

**Parent Involvement in Transition Planning for Students with
Learning Disabilities**

by

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Abstract

Post-secondary education is a path that many individuals take after high school. For students with learning disabilities, post-secondary education is an attainable goal regardless of the academic difficulties they may face. In order to make a successful transition to post-secondary education, it is necessary that students, as well as parents are actively involved in the transition process. Research has highlighted the importance of parent involvement. When parents are involved in their child's education students experience improved motivation and confidence in academics (Ames et al., 1993), improved school behavior (Epstein, 1987), and have more consistent attendance in school (Falbo et al., 2001). Pape (1999) discovered that students whose parents are involved make better transition, produce quality work, and develop realistic goals for life after graduation.

Although parent involvement has been linked to positive outcomes for students, parents choose not to get involved for many reasons. Low parent involvement can be attributed to issues related to transportation, differing opinions of parents and educators, lack of understanding about the school system, and the perception that they are inferior to others involved in the process (Turnbull, 1997). Another reason for the lack of parent involvement is lack of knowledge (Lovitt and Cushing, 1999; Turnbull, 1997).

It is necessary for educators and professionals to promote parent involvement in their organizations. Understanding the barriers to parent involvement will allow organizations to create ways in which parents can be more actively involved. This paper focuses on one strategy,

increasing knowledge through training sessions, in which to increase parent involvement in the transition process.

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Vita

Shelley Henthorne Bailey, daughter of David and Debbie Henthorne, was born on December 10, 1978, in Dothan, Alabama. She is the sister of Cynthia (Henthorne) Wheatley and Paul Jeffrey Henthorne. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Mild Learning Behavioral Disorders from Auburn University (2001). Upon graduation, Shelley was employed as a special education teacher in Lagrange, Georgia. She returned to Auburn one year later when she was accepted into the master's program at Auburn University. She earned a Master of Education in Collaborative Teacher in 2003. Shelley has four years teaching experience as a special education teacher at the high school level. She began the doctoral program in 2006. While in the doctoral program, Shelley completed her Administration Certification. During her final semester in the doctoral program Shelley married James Morrow Bailey of Chelsea, Alabama. Currently, she teaches at Nichols-Lawson Middle School in Sylacauga, Alabama.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Today, transition planning is not merely focused on work. The focus of transition planning has expanded and postsecondary education and training is emphasized more (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). With effective transition planning more and more students with learning disabilities are attending some form of postsecondary education. According to the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (2005), 23% of all students with a learning disability now attend a 2-year college and 11% attend a 4-year college. When compared to their peers without disabilities, these numbers are low. However, the rate of participation in postsecondary education has increased; in 1993, only 9% of all students with a learning disability were enrolled in a 2-year or 4-year college (Council for Learning Disabilities, 1993).

Some believe that transition planning is not needed for those with a learning disability because it is considered a milder disability; however this is not true (De Fur & Reiff, 1994; Dunn, 2008). Since postsecondary education is a viable option for those with learning disabilities, transition planning is crucial. “The transition to postsecondary educational settings refers to the sequential process of students’ completing secondary school requirements and planning and participating successfully in further formal educational activities in a degree or certification program” (Mellard, 2005, p. 2).

Planning for the transition to post-secondary education is critical because it involves many people and activities. An important element in this process is parents. It is also important

to include other key people, such as the student's teachers, the high school counselor, the vocational rehabilitation counselor, and a postsecondary admissions counselor (Mellard, 2005). Every person participating in the transition planning process must collaborate and share responsibility in the decision making process. Mellard states, "Successful participation in [community colleges, vocational and technical schools, 4-year colleges and universities] the programs require active long-range planning by students, their parents or guardians, and school staff" (p. 2). There are many decisions to be made about post-secondary options, as well as, employment, and independent living for individuals with learning disabilities, and all individuals who work with the student, need to be involved in every aspect of planning.

Early planning is key to making a successful transition to post-secondary education. The preparation for post-secondary education starts long before an individual graduates from high school. The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002) suggested that individuals with disabilities begin their postsecondary transition planning as early as middle school and a multiyear plan should be developed. Arnold (1985) suggested that college preparation activities should begin in the 9th grade and be included in the Individualized Education Program or Individualized Transition Plan.

Not only is it important to begin planning early, but the type of preparation is also important for the successful transition to postsecondary education. Planning for the transition to college should involve an array of activities, and these activities should be arranged so that the student completes different activities each year of high school (Arnold, 1985; HEATH Resource Center, 1995; Rogan & Branson, 1993). These activities should address areas such as self-awareness and career awareness, assessment, planning, programming, parent activities, summer

activities, and college search activities. Ultimately, the activities that a student participates in during high school should lead to acceptance into to a post-secondary institution.

In order for transition planning to begin early and include relevant activities, parents, as well as teachers must have the knowledge to be active participants. Lack of knowledge is one of the most commonly cited problems that affects parent involvement. Uncertainty about roles in the educational process also impedes parent involvement (Finders & Lewis, 1994). Providing training to parents is one way to address this lack of knowledge and role confusion (Buckner, 1992). If parents and teachers are provided with information that will inform them about the transition process, they can assume a more active role in transition planning.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the effects of training on knowledge about the process of transitioning to post-secondary education. “The transition to postsecondary educational settings refers to the sequential process of students completing secondary school requirements and planning and participating successfully in further formal educational activities in a degree or certification program” (Mellard, 2005, p. 2). This process is critical to the success of students with learning disabilities in post-secondary education settings. It is important that information about post-secondary education is provided to parents, students, and teachers so that they might make informed decisions in the transition process.

Another purpose of this study is to examine parents’, students’, and teachers’ perceptions of parent involvement. Extensive research has been conducted to show that there are many benefits of parent involvement (Ames et al., 1993; Epstein, 1987; Falbo et al., 2001). Understanding parent involvement is important in order to make changes to promote increased parent involvement in transition planning.

Research Questions

The study will investigate the following questions:

1. To what extent do changes in knowledge over time depend upon training?
2. To what extent do changes in knowledge over time differ by group?
3. To what extent do changes in knowledge over time differ by group and level of training?
4. To what extent do students and their parents agree about the level of perceived parent involvement?
5. What are teachers' perceptions about levels of parent involvement?
6. After receiving training, are students, parents, and teachers satisfied with the training they received?

Significance of the Study

This study will provide information to students, parents, and teachers about the transition process and preparing for post-secondary education after high school. The results from the pre and post tests will allow the researcher to determine the effectiveness of the training in increasing knowledge. The results may lead to improved delivery of transition services by understanding how students and their parents perceive the importance of parent involvement and the importance of the information they received. Results from the parent involvement questionnaire may provide a better understanding of ways in which parents are involved and challenges that inhibit their ability to get involved in their child's education.

Limitations of the Study

One of the major limitations of this study is the ability to generalize the results to other populations in special education. Although the potential participants make up the largest

disability category in special education, they are from only one of the thirteen categories in which students can qualify for special education. The participants in the study are from only one school system in Alabama. This is also a limitation when generalizing the results to other schools and populations.

Another limitation of the study is the survey, which requires self-report measures. In order for the results of the survey to be meaningful, potential participants should answer honestly about the level of perceived parent involvement. There is some possibility that students and parents may not be completely honest when completing the survey.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The American Heritage Dictionary defines transition as the passage from one form, state, style, or place to another. Every individual with and without disabilities has experienced transition in his or her life. Often times these transitions can be difficult, but for those with disabilities, the challenges associated with transitions may be exacerbated by the difficulties associated with their disability. For students with learning disabilities, transition to post-secondary education can be challenging for fear of the unknown and lack of preparation.

During times of transition, individuals frequently look to others such as parents, family members, and friends for support to help ease the process of transitioning. Parent involvement in the transition process is essential because parents are often the only source of support for students with disabilities once they leave high school.

Parent involvement in transition planning has been cited as a best practice in transition planning (Kohler, 1993). Best practices are essential components to transition planning that improve outcomes for students with disabilities (Kohler). A focus of transition planning today for students with learning disabilities is to increase the number of students who attend post-secondary education (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). To increase the odds of achieving this goal, schools and agencies should strive to include parents in every aspect of the transition planning process.

The purpose of this paper is to review literature and research related to parent involvement in transition planning for postsecondary education for students with learning

disabilities. To accomplish this goal, the writer will begin with an overview of the transition movement, legislation related to transition, and the definition of transition services. The writer will also provide a summary of the literature related to parent involvement for students with learning disabilities, which will include information about transitioning to post-secondary education. Also included in the paper is information about the evolution and definition of families, theories of family involvement, frameworks for involvement, and influences on involvement. The writer will conclude with a review of the literature related to transition planning and parent involvement.

The Transition Movement

Before 1990, transition had not been defined by law and therefore was not required. Although some professionals, educators, and counselors worked together to provide services to improve the post-school outcomes for individuals with disabilities, this was not the norm. Before transition was defined in the legislation and required for students with disabilities, there were two movements that helped lay the foundation for the transition movement. The first of these was the work-study movement and the second was the career education movement.

The Work-study Movement of the 1960s

The work-study movement occurred in the 1960s. During this time, schools and vocational rehabilitation agencies worked together to prepare individuals with disabilities for life after school. According to Halpern (1991), “the general goal of these programs was to create an integrated academic, social, and vocational curriculum, accompanied by appropriate work experience, that was designed to prepare students with mild disabilities for eventual community adjustment” (p. 203). As noted, a major focus of secondary programs for students with

disabilities during this time was work after school. As well, the focus of these programs was students with mild disabilities.

The Career Education Movement of the 1970s

The second movement, which occurred in the 1970s, was known as the career education movement. Career education is the totality of experiences through which one learns to live a meaningful, satisfying work life (Halpern, 1994). Career education includes more than just work, also emphasizing economic, social, and personal fulfillment (Brolin, 1973). Originally, this movement focused solely on students in the general education population (Halpern, 1991). It was not until the passing of the Career Education Implementation Incentive Act (P.L. 95-207) in 1977 that students with disabilities were considered a target group for career education, because it was believed that students with disabilities could greatly benefit from the services provided under this Act (Halpern). The Division of Career Development under the Council for Exceptional Children endorsed the idea of career education for individuals with disabilities and their endorsement helped lay the groundwork of the career education movement in special education (Halpern).

The Transition Movement of the 1980s

The 1980s brought about new ideas and new directions for transition. It was during this time that Madeline Will with the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) developed a transition model (Will, 1983). Will's ideas about transition and the model she developed with OSERS was not different than many of the goals of the movements of the 60s and 70s, but it was different in that this model focused on services provided for students with disabilities. The foundation for the model provided by Will and OSERS is in the belief that

different individuals need different amounts and types of support in order to successfully gain employment after high school (Will).

The transition model provided by Will and OSERS was often called the *Bridges Model* because of the three types of services or bridges used to gain employment (Halpern, 1991). This transition model provides three bridges by which students could receive services to help them obtain employment after school (Will, 1983). The first of these bridges was called “transition without special services” and this route is often used by individuals with and without disabilities. According to Will, individuals accessing this route obtain employment by using their own resources. The second bridge, “transition with time-limited services,” refers to the opportunities individuals have to obtain employment by using services such as vocational rehabilitation or a vocational training program. “Transition with ongoing services” is the title of the third and final bridge. This route was for individuals who may need long-term care or more extensive services, such as supported employment, in obtaining vocational opportunities.

The model provided by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services and Madeline Will was the first of its kind. The model focused solely on employment as a transition goal, while leaving out community adjustment, social functioning, and independent living. In 1985, Halpern proposed another model. This model was more comprehensive, focusing on community adjustment, with employment being just one facet of overall community adjustment (Browning, 1997). Halpern also considered residential environment and social and interpersonal networks to be important components of community adjustment (Browning). Halpern’s model still allowed for three routes to transition (i.e., generic services, time-limited special services, ongoing special services), like the OSERS model.

It was not until the 1980s that transition was mentioned in special education law (i.e., the amendments to The Education of All Handicapped Children Act (PL 98-199)). Although transition services and planning were not required, such practices were encouraged through discretionary programs that expanded transition services for students with disabilities. At this time, however, there was still no definition for transition services (Browning, 1997). The transition movement in the eighties paved the way for things to come in the nineties. In 1990 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized and transition services were mandated. As well, there was finally a definition for transition services. A milestone had been reached. According to IDEA, transition services were defined as:

A coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which 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. The coordinated set of activities shall be based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. [IDEA, PL 101-476, 20 U.S.C. Chapter 33, Section 1401(a)(19)]

The definition provided in the legislation focused on transition activities that would allow students with disabilities to have a more successful transition to life after school. It is important to note that the legislative definition did not focus solely on employment, but included other post-school activities such as postsecondary education, vocational training, and independent

living. This broader definition enabled all students with disabilities, regardless of the severity, the opportunity to participate in transition activities that were meaningful and beneficial to them. Educators and service providers now had a definition, as well as requirements to begin transition planning at age 16, to guide the provision of transition services.

In 1997, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was amended. The definition of transition services remained the same, but the new amendments required earlier planning. At age 14, or earlier if appropriate, a statement of needed transition services had to be written into the transition plan and at age 16 a description of transition services being provided needed to be included (De Fur, 2003). Changing the age at which transition planning could begin addressed the need to begin transition planning at an earlier age for students with severe disabilities who needed more intense transition planning due to the severity of their disability or post-school goals and those students with mild disabilities who might be at risk for dropping out of school. As well, educators could use their professional judgment in deciding if transition planning needed to be implemented earlier.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized once again in 2004 and is now called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). The definition of transition services remained essentially the same, but there were a few changes in terminology. First, instead of an outcome-oriented process, educators need to focus on a results-oriented process. This change in terminology speaks volumes about the planning process. Transition team members should not merely focus on what the student would like to accomplish when he or she leaves high school, but should focus on obtaining results from the plan. Another change in terminology occurred when legislators included a phrase that mandates the process

should be focused not only on academics, but functional achievement also (IDEIA 2004, PL 105-17 [34 CFR 300.43 (a)] [20 U.S.C. 1401(34)]).

