. Accordingly, students with mild mental retardation
required more transition planning overall than other students, but were leaving school
with the most number of these transition needs unmet.

Vocational education and family involvement were two of the predictor variables
identified in a longitudinal follow-up study by Schalock, Holl, Elliott, and Ross (1992).
Post-graduation outcomes on 298 graduates of Nebraska from 1979 to 1988 were analyzed. The purpose of the study was to analyze the employment and living status of students with learning disabilities (189) and mental retardation (109), and the predictors of these outcomes. Outcomes included (a) current employment status; (b) hours worked, wages, and number of weeks employed; (c) benefits; (d) living arrangement; and (e) primary source of income. Twelve predictor variables were identified including hours and number of vocational programs attended, family involvement, and disability. Graduates or parents were interviewed by phone.

Results indicated that across all outcome measures, students with learning disabilities appeared to do better than students with mental retardation. Of the students with learning disabilities, 132 out of 189 (70.1%) were employed and 85 (45%) were living independently. Only 48 out of 109 (44.2%) students with mental retardation were employed and 37 (33.7%) were living independently. Family involvement and hours in vocational programs were significant predictors of weeks employed, hours worked, and yearly salary. Furthermore, hours in vocational programs were a significant predictor for wages.

Sample (1998) analyzed social skills training as well as vocational training and family involvement. Twenty-seven students diagnosed with significant emotional disturbance and three family members were interviewed at 6 month, 12 month, and 24 month
intervals. The purpose of this study was to determine whether the use of transition best practices in transition programming was predictive of positive student outcomes for students with emotional disturbance. The predictor variables were vocational instruction, parent involvement, interagency collaboration and service delivery, individual plans and planning, paid work experience, and social skills instruction. The criterion variables (outcomes) were employment outcomes and community adjustment.

Results indicated parent involvement and paid employment influenced student postschool outcomes. Of the 30 participants interviewed, only three had interagency involvement documented in their individual education programs (IEPs) and individual transition plans (ITPs), therefore it was difficult to determine the impact adult services might have provided. There were no significant differences found between length of time in vocational or social skill instruction and postschool outcomes.

Family involvement and social skills were found to be significant factors in successful employment by Heal, Gonzalez, Rusch, Copher, and DeStefano (1990). Directors of model projects were requested to identify individuals with mental retardation who were successfully employed for 10 or more hours per week, at minimum wage or better, for at least 6 months, and very similar individuals with mental retardation who had been terminated within the same time period. The 39 pairs of successfully placed and
unsuccessfully placed subjects were then compared to identify variables that may have influenced successful competitive employment.

Heal et al. found home support, follow-up support, placement specialist support, and employer support to be significant factors in successful job placements. In addition, successful employment was linked to ability, quality of work, attitude, social skills, and compliant behaviors.

Hughes et al. (1997) reviewed 113 empirically based studies to identify strategies that supported students’ transition to adult life. To determine social validity the ten critical support strategies identified were incorporated into a questionnaire that was sent to all applied researchers who had published at least one empirical investigation. Of the ten support strategies (e.g., identify co-worker, peer, and family support; identify student’s preferences and choices; teach choice making and decision making; match support of student’s needs; teach self-management and independence; teach social skills; identify independence objectives; identify environment support; monitor social acceptance across time; assess social acceptance), all were rated critical to extremely important for a student’s transition to adult life.
Emerging Best Practices

Self-determination is an emerging best practice component that has gained wide acceptance in the area of transition (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1998a). Self-determination refers to people controlling their own lives and their own destinies (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1998a). It is the ability to make appropriate choices regarding independent living, employment, and leisure activities (Schloss, Alper, & Jayne, 1993).

Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) collected data regarding self-determination on 80 students with mental retardation or learning disabilities prior to their exiting high school. The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a link between student self-determination and positive adult outcomes. Students were given The Arc's Self-Determination Scale (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995), a self-report measure of self-determination, during their final year of high school. Adult outcome data were collected on these adolescents one year after leaving high school.

Data analysis determined that 64 (80%) of the self-determined students were employed compared to approximately 35 (44%) who were not self-determined. Those that were self-determined also earned more per hour and experienced more positive outcomes than their peers who were not self-determined.

Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1998b) considered self-determination to be one of the core dimensions of quality of life and theorized "increased self-determination will lead to an
increased quality of life” (p. 6). Wehmeyer and Schwartz studied 50 adults with mental retardation who lived in group homes to determine the relationship between self-determination and quality of life. Participants were given the Quality of Life Questionnaire (Schalock & Keith, 1993) and The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995). There was a significant relationship between self-determination and quality of life scores, which indicated that self-determination promoted more positive quality of life for people with mental retardation.

However, when Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1998a) analyzed the transition plans of students with mental retardation to determine if any of the goals pertained to teaching students self-determination, none were found. Results revealed that out of 900 transition-related goals, none related to skills enabling them to make choices, solve problems, make decisions, set and achieve goals, or understand themselves. Students with mental retardation probably are the most in need for systematic instruction in self-determination skills because of their cognitive impairments, however are the most unlikely to receive such instruction (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1998a).

Increasing student involvement in the transition planning is one way of promoting self-determination through the transition years (Getzel & deFur, 1997). However, researchers revealed that students are not actively involved in their transition programming (Getzel & deFur, 1997; Thoma, Rogan, & Baker, 2001). Getzel and deFur
(1997) reviewed transition-related information forms completed at the IEPs of eighty-four students, ages 14 to 21, with significant disabilities in Virginia. The purpose of the study was to examine trends in the design of transition services and to determine whether transition planning for students with significant disabilities (e.g., autism, multiple disabilities, severe or profound disabilities) differs from other students with disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, mild or moderate mental retardation).

All the students attended a public school and most had three or more years remaining before exiting. Although 75 (89%) of the parents participated in the planning, Getzel and deFur found only 29 out of 84 (35%) students with significant disabilities attended their IEP meetings to plan for transition, 13 (15%) did not attend the meeting but were involved in the planning, 17 (20%) were notified about their meetings, and 25 (30%) did not participate.

Thoma, Rogan and Baker (2001) conducted a qualitative study to determine level of involvement in transition planning of eight students with moderate to severe mental retardation. All students could communicate preferences and interests and all had attended their transition planning meetings.

Findings indicated (a) when questioned about life goals, students' answers were influenced by the instructor, (b) students were not always informed about the transition meetings and therefore not prepared, (c) professionals spent most of their time talking to
the parents and not the students, and (d) professionals tended to use technical jargon.

Although jobs, places to live, and transportation were all in place in the transition plan, the goals were not typically a true representation of student preferences, interests, and/or dreams. Most of the student's dreams for the future mirrored what other typical young adults wanted, however written goals were more stereotypical of outcomes deemed appropriate for students with more severe disabilities.

Exemplary Transition Programs

Sale, Metzler, Everson, and Moon (1991), in an attempt to validate the importance of various transition elements presumed to be important in transition planning, surveyed 154 individuals representing five groups involved with vocational transition. A 130-item instrument listing indicators of successful transition attributes derived from a comprehensive literature review was sent to parents, university personnel, state adult agency personnel, local adult agency personnel, and education personnel. Participants were asked to evaluate the indicator as not, somewhat, or very important for successful transition from school to work for students with disabilities. The highest ranked indicators of effective transition were supported-employment, individual-placement program availability, parental and student involvement in the IEP process, training in community survival skills, and vocational training at real community job sites.
Kohler, DeStefano, Wermuth, Grayson, and McGinty (1994) analyzed 15 evaluation studies to determine how best practices and exemplary transition programs were validated and to determine what practices were consistently perceived as effective. The elements identified as exemplary in the evaluation studies coincided with the practices investigated by Kohler (1993) including vocational training, parent involvement, social skills training, and community-based instruction.

Rusch and Millar (1998) reviewed special education best practices as identified by model demonstration programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Over 500 model demonstration projects were developed and implemented to positively impact students' postschool outcomes in every state except South Dakota, Nevada, and West Virginia. Some of the emerging best practices in transition that were shared by researchers and model program developers were (a) student involvement and self-determination; (b) community-based work experiences and/or job placement; (c) family involvement; and (d) individualized transition and career planning, beginning by the seventh grade.

Hasazi, Furney, and DeStefano (1999) explored implementation of transition policy efforts in nine sites throughout the country. The purpose of the study was to describe how local sites implemented transition policies, practices, and procedures, and to determine factors that either assisted or hindered implementation. Five sites were identified as
model sites based on their reputation for providing quality transition services. Four sites were identified as representative because initial implementation efforts had occurred but progress was hindered by challenges associated with the implementation process.

Exemplary transition services included utilization of best practices in the individual transition planning process and the collaboration of the school and community agencies. Themes that evolved at the model sites relating to effective implementation of the transition requirement of IDEA were (a) systematic approaches to teaching students self-determination skills; (b) implementing strategies for effective interagency collaboration; (c) devising strategies for systematic improvement and related professional development needs through evaluation of postschool student outcomes; and (d) expanding school and postschool options for students with specific disabilities. Identified recommendations were (a) identify strategies to give students a more active role in the development of their IEP/ITPs, (b) expand opportunities for students with emotional disturbance, and (c) improve methods for using postschool outcome data to evaluate and improve programs. Factors supporting the implementation of transition requirements of IDEA in representative sites included (a) commitment to families and students with disabilities, (b) programs funded by schools and agencies, and (c) professional development activities that focus on transition activities.
Summary

A review of the literature suggests more evidence is needed to determine the relationship between what is accepted as best practices in transition and student postschool outcomes (Johnson & Rusch, 1993), particularly for students with mental retardation. Gill and Edgar (1990) stated analysis of postschool outcomes of students who exit special education should be explored by type of disability. “Best practices for one group of students may not necessarily be best practices for another group” (Sample, 1998, p. 240).

Studies concerning postschool transition outcomes provide data needed to assess and improve policies, programs, and transition practices (Furney, Hasazi, & DeStefano, 1997). If exemplary practices are disregarded, the impact of transition programming will be minimal on student outcomes (Morningstar & Kleinhammer-Tramill, 1999). Given the limited number of studies incorporating best practices with only students with mental retardation, it is difficult to determine if these practices do indeed lead to positive student outcome for this population.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study was designed as a systematic inquiry linking six best practices in transition (e.g., vocational training, parent involvement, paid work experience, social skills training, interagency involvement, student involvement) to postschool outcomes of employment, living arrangements, and community adjustment for 230 former high school students with mental retardation. In order to strengthen the evaluation design this study combined three data collection strategies (Patton, 1987). A student demographic survey was mailed to all parents of students with mental retardation who graduated, dropped out, or aged out in the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 school years in four counties in a southwestern state. Parents answered questions that pertained to their child’s educational programming, employment, and community adjustment. The individualized education plans of students whose parents completed the survey were then analyzed for best practice components. Families (e.g., parents, adolescents) who completed the survey and gave prior consent were then interviewed. Questions asked during the family interview included student, parent, and agency involvement in the transition planning of the IEP.
The student demographic survey was administered to analyze three research questions pertaining to student outcomes which were:

1. What is the employment status of students with mental retardation after exiting high school?
2. Where are students with mental retardation living after they exit high school?
3. Do students with mental retardation access facilities within the community after they exit high school?

The IEP rating checklist was used to investigate the three research questions pertaining to transitional programming which were:

1. Did transition programs include vocational training, social skills training, paid work experience?
2. What persons or agencies were responsible for delivering supports for coordinated activities in the transition plan?
3. Which of these predictor variables (e.g., vocational training, social skills training, parent involvement, student involvement, interagency involvement, paid work experience) were the most important in predicting employment outcomes, living arrangements, and community participation?

The family interview attempted to answer the research questions pertaining to involvement which were:
1. To what extent was the student involved in planning his or her transition program?

2. To what extent was the parent involved in planning the transition program?

3. To what extent were agencies involved in transition from school to adulthood.

Design and Procedures

Participants

The target population \((N = 230)\) included all students with mental retardation who graduated, dropped out, or aged out in the 1999-2000, 2000-2001 school years in a southwestern state. Of the seventeen school districts within this state, twelve districts were identified having students meeting this criteria through data provided by the Department of Education. Out of the twelve school districts only five volunteered to participate.

The low participation rate for the school districts was attributed to several factors. Of the nonparticipating districts, one volunteered to participate but school personnel were unable to identify the names of students with mental retardation who graduated, dropped out, or aged out in the designated years. Personnel from another nonparticipating district were unable to find the IEPs of their previous students, and the stated reason for nonparticipation of another district was that they were too busy to participate. Personnel
from three districts stated they did not want to participate and personnel from the
remaining two districts did not acknowledge initial invitation nor the follow-up phone
calls or emails. The final sample \((n = 16)\) included only students from a large urban school
district due to no response from parents from the other three districts.

Selection of Participants

The population identified for this study included students ages 14 through 24 in a
southwestern state with an eligibility code of mental retardation who graduated, dropped
out, or aged out of high school during the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 school years and
their parents/guardians. A cover letter of introduction explaining the study to
administrators and administrator consent forms (see Appendix A), proposal approval
letters from the Center for Educational Research and Planning (CERP), Office for the
Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS), parental consent forms (see Appendix B),
student assent forms (see Appendix C) and copies of both surveys (see Appendixes D and
E) were sent to all the Special Education Program Administrators identified by the
Department of Education as having students with mental retardation exiting their district
in the years 2000 and 2001. A letter from the Department of Education supporting this
study was also included. The twelve Special Education District Administrators were
asked to supply names and addresses of parents of students with mental retardation, as
well as access to individualized education programs (IEPs) of those students whose parents participated in the study.

A follow-up phone call was made to the districts administrators one week later to ensure they received the information and to answer any questions they might have had about the study. Six weeks later a follow-up email was sent to all district administrators who had not responded. Of the twelve districts, five returned consent forms.

Setting

The school districts that participated in this study were located in a southwestern state. One of the districts is urban and located in the southern end of the state. It is one of the sixth largest in the nation with an elementary through high school enrollment of 245,000 in 2001 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). Three of the other districts are rural. One is located in the eastern portion of the state with a total of 1464 students, one is located in the northeastern corner of the state with an enrollment of 9847 students, and one is located in the central portion of the state with an enrollment of 774 students.

Procedure

In the urban school district, the master list of student names was provided by the office of Research and Evaluation and the addresses were obtained from the Central Information System. In the smaller districts, the special education directors provided master lists of the names and addresses.
Once names and addresses were obtained, consent forms (parent and youth) and student demographic surveys were sent to parents along with preaddressed, postage-paid return envelopes. Names did not appear on the surveys, but a code was placed on the back in order to identify respondents from nonrespondents and to compare surveys to student’s IEPs. Since parents needed to give consent for IEPs to be released, total anonymity could not be maintained. A follow-up letter was sent to nonrespondents four weeks later along with additional consent forms, surveys, and another preaddressed, postage-paid return envelope. A final mailing was sent four weeks later. Due to the poor response rate, an informal cover letter urging parents to participate was included with the consent forms, survey, and postage-paid return envelope. A dollar was also enclosed to say thank you for participating in the study. There was a total of four (21%) completed surveys received the first mailing, 11 (58%) the second mailing, and four (21%) from the third mailing. Three surveys had to be excluded from the study because two of the participants had not exited from high school and the third student did not have mental retardation. Therefore, the sample population was sixteen ($n = 16$).

Forty-five surveys (28%) were returned due to incorrect addresses. In an effort to reach all prospective participants, a thorough search was conducted using the phone book and web sites including telephone directories and public record information for the correct addresses. Sixteen additional addresses were found and surveys resent, however,
two of these were returned with notes stating they did not have children in school at that time.

Data from the completed student demographic surveys were entered into an SPSS-10 statistical program for analysis. Codes from completed demographic surveys were compared to the coded master list to locate names and student identification numbers. The name, student identification number, and copies of the signed consent forms were then given to Student Data Services who supplied the student’s IEP. The annual IEP from the student’s final school year was utilized to maintain consistency.

The IEPs of students whose parents had returned the survey, were evaluated using a rating form (see Appendix F). IEPs were reviewed for documentation of or absence of vocational training; paid work experience; social skills training; and student, parent, and agency involvement. A doctoral student was given an explanation of the rating form and instructed on the method of coding. Fifty percent of the IEPs were evaluated by the doctoral student and the researcher to validate consistency between responses and coding. Data from the rating forms were entered into an SPSS-10 statistical program for analysis.

Fourteen (93%) families indicated on their consent forms they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Three attempts were made to contact all of them at the times they indicated would be convenient. Of the fourteen families who volunteered, only eight (57%) could be reached. They were given the opportunity to: (1) participate in
a follow-up phone interview, or (2) participate in a face to face interview at a location of their choice. Six families were interviewed in their homes, one was interviewed at a fast food restaurant, and one was interviewed over the phone because the family lived out of state. Except for two interviews, which were held with parents, the survey questions were read to the adolescents. The family members were encouraged to help answer the questions if the adolescent did not understand the question. Interviews took approximately thirty minutes. Answers to the interview questions were then analyzed and the data were collapsed into four broad categories that specifically related to student, parent, agency involvement, and student outcome. Numerical values were assigned to each category. Under each of these broad categories several themes emerged.

Instrumentation

*Student Demographic Survey*

The student demographic survey was a modified version of a detailed 23 page follow-up interview developed by Hess, Kregel, and Wehman (1992). Permission to use the questionnaire in this study was obtained from one of the authors of the original questionnaire. In order to reduce the time needed to complete the questionnaire and since all the questions were not relevant to this study, the original 91 questions were reduced to 32. Questions that were eliminated were questions pertaining to competency tests;
independent living skills such as banking, paying bills, voting; and experiences with agencies specific to the state in which the study was originally conducted. One additional item was constructed to identify parent involvement in the transition process.

The 32-item instrument was divided into four sections, student information, educational experiences, employment, and independent living/community participation (see Appendix D). The items were intended to determine the individuals' current employment; factors that affect employment status; living arrangements; and community, recreational, and social activities. The readability of the survey was equivalent to upper fifth grade determined by Microsoft Word. No modifications were made for persons who could not read. Most questions were worded in a multiple-choice format to minimize the length of time required to complete the survey. Items that required a classification (e.g., hours worked) were converted to a code. For example, one of the questions asked how many hours in an average work week does the child work for pay. The hours were coded: 1 = more than 37 hours per week; 2 = 21 to 36 hours per week; 3 = less than 21 hours per week; and, 4 = unemployed.

**Rating Checklist**

A rating checklist (see Appendix F) was developed to record the documentation of vocational training; paid work experience; social skills training; and student, parent, and agency involvement. The checklist was developed after a review of the literature.
pertaining to evidence of elements of best practice in transition programming (Brown, 2000; Getzel & deFur, 1997; Rusch & Millar, 1998; Shearin, Roessler, & Schriner, 1999; Wehman, Kregel, & Seyfarth, 1985a; 1985b).

**Family Interview Questions**

Family interview questions (see Appendix E) were developed after reviewing literature pertaining to student involvement in transition planning (Thoma, Rogan, & Baker, 2001; Wehmeyer, 1998). The instrument consisted of 18 semistructured questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997) that were open-ended, but designed with a specific intent. Fifteen of the questions were directed to the student and pertained to transition planning, involvement, and friendships. Three of the questions were directed to the parents about their involvement in the transition planning. The purpose of the interview was to further investigate student, parent, and agency involvement in transition programming.

**Clarity of Student Demographic Survey**

The original survey had been field tested with a sample of students with mild and moderate mental retardation in the original follow-up study by Hess, Kregel, and Wehman (1992). However, to establish clarity, a colleague knowledgeable about the subject reviewed the survey to determine if each item was clear and easily understood, if the items had a relationship to the study’s topic and goals, and the intent behind each item.
was clear. The survey was given to an expert in the field of mental retardation, the Center for Educational Research and Planning (CERP), the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS), and the School District Cooperative Research Committee. Items were then modified according to their suggestions.

*Interrater agreement*

In order to ensure that the IEP checklists were rated accurately, interscorer reliability was obtained. The researcher rated all of the IEPs. Fifty percent of the IEPs were then randomly selected and rated by a trained doctoral student. Interrater agreement was calculated by dividing the number of agreements by the number of agreements plus disagreements and converting the proportion to a percentage. The interscorer reliability score was 100%.

*Confidentiality*

All information gathered in this study was completely confidential. In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, codes were used at all times. No names appeared on the surveys and codes were used only to contact and remind those who had not returned the questionnaires and to compare the student demographic survey with the IEP. Another trained doctoral student and the researcher were the only persons with access to the codes.
Data Collection and Analysis

Student Demographic Survey

Data from the Student Demographic Survey were analyzed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the employment status of students with mental retardation after exiting high school?
2. Where are students with mental retardation living after they exit high school?
3. Do students with mental retardation access facilities within the community after they exit high school?

Analysis: Descriptive statistics were performed to describe key trends and findings to determine student outcomes.

IEP Rating Form

The IEP rating form was used to review IEPs for documentation of or absence of vocational training, paid work experience, social skills training, student involvement, parent involvement, and interagency involvement. Data from the IEP rating form were analyzed to answer the following research questions:

1. Did transition programs include vocational training, social skills training, paid work experience?
2. What persons or agencies were responsible for delivering supports for coordinated activities in the transition plan?