Yet another change in the 2004 reauthorization occurred in the transition requirements. The law states that by age 16, or younger if appropriate, the Individualized Education Program must include the following:

Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment and, where appropriate, independent living skills; the transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals; and beginning not later than one year before the child reaches the age of majority under State law, a statement that the child has been informed of the child's rights under Part B, if any, that will transfer to the child on reaching the age of majority under §300.520 [see 20 U.S.C. 1415(m)] (IDEIA 2004, PL 105-17 [34 CFR 300.320(b) and (c)] [20 U.S.C. 1414 (d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII)]).

The changes that occurred in the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA seem to reflect the many changes in transition throughout the years. The options for individuals with disabilities are greater now than they were in the sixties and those opportunities are reflected in the newest definition and requirements. The focus is not only on work as an option for those with mild disabilities. The focus of transition planning has expanded and there is a greater emphasis on postsecondary education and training (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). As well, in an effort to improve postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities, schools must report annually on the number of students who have been competitively employed or enrolled in postsecondary education 1 year after graduating from high school (IDEIA, 2004). With transition planning today, transition and post-school options, such as post-secondary

education, are a reality for every individual with a disability regardless of his or her weaknesses or ability.

Learning Disabilities in Postsecondary Education

Students with learning disabilities and their parents must participate in the transition process. Although learning disabilities are often considered to be a mild disability and some contend that transition planning is not necessary for those with milder disabilities, this is not true (De Fur & Reiff, 1994; Dunn, 2008). An important element in this process is parents. There are many decisions to be made about post-secondary options, employment, and independent living for individuals with learning disabilities and parents need to be involved in every aspect of planning.

Transition to Postsecondary Education

When students with learning disabilities consider their options after high school, post secondary education is a viable choice for many. “The transition to postsecondary educational settings refers to the sequential process of students’ completing secondary school requirements and planning and participating successfully in further formal educational activities in a degree or certification program” (Mellard, 2005, p. 2). The preparation for post-secondary education starts long before an individual graduates from high school. Mellard states, “Successful participation in [community colleges, vocational and technical schools, 4-year colleges and universities] the programs require active long-range planning by students, their parents or guardians, and school staff” (pg. 2).

Planning for the transition to post-secondary education is critical because it involves so many people and so many activities. It is important to include students in the process, although they may not be active participants in the beginning. Students can provide valuable information

about their strengths and weaknesses and accommodations that they have found works best for them (Mellard, 2005). It is also important to include the student's teachers and parents, the high school counselor, the vocational rehabilitation counselor, and a postsecondary admissions counselor as well (Mellard). Every person participating in the transition planning process must collaborate and share responsibility during decision making.

Before starting high school there are many decisions that must be made. Students have to make decisions about the diploma they will seek and the courses they will take. The choices they make will have a direct impact upon their decision to attend an educational institution after high school. Often these decisions are made in eighth or ninth grade. However, for some students with disabilities, the decisions are not made until the tenth grade. This is too late because students must take academic courses such as English and math each of their 4 years in high school if they are seeking a regular high school diploma. In order to ensure success in postsecondary settings, decisions about attending postsecondary education should be made earlier than the 9th or 10th grade.

After examining the literature, it is evident that there are a variety of opinions regarding the time at which postsecondary preparation and planning should begin. The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002) suggested that individuals with disabilities begin their postsecondary transition planning as early as middle school and a multiyear plan should be developed. College preparation activities should begin in the 9th grade and be included in the Individualized Education Program or Individualized Transition Plan (Arnold, 1985). Skinner and Lindstrom (2003) would agree because they believed planning for the transition to college should start earlier than 10th grade. A review of the literature available (Arnold; Skinner & Lindstrom; U.S. Department of Education) indicates that postsecondary

preparation should start early; although, there is no consensus on a specific grade or time to begin planning.

In addition to early planning, the type of preparation is also important for the successful transition to postsecondary education. Planning for the transition to college should involve a variety of activities and these activities should be arranged in such a way that the student completes them each year while in high school (Arnold, 1985; HEATH Resource Center, 1995; Rogan & Branson, 1993). These activities should lead to the successful acceptance into college and may address areas of self-awareness, career awareness, assessment, planning, programming, parent activities, summer activities, and college search activities.

Not only is it important for students to prepare for the college search process, but they must also be prepared for the academic rigor of postsecondary education as well as the change in how services are provided. Students should develop effective study skills and learning strategies (Mellard, 2005), decide which testing accommodations work best for them in high school, ensure they have the necessary documentation to have those accommodations available to them in college (Mellard; Skinner & Lindstrom, 2003), and know which accommodations and supports work best for them, so they may receive the same types of supports in college (Mellard; Skinner & Lindstrom; HEATH Resource Center, 1995). Students should also have an understanding of the laws that affect their education and the different laws that affect them in postsecondary education (Skinner & Lindstrom; HEATH Resource Center).

While students are participating in transition activities, schools and parents can work together to assist students in planning for their transition to postsecondary education. Educators and parents should assist the student in developing effective organizational skills (Skinner & Lindstrom, 2003), and in understanding their disability and the academic problems related to

their disability (Skinner & Lindstrom; HEATH Resource Center, 1995). Educators and parents should also provide support during the process of applying for college (Mellard, 2005; Skinner & Lindstrom) and preparing the appropriate disability documentation that is needed to receive services in a postsecondary setting. Colleges need to receive information about recent evaluations and any supports or accommodations that the student received and benefited from in high school (Mellard; Skinner & Lindstrom). This information is often included in an exit document (i.e., summary of performance) which is completed before a student graduates from high school. The student and his or her teacher collaboratively work on this document.

With effective transition planning more and more students with learning disabilities are attending some form of post-secondary education. Of all students with a learning disability, 23% now attend a 2-year college and 11% attend a 4-year college (NLTS-2, 2005). Compared to their peers without disabilities, one student with a learning disability for every 3 without a disability attends postsecondary education within a year after high school (Mellard, 2005). While these numbers are low, the rate of participation in postsecondary education has improved. In 1993, only 9% of all students with a learning disability were enrolled in a 2-year or 4-year college (Council for Learning Disabilities, 1993), whereas now 34% attend a 2 or 4 year college.

Characteristics of Those that are Successful

Although there are more students with learning disabilities attending postsecondary education today, these students still face some of the same difficulties in college (i.e., study skills, academic skills, self-esteem) they did in high school (Skinner & Lindstrom, 2003). Even though they may face academic and social difficulties, students with learning disabilities can be successful in college. Several researchers have attempted to identify those characteristics that contribute to student success in postsecondary settings.

Of those students with learning disabilities, nearly 30% earn a degree from a community college, 4-year college, or university (Bursuck, Rose, Cowen, & Yahaya, 1989). Students who are able to set goals and know what they want to accomplish are more likely to succeed in a postsecondary setting (Greenbaum, Graham, & Scales, 1995; Mellard, 2005). For individuals with learning disabilities, a network of supporters that can be accessed throughout their postsecondary career may also be beneficial in promoting success while in college.

Dowds and Phelan (2006) conducted a qualitative study that examined factors that contribute to academic success in students with learning disabilities. In their study, 15 individuals with learning disabilities were interviewed, 14 of them were enrolled in college or had already graduated college and 1 individual was applying for college at the time of the study. The interviews began with each individual telling his or her story of living with a disability. Through these interviews, Dowds and Phelan noted several themes that seemed to relate to postsecondary success, such as goal setting, an effective support network, and self-awareness.

One of the factors mentioned by many of the participants was goal setting. One of the individuals that was interviewed said, “You can be as focused and determined as you want, but if you don’t have a plan, then you’re not going very far...you have to have a plan and it has to be somewhat of a realistic one” (p. 153). Although this study was specific to factors associated with academic success, the statement provided above can also apply to an individuals’ social or personal life. Many disability counselors in postsecondary settings also believe goal setting is important and students with learning disabilities who have clear goals are less likely to give up when they are faced with challenges related to their disability (Hicks-Coolick & Kurtz, 2006).

Another theme in Dowds and Phelan’s study (2006) was an effective support network. They found that many of the participants in their study attributed their success partially to the

support they received from others. The individuals who were interviewed noted that support came from many different places. Some individuals mentioned their parents and family members, while others spoke of the support they received from schools and teachers.

Other researchers have highlighted the importance of support networks too. For example, Greenbaum et al. (1995) and Mellard et al. (2005) believe students should know who is in their network and make use of those supports when they need it. Students should have support networks they can access in the academic setting and in their social and personal life. Mellard et al. have argued that a student's ability to make friends and participate in social settings will increase his or her chances of succeeding in post-secondary education.

A third theme in Dowds and Phelan's (2006) study was self awareness. They found that many of the participants who had experienced success in academics demonstrated self-awareness during their interviews. The students were aware of their disability and how it affected their life. Hicks-Coolick and Kurtz (1997) also examined factors related to postsecondary success. They interviewed nine college directors of support services for students with learning disabilities. The purpose of their study was to ascertain the characteristics of students with learning disabilities that contribute to postsecondary academic success from the perspectives of the counselors. They identified self-advocacy, motivation, and preparation as the factors most important for success for students with learning disabilities.

With regard to self-advocacy five characteristics emerged: self-awareness, self-acceptance, knowledge of laws, policies, and resources, assertiveness skills, and problem-solving skills. Many of the counselors thought the first step in self advocacy was self-awareness and one counselor commented, "First of all, it starts with a clear understanding of the disability and how

it affects both academic and social life” (Hicks-Coolick & Kurtz, 1997, ¶21). As discussed previously, Dowds and Phelan (2006) also identified the importance of self-awareness.

With regard to motivation, Hicks-Coolick and Kurtz (1997) found that the counselors they interviewed believed that motivation was a key factor in the academic success of students with learning disabilities. This belief was based upon their experiences of working with students with learning disabilities at the postsecondary level. The counselors commented that successful students with learning disabilities decide to be successful; they do not wait on other people to do things for them.

With regard to preparation, the counselors interviewed in the study by Hicks-Coolick and Kurtz (1997) found through their experience that successful students with learning disabilities come to college with their study strategies and skills already honed. One counselor commented, “If they come in with their study strategies and learning styles pretty well defined already, then they do very, very well” (Hicks-Coolick & Kurtz, 1997, ¶19). Through the interviews, the counselors reiterated that successful students have good time management skills, regular class attendance, and compensatory techniques.

Barriers to Postsecondary Success

The research shows that students with learning disabilities can be successful in postsecondary settings. However, there are many barriers that may prevent students from being successful. It is important that parents and students understand the reality of how the young adult’s disability will affect performance in any area of his or her life including work, school, and recreation (Mellard, 2005). Students should also be aware of their disability and how it will impact their life. If parents and students understand the disability and the impact of the disability, they can overcome any or most obstacles they may face.

In his review of the literature, Mellard (2005) identified four barriers to success in postsecondary education. The first barrier is lack of postsecondary preparation. Students and parents have to be proactive in their approach to postsecondary preparation and be aware of the process of transitioning to education after high school. This preparation must go beyond high school academics and the transition plan. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team should identify early in high school what types of postsecondary options the student will be contemplating, which will allow the team to map out the courses and path that are appropriate in the transition plan (Mellard). More specifically, if a student is going to attend a 4-year college, the transition planning process should focus on activities he or she will need to take part in to prepare him or her for that setting. Mellard goes on to say that instruction in high school should match the postsecondary plans. For example, if a student is going to attend a 4-year college to prepare to be an engineer, then his or her course work in high school should include rigorous courses in math.

The second barrier identified by Mellard (2005) is faculty and staff attitudes. As students transition from elementary to middle to high school, teachers expect more from them. In high school, teachers no longer want to spend time teaching pre-requisite skills (Mellard). Instead, teachers expect students to have already learned prerequisite skills that will enable them to learn more challenging skills. This would lead one to believe that faculty in post secondary institutions do not want to spend time on prerequisite skills either. Therefore, students will need to access available services (i.e., tutoring) that will allow them to stay on track in their courses.

A third barrier noted by Mellard (2005) is the difference in the services provided in high school and postsecondary education. In public school settings, school officials must provide a continuum of services to determine the setting in which the student can be successful. However,

in college there is not a continuum; colleges decide which services they want to provide and the students must make that model work for them.

The final barrier identified by Mellard (2005) deals with inconsistency for disability documentation in the college setting. There are no formal guidelines for all colleges to abide by when identifying and serving students with learning disabilities. Each college chooses its own rules and criteria. This presents difficulty when students with learning disabilities are trying to prepare documentation of their disability and needed supports and accommodations.

Another study examining characteristics related to postsecondary success was conducted by McCleary-Jones (2008). She conducted a mix-methods study to learn about the experiences of students with learning disabilities in community colleges. She surveyed 12 participants, ten students and two disability support services counselors, using the Learning Disability Student Questionnaire and the Disability Services Questionnaire. The participants ranged in age from 19-40. The students with learning disabilities also participated in focus group interviews.

Consistent with the results of Mellard's (2005) study, McCleary-Jones (2008) also noted faculty and staff attitudes to be a barrier to success. One of the participants in her study commented that she felt some professors at her college did not understand students with disabilities. This lack of understanding can result in faculty and staff being reluctant to provide accommodations. Another participant in the McCleary-Jones study said when she requested more time for tests, with the appropriate documentation, the instructor's response was that he, "didn't give more time" (p. 16). Although students may face these types of attitudes, they will have to work diligently to succeed in academics and meet the expectations that are placed upon them.