3. Which of these predictor variables (e.g., vocational training, social skills training, parent involvement, student involvement, interagency involvement, paid work experience) were the most important in predicting positive employment outcomes, living arrangements, and community participation?

Analysis: Descriptive statistics were performed to describe key trends and findings of best practices utilized in transition programming.

*Family Interview Questions*

Data from the family interview were analyzed to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent was the student involved in planning his or her transition program?

2. To what extent was the parent involved in planning the transition program?

3. To what extent were agencies involved in transition from school to adulthood?

The information from the interviews was analyzed looking for emerging themes (Spradley, 1980). Using a constant comparative method numerical values were assigned to each category.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate best practice components in transition programs for students with mental retardation (mild, moderate, severe, and profound) by determining (a) the post school outcomes (e.g., employment, living arrangements, community adjustment), (b) the extent to which the transition component of the IEP reflected current best practices, and (c) the extent of student and parent involvement in the transition process. The student demographic survey was administered to determine educational experiences, employment, and community adjustment. Frequency and percentages were recorded for each response. The IEP rating checklist was utilized to record student, parent, and agency participation in the development of the IEP/transition plan; persons and agencies responsible for delivering supports for coordinated activities in the transition plan; and documentation of social skills, vocational training, and paid work experience. Frequency and percentages were recorded for each component. The families were interviewed to determine the extent of student and parent involvement in the transition process. A qualitative summary of participant comments was the primary method of data analysis for the family interview.
Participants

The participants of this study (n = 16) were students with mental retardation who graduated, dropped out, or aged out in the 1999-2000, 2000-2001 school years in a large urban school district located in a southwestern state (see Table 2). The participants included eight males (50%) and eight females (50%) with the largest percentage (56%) being White. Fifteen (93.7%) of the participants graduated from regular high schools throughout the district, thirteen (81.2%) from self-contained placements, 1 (6.3%) general education, and 1 (6.3%) a combination of general education and resource. One (6.3%) student attended a special school for students with disabilities. Five (31.2%) of the participants were attending postsecondary programs offered by the school district for students with mental retardation, five (31.2%) had been out of school for more than one year but less than two, three (18.7%) had been out for one year or less, and three (18.7%) had been out of school for two years or more.

Student Demographic Survey

The student demographic survey (see Appendix D) was intended to determine the individual’s current employment; factors that affected employment status; living arrangements; and community, recreational, and social activities. The data were from parents and were reported in the areas of educational experiences, employment,
Table 2

Frequency and Percentage of Selected Demographic Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Origin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of High School Last Attended</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular high school</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Table 2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Arrangement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-contained on a regular campus</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination general education and resource</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of time out of school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still attending postsecondary program</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 1 year but less than 2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year or less</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years or more</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
independent living, and community participation. The responses were analyzed for frequency distribution. The frequency and percentages were reported for each response to each question.

Research Questions

- What is the employment status of students with mental retardation after exiting high school?
- Where are students with mental retardation living after they exit high school?
- Do students with mental retardation access facilities within the community after they exit high school?

Educational experiences. Parents answered five questions concerning educational experiences their child had the last year of high school. These questions included: (1) reason for exit from high school, (2) instructional arrangement at the time of exit, (3) type of secondary program the child participated in, (4) if in a functional program, where the majority of time was spent, and (5) what job(s) the parent felt the child was trained to do when he or she left school.

Of the sample (n = 16), 12 (75%) students graduated with an adjusted diploma, 3 (25%) with a certificate of attendance, and 1 (6.3%) moved out of state (see Table 3). Thirteen (81.2%) participated in a functional curriculum (e.g., community based
Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for Exit from School</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduated with adjusted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diploma.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated with certificate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of attendance.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated with standard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diploma.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reached maximum age.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

instruction, vocational, independent living skills) and 3 (18.8%) participated in a secondary program that consisted of general/basic education (see Table 4).

The 13 (81.2%) in functional programs reported the skill areas in which the majority of the time was spent. They were instructed to check up to three choices. Eleven (68.8%) indicated the majority of time was spent learning job seeking skills, 10 (62.5%) indicated non-employment related skills, 8 (50%) instruction in the community, 2 (12.5%)
Table 4

Frequency and Percentage of Type of Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional curriculum</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>81.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General/basic education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College preparatory</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

selected supported employment, and 1 (6.3%) selected sheltered employment (see Table 5).

Parents were asked to list no more than three job(s) they felt their child was trained to do when he or she left school (see Table 6). Three (18.8%) reported none and 2 (12.5%) participants left this blank. The remaining eleven (62.5%) participants reported duties including, stocking, running office errands, filing, cleaning floors and tables, child care, kitchen helper, bussing tables, basic computer skills, courtesy clerk, gardening, volunteer work at various charity organizations, opening and putting away syringes, and sorting.

Employment. Parents were asked thirteen questions concerning employment. Two of the questions concerned their child’s employment while attending school and during the summer. Nine of the questions included: (1) current employment, (2) how many jobs
Table 5

Frequency and Percentage of Skill Areas Taught in the Functional Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)*</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning job seeking, work-related skills.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning non-employment related skills in the classroom.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-going instruction in community environments.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported employment.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered employment.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive employment.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Respondents were instructed to choose up to three areas.

their child had held since high school, (3) child’s job title, (4) who helped their child find their current job, (5) how many hours in an average work week did their child work for pay, (6) hourly salary, (7) fringe benefits, (8) length of time employed, and (9) level of satisfaction with job. The last two questions related to children who were currently
Table 6

Frequency of Job(s) Parent Identified Student was Trained to do When He or She Left School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jobs</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blank</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock shelves</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Order from a menu.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacuum</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ride the bus.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant flowers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office errand person</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic computer skills</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child care</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer work at various organizations</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Table 6 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jobs</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sorting</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning tables and floors</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen helper</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtesy clerk</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening and putting away syringes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emptying garbage</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting tables and washing dishes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busser</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Respondents were instructed to list no more than three jobs.
unemployed, what made it most difficult to get a job and what could the school have done to help their child become employed.

Of the sample \( (n = 16) \), 12 (75%) were not employed while in school and 4 (25%) were employed part-time (see Table 8). Eleven (68.8%) were not employed during the summer and 4 (26.6%) were employed part-time during the summer (see Table 8). One participant did not respond to this question.

Of the sample \( (n = 16) \), 7 (43.7%) were working in sheltered employment, 4 (25%) were full-time students, 3 (18.9%) were unemployed, 1 (6.3%) was working as a

### Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employed while in school</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not employed while in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part-time while</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed full-time while</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8

Frequency and Percentage of Students Employed During the Summer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employed during the summer</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)*</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not employed during the summer</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part-time during the summer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed full-time during the summer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. One participant did not respond to this question.

volunteer, and 1 (6.3 %) was working part-time for an employer (see Table 9). One parent reported that her son was a full-time student and was also employed. Seven (43.8%) held one job, 6 (37.5%) students had not held a job since leaving school, 2 (12.5%) held 2 different jobs, and 1 (6.3%) had held three different jobs (see Table 10).

From the sample (n = 16), 8 (50%) students were employed at the time of the study. Three (12.5%) parents reported they did not know their child’s job title and 1 (6.3%)
Table 9

Frequency and Percentage of Categories that Best Describes the Student’s Current Employment Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working in sheltered employment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time student</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing volunteer work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working for an employer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

reported none. Job titles parents reported included kitchen helper, stocker, maintenance and sheltered employment (see Table 11).

As shown in Table 12, of the eight students who were employed, 3 (37.5%) found their jobs with the help of a parent and rehabilitation counselor, 2 (25%) found their jobs with the help of a rehabilitation counselor, 2 (25%) from school personnel, and 1 (12.5%) from a state worker. Three (37.5%) were working between 10 and 19 hours a week, 3
Table 10

Frequency and Percentage of Jobs Student Held Since Leaving School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Jobs</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than three</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(37.5%) between thirty and thirty-nine hours a week, and 1 (12.5%) between 20 and 29 hours a week. No participant was working a full 40 hour work week (see Table 13).

Of students who were employed (n = 8), parents reported that 4 (50%) were paid piece work wages, 2 (25%) earned below minimum wage, and 2 (25%) earned minimum wage (see Table 14). Six (75%) did not receive paid sick leave, health insurance, or retirement; 1 (12.5%) received these benefits; and one (12.5%) did not know. Seven (87.5%) reported they did not receive paid vacations or dental insurance and 1 (6.3%) did not know (see Table 15).
Table 11
Frequency of Reported Job Titles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jobs</th>
<th>Number (n = 8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stocker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen helper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered employment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of students who were employed (n = 8), parents reported 4 (50%) had been employed seven months to one year and 4 (50%) had been employed more than one year, but less than two years (see Table 16). As shown in Table 17, of the sample of students who were employed (n = 8), 5 (62.5%) parents reported they were somewhat satisfied with the type of work their son/daughter performed at his/her job and 2 (25%) were satisfied. Only 1 (12.5%) parent reported they were not satisfied at all.

Parents were asked to identify all the obstacles they thought made it hardest for their child to get a job. Child still in school (postsecondary), lack of jobs in the area, no one to
Table 12

Frequency and Percentage of Assistance in Locating Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assistance Provided By:</th>
<th>Number (n = 8)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent and rehabilitation counselor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation counselor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School personnel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State worker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An employment agency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found the job independently</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A friend</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

help find a job, and lack of training programs were identified the most by parents as leading obstacles. Having to stay home to supervise small children, finding a job to fit interest, disability, low wages provided by sheltered workshops, and transportation were each identified once as a leading obstacle (see Table 18).

Parents of those children who were not employed (n = 8) were asked to check all the items related to what the school could have done to help them become employed.

Providing more vocational training was identified by 6 (75%) parents and told where to
Table 13

Frequency and Percentage of Hours Worked in a Week for Pay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Number (n = 8)*</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 – 19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 or more hours</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 10 hours</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. One participant did not answer the question.

find help after leaving school was identified by 4 (50%) parents. Helping him/her find a job was checked by 3 (37.5%) of the parents and 2 (25%) of the parents felt that the school had done everything it could to help. One (12.5%) parent reported that their child was still in school (see Table 19).

Independent Living/Community Participation. Parents answered seven questions concerning their child’s (1) living arrangement, (2) use of community facilities, (3) regular activities, (4) affiliation with groups/clubs, (5) people they spend the most time with, and (6) their satisfaction with their child’s life.
Table 14

Frequency and Percentage of Hourly Salary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Number (n = 8)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Piece work</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below federal minimum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wage ($0.01 - $5.15)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum wage ($5.15)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above minimum ($5.15 +)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“By the job, whatever”</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the sample (n = 16), 15 (93.8%) were living at home. One (6.3%) was living with grandparents in another state (see Table 20).

Parents were asked to identify all of the facilities in which their child spent one or more hours each week. Of the sample (n = 16), the most frequented facilities were indoor recreation facilities 9 (56.3%), outdoor recreation facilities 9 (56.3%), restaurants 8 (50%), shopping facilities 8 (50%), and homes of friends 5 (31.3%). Three (18.3%)
Table 15

Frequency and Percentage of Fringe Benefits Received By Employed Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fringe Benefits</th>
<th>Number (n = 8)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid sick leave, health insurance, and retirement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid vacations and dental insurance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants did not use any community facilities. After school programs, dance class, associations for persons with disabilities, gym, and church were each reported by 1 (6.3%) of the participants (see Table 21).

Parents were asked to identify all the activities in which their child participated on a regular basis (see Table 22). The most popular activities were bowling 5 (31.3%), swimming 5 (31.3%), bicycling 3 (18.8%), and basketball 3 (18.8%). Three (18.8%) did...
Table 16

Frequency and Percentage of Length of Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Time</th>
<th>Number (n = 8)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 months to 1 year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one year, but less than 2 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-6 months</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than two years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17

Frequency and Percentage of Level of Job Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Number (n = 8)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat satisfied</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not satisfied at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 18

Frequency of Obstacles to Employment of Those Who are Currently Unemployed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacles</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Still in school (postsecondary)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of jobs in the area</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one to help find a job</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of job training programs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not able to work because of young children who need supervision</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a job to fit interest</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of disability</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered workshops don’t pay enough</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No transportation available</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t want to give up Social Security benefits</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not able to work because of health</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Respondents were instructed to check all that apply.*
Table 19

What Schools Could Have Done to Help with Employment of Those that are Unemployed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions School Could Have Taken</th>
<th>Number (n = 8)*</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provided more vocational training while in school</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Told where he/she could find help after leaving school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped him/her find a job</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school did everything it could to help.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still in school (postsecondary)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion, don’t know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Respondents were instructed to check all that apply.

not participate in any regular recreational activities. Other activities included dance 2 (12.5%), gymnastics 2 (12.5%), soccer 1 (6.3%), hockey 1 (6.3%), baseball 1(6.3%), exercise 1 (6.3%), fishing 1 (6.3%), and adaptive recreation programs 1 (6.3%).
Table 20

Frequency and Percentage of Current Living Arrangement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Living Arrangement</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At home with parent</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>93.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with relatives</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parents were asked to identify all the groups or clubs to which their child belonged. Eight (50%) were not in any groups or clubs (see Table 23). Groups that were the most popular were organizations for youth with disabilities 4 (25%), church 4 (25%), exercise classes 2 (12.5%) and city recreation programs 2 (12.5%).

Parents were asked to identify individuals with whom their child spent the most time (see Table 24). Family members were identified 7 (43.8%) times, family and friends 4 (25%), friends 1 (6.3%), and him/herself 1 (6.3%). One (6.3%) parent checked all choices.

Of the sample (n = 16), 9 (56.3%) spent the largest amount of free time with people with and without disabilities. Four (25%) spent most of their time with only family members, 2 (12.5%) with people with disabilities, and 1 (6.3%) spent the largest amount of free time with people without disabilities (see Table 25).
Table 21

Frequency and Percentage of Facilities Frequented One or More Hours a Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indoor recreation facilities</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor recreation facilities</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping facilities</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home of friends</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not use community facilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After school program</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance class</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association for persons with disabilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gym</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Respondents were instructed to check all that apply.

Of the sample (n = 16), 9 (56.3%) were somewhat satisfied with their child’s life in general and 3 (18.8%) were somewhat dissatisfied. Two (12.5%) were very satisfied and 2 (12.5) reported being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (see Table 26).
Table 22

Frequency and Percentage of Activities Participated in Regularly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)*</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bowling</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycling</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not participate in any</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regular recreation activities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive recreation programs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jogging</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Respondents were instructed to check all that apply.*
Table 23

Frequency and Percentage of Groups or Clubs Attended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups/Clubs</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)*</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church club</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizations for youth with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise class</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City recreational programs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scouts</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education class</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Respondents were instructed to check all that apply.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Rating Checklist

A rating checklist was developed to record the documentation of student, parent, and agency participation in the development of the IEP; persons or agencies responsible for delivering supports for coordinated activities in the transition plan; and documentation of social skills, vocational training, and paid work experience (see Appendix E). The data were reported in the areas of (1) IEP participation, (2) persons or agencies listed as
Table 24

Frequency and Percentage of Individuals Child Spends Most Time With During Leisure Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuals</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and friends</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Him/herself</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/friends/himself</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and himself</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With general public/co-workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family/friends/himself</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The frequency and percentages were reported for each documentation. Due to the sample size \((n = 16)\), no other statistical analyses could be attempted and therefore responsible for delivering supports and services, (3) vocational training, (4) paid work experience, and (5) social skills training.
Table 25

Frequency and Percentage of Groups of People Child Spends Most Time With During Leisure Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups of People</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People with and without</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disabilities</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only spends time with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family members</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with disabilities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People without disabilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

questions pertaining to which predictor variables were most important in predicting employment, living arrangements, and community participation could not be answered.

Research Questions

- Did transition programs include vocational training, social skills training, and paid work experience?
Table 26

Frequency and Percentage of Satisfaction with Child’s Life in General

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Number ((n = 16))</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat satisfied</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat dissatisfied</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very dissatisfied</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to assess satisfaction</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- What persons or agencies were responsible for delivering supports for coordinated activities in the transition plan?
- Which of these predictor variables (e.g., vocational training, social skills training, parent involvement, student involvement, paid work experience, interagency involvement) are the most important in predicting employment outcomes, living arrangements, and community participation?
**IEP/Transition Participation.** Each IEP was analyzed for the signature of those that attended the annual IEP of the students' final year before exiting. As shown in Table 27, of the sample (n = 16), 14 (87%) of the parents attended the IEP/transition meeting and 2 (12.5%) participated through a phone conference, 13 (81.2%) students attended their IEP/transition meeting, and 3 (18.8%) did not attend. Local Educational Agency (LEA) representatives and special education teachers were in attendance at 16 (100%) meetings. Regular education teachers were in attendance at 5 (31.3%) meetings, speech therapists at 5 (31.5%) meetings, transition specialists at 4 (25%) meetings, and school psychologists at 4 (25%) meetings. Vocational educators were in attendance at 2 (12.5%) meetings and representatives from the intermediate care facility for individuals with mental retardation (ICF/MR) were at 2 (12.5%) meetings. A principal was in attendance at 1 (6.3%) meeting, an aide was in attendance at 1 (6.3%) meeting, and a one adaptive physical education teacher was in attendance at 1 (6.3%) meeting.

**Persons or agencies responsible for delivering supports.** In the coordinated activities section of the transition plan the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages section was analyzed for names of persons or agencies identified for ensuring that the student's postschool outcomes were met. There were no limits as to how many persons or agencies could be listed in this area. The activities were in the areas of instruction, related services, community experiences, employment and other post-school adult living.
objectives, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. Data were analyzed to determine whether the statement was left blank or whether a specific agency was listed. In 4 (25%) of the transition plans all of these areas were left blank and 8 (50%) of the plans had no agency listed. Following are persons who were listed in the specific areas of instruction, related services, community experiences, employment, and acquisition of daily living skills.

As shown in Table 28, in the area of instruction, school or staff was listed as the key persons or agency identified for delivering supports and services to achieve IEP outcomes on 8 (50%) of the IEPs, parent was listed on 6 (37.5%), student was listed on 6 (37.5%), vocational rehabilitation was listed on 1 (6.3%), intermediate care facility for individuals with mental retardation (ICF/MR) was listed on 1 (6.3%), a regular education teacher was listed on 1 (6.3%), and transition services was listed on 1 (6.3%) of the IEPs. Seven (43.8%) of the transition plans had no one listed as responsible for delivering supports and services in the area of instruction.

In the area of related services, school or staff was listed as the key persons or agency identified for delivering supports and services to achieve IEP outcomes on 3 (18.8%) IEPs, parent was listed on 2 (12.5%), student was listed on 2 (12.5%), vocational rehabilitation on 1 (6.3%), and ICF/MR on 1 (6.3%) IEP (see Table 29). Speech therapist was listed on 1 (6.3%) IEP, transition services on 1 (6.3%), and transportation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent involvement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone conference</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not attend</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student involvement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>81.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not attend</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other team members</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education teacher</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular education teacher</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech therapist</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition specialist</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School psychologist</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational educator</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Table 28 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)*</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate care facility for individuals with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mental retardation (ICF/MR)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aide</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive physical education teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Number of IEPs analyzed.*
on 1 (6.3%) IEP. Eleven (68.8%) transition plans had no one listed as responsible for delivering supports and services in the area of related services.

In the area of community experiences, school or staff was listed as the key persons or agency identified for delivering supports and services to achieve IEP outcomes on 9 (56.3%) transition plans, parent was listed on 6 (37.5%), student was listed on 6 (37.5%), and transition services was listed on 1 (6.3%) of the plans (see Table 30). Five (31.3%) transition plans had no one listed as responsible for delivering supports and services in the area of community experiences.

As shown in Table 31, in the area of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, school or staff was listed as the key persons or agency identified for delivering supports and services to achieve IEP outcomes on 5 (31.3%) transition plans, parent was listed on 4 (25%), student was listed on 4 (25%), vocational rehabilitation was listed on 3 (18.8%), transition services was listed on 2 (12.5%) and ICF/MR was listed on 1 (6.3%) transition plan. Seven (43.8%) transition plans had no one listed as responsible for delivering supports and services in the area of employment.

As shown in Table 32, in the area of acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation, school or staff was listed as the key persons or agency identified for delivering supports and services to achieve IEP outcomes on 5 (31.3%) of the transition plans, parent was listed on 3 (18.8%), student was listed on 3 (18.8%),
Table 28

Frequency and Percentage of Persons or Agencies Responsible for Delivering Supports for Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons/Agencies</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)*</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School or staff</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational rehabilitation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate care facility for individuals with mental retardation (ICF/MR)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular education teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one listed</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Number of IEPs analyzed.

and ICF/MR was listed on 1 (6.3%) of the transition plans. Ten (62.5%) transition plans had no one listed as responsible for delivering supports and services in the area of daily living skills and vocational evaluation.
Table 29

Frequency and Percentage of Persons or Agencies Responsible for Delivering Supports for Related Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons/Agencies</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)*</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School or staff</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational rehabilitation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate care facility for individuals with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mental retardation (ICF/MR)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech therapist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one listed</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Number of IEPs analyzed.