As mentioned previously Mellard (2005) identified that lack of preparation can be a barrier to success in post-secondary education. However, McCleary-Jones (2008) did not find this to be true in her study. None of the participants in her study said they would withdraw from classes due to a feeling of being academically unprepared. Although this finding does not speak specifically to the success of students in post-secondary education, one can presume that students with learning disabilities will continue attending and participating in classes, even without sufficient academic preparation. How this affects their success deserves more attention.

Another barrier that may provide trouble for some parents and students are the laws that govern education for those with disabilities. While in high school, students with learning disabilities are covered under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). IDEIA ensures that those with disabilities will receive a free and appropriate public education (HEATH Resource Center, 1995). This means that students who qualify for special education services must receive an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and necessary accommodations and supports to succeed academically.

However, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act no longer applies once a student leaves high school. Postsecondary education institutions are governed by Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Under these acts, postsecondary institutions cannot discriminate against any person with a disability. If a student is deemed to qualify for supports, then colleges must provide modifications and accommodations that are reasonable and will allow students to participate in programs offered on campus (HEATH Resource Center, 1995).

In summary, the transition to postsecondary education for students with learning disabilities can be an exciting but trying time. There are many decisions to be made and the more

effort that is put into those decisions by everyone involved, the smoother the transition to life after high school will be. Everyone, including the parents, must take an active role in transition planning and assist the student in preparing for postsecondary education. Understanding the demands and realities of postsecondary education environments will help students and their parents better plan and prepare for the transition to postsecondary education. When transition planning is a collaborative effort the chances for success are likely increased. Postsecondary preparation must begin before high school so that students with learning disabilities can be successful in college. Parents can assist in this preparation by speaking openly about their child's disability and celebrating his or her successes and teaching their child to learn from his or her failures.

Evolution of the Family

As discussed in previous sections, students with learning disabilities can be successful in postsecondary education even though they may face many barriers. Success can be increased with careful planning during the transition process, and parents play a critical role during this time. This section provides information about the change in families over time and how these changes can affect parent involvement in education.

Families have evolved over time and in order to understand the evolution of families it is important to first define family. Many have provided definitions of family and what it means to be a family, but with so many ideas it is impossible to give "family" one specific definition. According to dictionary.com, one of the definitions given for family is "parents and their children, considered as a group, whether dwelling together or not." According to Hanson and Lynch (1992), "A family is considered to be any unit that defines itself as a family including individuals who are related by blood or marriage as well as those who have made a commitment

to share their lives” (p. 2). Also included in their definition of family is the traditional nuclear family, extended family, and same-sex partners (Hanson & Lynch, 1992). A similar definition is provided by Seccombe and Warner (2004). They state that families are connected either by blood, marriage, or fondness, and care for children if involved.

When defining family, it is important to also consider the term household. This term is closely related to the three definitions provided previously. According to Wetzel (1990), “A household is any separate living unit occupied by one or more persons” (p. 5). Today households consist of family households and non-family households. There are many types of family households. They may include husband/wife families with children or without, children living with single parents, and other combinations such as adult children living with parents or even aunts, uncles, cousins, or grandparents residing in the home. Non-family households are those in which one person is living alone or with unrelated people (Wetzel, 1990).

When one thinks about families from the 50s and 60s, the traditional nuclear family may come to mind. According to dictionary.com, the American Heritage Dictionary defines a nuclear family as a family unit consisting of a mother, a father, and their children. Those were the days of the June Cleavers and Wally Cleavers. The mother would often stay home and keep house while the father went to work. This was considered the norm for that time.

However, things have changed and our ideas of family have also changed. When one compares families of today to families from long ago, the differences are numerous. Families have changed with regard to roles, composition and structure, and size. Differences in families can also be attributed to race and ethnicity, education, age, income, religion, region, and the interactions of the family. Today there are fewer traditional nuclear families.

The structure or composition of a family is related to the way the family is made. Who are the members and who heads up the family? In the 1950s, married-couple households made up almost 88% of all households. As years passed the percentages of married-couple households decreased from 88% to 79% in 1988 (Wetzel, 1990). In 2000, the number of households maintained by married couples had decreased to 52% (U.S. Census Bureau 2002). Today, many families no longer consist of a mother and father who are married, but instead one will often find alternative family structures. Alternative family structures include single parent families, step parents, foster parents, and same-sex partners (Copeland & White, 1991). The definition provided by Hanson and Lynch (1992) seems to better fit what we see today in the 21st century. Not only do Hanson and Lynch include the traditional nuclear family, but they also include same-sex partners, and extended family in their definition.

As types of alternative family structures increased, the traditional family structure decreased (Copeland & White, 1991). The number of households led by foster parents is increasing. Grandparents also often play the leading role of parent in many households due to many reasons such as birth of a grandchild to their teenage son or daughter, to a mother who uses drugs or alcohol, or to a child with a mental disease (Hanson & Lynch, 1992).

Roles that each family member assumes have also changed from years ago. In 1915, most Americans could expect to play four family-life roles; dependent, spouse, parent, and grandparent. During this time, more than half of the residents in the United States would expect to fulfill all of these roles in the rural areas in which they lived. Children rarely left home to live alone before marriage. It was not uncommon for older children to live with their parents (Wetzel, 1990).

Today, many individuals choose not to marry or have children. Therefore, they will not assume the role of spouse or parent. Often people choose to have children, but never marry. The chances of these individuals assuming four life roles of dependent, spouse, parents, and grandparent is slim. The roles of husband and wife have also changed. Before the Second World War, women typically did not work outside of the home, but during the years of war, men had to fight, so more women began to work (Jeansonne, 1995). With this loss of manpower from the war, women had to take over the job market, not necessarily by choice, but as a necessity. Since the years of war have passed, women are more likely to work a full-time job outside the home than serve solely as homemakers (Wetzel, 1990). In many families today, both parents work and provide for the family.

Directly related to the composition of families is the size of families. As years have passed, family sizes have gotten smaller and smaller when compared to the early 1900s. One of the reasons family sizes have decreased is because the age at which women have children has increased over the years. Choosing to have children, at a later age in life, leads to smaller family sizes today. In the 1940s, many households included 7 or more people because women began having more children after soldiers returned home from the war. The average family in 1989 only included 3 people (Wetzel, 1990) and today the number remains the same (US Census Bureau, 2002).

The change in the concept of family has a significant impact on students. When considering parent involvement and the family roles that parents play in today's society, involvement is often not an option. When parents work tirelessly through the day, getting involved in the education of their child, whether it is active or passive involvement, may not be at the forefront of their mind. It is important that educators take the time to understand families,

what family involvement is and is not, and theories that underlie the idea of family involvement in education.

Parent Involvement in Education

Parent involvement in education is not a new idea or concept. Parent involvement can be traced as far back as the early nineteenth century (Topping, 1986). The extent to which parents are involved in their child's education is affected by many factors such as characteristics of the family and of the child. These characteristics can affect parents of children with or without disabilities. The purpose of this section is to present a foundation for parent involvement by providing a review of the literature on theories and frameworks of involvement. Parent involvement in education will be defined and an overview of the importance of involvement and factors that influence involvement will be provided.

Theories of Involvement

Before defining family involvement, one must first understand the theoretical base of family involvement. According to Knight and Wadsworth (1999, ¶2), "A strong theoretical basis for promoting active family involvement has its roots in three theories- the transactional theory of development, the family systems theory, and the ecological theory of human development."

The **transactional model of development** was introduced by Arnold Sameroff. This model is founded on the idea that outcomes are based on the individual and the experiences that he or she has (Sameroff & Fiese, 2000, chap. 7). This description would lead one to believe that the child development process is directly related to the relationship between the child, the family and experiences provided by the family, and the social context in which all of this occurs. Experiences provided by the family and the social context are dependent upon the child, so the effects of the child and the environment are equally emphasized in the transactional model. For

example, a child acts out at the grocery store and the parent chooses not to reprimand the child and the child continues to act out. The next time the parent reprimands the child by scolding him or her, the child does not respond appropriately and continues to misbehave. The parent ignores the behavior of the child and this pattern is repeated throughout his or her childhood. The child does not respond to the discipline because of the inconsistent manner in which the parent has handled the situation. The parent's choices in discipline affect the child and how he or she responds, and can affect the child's future behavior, which is reflective of the parent's inconsistency in discipline. Each person and action feeds off the previous action and future actions are influenced by past actions.

In their explanation of the transactional model, Sameroff and Fiese (2000, chap. 7) also indicate that child development is based upon environmental factors in the culture, the family, and the individual parent, which is known as the *enviro*type. The culture, family, and individual parent not only interact with the child, also known as the *phenotype*, but also interact with one another. To some extent, the cognitive and social-emotional development of the child is controlled by the culture, family, and individual parent so that the child may one day become a productive citizen in society (Sameroff & Fiese). More specifically, the experiences of the child are, to a degree, decided upon by the beliefs and values of the parents, the interactions of the family, and the beliefs, controls, and supports of the culture.

The **family systems theory** evolved from the general systems theory and has existed since the 1960s, although some elements can be traced back to the 1920s. A family is viewed as a system because family members typically interact with each other, depend upon each other, and behave in a manner that allows the family to act as a unit (Chibucos & Leite, 2005, chap. 9). This is similar to the transactional model in that there are connections between the individual or

child and the family. The focus of the family systems theory is placed on the elements that make up families and the processes that exist within and between families and their environments (Chibucos & Leite). Similar to the transactional model, the family systems theory looks at interactions that occur between families and their environments.

Ten key concepts make up the family systems theory. Each concept impacts the manner in which a family operates and the functioning of the family impacts the child (Chibucos & Leite, 2005, chap. 9). The first concept is called *interdependent components* and refers to the family members and the roles they serve. *Inputs*, the second concept, are the pieces of information the family receives that can influence the operation of the family, whereas outputs are a reflection of the family's acceptance by the outside world. The third concept is *boundaries*. A boundary is the point of interaction between the family and its environment and is defined by members inside the circle or family and by those outside the family. Subsystems make up the family system and this is known as the *hierarchy of systems*, the fourth concept. *Rules*, the fifth idea, are a reflection of repeated behaviors in families, and *goals*, the sixth concept, are set by families and change as members of the family change. However, goals of the family are not always consistent with the goals of individual family members.

The seventh concept is called *feedback mechanisms* and refers to ways to examine the operation of the family. If a member of the family feels that the family operation is unstable then he or she may try to achieve stability by changing his or her patterns of behavior. The eighth concept, *nonsummativity*, means that the entire family system cannot be viewed as a sum of its parts. More specifically, the family members, their actions and interactions, and functioning all contribute to the family system. The ninth concept, *change*, takes place when family members reorganize and change interactions based upon information that is received. The final concept is

equifinality. Chibucos and Leite (2005, chap. 9) define equifinality, “as the ability of a system to achieve a goal through different means or routes” (pg. 280). Therefore, different families may reach the same goal by different means.

Each of the concepts describes processes and characteristics of families and how they work. All of these components may affect the extent to which parents are involved in their child’s education because they each affect how the family operates, which directly impacts the child. For example, inputs and outputs can influence parents’ choice to get involved in their child’s education because they may not receive critical information that allows them to be informed participants. Therefore, they may choose not to participate at all. Although Chibucos and Leite (2005, chap. 9) provide ten concepts, Turnbull and Turnbull (1997, chap. 6) believe that the three most relevant concepts to parent participation in education are input/output, wholeness and subsystems, and boundaries.

The final theory, **ecological theory of human development**, was developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979). This theory is based on the interactions that occur between the individual or group and their environment (Chibucos & Leite, 2005, chap. 10). This means that families and individuals are not only influenced by environmental controls, but they also impact their environments. For example, if an infant with a disability is born to parents that are unaware of the disability and not prepared for what lies ahead, they may seem distant from the child when he or she is born and limit their interactions with the baby. These actions will affect and shape the child and affect his or her development. The child may become withdrawn from others in the future whether it is family members or classmates at school.

Each action and reaction in the scenario provided previously can be related to the four systems that Bronfenbrenner describes in his theory. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the

four systems that influence the development of an individual are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The microsystem explains the relationship between the child and the immediate setting such as the home or classroom, whereas the mesosystem describes the relations between major environments such as home and school (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001, chap. 2). The exosystem describes settings that have an influence on the individual, but that the individual may not be a part of, and the macrosystem is defined by the cultural influences such as legislation that may have an impact on the individual (Christenson & Sheridan). Each of these systems can directly or indirectly impact the individual and his or her development.

The same systems Bronfenbrenner (1979) uses to explain influences on individuals can also influence family development. For families, the microsystem would include their home and neighborhood. The mesosystem would include entities such as church and their relationship to health care. The exosystem describes environments such as the local school board, because they influence the family, but the family may not be a part of the school board. The macrosystem impacts families as it does individuals and may include legislation and decisions about war that are made at the national level.

Each theory previously described and discussed shares a similar idea and that is the idea that individuals are influenced by others and their environment. According to Mandel (2007), “only 15 to 20 percent of the child’s waking hours are spent in the school. Therefore, the majority of the child’s school-age life comes under the eyes and supervision of the parent, not the teacher. To not include the parent in the child’s education ignores the tremendous influence parents hold over the child (p. vii).” Understandably, it is imperative that educators make a conscious effort to involve parents in their child’s education.

Definition of Involvement

Defining parent and family involvement is almost impossible. Throughout the literature, there are many definitions given; some very broad and others that are specific. Christenson and Sheridan (2001) believe that “parent involvement refers to participation at school and at home” (p. 48). Still others give more specific roles in their definition of involvement. According to Desland and Bertrand (2005), involvement can be many different things such as parents volunteering in their child’s school, parents talking to their child about school, or parents helping with homework. The literature also indicates a move from definitions of parent involvement to definitions that include the word family because other adults such as siblings or other relatives can significantly impact a child’s life (Christenson & Sheridan).

Frameworks of Involvement

Consistent with the theories and definitions of involvement are philosophies about parent involvement. There has been extensive work in this area and many have developed models and frameworks of involvement, as well as strategies to increase parent involvement. Each philosophy has its own unique qualities; some strive to increase active involvement while others do not. Joyce Epstein (1995) is one of the frontrunners in this area of research and has developed a framework for parent involvement that includes six strategies that schools can use to increase involvement. The six strategies are centered on parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaboration.

Parenting is the focus of the first strategy, and with parenting, schools can help parents understand child development in order to provide a home environment that enables one to learn. The second strategy, which involves communication, is concerned with schools communicating effectively with parents about their child’s progress. Volunteering, the third strategy, means that

schools need to recruit parents as volunteers in the school and in the classrooms. The fourth strategy to increase parent involvement is focused on learning at home. With this strategy, Epstein (1995) indicates that schools need to provide learning activities for parents to use with their children at home. The fifth strategy, which aims at increasing involvement in decision making, is one in which schools should invite parents to be actively engaged in school government to increase their leadership skills. Finally, the sixth strategy is aimed at increasing collaboration with the community. Increased collaboration in the community means community services and resources need to work with schools and families to increase and support student learning.

Winlock (1994) has developed a model for parent involvement that does not focus solely on active parent involvement, but rather describes levels of involvement. According to Winlock there are three levels of parent involvement. Level one focuses on parents' participation in activities to get to know the school. One of the goals of participation at this level is to help parents feel welcomed at the school. This level is important in the development of the relationship between the parents and the school.

In level two, which is known as education and dialogue, parents are provided with more information about the school and its mission, policies, procedure, etc. Winlock (1994) mentions that many schools start at level two and blame lack of parent involvement on the "don't care" attitude of parents. However, the low levels of parent involvement can often be attributed to the schools failure to begin at level one, which allows time for the development of the partnership between schools and parents.

In level three, parent involvement is focused on the governance of the school and volunteering at all levels. During level three, parents may choose to take a more active role in the

school by volunteering and offering suggestions that will improve the school and benefit the students. Training must be provided to parents and teachers at this level to really develop the partnership and enable everyone to work as a team. This training should help parents and teachers understand their roles in parent involvement as well as each others expectations.

The model provided by Winlock (1994) appears to be a model in which schools can recruit parents for involvement by acclimating them to the school and the nature of the school. It is not until the final stage that parents are taking an active role in the school and the amount of involvement in level three depends upon the effort and time put into level one. This model is unlike Epstein's (1995) where she provides six strategies for schools to use to increase involvement, but one strategy does not necessarily depend upon the other. In Epstein's framework parents may choose to be actively or passively involved in their child's education, whereas in Winlock's model, parents move from passive involvement to assuming a more active role in their child's education.

Cervone and O'Leary (1994) developed a Parent Involvement Continuum that flows horizontally and vertically. This framework provides four categories of parent involvement. These categories are "Reporting Progress," "Special Events," "Parent Education," and "Parents Teaching." The continuum is one in which parents initially are passive recipients of information and as they move along the continuum they become active participants in the educational process. Parents who are passive participants may be involved in their child's education, but according to Cervone and O'Leary, active participants assume leadership roles in the school.

During the category of "Reporting Progress", parents can be passively or actively involved. As a passive participant, parents would receive information from the teacher such as good news notes or phone calls. As an active participant in this category, parents would attend

parent-teacher conferences or review and sign home-school notebooks. In the category of special events, parents could passively be involved by attending open houses or listening to presentations. In parent education, passive participants may assist in developing a parent bulletin board or serve on the welcome committee. Parents can become more active in parent education by participating in a lending library, leading workshops for other parents, or leading parent-to-parent meetings. The final category, parents teaching, is one in which parents assume a less passive role and a more active one by possibly making homework sheets or assisting in the classroom. It is important to note that parents can assume the most active role in any of these categories by being a parent leader.

Berger (2008) has also developed a framework for parent involvement that articulates nine different levels at which parents can be involved in their child's school. Like some of the other models and frameworks, it focuses on providing parents with opportunities to be actively or passively involved. In Berger's framework parents may act as (a) active partners and educational leaders at home and at school, (b) decision makers, (c) advocates, (d) volunteers or paid employees, (e) liaisons between school and home, (f) passive supporters of school goals, (g) recipients of support from the school, (h) members of parent education classes, and (i) finally representatives and activists in the community. When comparing this model to the others, the roles or levels seem specific. If schools were to adopt this framework, this specificity can be good in that it provides roles for parents to assume, but it can be harmful in that specific roles do not seem to provide any flexibility in involvement. Parents may choose not to get involved if they cannot fit into one of the predetermined roles.

Each of the models and frameworks discussed here provides levels or stages of involvement or strategies to increase parent involvement. While some may be focused on active

involvement, others provide for a combination of involvement and allow parents to be actively or passively engaged. The models that focus on a combination of involvement may be a better fit for many parents in today's world because of time constraints or family obligations. Whether parents choose to be actively or passively involved is not for educators to decide. Schools need to provide parents with some way to be involved because there are many implications for parent involvement that can affect students in positive and negative ways. When parents choose to get involved students reap the benefits.

Importance of Involvement

There is an abundance of research that speaks to the importance of parent involvement. Generally speaking, researchers have shown that parent involvement improves student motivation and self-confidence in academics (Ames et al., 1993), promotes more consistent attendance (Falbo et al., 2001), and improves school behavior (Epstein, 1987). Fehrmann, Keith, and Reimers (1987) even found that parent involvement has a direct effect on student grades. This would lead us to believe that if parents are involved, student grades would improve and if parents are not involved or less involved then student grades would not improve as much.

Students in junior high and high school, whose parents are involved in their education, make better transitions, produce quality work, and develop realistic goals for life after graduation (Pape, 1999). Students whose parents are not involved have a greater chance of dropping out of school (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Trusty, 1999). The impact of parent involvement is still found during the middle school and high school years even though research shows that parent involvement decreases during this time. When Deslandes (2003) compared parent involvement in grades 8, 9, and 10, he found that as grade level increased for students, parent involvement decreased. Others (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Epstein, 1995) have found that parent

involvement, of many kinds, decreases during the transition to high school and during the years of high school.

The research (Ames et al., 1993; Epstein, 1987; Falbo et al., 2001) shows that parent involvement can have a positive impact on students and law makers have taken heed to the research by supporting and including parent involvement in the legislation. Goals 2000 requires that State reform efforts include “strategies for how the State educational agency will involve parents and other community representatives in planning, designing, and implementing the State improvement plan ...” (Sec. 306(f)). The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) provides agencies with funds if they develop and implement programs to increase parent participation. The objective of both pieces of legislation is to help increase parent involvement for all students.

Factors that Influence Involvement

Although parent involvement has been linked to positive benefits and outcomes for students, parents do not always participate in the education of their children. Researchers identify many reasons for little or no involvement in education. Deslandes & Bertrand (2005) believe one of the reasons parents choose not to participate is uncertainty about their role(s). Maybe they are unsure of what teachers and schools expect of them. Parents must understand their roles in order for them to be more involved in their child’s education and participate in activities they believe are their responsibility (Deslandes & Bertrand).

Research also shows that characteristics of the family and parents affect parent involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1996). Some parent and family characteristics that could potentially influence parent and family involvement include structure and size of the family and gender and education level of the parents (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005) as well as parent beliefs, parenting practices, home environment, and previous experience with the school (Stone, 2006).

Deslandes, Potvin, and Leclerc (1999) found that students whose parents are more educated report receiving more support, which includes praise, homework assistance, and parent attendance at school events. Students whose parents are less educated report that they receive less support. This suggests that parents with less education may not have the knowledge or skills needed to provide homework assistance and therefore might not get involved.

Not only do family and parent characteristics affect the level of involvement, but child characteristics also have a role in deciding a parent's amount of involvement in their child's education (Eccles & Harold, 1996). Some child characteristics include age, grade, gender, and academic performance (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Stone, 2006). Stone indicated, "parent involvement increases as a function of adolescent ability levels" (p. 519). More specifically, the higher the ability of the student, the more involved parents are. Stone also found that other factors such as the talents, interests, and personality of the child affect the level of parental involvement. Ultimately, parents decide how, and to what extent, they will be involved in their child's education and Stone reiterates this when he says parents' values, resources, talents, and demands impact how they choose to get involved.

Others (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Stone, 2006) have found that there are school characteristics and community characteristics that affect parent participation. School characteristics include factors such as school structure, teacher ideas, and practices to encourage parent involvement. Community factors are associated with resources available in the community and the unity of the community.

Involvement in Special Education versus General Education

Even though there are many reasons why some parents are not involved, other parents, whether their child is in general education or special education, choose to get involved. One

might believe that students in special education receive more parental support because of the learning difficulties they have. Another misconception may be that those who do not receive services from special education (i.e., the general education population) receive less support from their parents because they may not have learning difficulties and are able to be successful in school without parental support. The available research comparing general education and special education parental involvement does not provide any consistent findings regarding parental support given to those students in special education and those students in general education.

When speaking about parent involvement in general terms, the facts show that parents of special education students are involved at a slightly higher rate than parents of general education students. In one study using data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), family involvement at school was examined. For the NLTS2, a scale of family involvement was created and used to collect data on the frequency of parent involvement of students ages 13–17, with and without disabilities (Newman, 2005). The scale measured involvement in four types of activities: school meetings, parent-teacher conferences, school or class events, and volunteering.

The results indicated approximately 93% of parents of students with disabilities were likely to be involved in any of the following activities: school meetings, parent-teacher conferences, school or class events, and volunteering. In comparison, only 87% of parents of students in the general population were likely to participate in any four of the activities (Newman, 2005). According to the statistics provided here, parents of students in special education are slightly more involved than those parents of general education students. However, these numbers only provide information about involvement in activities such as volunteering and school meetings and not about parent involvement in home activities such as homework assistance.

On the other hand, when one examines parent participation solely on characteristics of the child and the family, the levels of parent involvement are similar. Another study using the data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 examined parent involvement at school, at home, and during the Individualized Education Program process for students with disabilities. This time parent participation was examined based on child and family characteristics such as gender and ethnicity, household income, behavior and abilities, and parents' expectations (Newman, 2005).

Newman reported that the findings of the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 show, "variations in levels of participation associated with differences in youth's cognitive abilities, behavior, age, gender, race/ethnicity, family income, mother's educational attainment, number of parents and siblings in the household, and level of social support for families of student with disabilities parallel those of families of students in the general population" (p. 14). That is, the differing levels of parent involvement within each group (i.e., special education students and general education students) were the same when comparing the groups to each other.

Still other researchers have found that family characteristics affect students with disabilities and those without disabilities differently. Coleman (1987) and Nord and West (2001) found that in general, children who come from homes with two parents and higher education levels are more likely to receive higher levels of parent involvement. Wagner, Marder, Levine, et al. (2003) examined data collected in the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 and found that student with disabilities ages 13–16 are more likely to live in homes with parents who did not complete high school when compared to students without disabilities. The same researchers also reported that approximately 61% of students with disabilities live with both parents compared to 74% of students without disabilities, and approximately 25% of students with

disabilities live in poverty compared to only 20% of students without disabilities. It might be expected that students with disabilities are more likely to experience less parent involvement when comparing them to students without disabilities based upon the information presented here.

In summary, for any child, parent involvement is important for success in school and after school. For students with disabilities, parent involvement is needed even more because of the obstacles that those with disabilities face. Not only do students with disabilities have to face the everyday challenges of school, but each day brings new challenges that are related to their disability. These individuals often have difficulty with learning and social skills or have health problems that make their day at school more trying. The challenges that students with disabilities face can be decreased when their parents are more involved.

Parent Involvement in Transition

With the many hurdles that students with disabilities face, it is important that their parents play an active role in the transition process. Generally speaking, transition is moving from one stage in life to another (Brotherson & Berdine, 1993). This definition implies that everyone has transitions in their life. But for individuals with disabilities these transitions may be more difficult because of their disability. The purpose of this section is to provide information about parent involvement in the transition process. This section begins with the legislation related to family involvement. An overview of the literature discussing the importance of involvement, barriers to involvement, and increasing involvement in transition planning is also included.

Legislative Requirements for Family Involvement

Not only does legislation provide a definition of transition services and transition requirements in the transition process, but it also provides support for parental involvement in

special education. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 provides agencies with guidelines to follow to ensure that parents are able to participate in planning their child's education through the Individualized Education Program (IEP). According to IDEIA 2004, schools and agencies must notify parents of an IEP meeting and invite them to attend. In the notice, the purpose of the meeting must be identified, as well as other invitees such as the general education teacher, special education teacher, local education agency representative, and the student. This is to ensure that parents have the opportunity to participate in educational planning for their child. As well, the meeting must be scheduled at a time and place at which parents can attend. When speaking specifically about transition, parents must be notified that the purpose of the IEP meeting is to discuss needed transition services and post-school goals (20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)(B)(i)).

Importance of Involvement

The reasons for parent involvement are more than it just being a legal requirement; research supports this practice too. Studies have found that parents play an important role in the transition process with regard to decision making and post-school outcomes (Mellard, 2005; Pape, 1999). Parent involvement can impact a student's life during school and after graduation.

Generally speaking, children spend the majority of their time during the day with their family. Parents know their children better than teachers and other school staff. Parents are vested in their child's life and can serve as advocates for their children and what they want their child to accomplish. Johnson, Bruininks, and Thurlow (1987) found that the most valuable advocates a child has are his or her parents and their work is critical for guaranteeing a smooth transition from school to adult services. Parents want their children to accomplish their goals regardless of

their disability. Benz and Halpern (1987) found that parents' principles and expectations about integration and independence affect their own children and their lives.