*Vocational Training, Social Skills, and Paid Work Experience. The IEP goal pages were analyzed for documentation of vocational training, social skills training, and paid
Table 30

Frequency and Percentage of Persons or Agencies Responsible for Delivering Supports for Community Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons/Agencies</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School or staff</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one listed</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Number of IEPs analyzed.

work experience. As shown in Table 33, the vocational training goal was written under the specific heading of vocational training or education in 9 (56.3%) IEPs, vocational training or education was implied in benchmarks in 6 (37.5%) IEPs, and 1 (6.3%) IEP did not have any documentation of vocational training or education. Social skills training was implied in benchmarks in 5 (31.3%) IEPs and a social skills goal was written under the specific heading of social skills training in 4 (25%) IEPs. Seven (43.8%) of the IEPs did not have any documentation of social skills training. Paid work experience was not documented in any of the IEPs.
Table 31

Frequency and Percentage of Persons or Agencies Responsible for Delivering Supports for Employment and Other Post-School Adult Living Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons/Agencies</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School or staff</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational rehabilitation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition services</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate care facility for individuals with mental retardation (ICF/MR)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one listed</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Number of IEPs analyzed.

Family Interview

The purpose of the interview was to further investigate student, parent, and agency involvement in transition programming. Fifteen of the questions were directed to the student and pertained to transition planning and involvement (see Appendix E). Three of the questions were directed to the parents about their involvement in the transition
Table 32

Frequency and Percentage of Persons or Agencies Responsible for Delivering Supports for Daily Living Skills and Functional Vocational Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons/Agencies</th>
<th>Number (n = 16)*</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School or staff</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate care facility for individuals with mental retardation (ICF/MR)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one listed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Number of IEPs analyzed.

planning. A qualitative summary of participant comments was the primary method of data analysis for this portion of the study. This summary involved reviewing and coding all relevant passages related to each of the questions from family interviews, demographic surveys, and IEP documents.
Table 33

Frequency and Percentage of Vocational Training, Paid Work Experience, and Social Skills Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IEP Components</th>
<th>Number ( (n = 16) )*</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Training or Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal stated</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal implied</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Skills Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal implied</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal stated</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid Work Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal stated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal implied</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Number of IEPs analyzed.*
Participants and Setting

Participants of this interview were eight families who had volunteered to the interview at the time they completed the student demographic survey (see Table 34). Six of the interviews were in the home, one interview was at a fast food restaurant, and one interview was over the phone with a mother who lived out of state. Six interviews were with the student and his/her mother, one interview the mother and father were present, and one interview the father, mother, and brother were present. Two interviews were conducted without the student. The questions were directed to the student, however, the parent in most cases helped by restating the question or offering information to aid in the student remembering. In the cases where the student could not answer, the parent answered.

The data were collapsed into four broad categories that specifically related to student, parent, agency involvement, and student outcome. Under each of these broad categories, several themes emerged.

Research Questions

- To what extent was the student involved in planning his or her transition program?
- To what extent was the parent involved in planning the transition program?
- To what extent were agencies involved in transition from school to adulthood.
Table 34

Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student*</th>
<th>Age at Interview</th>
<th>Location of Interview</th>
<th>Family Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theresa</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernie</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Father &amp; Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Father, Mother, &amp; Brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhonda</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Fast Food Restaurant</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Pseudonyms

Student IEP/Transition Involvement

Table 35 illustrates student attendance at their IEP/transition meetings and involvement in the decision making process (e.g., who would attend, choice related to what classes would be taken). Seven of the students attended their IEP/transition meetings, one student did not. Lucy would show up at her IEP/transition meetings, but her mother reported, “She didn’t like them. People talked about her not to her, and she
would end up crying. Although she went to most of them, because of her emotional state, she would be excused.”

When students were asked, “Were you asked who you would like to have at your meeting?” only Cynthia said yes. “I asked if my aide could come to the meeting.”

Cynthia’s mother explained that Cynthia had the same aide for many years. Only one student was able to choose the classes she took in school. Cynthia was in the self-contained classroom for students with mental retardation (MCS) for pre-vocational skills and math. The other four classes; keyboarding, choir, fashion merchandising, and cooking; were in the general education classroom. Cynthia’s mother stated this enabled Cynthia to have many more typical peer acquaintances, “We were at the mall and a group of kids waved and said hi to Cynthia. When I asked who they were, Cynthia said they were in one of her classes at school. This would never have happened if she was in a self contained classroom all day.”

*Visions for the Future and Actual Outcomes*

Table 36 illustrates students visions for the future, school work experiences, and outcomes for each of the eight students in the interview section of this study. Although two of the students didn’t know what they wanted to do after they graduated, six of the
Table 35

IEP/Transition Meeting Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student*</th>
<th>Attended Meeting</th>
<th>Asked Who You Could Invite</th>
<th>Choose Your Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theresa</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernie</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhonda</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Pseudonyms

students had definite visions in the area of employment, however this vision had not materialized for any of the six.

Theresa’s vision for the future read “find an occupation she can do.” When Theresa’s mother was asked if Theresa had the chance to learn about jobs in which she was interested while in high school she stated, “They worked on that a lot, but I do not know if she understood.” When asked what Theresa wanted to do after she graduated Theresa’s
mother replied, "I don't think she had a clue as to what she liked or wanted to do."

However, according to her IEP, Theresa did an excellent job and enjoyed planting and watering plants in a greenhouse which was part of her work experience training in school.

Theresa now works in a sheltered workshop. Her duties include sorting clothes at a used clothing store, emptying garbage, vacuuming, and washing sinks. She gets paid every two weeks and her bimonthly pay check is about $5.50, which is based on piece work. As for future employment, Theresa's mother states, "She still needs job training and lots of supervision." Theresa's mother is very satisfied with Theresa's life in general and reported that Theresa is as well.

Kathy had attended a post educational program offered by the school district after graduating from high school. This program was an option for students who graduated with an option 2 diploma and had an open case with the intermediate care facility for individuals with mental retardation (ICF/MR) or Vocational Rehabilitation. The areas of emphases were work experience, employability skills, career exploration, job shadowing, job seeking skills, and other employability academics. However, her final year in this program, Kathy's vision for the future still read, "Kathy doesn't know at this time." Her mother, however, indicated Kathy was interested in working with animals. When asked if Kathy had the chance to learn about jobs she was interested in the answer was "no", and although the terms work experience were used in the IEP, a job or job duties
Table 36

Student Visions for the Future and Actual Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student *</th>
<th>Vision for the Future</th>
<th>School Work Experience</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theresa</td>
<td>Find an occupation she can do</td>
<td>Worked in greenhouse unpaid</td>
<td>Works at a used clothing store sheltered employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>None identified in the IEP</td>
<td>Various contracted jobs sheltered employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernie</td>
<td>Work with copier</td>
<td>Volunteered at organizations to help the poor</td>
<td>Post Educational Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Child Care</td>
<td>Volunteered at homeless shelter: folding clothes Volunteered at university day care center: fixed snacks, and played with children</td>
<td>Various contracted jobs sheltered employment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Table 37 (continued)

Student Visions for the Future and Actual Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student*</th>
<th>IEP Vision</th>
<th>School Work Experience</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia</td>
<td>Child Care</td>
<td>Volunteered at a senior care center: talked to clients, pushed them in wheelchairs, folded linen, cleaned tables, washed dishes, stacked chairs</td>
<td>Post Educational Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhonda</td>
<td>Telephone operator</td>
<td>Laundry unpaid</td>
<td>Post Educational Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Stay home and answer the phone, Work at a nursing home, Work at Sprint</td>
<td>Wiped down tables, picked up trash unpaid</td>
<td>Cleaning stalls at a stable sheltered employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Selling movie tickets at MGM, Working with a Veterinarian</td>
<td>Worked as a custodian unpaid</td>
<td>Stocks shelves sheltered employment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Pseudonyms
were not identified. At the time of the interview Kathy was 23 years old and had aged out of the post secondary program. When Kathy’s mother was asked what jobs she felt Kathy was trained to do when she left school she reported, “Minimal-she is unable to read or count money. She could do sorting, things of that nature.” Kathy now works in a sheltered workshop doing various contracted jobs. She works an average of 30 hours a week and pay is based on piece work. Kathy’s mother is somewhat dissatisfied with Kathy’s life in general although Kathy states she is happy.

On Bernie’s IEP, his vision for the future was to work with a copier. When interviewed, however, Bernie stated “I want to work at a bookstore or sport store.” He had been enrolled in the same post educational program as Kathy but was about to enroll in another post educational program offered by the school district. When asked the question, “Did you have the chance to learn about jobs you were interested in while in high school,” Bernie and his mother both answered “yes”, however according to the IEP, his work experience consisted of volunteering at organizations to help the poor where he baked, cleaned, did laundry chores, and worked in the yard. The survey question which asked what Bernie had been trained to do when he left school had been left blank. Bernie is still attending a postsecondary education program and is not employed. Whether Bernie is doing what he wanted to do after graduation can not be answered. His mother indicated that she is neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with Bernie’s life in general.
and Bernie stated that he is happy.

Lucy’s vision for the future was to work with children. When asked if Lucy had a chance to learn about jobs she was interested in while in high school, her mother reported that she had worked at the day care center at the university for a very short period of time. Lucy also worked at a homeless shelter folding clothes. Although working at the homeless shelter wasn’t in the area of interest for Lucy, mother stated, “It at least got her out of the classroom.” Lucy was very clear that she was not doing what she wanted to after she graduated, “I want to work at a day care, I want to go to work.” Lucy is now employed in sheltered employment doing various contracted jobs and pay is based on piece work. Mother stated:

When there is no work she just sits, many times she falls asleep and then gets reprimanded. We want supported employment for her, but can’t find jobs or agencies that provide enough support, we are worried about safety issues and her being left alone. She had a job at a clothes store, but they didn’t supervise her enough, she would have to go and find the supervisor to ask her what to do next, and then she would get into trouble for being off her station. She loves to work with kids, I have tried to get her involved where she works now, but nothing is available in that area. Lucy’s mother reported that she is somewhat dissatisfied with Lucy’s life in general, but Lucy reports she is happy.
According to Cynthia’s IEP, her vision for the future was to continue going to school, however she reported in the interview that she wanted to work with kids. When asked if she had the chance to learn about jobs she was interested in while in high school her reply was, “I was never offered a chance.” Her work experience included volunteering at the library, an organization to help the poor, and a nursing care center. Her duties at the care center were pushing clients in their wheelchairs, folding linen, cleaning tables, washing dishes, and assisting with the bingo game. When asked if she was doing what she wanted to do after graduating her reply was yes. She is attending the post education program offered by the school district. Mother reported that she is somewhat satisfied with Cynthia’s life in general and Cynthia stated she is happy.

Rhonda’s vision for the future was to be a telephone operator. When asked if she had a chance to learn about jobs she was interested in while in high school the answer was “no”. Although one of her IEP benchmark’s was to participate in work experience there was no documentation of any activities. Mom stated, “They taught her to do laundry, my goals were for her to obtain a job so she could function in the community. She should have been taught skills for outside the home, but I didn’t see it.” Rhonda is attending the district’s post educational program. When asked if she was learning more in the program her mother’s reply was:
The focus is on vocational skills, however, she is still doing simple things, like learning emergency signs. She knows that, she is just repeating things. They take a lot of field trips like movies and banks, but no job training.

Rhonda’s mother reported that she is somewhat satisfied with Rhonda’s life in general and she thinks Rhonda is happy.

Alex’s vision for the future according to his IEP was to stay home and answer the phone. When interviewed he stated he wanted to work for the local phone company. When asked if he had the chance to learn about jobs he was interested in while in high school his answer was “no”. School work experiences included picking up trash and wiping tables. According to Alex’s mother there was “a little, very little” job seeking, work-related, and pre-vocational skills learned in the classroom environment. When I asked Alex to tell me about what he wanted to do after he graduated and if he was doing it he replied, “No, I wanted to work at the nursing home and make food for people.” He is presently working in sheltered employment cleaning stalls at a stable. His pay is based on piece work. When Alex’s mother was asked how satisfied she was with Alex’s life in general she reported, “Somewhat satisfied, only because I wish he had employment with the general public. Otherwise I know he is safe and happy and loved.” When I asked Alex if he was happy with his life now he replied “yes”.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Thomas's vision for the future, according to his IEP, was to sell movie tickets at MGM, however, when asked during the interview, he stated he was interested in working for a veterinarian, anything to do with animals or food service. When asked if he got a chance to learn about jobs he was interested in while in high school his mother replied, “Jobs that were available were not jobs he was interested in.” School work experience included working as a custodian at an elementary school. When Thomas’s mother was asked if Thomas was doing what he wanted to do after he graduated the answer was, “No, he is working in sheltered employment stocking shelves. His pay is based on piece work.” His mother reported that she is somewhat satisfied with Thomas’s life in general and when Thomas was asked if he was happy his answer was, “Not yet.”

*Parent Involvement in the IEP/Transition Program.* All eight parents reported they attended all of the IEP/transition plan meetings. When asked about their involvement in their son/daughters’ school programs three of the parents reported they were very involved in their child’s program. Cynthia’s mother stated, “I would move Cynthia to different programs because some didn’t have enough academics. I advocated for Cynthia to do more normal things. Socialization was an important issue. I was the one who found her a position at a private preschool to read to the kindergarten class.” Bernie’s mother would meet with the district’s transition specialist to review community services. Theresa’s mother reported going on weekly community based instruction (CBI) trips.
Five parents reported their involvement was primarily attending the IEP/transition meetings. Lucy's mother stated, "During elementary and junior high school I was very involved. I would visit the classroom, volunteer, and go on field trips. In high school I wasn't involved at all, they didn't do anything to be involved with." The other parents stated they would call the teachers if there were any concerns and they would go to the IEPs with goals in mind.

Agency Involvement. When asked which agencies provided the most support after leaving high school, two parents reported the intermediate care facility for individuals with mental retardation (ICF/MR), one reported ICF/MR and Easter Seals, one reported ICF/MR and a sheltered workshop, and one reported the rehabilitation counselor for the disabled. However, these parents were frustrated that there wasn't more agency support. Lucy's mother stated she didn't know where else to turn. She needed someone to give her a list of agencies so that she could start investigating alternatives. Three reported that there was no agency support. Rhonda's mother stated, "There were no follow-up calls. They should have a list of students who graduate and the agency should call us. There is nothing, no program. This should be initiated at the high school." Thomas's mother stated, "I sent Thomas to live with his grandmother in California because of the lack of services here."
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to focus exclusively on best practice components in transition programs for students with mental retardation by determining: (a) the post school outcomes of students with mental retardation; (b) the extent to which the transition component of the IEP reflected current best practices; (c) determine which predictor variables were the most important in predicting the positive outcomes of employment, living arrangements, and community participation; and (d) the extent of student and parent involvement in the transition process. Answers obtained for these research questions are summarized and discussed. In view of the low return rate, the reader is cautioned to avoid over-generalization.

Discussion of Results

Employment Outcomes

Employment options for students in this study seem to be sheltered employment or unemployment. Only one student who graduated from a postsecondary vocational
program was working in a competitive employment position making minimum wage and receiving some benefits. The majority were making below minimum wage or being paid based on piece work. The employment trend in this study was similar to the findings of Wehman, Kregel, and Seyfarth (1985a) in which the unemployment rate was nearly 70% when part-time and sheltered employment were defined as unemployed. In 1990, IDEA mandated that transition planning be incorporated into the IEP to provide instruction that would lead to improved postschool outcomes. Employment outcomes of students with mental retardation do not appear to be improving.

This may be a result of parents’ expectations. Parents expectations for students with mental retardation have been found to be placement into adult activity centers or sheltered workshops (Hill, Seyfarth, Banks, Wehman, & Orelove, 1987). When asked what the school could have done to help their child become employed, one parent reported, “We have different goals for her.”

This may also be the result of a scarcity of supported competitive employment opportunities. The majority of the parents interviewed stated that their children were too high functioning for sheltered workshops but not able to work competitively without support. Parents did not know where to go to find this kind of assistance.

Living Arrangements

All the students in this study continue to live at home or with relatives. For the majority of students who were still attending postsecondary programs or who had only
been out of school less than two years this was not surprising. Students without
disabilities typically are in some form of dependent living arrangement during the first
year following exit from high school (Hasazi, Johnson, Hasazi, & Gordon, 1989).

However, three of the students had been out of school for over two years and still were
living at home. This may be because parents want their children to remain living at home.
Only one parent reported that a group home was the goal for their son’s future.

Community Access

Most of the students in this study were accessing community facilities. The majority
used indoor recreation facilities such as movies, video arcades, and outdoor facilities like
parks, and community swimming pools. Restaurants and stores were also community
facilities that some enjoyed. However, the majority reported spending most of their free
time with family and a few with friends. Realizing there is a difference between living in
the community and being socially integrated into the community (Kregel, Wehman,
Seyfarth, & Marshall, 1986), the research question may have been better stated as to
whether there were social interactions with friends or other community members besides
care givers while accessing community facilities.

Vocational Training, Social Skills Training, and Paid Work Experience

Of the students who were not employed, parents reported that the schools should have
provided more vocational training. Vocational training, however, appeared to be an
integral part of the curriculum for students with mental retardation. Vocational training
was written as a goal or benchmark in all but one of the IEPs. None of the students, however, were enrolled in a paid work experience program. This is disturbing considering studies have found that students who work in consistent paid employment during school, continue to be employed after exiting school at a much higher rate (Benz, Lindstrom & Yovanoff, 2000; Sample, 1998). This may indicate that parents are aware of the importance of vocational training, but unaware that students could be getting high school credit for paid work experience.

Furthermore, only half of the IEPs included social skills training even though social skills have also been found to be significant factors in successful employment (Heal, Gonzalez, Rusch, Copher, & DeStefano, 1990). These findings may indicate there needs to be a curriculum developed for students with mental retardation that includes best practices in transition.

*Persons or Agencies Listed as Responsible for Delivering Supports*

IDEA requires that transition programs contain a statement of interagency responsibilities or needed linkages for successful transition. Results from this study revealed that only four of the total \( n = 16 \) IEP/transition meetings had agencies listed as responsible parties, however, these agencies were not in attendance at the time of the meeting. Furthermore, the two meetings which had agencies in attendance did not list these agencies as responsible for delivering supports. Of the IEPs that had agencies listed but not in attendance, it is unknown whether the team members had made linkages with
these agencies prior to the team identifying them as responsible parties. Four of the IEPs had no one listed in these areas and eight IEPs had school or staff, student, and parents as key persons for carrying out actions specified on the transition plans.

The trend of school personnel, students, and parents being identified as responsible for delivering supports in this study coincides with Shearin, Roessler, and Schriner (1999) who found that students were listed as the key persons on the majority of the IEPs and agencies were rarely identified. These findings may indicate that schools and agencies are not collaborating and therefore agencies are not being invited to the meetings. It may also be that school personnel are not adequately trained on this section of the transition plan and do not know who the responsible parties should be for delivering supports.

**Predictor Variables**

Statistical analyses on predictor variables could not be performed due to low response rate. Sample (1998) found, however, that long term employment during high school was a predictor of high employment for students with emotional disturbance. The study also found that parent involvement in educational programs was a predictor of successful community adjustment. Further investigation with a larger population is recommended to investigate whether the same trend is true for students with mental retardation.
Student Involvement

One of the intents of the IDEA transition mandate was that students become actively involved in their transition planning (Wehmeyer & Ward, 1995). In this study, however, student involvement was minimal. Although almost all of the students attended their transition meeting, professionals made most of the decisions including who would be at the meeting and classes they would take. One student reported, “The classes were all figured out.” These findings may indicate that professionals do not believe students with mental retardation have the ability to make informed choices during the complex transition process (Wehmeyer, 1998).

When triangulating interviews, surveys, and IEP/transition plans an unintentional finding emerged. There was a discrepancy between the students’ vision for the future, school work experiences, and actual outcomes. Although students were asked their vision for the future, goals were not written addressing the students’ expressed desires for the future. While most of the students expressed their desire to work in jobs that were typical of nondisabled peers their age (e.g., child care, veterinarian, telephone operator), their school work experiences more accurately mirrored stereotypic vocations such as custodial work. Post school employment consisted of maintenance worker, shelf stocker, and kitchen helper. These findings support the findings of Thoma, Rogan, and Baker (2001) who found transition goals were not typically a reflection of student preferences.
or interests. This may be a result of professionals and or parents presuming that students’ visions are idealistic and therefore more realistic goals are pursued.

*Parent Involvement*

Although all parents in this study reported going to the IEP/transition meetings, three were integral team members. These parents advocated for more integration, reviewed community services, searched for better programs, and found employment for their children. One parent volunteered often with community based instruction activities and other school activities. Other parents attended the meetings with goals in mind but basically gave those working with their child a free hand in transition plan development. This may indicate that some parents were satisfied with program placements. But it may also be that some felt a sense of hopelessness as expressed by one parent, “I didn’t prepare for the meetings because they focused on bad things, they didn’t tell what she could do, always what she couldn’t do.”