Throughout the transition planning process many important decisions are made that influence student outcomes as adults. Such decisions can include selecting a plan of study, courses to take, and post-school goals that relate to post-secondary education or training, independent living, and social adjustment. These decisions can either limit the options available for a student and result in the student not being prepared for secondary roles or expand the range of options available and ensure students are well prepared for their varied roles as young adults. When parents are actively involved in the transition process they can assist in making appropriate decisions for their child. According to Nisbet, Covert, and Schuh (1992) "...parents are the leading members, and decision makers, in planning for their son/daughter" (p. 407). This is especially true when a child has a disability because there are other additional factors to take into consideration when planning for life after high school. Since parents have lived with their child and their disability all their life, they can help make decisions about life after high school with knowledge of how the disability might impact those decisions.

Parent involvement in education can also impact a student's life during school. The research has shown that improvement in school attendance and student's self-esteem and confidence has been linked to parent involvement (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Flaxman & Inger, 1991; Newman & Cameto, 1993). This finding significantly impacts students with disabilities because they may already have low self-esteem and confidence related to their disability. When parents get involved they can impact how their child feels about him or herself. This boost in confidence can positively impact other areas of a student's life as they continue through school and transition to life after school.

After an extensive review of the literature the author did not locate any empirical studies that examined the effects of parent involvement in transition planning on post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. Even though this is true, many resources (i.e., textbooks, reports, models) that support parent involvement in transition planning exist. For example, Paula Kohler (1993) conducted a study to determine which transition practices were most supported or identified in the literature. Through her research, Kohler found many documents such as experimental studies, follow-up studies, and theory or opinion based articles that related to transition. After examining these documents, Kohler found that three practices, vocational training, parent involvement, and interagency collaboration and service delivery, were cited in more than 50% of the documents. She recommends including these components in transition planning since they are supported in the literature.

In 1996 Paula Kohler developed a taxonomy for transition planning. This taxonomy includes transition best practices that are recommended by transition experts and the findings of many studies. One of the components of her taxonomy is parent involvement, which is a transition best practice. This component focuses on the importance of parent participation in the development of the Individualized Education Program. Also addressed by this component is the importance of providing parents with knowledge about post-school options and their roles in the transition process.

Greene (2002) also reviewed the literature related to transition and students with disabilities. Like Kohler, he reviewed many sources such as textbooks, journal articles, and papers. Greene identified 10 best practices that were frequently cited in the literature and then he organized them into three categories which are transition service agency, transition education

programming, and transition planning. Family and parent involvement is a component of the third category, transition planning.

In a brief about the transition planning process written by Cameto (2005), she reiterates the importance of parent involvement in transition planning. Cameto states that the school's role is to provide parents with information about post-secondary options and services available for students with disabilities. When provided with this information parents can help make important decisions. She continues by saying that in order for transition planning to be truly effective, all individuals (i.e., general education teachers, special education teachers, students, agency personnel) must participate, including parents.

In summary, parent involvement for students with disabilities can affect the student greatly in many facets of their life during school and after school. Parents can provide valuable knowledge about the child and the impact of the disability on his or her life. Parent involvement also affects in-school performance related to attendance, self-esteem, and confidence. Although there are no empirical studies examining the effects of parent involvement on post-school outcomes for students with learning disabilities, this practice makes sense. Substantial research supports the impact parents can have in their children's education and outcomes (Ames et al., 1993; Epstein, 1987; Falbo et al., 2001; Fehrmann et al., 1987). It is logical then that parent involvement is important during decision making in the transition process.

Barriers to Involvement

Although legislation mandates parental involvement in the transition process and research supports the importance of parental involvement in education, many parents choose not to participate for a variety of reasons. Transition can be difficult for those with disabilities and their families because they are moving from school, which is a familiar place, to one that is unfamiliar

(Brotherson & Berdine, 1993). Further, when it is time for young adults to transition to life after school, parents may feel a sense of “parent burnout” (Brotherson & Berdine). Parent burnout and unfamiliarity are just a few of the reasons why parents may not be involved.

Often parents choose not to get involved because of their past experiences with schools and school officials. Brotherson and Berdine (1993) found that parents may have had many negative experiences regarding their input during educational planning for their child and this may prevent them from participating in transition planning. These negative experiences affect future parent involvement regardless of the current efforts of the school and school members. Parents also might have been put into uncomfortable situations. Through their research, Gilliam and Coleman (1981) found that parents may have faced intimidating situations with professionals in previous opportunities. As humans, it is only natural to use past experiences as a predictor of future behavior and parents are no different. If parents have had bad experiences with school officials in the past, then they will not put themselves in that situation again, and consequently will not get involved.

Low parent involvement can also be specifically related to parenting styles. Lovitt and Cushing (1999) found that parents choose not to participate in their child’s education because of the difficulties they have parenting their child with a disability. As one parent indicated, “Parents get tired of special education kids by the time they’re in junior high or high school. They’ve worked with them for 3 or 4 years earlier and now they don’t want to hear about it anymore” (p. 137). The job of parenting can be a daunting task and when a parent has a child with a disability the task often seems even greater. The parent not only has to deal with typical parenting issues, but also has to deal with issues related to their child’s disability and the effect of that disability

on every aspect of life. It can be an overwhelming situation when parents do not have enough support.

Other reasons parents might not be involved in their child's education are related to multicultural issues. Parents from some cultures might have different views of their roles in the educational process. As well, teachers might have misconceptions about parents from different cultural backgrounds. A common misconception is that minority parents do not want to be involved in their child's education, but research has indicated this is not true. In a study examining involvement of minority parents, Chavkin and Garza-Lubeck (1990), found that minority (Anglo, Black, Hispanic) parents were most interested in 3 roles: audience, home tutor, and school program supporter. Audience, home tutor, and school program supporter may not be considered active roles by some educators; therefore, when parents are involved in these ways it might be interpreted as a lack of involvement.

Although some minority parents are interested in being involved others find it difficult for a variety of reasons. One researcher, Harry, (1992) discusses four problems that lead to low parent involvement for African-American parents. These include a mistrust of the school system, lack of concern on the parents' part, life events, and disagreement with special education. The overrepresentation of black children in special education has increased this mistrust. Harry found that parents are concerned, but their concern is not shown because they often feel overwhelmed by life events. Life events are simply the events that happen from day to day which cause stress in life. Finally, disagreement often hinders communication between the parents and schools which will cause parent involvement to decrease.

Still there are other reasons parents choose not to get involved. Turnbull and Turnbull (1997) identified several reasons why parents are less involved in the transition planning process.

Those reasons included transportation issues, problems that arise due to differing opinions, lack of understanding about the school system, perception that they are inferior to others involved in the process, and lack of knowledge about their child's disability. Transportation may not be available for parents; therefore, this will prevent them from attending transition meetings. Parents and team members often have different opinions regarding the student and what their transition needs are and what their post-secondary goals should be. With this difference in opinion, team members can often make parents feel that they are inferior because they are often not considered the expert. Finally, parents often lack the knowledge to fully understand their child's disability and how it impacts learning. All of these factors play a critical role in a parent's decision to participate in the transition process and how they participate in the process.

Another reason parents may choose not to participate is lack of knowledge. Most parents do not receive any formal training about the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Individualized Transition Plan (ITP). But IEP team members expect parents to understand the processes and documents related to transition planning. In 1995, Lovitt conducted a 3-year longitudinal study to examine curricular offerings for high school students with disabilities. In this study, Lovitt interviewed parents and asked them, "What roles do the IEP and the ITP play in students' programs, and who is involved in designing and carrying out their programs?" (p. 137). Lovitt and Cushing examined the data in 1999 and found that while many parents did not know what the IEP or ITP were, others participated fully in the transition planning process. They also found that levels of participation varied across the parents. Some provided support during the process and others conveyed they knew nothing of the process. In order to aid parents in obtaining appropriate services and supports for their children, they must be informed of the

options that are available (Nisbet et al., 1992). If parents do not have the information they need to be informed participants, the IEP team cannot expect them to fully participate in the process.

Role expectations play a part in deciding if and when parents will get involved in their child's education. Plevyak (2003) found that parents have different ideas about how they should be involved in their child's education. Plevyak says, "These different role expectations of parents may also be dissimilar to what schools expect from parents" (p. 34). When parents and schools cannot agree on how parents should participate then parent involvement will suffer and ultimately the child will suffer.

Parent involvement for children with disabilities is critical. Success in and after school for children with disabilities is directly affected by how and when their parents choose to get involved. Even though there are many barriers to parent involvement in the transition process, schools and agencies must find a way for parents to participate. Schools and parents have to come to an agreement on parent and school roles and expectations of parent involvement in order for it to be successful. When parents and schools agree, students with disabilities will reap the numerous benefits of parent involvement.

Ways Parents Can be Involved

Most parents want to be active participants in their child's education and in the transition process and believe they should be. Lovitt and Cushing (1999) examined data from a longitudinal study conducted by Lovitt in 1995 and found that parents, generally speaking, agreed that their involvement in their child's education in high school was important. The way in which parents choose to participate varies. "Parent involvement ranges from case management and chief advocate to no active involvement" (Nisbet et al., 1992).

The research shows that many parents are not as involved as they would like to be (McNair & Rusch, 1991). McNair and Rusch found that nearly 70% of the parents they sampled wanted to be involved in the transition process, but less than 35% were actually involved. They also found that approximately 12% of the parents sampled were not involved in the process at all and only 2% expressed their desire not to be involved. With these staggering numbers it is evident that parents want to be involved, but for some reason they are not.

Parents of students with disabilities still have many of the same dreams and hopes for their children as parents of children without disabilities do. Lovitt and Cushing (1999) found that parents of children with disabilities wanted their children to finish high school and obtain vocational training. The researchers also found that the same parents wanted their child to obtain employment, live independently, and obtain some type of post-secondary education after graduation from high school. If parents can express their desired goals for their child then they should be active participants in the transition process, but still many choose not to participate.

There are many ways in which parents can participate in the transition planning process. First, Goodall and Bruder (1986) suggested that parents learn about the transition process and what their role in the process should be. Once they understand the process, parents can better serve as active participants in the transition process (Brotherson & Berdine, 1993; Goodall & Bruder). Goodall and Bruder believe parents should attend meetings, provide input on specific family and child needs and responsibilities they are able to assume, assist in creating a plan that focuses on community integration and less family support, inquire about information that the family would need to address with student, and provide informal learning opportunities within the home and community.

There are many activities related to life after school that parents can participate in during transition planning. Kerka (1987) recommended that parents can assume roles in the transition planning process in the areas of career exploration, job search and survival, independent living skills, and collaboration with educators and other service providers. More specifically, parents can model the steps in finding job leads and preparing a resume, and explain the job interview process. Parents can also help identify which independent living skills the student has mastered and those he or she still needs to work on. As well, parents can allow their child to use family transportation and practice driving skills (Carter & Lunsford, 2005; Kerka, 1987).

The involvement in planning life after school is critical, but parents must also participate in activities that affect the child while in school. Lovitt and Cushing (1999) suggested that parents can be involved by assisting in developing goals for the Individualized Education Program, understanding their child's rights, privileges, and due process, developing and understanding the system being used to evaluate their child's progress on goals, and developing knowledge about current practices in education. Being aware of and participating in the education of their child while in school can help parents be aware of the transition plan, diploma options, post school opportunities, and community agencies that can provide assistance which are directly related to success after school (Lovitt & Cushing).

Still, others have their own framework for parent involvement in transition. Paula Kohler includes a component related to family involvement in her Taxonomy for Transition Programming. Three components that make up family involvement in the Taxonomy are participation, empowerment, and training. Participation considers the variety of ways parents can be involved in the transition process. Empowerment focuses on providing strategies that allow families to participate in a meaningful way. Training provides families with valuable information

that will allow them to work effectively with other team members (Kohler & Field, 2003). The three components described here can allow parents to take a more active role in the transition process and participate in the more specific roles that are provided by others.

While many believe that parents should take an active role in transition planning, others believe parents should decide to what degree they want to be involved. Schutz (1986) believes that parents can assume many roles in the transition process. According to Schutz there are several types of involvement and they include passive receptivity, minimal involvement, training program participant, activity planning team member, counselor of other parents, advocate and policy maker. The types of involvement that Schutz explains here allow all parents, regardless of their busy lives and work schedules, the opportunity to participate at some level. Parents can make the choice to take on active roles or passive roles in the transition process.

Increasing Involvement

Increasing parent involvement is no easy task for any school or agency. Often, schools provide numerous ways in which parents can get involved, but may still find themselves struggling to increase involvement. Although many parents believe their involvement is important to the success of their child, some still choose not to get involved in the activities provided by the school. Schools need to develop a parent involvement program in which parents feel like they are equal members in the home-school partnership.

Finders and Lewis (1994) suggested that educators identify parent roles in the educational process, insist that parents be more aggressive, create a trusting relationship with the parents, expand upon events the child may experience at home, and make use of the knowledge and skills that parents bring to the process in order to facilitate active parent involvement. Parents need to know and understand their role in the process, but must believe and trust that educators have the

best interest of their child in mind before they will participate. Parents bring many skills of varying levels to the process and educators should make use of the skills that parents have so they can actively participate.

Meeting with parents from different ethnic backgrounds can present some challenges for some educators. The different cultures create their own obstacle for involvement, but agencies should strive to facilitate parent involvement in the transition process. To increase involvement from families of multicultural backgrounds, agencies need to identify family needs, reach out to cultural organizations, train parents of diverse backgrounds to be liaisons, educate the cultural communities about special education, create and offer training programs for parents about special education, and provide in-service training to school staff on cultural differences (Lynch & Stein, 1987).