*Agency Involvement*

A common theme was the lack of agency support. Parents reported they didn’t know what agencies to contact after their children exited the school system. This trend was consistent with Wehman, Kregel, and Seyfarth (1985a) who found that rehabilitation, mental retardation, and state employment services were not being used by the students when they left school. This was disappointing considering the intent of IDEA (1997) was
for agencies to assist in the transition from school to post-school activities. This may be a
direct result of the lack of agency involvement at the IEP/transition meetings while
the student was still in school.

Study Design Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was the scarcity of district administrators
participating. Although twelve school districts in this southwestern state were identified
as having students meeting the criteria, only five volunteered to participate.

The master list of names of graduates from the large urban school district had some
discrepancies. Although the numbers coincided with what was reported to the state
during their IDEA monitoring report, some of the students on the list had not graduated
and at least one was not diagnosed as having mental retardation. Therefore, it is difficult
to determine the actual population of students meeting the criteria.

Finally, there was a low response rate, even though a thorough search was conducted
using the phone book and web sites to contact prospective participants whose surveys
were returned due to incorrect addresses. Refusal or inability to contact respondents is a
problem with all types of survey research and may result in bias (Blackorby & Edgar,
1992). Due to the transient nature of this school district, there was even more of a
problem with large numbers of the population moving in and out of the area. These small
numbers made it impossible to make definitive conclusions about the influence of
transition best practices on student outcomes.
Caution should be exercised when interpreting the qualitative findings from the family interview. Using qualitative methods, the researcher inductively derived an understanding by attending to the participants’ discussion rather than by testing or confirming hypothesis or theory (Krueger, 1988). The purpose of the family interview was to explore specific students’ and parents’ involvement in the transition planning process. Generalization to all students with mental retardation should be avoided.

Conclusions

This study, despite the limitations, provides some important data that can be helpful in transitioning students from school to adulthood.

1. Adolescent’s employment outcomes continue to be sheltered employment or unemployment.

2. Although most of the students were accessing community facilities, most of the social interaction was with family rather than with friends or other community members.

3. Vocational training was included in almost all of the IEPs.

4. Social skills training was included in some of the IEPs.

5. Paid work experience was not included in any of the IEPs.

6. Almost all of the transition plans were written without agencies in attendance.
7. Student, parent, and school personnel were listed as the persons or agencies responsible for delivering supports for coordinated activities in the majority of the transition plans.

8. Although students were present at their transition planning meeting, they were not actively involved in the decision making.

9. Students' visions for the future were not incorporated into school work experiences and were not fulfilled after they exited school.

10. Although parents were present at the IEP/transition meetings, most left the decision making to other team members.

11. After students exited school, parents had little agency support and did not know where to go to find assistance.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 strengthened academic expectations and accountability for children with disabilities and bridged the gap between what children with disabilities learn and what is required in regular curriculum (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Goals for students with disabilities must be consistent "to the maximum extent appropriate, to the standards for all students established by the State" (34 CFR 300.137 (a) (2)). Therefore, teachers of students with mild disabilities whose courses of study are college preparatory or general education, align their curriculum with the general education curriculum. However, teachers of students with more severe disabilities whose course of study is functional, have little
guidance on what to teach. There appears to be a need to develop a curriculum for students with mental retardation that includes best practice components of vocational training, paid work experience, social skills training, and activities that foster student, parent, and agency involvement.

Recommendations for Further Study

1. Research is needed using a larger number of districts at the national level to increase the number of respondents so that statistical analysis can be conducted to determine the variables that are most important in predicting employment outcomes, living arrangements, and community participation.

2. Many of the students were graduating with their peers and going into posteducational programs until they age out at twenty-two. Further research is needed to determine if outcomes of these students exiting the postsecondary programs were more fitting than those staying at their high school.

3. Research is needed to determine if parent expectations are a variable that may be limiting competitive employment for students with mental retardation.

4. Research is needed to determine if professional expectations are a variable that may limiting competitive employment for students with mental retardation.

5. Research is needed to address more specifically how to facilitate parent involvement in transition programs.
6. This study did not take into account level of mental retardation. Further research is needed to determine what effect the level of retardation would have on findings.

7. Research is needed to determine why agency linkages are not being made at the IEP/transition meetings.
February 27, 2003

Dear District Administrator,

Your school district is invited to participate in a statewide research project that will contribute to further understanding the relationship between what students with mental retardation are doing after they exit special education and their transitional programs. This research study is being conducted as a part of the doctoral dissertation associated with my doctoral program.

Through the special education monitoring report led by the Department of Education, these past two years, I had the opportunity to review data as it pertains to students with disabilities relative to a number of critical indicators. This project revealed that there were limited data to understand what happens to students with mental retardation upon exiting high school and there were little or no data available from students and families regarding the effectiveness of transition planning. This research project will provide an opportunity to systematically study what students with mental retardation are doing after they exit high school and to determine if there is a relationship between student outcomes and transition planning.

In order to facilitate the acquisition of necessary data to guide future decision-making, I would like to request approval to have access to the names, addresses, and IEPs of former students in your district, ages 14 through 24, with an eligibility code of mental retardation; who graduated, dropped out, or aged-out of high school in the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 school years. In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms will be used at all times. No names will appear on the surveys and codes will be used only to contact and remind those that have not returned the questionnaires. The only persons with access to the codes will be myself as the primary researcher and another trained doctoral student. All data sources related to this study will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my home for the requisite three-year period and then destroyed. The Department of Education has approved this approach to collecting these data, and as you will see in the attached letter, hopes that you will assist in this process.

This study will be conducted under the direction of an associate professor in the Department of Special Education. I have enclosed the approval letters of The School District Cooperative Research Committee, the Center for Educational Research and Planning Advisory Committee, and Office for the Protection of Research Subjects. If you are willing to have your district participate in this study, please sign on the line below and return the form to Deborah Kennedy. If you have any questions please call me at 702-895-1075. If you so desire, I will be happy to provide you with the results of this study.
The results will also be shared with the Department of Education and will help inform decision-making for future state improvement efforts.

Sincerely,

Deborah Kennedy
Doctoral Candidate

I give my consent:

Signed

Date

Check here if you would like a copy of the result of this study.

Address where results should be sent:

Note. This letter has been modified to ensure confidentiality.
APPENDIX B

PARENT CONSENT FORM
Department of Special Education

INFORMED CONSENT

I am Deborah Kennedy, a doctoral student from the Department of Special Education. I am the researcher on this project. You are invited to participate in a research study. The study is called Linking Transition Best Practices to Student Outcomes for Students with Mental Retardation. This study has been approved by the Center for Educational Research and Planning Advisory Committee and the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: Fill out a survey about the classes your son/daughter took in school, where he or she works (if employed), where he or she lives, and what kind of activities he or she participates in regularly, as well as some background information. The survey takes about five minutes to fill out. The purpose of this study is to find out what students with mental retardation are doing after they leave high school. I am trying to find out if there is a relationship between what students are doing after they leave high school and their transition plans.

I am also looking for families willing to do a confidential follow-up interview. The interview would take approximately 30 minutes and can be by phone or location of your choice. Questions pertain to you and your son/daughter’s involvement in their transition planning.

Your participation in this study will benefit students with mental retardation by supplying information to educators that will help them develop effective transition programs. You also may acquire an increased understanding of your son/daughter’s goals for the future.

You might be uncomfortable answering some of the questions asked. You are encouraged to discuss this with me. I will explain the questions to you in more detail.

If you have any questions about the study or if you experience harmful effects as a result of participation in this study, you may contact me at (000) 000-0000. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, you may contact the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at (000) 000-0000.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
records will be stored in a locked facility for at least 3 years after completion of the study and then destroyed.

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT:**
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_________________________  _______________________
Signature of Participant  Date

_________________________
Participant Name (Please Print)

**Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview?**

___yes

_________________________
Signature of Participant

Phone number (_____)________________
Best day to call  M  T  W  Th  F  S  S
Call between ________________________

___no  

_________________________
Signature

*Note.* This letter has been modified to ensure confidentiality.
APPENDIX C

STUDENT ASSENT FORM
Department of Special Education

YOUTH ASSENT FORM

I am Deborah Kennedy, a student from the Department of Special Education. I am trying to find out what students are doing after they leave high school. The study is called Linking Transition Best Practices to Student Outcomes for Students with Mental Retardation.

If you volunteer to help me in this study, you will be asked to answer some questions about school. This will take about 30 minutes. I am asking you these questions because I want to know if your transition plan helped prepare you for getting a job, being able to take care of yourself, and taking part in community recreational activities.

Your answers may help teachers to understand that it is important for students with mental retardation to make choices and decisions about their future.

You might be embarrassed answering some of the questions. If you are embarrassed or don’t understand the question, you can tell me. I can ask it a different way.

If you have any questions about the study or if you are unhappy because of answering some of the questions, you may contact me at (000) 895-000-0000. If you want to know about your rights about being a part of this study you may contact the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at (000) 000-0000.

You have the right not to talk to me. You may stop answering my questions at any time. By saying no you will not make me or anyone at the university mad. You may ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the study.

Anything you tell me will be kept private. Your name will not be on any of the papers. All information will be kept in a locked file cabinet for at least 3 years after the study is over and then destroyed.

Participant Consent:
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_________________________________          _____________
Signature of Participant                Date

_________________________________
Participant Name (Please Print)
Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview?

_____yes

________________________________________

Signature of Participant

Phone number (____)____________________

Best day to call M T W Th F S S

Call between ____________________________

_____no

________________________________________

Signature

Parent Consent

I have read the above information and give permission for my son/daughter to participate in this study. A copy of this form has been given to me.

________________________________________  ______________________

Signature of Parent  Date

________________________________________

Parent Name (Please Print)

Note. This letter has been modified to ensure confidentiality.
APPENDIX D

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY
SECTION A: STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. What was the name of the school and the county your child last attended?

   Name of School ______________________________________________________

   Name of County ______________________________________________________

2. What was the last month and year your child attended school?

   ____ ____  ____ ____
   Month   Year

3. What is your child's date of birth?

   ____ / ____ / ____
   month   day   year

4. What is your child's gender?

   1 = Male
   2 = Female

5. What is your child's race/ethnic origin:

   1 = American Indian  3 = White  5 = African American
   2 = Asian  4 = Hispanic  6 = Other (please specify)

6. Does your child have any medical problems that would affect his/her ability to obtain employment or live independently (heart conditions, seizures, etc.)?