To gain more parental involvement in transition educators can provide clear information about the purpose and process of transition, create an inviting atmosphere in which family members can communicate their thoughts freely, hold meetings at times and locations which are convenient for the family, and recognize families for the role they play in the process (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002). In order for parents to participate they must first have an understanding of what transition means and why it is important. One way to provide this information is through training sessions, seminars, or informal meetings with the parents. Benz, Johnson, Mikkelsen, and Lindstrom (1995) found that parents believe joint training for VR and school staff members, parents, and students would make the transition planning process better and improve the amount and level of family involvement.

As mentioned previously, parents play an important role in the transition planning process. Parents can assist in decision making during high school which will ultimately impact their children's post-secondary preparation. In order for parents to be actively involved in transition planning, they must be provided with information about transition and what is expected of them. Often times, this information can be provided in the form of parent trainings.

Parent Trainings

A commonly cited problem with parent involvement is that parents do not have the knowledge they need in order to actively participate in their child's education. Yet another problem hampering involvement is that parents are often unsure of their role in the educational process (Finders & Lewis, 1994). One way to address this lack of knowledge and role confusion is to provide training for parents, which can ultimately lead to increased parent involvement in the transition process (Buckner, 1992).

After an extensive review of the literature, several studies were located that focused on parent training related to various aspects of educational planning for students with disabilities. Although these studies do not specifically relate to training parents in the area of transition to post-secondary education, they each relate to features of the transition planning process.

Larry Taylor (1992) developed and implemented a program to increase parent involvement in the reevaluation process and also increase involvement in decision making regarding their child's academic and vocational programs. The researcher asked for parent input throughout the program and this was accomplished when Taylor asked parents if they had any specific concerns about their child's program development.

To increase the staff and parents' knowledge about special education, training was provided once each month during the first two months of the program. Although there were only

10 students participating in the study, the training was extended to the parents of approximately 70 students who were also up for reevaluation during the school year. The training focused on basic education rights of individuals with disabilities and post-school career and vocational choices for individuals with disabilities.

The results of the study showed that parent involvement in meetings increased from involvement for 4 of 10 students to 8 out of 10 students; 6 out of 10 parents attended in person and 2 participated in the meeting via a phone conversation. Taylor (1992) also found that knowledge about basic rights and vocational programs increased for parents, students, and staff members. One might expect that the increase in knowledge contributed to the increase in parent involvement in meetings. The results of this study illustrated how training can increase parents, students, and staff members' knowledge about issues related to special education and even transition (i.e., vocational programs) which impacts parent involvement in transition planning.

Campbell, Strickland, and la Forme (1992) conducted a study that examined parent participation in the individualized family service plan (IFSP). Twenty families of children enrolled in an early intervention program participated in this study; eleven families chose to participate in formal training (Group 1) and nine families did not participate in the training (Group 2). Workshops and discussion groups were available for all parents to attend, but attendance was not required. Information from a book that was distributed by the early intervention program was emphasized during the workshops and discussion groups.

The formal training for Group 1 consisted of a 12-hour workshop program held over 2 consecutive weeks. The program was broken down into four 3-hour sessions. The sessions were guided by the training manual. During these sessions, parents were trained on components of the individual family service plan (IFSP), emotions and coping, communication and decision

making, and participation as team members. Small group meetings were also held early in the fall session to allow parents to ask questions and get clarification on information. Additionally, staff members were trained in the underlying principles of the IFSP and preferred outcomes of the IFSP conferences.

After families participated in the educational sessions, individualized family service plan (IFSP) conferences were scheduled for both groups individually. Parents were asked to describe their children and conference leaders wrote all information in an IFSP document. Leaders then asked parents to tell them what was important for them, their children, and their family. This information was also written on the IFSP document.

Two different raters analyzed the individualized family service plans (IFSP), which allowed for reliability measures. Neither rater knew which parents did or did not attend the training. Each rater analyzed the IFSPs written before and after the training for each family. Parent participation in developing the IFSP was based on two factors: (a) the extent to which parents' reports of their child's present levels of development were stated in parent or professional language or in both parent and professional language (e.g., combined) and (b) the number of outcome statements written in parent or professional language.

Results of the study showed that parents who participated in training were more involved in developing the individualized family service plans (IFSP) than those parents who did not receive training. More specifically, 85% of the outcome statements written on the IFSP for Group 1 resembled more parent language than educator language compared to 73% of outcomes statements for Group 2. This would lead one to believe that parents in Group 1 gave more input during the process of writing the IFSP. Parents in Group 1 also gave more new outcomes on post-training IFSPs than did Group 2.

The results presented here are not specifically related to transition planning for high school students. However, the results from this study could possibly be applied to high school transition planning. If parents of students with disabilities in high school are provided with training about the transition process, issues, roles, etc. then they might become more involved by providing input that can be used in transition planning.

A study conducted by Alice Buckner (1992) relates specifically to students with learning disabilities. The purpose of Buckner's study was to increase parent involvement in developing educational goals for students with learning disabilities. The investigator tried to achieve her goal by improving attendance at Individualized Education Program (IEP) conferences, increasing parent participation in decision making during the IEP process, and enhancing parents' perceptions of their importance during the IEP process.

In order to achieve her goals, Buckner (1992) implemented a variety of activities. First, staff in-service was held for special education teachers to provide information on parent involvement and its effects on students. The objective of this in-service was to increase effective communication between teachers and parents, which would ultimately increase parent involvement during Individualized Education Program meetings.

Workshops were held for parents and teachers to increase their knowledge of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and increase parent involvement in a variety of activities including the IEP process. Active parent participation in the IEP meeting was documented through observation and careful note taking. Another aspect of the study was ongoing written and oral communication that was sent to parents. The investigator also held frequent parent, student, and teacher conferences to establish continuity during the program and also provide some time for all stakeholders to meet.

Results of the 4-month project indicated that parent attendance in Individualized Education Program (IEP) conferences increased when comparing the base-line attendance (66%) to the attendance at the terminal IEP meeting (83%). Active parent participation in IEP decision making also increased. Prior to program implementation only 54% of the parents participated in decision making and after implementation 82% participated in decision making. After training and other program components were implemented, 76% of parents perceived the conference and themselves as necessary for developing appropriate education goals which is an increase from 22% pre program implementation.

As mentioned before, if parents are provided with information that will educate them about the transition process, they may be more inclined to participate in transition planning. The results of the study conducted by Buckner (1992) can be applied to training parents in the transition process specifically related to individuals with learning disabilities who desire to attend post-secondary education. Parent training related to transition to post-secondary education should provide parents with information about post-secondary education including, but not limited to preparation activities, locating schools and obtaining services. Parents' perceptions about their own ability to assist in planning may increase if they are provided with the appropriate information and training.

In summary, parent involvement in the transition planning process for students with learning disabilities is essential for their success during high school and after high school. When students transition to post-secondary education they are leaving the structured environment of the high school for the less structured, sometimes less supportive environment of college. Students with learning disabilities need the support of parents to make this transition easier. In order for parents to support their child and be active participants in transition planning, agencies and

educators need to provide parents with adequate information and training. This training should be focused on the transition process and goal setting to help students achieve their post-secondary goal of attending college. Training can help increase parent involvement as well parents' perceptions about their ability to take on an active role in transition planning.

Conclusion

Transition began with the Work-Study Movement in the 1960s and the Career Education Movement in the 1970s. During the 1960s, the focus was to prepare students with mild disabilities for adult life through a comprehensive program of academic, social, and vocational training (Halpern). The 1970s brought about the passing of the Career Education Implementation Act, and it was with the passing of this act that students with disabilities were included in career education (Halpern). In the 1980s new ideas about transition were emerging and transition models were developed.

In 1983, Madeline Will presented the Bridges Transition Model, which helped focus services on preparing students with disabilities for post-secondary environments, specifically, employment. In 1985, Halpern developed a model that expanded Will's model, focusing on residential empowerment, social adjustment, as well as, employment (Browning, 1997). Although transition was mentioned in the legislation at this time, it was not until 1990 that transition was defined in the legislation. The definition of transition not only included employment as a viable post-school option, but also expanded options to include postsecondary education, vocational training, and independent living. When the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was reauthorized in 1997 and 2004 greater emphasis was placed on post-secondary education and increased parent involvement.

Parents play an important role in the education of all students. Parent involvement can impact students during and after school. Parent involvement in education is important for all students and has been linked to improved motivation and self-confidence (Ames et al., 1993), consistent school attendance (Falbo et al., 2001), improved school behavior (Epstein, 1987), and the development of realistic post-school goals (Pape, 1999).

For students with disabilities, transition planning is a time at which parents can get involved in their child's education because there are many decisions to be made. During transition planning students with disabilities must decide if they would like to attend post-secondary education or obtain competitive employment. Many students with learning disabilities choose post-secondary education as an option after high school.

Planning for the transition to post-secondary education should begin early (Arnold, 1985; Skinner & Lindstrom, 2003) and parents need to take an active role in this process. Preparation for post-secondary education should start before a student begins high school. Students must decide what diploma to seek and which courses to take. These decisions impact the type of post-secondary institution one can attend.

During high school, students should work with their parents and other professionals to effectively plan and prepare for the transition to post-secondary education. Students should develop study skills and learning strategies and decide which accommodations work best for them (Mellard, 2005). Parents and professionals can collaborate and assist the student in the process of applying for college and preparing appropriate disability documentation (Skinner & Lindstrom, 2003). When parents get involved, the chances of their child being successful during and after school increases.

Some parents choose not to get involved in their child's education for many reasons. Some of the reasons cited in the literature include lack of knowledge and skills and role ambiguity (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). One way to combat low parent involvement due to knowledge, skills, and role confusion is to provide parents with the information they need to be active participants in the educational process, which also includes transition planning.

After an extensive review of the literature the researcher did not find any studies that pertained to training parents in transition planning for students with learning disabilities who have chosen post-secondary education as their post-school goal. Instead, several studies that trained parents to become more active participants in the development of the Individualized Education Program (Buckner, 1992; Taylor, 1992) and the individualized family service plan (Campbell et al., 1992) were found. The goal of these programs studied was to increase parent involvement by increasing parents' knowledge of and skills related to the educational planning process. The results of these studies indicated that parent involvement in the planning process did increase after training that focused on laws, education rights of individuals with disabilities, components of the transition plan, and post-school choices for individuals with disabilities.

Parent involvement for students with learning disabilities who have chosen post-secondary education as their transition goal is important. In order for parents to participate in the transition process, they must be equipped with the information and skills needed to be actively involved. If schools want more parent involvement in the educational planning process, they must take steps to provide parents, as well as, students and school professionals with training about the transition to postsecondary education so that everyone involved can collaboratively plan for the student's transition to life after school.

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

An increasing number of students with learning disabilities are attending post-secondary education and parent involvement in the planning process is critical. This study used a pre/post test design to examine the effects of training on knowledge about the process of transitioning to post-secondary education. This study also examined students', parents', and teachers' perceptions of parent involvement. Participants were randomly placed in the control or intervention group. The intervention group participated in the training session about the process of transitioning to post-secondary education and the control group did not. Participants in both groups completed the Parent Involvement in Education Survey.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the procedures used for selecting participants and selecting and developing the instruments. Also presented in this chapter is information about the procedures used during the intervention and the statistical procedures used in the study.

Research Design and Methodology

This section describes the procedures used for selecting and identifying the sample for this study. Also discussed is the selection and identification of the treatment group and non-treatment group participants.

Sample Selection and Identification

Population. The original sample, wave 1, for this study was derived from twelve Alabama public schools in Shelby County, which is located in North Central Alabama. Shelby County School District has a total of 38 schools, and 16 of those are middle and high schools.

Information about school population and percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch for the 2008–2009 school year was gathered on the 16 middle and high schools from the Alabama Department of Education Web site. This was done in order to find schools that were similar. Of the 16 middle and high schools, it was determined that twelve schools were similar based on the school population and percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch. These twelve schools were chosen for participation in the study. Five of the chosen schools were middle schools and seven were high schools. Table 1 provides enrollment and percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch for each school selected for participation in Shelby County.

Table 1

Enrollment and Percentage of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Lunch

School	Enrollment	% Free Reduced
Calera High School	757	41.35
Chelsea High School	774	11.76
Columbiana Middle School	508	49.41
Helena Middle School	701	14.55
Montevallo High School	359	44.57
Montevallo Middle School	338	55.62
Oak Mountain High School	1729	5.09
Pelham High School	1523	15.82
Riverchase Middle School	685	28.32
Shelby County High School	611	36.82
Thompson High School	1696	21.34
Thompson Middle School	1400	25.57

After the participating schools were identified, the principal investigator requested from the secretary at the Special Services Center (SSC) in Shelby County the number of students with a learning disability (LD) being served at each of the participating schools. There were 244 students being served at all of the schools combined. Each student received an envelope containing a flyer that provided information about the study, as well as an assent form. Each student also received an envelope to deliver to his or her parent or guardian that contained a flyer, a parental permission form, an informed consent form, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. After the envelopes were delivered to the SSC, the principal investigator realized that she did not request numbers only for those being served who were in the 8th or 9th grade. When this was discovered, the principal investigator immediately notified each special education lead teacher to ascertain the number of 8th or 9th grades students with LD being served at each school. Only one teacher responded. The researcher tried to obtain the number of students with LD in the 8th or 9th grade, but received this information from only one teacher. Fifty-eight teachers who taught 8th or 9th grade in one of the participating schools were recruited for this study. Of the original population chosen for the study, there were 13 individuals from Shelby County who participated in the study; four students, four parents, and five teachers.

In an effort to increase the number of participants in the intervention and control groups, the principal investigator contacted other school systems and organizations, via email, on May 6, 2009 and May 15, 2009 to see if they were interested in participating in the study. Three school systems/organizations showed interest in the study. After gaining interest, the principal investigator submitted a modification request form to the Auburn University Institution Review Board on May 26, 2009. Permission for modifications was granted on June 2, 2009.

After gaining approval of modifications, the sample was expanded to include students, parents, and teachers from other school systems and organizations in Alabama. This group of participants will be referred to as wave 2. The increased sample now included six schools from the Lee County School System. The six schools included four high schools, one junior high school, and one middle school. Also included in the new sample were two schools from the Opelika City School System, which included one high school and one middle school. Parents and professionals affiliated with the Alabama Network for Children with Disabilities (ANCD), which is a component of the Alabama Parent Education Center (APEC), were also included in the sample. The APEC is located in Wetumpka, Alabama and is a non-profit organization organized by parents in central Alabama. The ANCD, which is now called The Alabama Parent Training and Information Network for Children with Disabilities (AL PTI NCD) provides free information and training to parents to allow them to become advocates for their children.

In order to gain more participants, the participant criteria were also altered with the modification. Student participants from wave 2 could be in grades 7–11 and attend one of the following schools: Opelika High School (OHS), Opelika Middle School (OMS), Smith Station High School (SSHS), or Wacoochee Junior High School (WJHS). Their parents were also invited to participate in the study. The teacher participants from wave 2 who had experience working with students with LD that taught grades 7–11 and worked at OHS, OMS, SSHS, or WJHS were allowed to participate. In order to participate, parents and professionals affiliated with the Alabama Parent Training and Information Network for Children with Disabilities had to meet the same participant criteria as mentioned previously. Students had to be in grades 7–11, have a LD, and attend a school in the Wetumpka area. Parents had to have a child with a LD in

grades 7–11 that attended a school in the Wetumpka area. Teachers had to have experience teaching students with LD in grades 7–11 at a school in the Wetumpka area.

Information about the study was emailed to all special education teachers in the Lee County School system by the Special Education Coordinator. Two teachers contacted the principal investigator to express interest in participating. One of the teachers became the contact person for Smith Station High School and the other was the contact person for Wacoochee Junior High School. After permission was granted by the Special Education Director for Opelika City Schools, the principal investigator contacted the transition teacher at Opelika High School to see if she would be the contact person for the high school and Opelika Middle school; she agreed. The Director of the Alabama Parent Training and Information Network for Children with Disabilities served as the contact person for the Wetumpka area.

Each contact person at the schools was asked to identify students with a learning disability in grades 7–11 who they thought might be interested in college. The contact person at Smith Station High School identified 50 students with a learning disability in 10th and 11th grade. Seven students in grades 7–9 were identified by the contact person at Wacoochee Junior High School and 10 students were identified at Opelika High School. An envelope containing a flyer, consent forms, and a pre-test was mailed to the parents or guardians of all 67 students identified in the schools. The director at the Alabama Parent Training and Information Network for Children with Disabilities (AP TI NCD) was not asked to identify students because she agreed to send the flyer, consent forms, and pre-test to all parents and professionals in her database. The director was unable to provide the researcher with the number of people that were contacted.

There were 18 participants from wave 2, which included 6 students, 7 parents, and 5 teachers. Of the 18 participants, there were 6 students, 5 parents, and 4 teachers associated with

Opelika City Schools or the Lee County School System. There were 0 students, 2 parents, and 1 teacher affiliated with the Alabama Parent Training and Information Network for Children with Disabilities.

Treatment and non-treatment group. The treatment and non-treatment groups consisted of students, parents, and teachers from wave 1 and wave 2. Students who participated in the study met three criteria. First, students had to have a diagnosis of a learning disability (LD) as defined by the Alabama State Code. Second, they had to be in 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, or 11th grade. Finally, students had to be enrolled at one of the schools that was selected for participation or they had to be affiliated with the Alabama Parent Training and Information Network for Children with Disabilities (AP TI NCD). In the original proposal, parents were allowed to participate as long as they had a child with a LD that was in 8th or 9th grade and attended one of the schools selected for participation in Shelby County. In an effort to increase the number of participants these criteria was changed when the modification request was submitted. Parents from wave 2 were allowed to participate in the study regardless of whether their child participated in the study as long as their child had a LD, attended one of the schools selected for participation or was affiliated with the AP TI NCD, and was in 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, or 11th grade. Special education teachers had to meet 3 criteria to participate in the study. First, they had to have experience working with students with learning disabilities. Second, they had to teach 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, or 11th grade. Finally, teachers had to teach in one of the schools selected for participation or be affiliated with the AP TI NCD.

Of the original population (wave 1) chosen for the study, there were only 13 individuals from Shelby County who participated in the study; four students, four parents, and five teachers. Only 1 student attending a school in Shelby County and his or her parent participated in the

study as members of the intervention group. Three students attending a school in Shelby County and their parents participated in the study as members of the control group. Five teachers who taught in Shelby County participated in the study as members of the control group.

There were 18 participants from wave 2 who participated in the study. Three students, 5 parents, and 4 teachers participated in the study as members of the intervention group. Three students, 2 parents, and 1 teacher participated as members in the control group.

There were 31 participants in the study. The intervention group consisted of 14 participants and the control group consisted of 17 participants. The intervention group was made up of 4 students, 6 parents, and 4 teachers and the control group was made up of 6 students, 5 parents, and 6 teachers.

Intervention

Transition Training and Supporting Materials

The principal investigator reviewed available materials and resources about the process of preparing for and applying for post-secondary education. Materials from the U.S. Department of Education, the Alabama State Department of Education, Heath Resource Center, as well as scholarly journals and materials were analyzed. As a result, an outline of information to be presented during the training session to students, parents, and teachers was prepared.

Using the information found during the review of available resources, a PowerPoint presentation to discuss the process of transitioning to post-secondary education was developed by the principal investigator. The presentation consisted of 44 slides.

The presentation began with a brief overview of transition planning and why it is important. Discussed next in the PowerPoint were the roles of students, parents, and teachers in the transition process. A considerable amount of the presentation was devoted to differences in

high school and post-secondary education and how those differences affect students with disabilities. Differences in laws, classes, instructors, disability documentation, studying, grades, and testing were presented. The presentation concluded with an overview of how to prepare for post-secondary education during high school. The researcher presented information about high school courses to take, as well as the college exploration process. Information about college exploration was divided into five sections which included selecting a college, applying for college, financial aid, and disability programs and support services.

The presenter promoted active engagement in the training by providing each participant with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation. This handout gave individuals the opportunity to make notes during the presentation. The participants also received a handout that could be used during the process of searching and applying for post-secondary education. The handout provided space for students to write down information about colleges they were interested in, as well as personal information that would be needed when completing applications. Other information related to the college search and application process was also provided for on the handout.

During the training session, students, parents, and teachers participated in activities that supported the material being covered. The first activity was called "Post-school Goals." For this activity students were asked to write down their goals for life after high school in 3 areas including work/career, training/school, and living arrangements. Parents completed the same activity, but each parent wrote down what they thought their child's goal was for each area. Finally, teachers completed the handout based on what their own goals were. Students and parents were given the opportunity to discuss their answers before the presenter talked about the activity with the entire group.

“What’s High School Like?” is the title of the second activity. During the second activity, participants were asked to write down what high school was like with regard to classes, instructors, studying, and testing/grades. This activity served as an introduction to the next portion of material being covered. After the activity was completed, the presenter led a brief discussion about the differences between high school and post-secondary education before continuing on with the presentation.

Instrumentation

This section describes the three instruments that were used in the study, which includes the Knowledge-based Pre and Post-Test, the Parent Involvement in Education Questionnaire, and the Consumer Satisfaction Questionnaire. The purpose of each instrument is discussed, as well as the procedures for developing each instrument.

Knowledge-based Pre and Post Test

In order to examine students’, parents’, and teachers’ level of knowledge about the process of transitioning to postsecondary education, the principal investigator developed a knowledge-based pre- and post-test. The knowledge-based test consisted of 19 multiple choice questions with 4 answer choices and 12 true/false questions. The questions on the test were based upon the content provided during the training session, which was selected from an extensive review of the literature.

The knowledge-based pre and post-test consisted of 31 questions. Five of the 31 questions addressed the first part of the PowerPoint called, “What is transition planning?” Four questions on the test were derived from the second and smallest section of the training about parent, student, and teacher roles in planning. Differences in high school and post-secondary education which included information about laws, classes, instructors, disability documentation,

studying, testing, and grades, made up eight questions on the pre and post-test. The final and largest section of the training session, preparation for post-secondary education, was addressed with 14 questions on the pre and post-test. This final section included information about classes to take while in high school and the process of selecting a college, applying for college, financial aid, and disability programs and support services.

The pre-test was given to all participants in the study before the training session was provided to the intervention group. All participants in wave 1 took the post-test after the training session was provided to the intervention group. Members of the control group in wave 2 took the post-test on the day of the training session, but before the presentation began. Members of the intervention group completed the post-test on the day of the training session after the presentation was completed.

Each correct answer was changed to a 1 and each incorrect answer was changed to a 0. When completing the data analysis, the researcher obtained a mean score of the percentage of items correct on the pre-test and the post-test for each group (students, parents, and teachers)

Parent Involvement in Education Survey

Coding the survey. A survey was developed by the principal investigator to gain a better understanding of students', parents' and teachers' perceptions of parent involvement in education. The survey was also used to determine the extent to which a student and his or her parent agreed about the parent's level of involvement. In order to compare a student's rating with his or her parent the surveys had to be coded in the same manner. Each student/parent pair received the same 3 digit code. The student code was preceded with an *S* and the parent code was preceded with a *P*. For example, if a student/parent pair received the number 102, the student's code would be S102 in which the *S* identified the participant as a student and the *P* identified the

participant as a parent. Teacher codes were preceded by the letter T. The code T102 would identify the participant as a teacher in the intervention group. Although a teacher received the same code as a student/parent pair, there were no connections between the student and teacher. In other words, the same code did not identify the teacher participant as the teacher of the student with the same code.

The first number in the codes was used to identify members of the intervention and control group. Codes for all participants in the intervention group began with a 1. If a student was assigned to the intervention group then that student's parent was also assigned to the intervention group. Codes for the participants in the control group were created in the same manner. However, codes for all participants in the control group began with a 2. For example, the code for a student in the control group might be S203 and the code for his parent would be P203.

Survey development. A draft of the Parent Involvement in Education Survey was developed by the principal investigator during her Survey Methods course taken in Fall 2008. Three different surveys were developed: one for parents, one for students, and one for teachers. Although, the items were the same, the language was altered dependent upon the respondent. For example, for the item question related to parent involvement in education, the parent survey read, "I am involved in my child's education;" whereas the student survey read, "my parent(s) is involved in my education." This survey was developed using a five-point Likert-type scale of *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). The survey for parents and students was made up of 13 questions and there were 11 questions on the teachers' survey. The survey consisted of activity-related questions and open-ended questions. All participants were asked to rate parents' involvement in activities such as Individualized Education Program participation, homework,

school events, volunteering, education decisions, and outcomes after graduation. The open-ended questions gave participants the opportunity to provide other activities or ways in which parents were involved and challenges that parents faced when trying to get involved.

Scope of questions. To assist with the development of the instrument, the survey was examined by experts in the field of Transition, including a university professor from Auburn University, a high school special education teacher and special education students from Opelika High School, and a researcher at Auburn University. Each person was asked to read the survey for clarity and suggest any changes they felt warranted. Two suggestions were made regarding the format of the survey. Originally, the first page of the survey included the purpose of the instrument, the directions, and demographic questions. At the suggestion of one of the reviewers, the survey items were moved to the first page to begin right after the purpose and directions. Another expert suggested that two open-ended questions be included at the end of the survey. The first question that was added would allow respondents to identify ways in which parents may be involved in their child's education that were not included in the activity-related questions. The second open-ended question that was added would allow respondents to identify challenges that they believe parents may face when trying to get involved in their child's education

Consumer Satisfaction Questionnaire

The training satisfaction instrument used in the study was a revised version of the instrument used in a study conducted by Whitbread, Bruder, Fleming, and Park in 2007. The purpose of their study was to provide information via training to parents and professionals about the special education process to increase collaboration during planning. After the training they

asked the participants to rate their level of agreement with statements about the training and the presenters.

The training satisfaction questionnaire that was used in this study had 16 statements employing the five-point Likert-type scale of *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5) and four open-ended questions. The questions were divided among three sections: about the training, about the presenter, and your comments. The purpose of the instrument was to identify and examine levels of satisfaction for participants in the intervention group with regard to the training and the presenter. The instrument was completed by participants after the training session. Table 2 provides a list of the statements and questions that were on the instrument.

Table 2

Questions on the Consumer Satisfaction Questionnaire

Section	Question
About the Training	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Objectives of the training were met. 2. All topics on the agenda were addressed. 3. The materials were relevant to the training content. 4. Adequate illustrations and examples were used during the presentation. 5. Time was well organized. 6. The information is relevant and can be applied to my situation. 7. I believe that I now have a better understanding of the subject presented.

Table 2 (continued)

Section

Question

About the Presenter

1. The presenter was well prepared and organized.
2. I learned enough to implement the concepts presented.
3. The presenter used a variety of activities that corresponded with the content.
4. The presenter was easy to listen to.
5. The presenter valued our input.

Your Comments

1. The thing I found most helpful about the session was...
 2. The session would have been better if...
 3. The knowledge and skills learned today will be useful to me to...
 4. As a result of this training I will...
-

Timeline and Procedures

This section provides an overview of the timeline and procedures that were used during this study. The principal investigator proposed that the implementation of the intervention would be completed after 5 weeks. As noted previously, due to the low participation rate received from the original population, a request for modification was submitted to the Institution Review Board at Auburn University and approved. This modification extended the implementation of the intervention an additional 7 weeks. The intervention lasted a total of 12 weeks.