   _____ (1) YES   _____ (2) NO

   If yes identify ____________________________________________________________
7. How many annual IEP meetings have you attended, either in person or by phone, from
the time your child turned 14 until he/she exited high school?

   _____ all
   _____ 6 - 7
   _____ 4 - 5
   _____ 2 - 3
   _____ 0 - 1

SECTION B: EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

1. What was the reason for your child’s exit from school?

   1 = Graduated with Standard Diploma
   2 = Graduated with Adjusted Diploma
   3 = Graduated with Certificate of Attendance
   4 = Reached maximum age
   5 = Dropped out
   6 = Other (please specify)____________________________________________________

2. At the time your child exited school what was his/her instructional arrangement?
   (Circle one)

   1 = General Education
   2 = Resource Room
   3 = Self Contained on Regular Campus
   4 = Special School
   5 = Other (please specify)____________________________________________________

3. At the time your child exited school what type of secondary program did your child
   participate in?

   1 = College Preparatory
   2 = General/Basic Education
   3 = Functional Curriculum (e.g., Community Based Instruction, Vocational,
       Independent Living Skills)
4. If your child was in a functional education program (#3), the majority of time was spent in (check up to three):

   - (1) Competitive employment – paid work with minimum support in integrated community environments
   - (2) Supported employment – paid work with ongoing support in integrated community environments
   - (3) Sheltered employment
   - (4) Learning job seeking, work-related, pre-vocational skills in the classroom environment
   - (5) On-going instruction in community environments including non-paid vocational training
   - (6) Learning non-employment related skills in the classroom (e.g. self-care)

5. Please tell me what job(s) you feel that your child was trained to do when he or she left school. (List no more than three).

   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________

SECTION C: EMPLOYMENT

1. Was your child employed while in school?

   1 = Employed full-time while in school
   2 = Employed part-time while in school
   3 = Not employed while in school

2. Was your child employed during the summers while in school?

   1 = Employed full-time during the summer
   2 = Employed part-time during the summer
   3 = Not employed during the summer
3. Which of the following categories best describes your child’s current employment situation?

1 = Working for an employer
2 = Working in sheltered employment
3 = Full-time student (employment training or participant in vocational rehabilitation)
4 = Doing volunteer work
5 = Unemployed

4. How many jobs has your child held since leaving school?

____ 0
____ 1
____ 2
____ 3
____ More than three

IF YOUR CHILD IS CURRENTLY EMPLOYED PLEASE ANSWER QUESTIONS #5 - #11. IF THEY HAVE NEVER BEEN EMPLOYED, PLEASE SKIP TO QUESTION #12.

5. What is your child’s job title?

________________________________________________________________________

6. Did your child find his/her current job with the help of:

1 = Rehabilitation counselor
2 = A friend
3 = A parent/relative
4 = School personnel
5 = An employment agency
6 = Found the job independently
7 = Other (please specify)

7. How many hours in an average work week does your child spend working for pay?

____ ____ (Enter number of hours)
8. Hourly salary:

1 = Below federal minimum wage ($0.01 - $5.15)
2 = Minimum wage ($5.15)
3 = Above minimum ($5.15+)
4 = "By the job," "Whatever they’ll pay me" etc.
5 = "Piece work"
6 = "I don’t know"

9. Which of the following fringe benefits does your child receive in his/her present job?

(1) Paid Vacations  _____ YES  _____ NO  _____ Don’t Know
(2) Paid Sick Leave  _____ YES  _____ NO  _____ Don’t Know
(3) Health Insurance  _____ YES  _____ NO  _____ Don’t Know
(4) Dental Insurance  _____ YES  _____ NO  _____ Don’t Know
(5) Retirement  _____ YES  _____ NO  _____ Don’t Know

10. How long has your child been employed in his/her present job?

1 = 0-6 months
2 = 7 months to 1 year
3 = More than one year, but less than 2 years
4 = More than two years

11. Select the response which best describes your child’s level of satisfaction with the type of work he/she performs in their job.

1 = Not satisfied at all
2 = Somewhat satisfied
3 = Satisfied
12. If your child is currently **NOT EMPLOYED**, what do you think makes it hardest for him/her to get a job? Please check all that apply.

- (1) No transportation available
- (2) Lack of jobs in the area
- (3) No one to help him/her find a job
- (4) Lack of job training programs
- (5) Don’t want to give up Social Security benefits
- (6) Not able to work because of health
- (7) Not able to work because of young children who need supervision
- (8) Other (please specify) ____________________________________________

13. What, if anything, could the school have done to help your child become employed? Please check all that apply.

- (1) Provided more vocational training while in school
- (2) Helped him/her find a job
- (3) Told where he/she could find help after leaving school
- (4) The school did everything it could to help
- (5) No opinion, don’t know
- (6) Other (please specify) ____________________________________________

**SECTION D: INDEPENDENT LIVING/COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

1. Which of the following best describes your child’s current living arrangement?

   1 = At home with parent
   2 = Independent (alone)
   3 = With roommate(s) or spouse
   4 = Group Home
   5 = Supervised Apartment
   6 = Foster Home
   7 = Licensed Adult Boarding Home
   8 = Residential School
   9 = Institution
   10 = Other (please specify) ____________________________________________
2. At which of these facilities does your child spend one or more hours each week? Please check all that apply.

- a) Shopping facilities
- b) Homes of friends
- c) Outdoor recreation facilities (swimming pool, parks, etc.)
- d) Restaurants
- e) Indoor recreation facilities (movies, video arcades, etc.)
- f) Other (please specify)
- g) Does not use any community facilities

3. In which of these activities does your child participate regularly? Please check all that apply.

- a) Jogging
- b) Swimming
- c) Bicycling
- d) Bowling
- e) Other
- f) Does not participate in any regular recreation activities

4. To which of the following groups or clubs does your child belong? Check all that apply.

- a) Church club
- b) YMCA or YWCA
- c) Scouts
- d) Exercise class
- e) Adult education class
- f) Other
- g) None

5. Who does your child spend most of his/her free time with:

1 = Family
2 = Friends
3 = With general public (ex. In a shopping mall or movie theatre)
4 = Co-workers
5 = Him/herself

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
6. With which groups of people does your child spend the largest amount of his/her free time outside of his/her home?

   1 = People with disabilities
   2 = People without disabilities
   3 = People with and without disabilities
   4 = Only spends time with family members

7. All things considered, how satisfied are you (parent/guardian) with your child’s life in general?

   1 = Very satisfied
   2 = Somewhat satisfied
   3 = Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
   4 = Somewhat dissatisfied
   5 = Very dissatisfied
   6 = No opinion
   7 = Unable to assess satisfaction
APPENDIX E

FAMILY INTERVIEW
1. Did you go to your IEP/transition meetings when you were in high school?

2. Did someone explain to you what the meeting was about or what transition means? (If yes) Who?

3. Did someone talk to you about where you want to work and live before the transition meeting to help you get ready? (If yes) Who?

4. Were you asked who you would like to have at your meeting? (If yes) Who did you ask to come?

5. At your transition meeting did you tell about where you wanted to work and live? (If yes) Where?

6. Were you asked what you would need to learn to be able to work and live where you want? (If yes) Were these goals included in your transition plan?

7. Did you choose the classes you took in school? (If yes) What were they?

8. Did you have the chance to learn about jobs you were interested in while in high school?

9. Were you in any after school activities while in high school? (If yes) What were they?
10. Which agencies provided the most support after leaving high school?

*Who, besides your parents/guardian helped you after leaving high school find a job?*

*Use public transportation/drivers license?*

*Find a place to live?*

*Access community facilities?*

11. Tell me about what you wanted to do after you graduated? Are you doing it?

12. Did you have more friends when you were in school or do you have more friends now?

13. Are you happy with your life now?

Parent

14. Tell me about your involvement in your son/daughter’s school program.

15. How did you prepare for the IEP/transition meetings?

16. Did you and your son/daughter agree about his/her transition goals?
Code: [ ] [ ] [ ]

**IEP Participation:** Check in the appropriate box IEP team members who attended the IEP meeting. If more than one participant with same title, write number in box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent/Guardian/Surrogate Attended</th>
<th>Developmental Disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone Conference</td>
<td>Vocational Rehabilitation Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Adult Services Case Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA Representative</td>
<td>Independent Living Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher</td>
<td>Social Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Education Teacher</td>
<td>Job Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Psychologist</td>
<td>Community College Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech/Language Therapist/Pathologist</td>
<td>4 year College Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Nurse</td>
<td>Vocational/Technical School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreter</td>
<td>Technical Assistance Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Educator</td>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Counselor</td>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition Specialist</td>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Statement of Needed Transition Services:** Coordinated Activities: List persons/agencies (e.g. student, parent) responsible for delivering supports and services. (No Names)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Related Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment and Other Post-School Adult Living Objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition of Daily Living Skills and Functional Vocational Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IEP Goals and Benchmarks: Vocational Training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal was written under the specific heading of Vocational Training/Education</th>
<th>Goal Stated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal was written under another heading</td>
<td>Goal Implied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No goal was written</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IEP Goals and Benchmarks: Paid Work Experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal was written under the specific heading of Paid Work Experience/Employment</th>
<th>Goal Stated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal was written under another heading</td>
<td>Goal Implied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No goal was written</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IEP Goals and Benchmarks: Social Skills Training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal was written under the specific heading of Social Skills</th>
<th>Goal Stated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal was written under another heading</td>
<td>Goal Implied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No goal was written</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


148

*linkages, and policy* (pp. 371-386). Sycamore, IL-Sycamore.


The successfully employed worker with a handicap: Employee/employer perceptions of job performance. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 10,* 85-93.


Hasazi, S. B., Gordon, L. R., & Roe, C. A. (1985). Factors associated with the
employment status of handicapped youth exiting high school from 1979 to 1983.

*Exceptional Children, 51, 455-469.*


*Exceptional Children, 54*(1), 9-23.


Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments (1997) Public Law 105-17.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/Profiles/Single/2001/SS01/Narrative/050/

NP05000US32003.htm


Retrieved November 1, 2003, from

http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/Policy/IDEA/index.html


Graduate College  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  

Deborah Joy Kennedy  

Home Address:  
8517 Copper Falls Ave.  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89129  

Degrees:  
Bachelor of Science, Special Education, 1994  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  

Master of Education, Special Education, 1997  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  

Dissertation Title: Linking Transition Best Practices to Student Outcomes for Students with Mental Retardation  

Dissertation Examination Committee:  
Chairperson, Dr. Tom Pierce, Ph. D.  
Committee Member, Dr. Kyle Higgins, Ph. D.  
Committee Member, Dr. Susan Miller, Ph. D.  
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. Eunsook Hong, Ph. D.