Week 1: April 12–April 18

During week 1 of the study, consent and assent forms and flyers were sent to the parents, students, and teachers that met the criteria for participation as discussed before. The consent and assent forms contained the purpose of the study, time commitment needed, the schedule, incentives to be given, and contact information. The flyer contained information that was also contained in the consent form, but in a less detailed manner.

Each teacher participant received an envelope with a letter from the principal investigator, a consent form, flyer, and a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE). The front of the envelope had a label on it with the word Teacher printed on the label. Each student participant received a letter from the principal investigator and a flyer with information about the study. Each parent participant received an envelope with a label on the front with the words “To the Parents of _____” printed on the label. The lead special education teacher at each school filled in the blank with each student’s name that met the criteria for participation. This envelope contained a letter from the principal investigator 2 consent forms, 1 assent form, 1 flyer, and 1 SASE. In order to participate, parents gave their consent for participation, as well as consent for their child’s participation. Students gave assent for their participation in the study.

The envelopes containing the forms and flyers were delivered to the Special Services Center (SSC) by the principal investigator on April 13, 2009. Upon arrival at the SSC, the principal investigator placed the envelopes in large manila envelopes provided by Shelby County Schools so that they may be delivered by the school pony system. Also contained in the manila envelopes was a letter to the lead special education teacher listing the contents of the manila envelope, the number of students in 8th and 9th grade being served with a learning disability, instructions on what to do once they received their packet, and a return manila envelope for

teacher consents. On the outside of each manila envelope was written the lead special education teacher's name, the name of the school where the envelope was being sent, the location from where the envelope was being sent from, and the name of the person sending the envelope.

Once the lead special education teachers received the envelopes, they passed out the envelopes and flyers to the students. The student participants then delivered the envelope to their parent or guardian. The lead teacher at each school also handed out envelopes to the other special education teacher participants.

At the suggestion of the special education coordinator for Shelby County, those who were interested in the study were given two options to express their interest. Individuals who were interested in the study either mailed their consent forms directly to the principal investigator or they attended a brief meeting about the study which was held on April 23, 2009. Participants who attended the meeting signed their consent forms after the meeting.

Week 2: April 19–April 25

The optional information meeting was held on April 23 from 5:00–6:00 p.m. at the Instructional Services Center in Alabaster, AL. The purpose of the meeting was to allow interested participants the opportunity to ask questions about the study before giving their consent and/or assent to participate. The principal investigator and one of the key personnel attended the meeting. One interested parent and their child attended the meeting. The principal investigator explained the purpose of the study and answered any questions they had. After a brief discussion the parent and her child signed the consent and assent forms.

During week 2, three signed consent and/or assent forms were received from participants in the control group. The principal investigator was also going to pick up signed consent forms

from the teachers at each school on April 23, 2009. However, there were no consent forms to be picked up at this time.

At this time, the principal investigator made a file for each participant who had returned a signed consent form. The instruments to be used during the study were coded with each participant's code and placed in the file folder.

Week 3: April 26–May 2

On May 1, 2009, all participants in the treatment and control groups who had returned signed consent and/or assent forms received a coded pre-test. Parents received their pre-tests via mail. Along with the pre-test, parents also received a letter from the principal investigator and a self-addressed stamped envelope. The letter provided instructions for completing the pre-test and returning the pre-test.

Students attending Thompson Middle School, Thompson High School, and Shelby County High School returned signed assent forms and parental permission forms to participate in the study. The lead special education teacher at each school received an envelope containing a pre-test for each of these students. Also included with the coded pre-tests were instructions to the teacher about giving the pre-test to the students and returning the pre-test.

In an effort to gain more participation in the study, the principal investigator sent reminders about the study and the purpose of the study. The reminders were sent to the special education lead teachers at each participating school through the school system pony. Also sent with the reminders was a letter to the teachers providing instructions for handing out the reminders to the students and teachers.

During week 3 only one signed consent and/or assent form was received from a parent and his son in the intervention group. The parent pre-test was sent via mail on May 4 and the

child's pre-test was sent to his special education teacher on May 4. Both the parent and the teacher received instructions for completing the pre-test and returning the pre-test.

Week 4: May 3–May 9

The principal investigator mailed one coded pre-test to a parent in the intervention group. The parent received instructions for completing and returning the pre-test. The teacher of the student in the intervention group also received the child's coded pre-test along with instructions for giving the pre-test to the student and returning the pre-test.

On May 6, 2009, the principal investigator emailed the special education lead teachers at the participating schools in Shelby County to inform them that reminders about the study were sent to each of them. In the email, each teacher was also asked to provide to the principal investigator the number of students in 8th and 9th grade at his or her school that had a learning disability. Only one teacher responded.

At this time the principal investigator had not received the number of participants that was needed to validate the study. On May 6, 2009, the principal investigator contacted other school systems and organizations to see if they would be interested in participating in the study. Two responses were received. The director of the Alabama Parent Training and Information Network for Children with Disabilities responded via email and a teacher from Lee County School System phoned the principal investigator to express their interest. A letter of support from the Director of Federal and Special Programs of Lee County Schools was received on May 8, 2009.

Week 5: May 10–May 16

The training session for members of the intervention group was held on May 11 at the Instructional Services Center, which is the professional development center for Shelby County

Schools in Alabaster, AL. The session for parents and students was held from 5:00- 8:00 p.m. One parent and her son attended the training session.

When the parent and her son arrived, they were greeted by the principal investigator as they took their seat and were offered refreshments. At 5:00 p.m., the session began with introductions and a brief overview of the purpose of the study. The codes for the instruments were given to the participants, as well as the Parent Involvement in Education Survey. Instructions for completing the survey were given. After the survey was completed they were taken up and materials for the PowerPoint were passed out. The principal investigator proceeded with the training session and presented the information contained in the PowerPoint, stopping on 3 occasions to allow the participants to take part in the planned activities. The entire presentation took approximately 2 hours. After the presentation, the participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. The participants were instructed to turn over the materials they had received. The knowledge-based post-test and the Consumer Satisfaction Questionnaire were passed out and completed which took approximately 25 minutes.

The session for teachers in the intervention group was held on May 12, 2009 from 3:30-6:30 p.m. at the Instructional Services Center. The principal investigator had not received any signed consent forms from teachers in the intervention group at this time. Nonetheless, the principal investigator and key personnel still arrived at the Instruction Services Center to prepare for the training session. No one attended and at 4:30 p.m. the decision was made to clean up and leave.

On May 13 the principal investigator met with participants in the control group at the Instructional Services Center from 3:30–7:00 p.m. Participants were allowed to come and go as they saw best fit their schedule. As students, parents, and teachers arrived, they were greeted by

the principal investigator as they took their seat. Refreshments were offered to the participants, as well as a brief explanation of the procedures. Participants were given labels with their code on them. Everyone was dealt with individually since participants arrived at their leisure during the allotted time. The Parent Involvement in Education Survey was completed first and the knowledge-based post-test was completed next. Once the instruments were completed, they were taken up by the principal investigator or other key personnel. The participants received copies of the training materials that were given to participants in the intervention group.

On May 15, 2009, the principal investigator spoke with a Special Education teacher at Opelika High School about the study and discussed her possible involvement with the study. The teacher showed interest and urged the investigator to email the special education coordinator of Opelika City Schools to get support. An email explaining the purpose of the study was sent to the special education coordinator to determine interest.

Week 6: May 17–May 23

On May 18, 2009, a request for modifications was submitted to the Institution Review Board (IRB) at Auburn University. On May 18, 2009, the principal investigator spoke to a special education teacher from Lee County Schools about the study in response to her email from May 12. It was explained to the teacher that the modifications to the study had not yet been approved by the IRB. The investigator asked the teacher if she would be willing to identify approximately 10 students in 7th and 8th grade with a learning disability from Wacoochee Junior High School that might be interested in the study once the modifications were approved and she agreed. On May 19, 2009, a letter of support was received from the special education coordinator at Opelika City Schools.

Week 7: May 24–May 30

The Institutional Review Board reviewed the request for modifications.

Week 8: May 31–June 6

On May 2, 2009, the request for modifications was approved by the Institution Review Board (IRB) at Auburn University. The principal investigator sent an email on May 5, 2009 to a participating special education teacher at Smith Station High School, a special education teacher at Wacoochee Junior High School, the director of the Alabama Parent Training and Information Network for Children with Disabilities, and a special education teacher at Opelika High School about the IRB approval.

Week 9: June 7–June 13

Since the modifications were approved on June 2, 2009, the principal investigator proceeded with the study as outlined in the modification request. On June 10, the director of the Alabama Parent Training and Information Network for Children with Disabilities mailed a letter, a flyer, and knowledge-based pre-test to parents and professionals in the Wetumpka area. On June 11, envelopes containing a letter, a flyer, and a knowledge-based pre-test were sent to a special education teacher at Wacoochee Junior High School (WJHS) and Opelika High School (OHS) to be mailed to students they identified in grades 7–11 with a learning disability. Seven envelopes were sent to the teacher at WJHS and ten envelopes were sent to the teacher at OHS. The teachers addressed the envelopes to the parents/guardians of the students they identified. This was done to protect the identity of the students due to confidentiality. The principal investigator mailed envelopes to the parents/guardians of the 50 students who met the participant criteria that were identified by a special education teacher at Smith Station High School. The envelopes contained a letter, a flyer, and a knowledge-based pre-test

Week 10: June 14–June 20

Details about the training sessions that were being offered were finalized.

Week 11: June 21–June 27

On June 25, 2009, the training session for parents and professionals in the Wetumpka area was held at the Alabama Parent Education Center. Two sessions were offered to give parents and professionals the choice of which session would fit best in their schedule. The first session was held from 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. Three individuals attended along with the director for the Alabama Parent Training and Information Network for Children with Disabilities. The director did not participate in the study. Three participants who attended were assigned to the intervention group. There was no one assigned to the control group.

As the individuals arrived, they were greeted by the principal investigator. Each individual was given a consent form and the consent form was explained. Everyone was asked to read over the consent form, ask questions, and if they wanted to participate in the study print their name and sign the last page of the document. All individuals gave their consent for participation.

Once consent was obtained, the session began with introductions and a brief overview of the purpose of the study. The codes for the instruments were given to the participants, as well as the Parent Involvement in Education Survey. Instructions for completing the survey were given. After the survey was completed they were taken up and materials for the PowerPoint were passed out. The principal investigator proceeded with the training session and presented the information contained in the PowerPoint, stopping on 3 occasions to allow the participants to take part in the planned activities. The entire presentation took approximately 1-1/2 hours. After the presentation, the participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. The participants

were instructed to place their materials face down on the table. The knowledge-based post-test and the Consumer Satisfaction Questionnaire were passed out and completed which took approximately 25 minutes. After all instruments were completed and taken up, refreshments were served.

The second session was held from 5:00 p.m. –7:00 p.m. The principal investigator and other key personnel arrived at the Alabama Parent Education Center to prepare for the training session. By 5:30, no one had arrived to participate in the session and it was decided by the investigator to leave at that time.

Week 12: June 28–July 4

On June 29, 2009, the training session for students, parents, and teachers from Opelika High School, Smith Station High School, and Wacoochee Junior High School was held at Smith Station Elementary School in Smith Station, AL. Two sessions were offered to give individuals the choice of which session would fit best in their schedule. The first session was held from 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. and the second session was held from 5:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m. Fifteen individuals attended the training session held at Smith Station Elementary School. Nine participants who attended were assigned to the intervention group. Six participants who attended were assigned to the control group. Procedures for conducting the training session offered in the morning and in the afternoon were identical.

As the individuals arrived, they were greeted by the principal investigator. Each individual was told whether or not they would be assigned to the control group or intervention group and then they were given a consent form and the consent form was explained. Everyone was asked to read over the consent form, ask questions, and if they wanted to participate in the

study, print their name and sign the last page of the document. All individuals gave their consent for participation.

As consent was obtained from individuals assigned to the control group, the knowledge-based post-test was handed out along with the codes for all the instruments. Each participant received a code to place in the upper right-hand corner of his or her instruments. This code identified each individual's set of instruments. Instructions for completing the post-test were given. While members of the control group completed their post-test, codes were passed out to participants in the intervention group. As individuals in the control group completed the post-test, the principal investigator or other key personnel took up the tests.

Once all the post-tests were completed by members of the control group, the training session began with introductions and a brief overview of the purpose of the study. The Parent Involvement in Education Survey was passed out to all participants. Instructions for completing the survey were given. After the surveys were completed they were taken up and materials for the PowerPoint were passed out. The principal investigator proceeded with the training session and presented the information contained in the PowerPoint, stopping on 3 occasions to allow the participants to take part in the planned activities. The entire presentation took approximately 1- 1/2 hours. After the presentation, the participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. The participants were instructed to turn over the materials they had received. The knowledge-based post-test and the Consumer Satisfaction Questionnaire were passed out to participants in the intervention group and completed, which took approximately 25 minutes. After all instruments were completed and taken up, refreshments were served.

Research Design and Analysis

A quasi-experimental research design was used to study the effect of training on knowledge about the process of transitioning to post-secondary education in three groups: parents, students, and teachers. Through the use of the parental involvement questionnaire, data were analyzed to compare students' and parents' perceived levels of parent involvement in education. The scores on the knowledge-based pre and post test were analyzed to determine what effect the training had on students', parents', and teachers' knowledge. The consumer satisfaction instrument was used to determine the participants' satisfaction with the training and the presenter.

Research Questions

The following research questions were tested in this study:

1. To what extent do changes in knowledge over time depend upon training?
2. To what extent do changes in knowledge over time differ by group?
3. To what extent do changes in knowledge over time differ by group and level of training?
4. To what extent do students and their parents agree about the level of perceived parent involvement?
5. What are teachers' perceptions about levels of parent involvement?
6. After receiving training, are students, parents, and teachers satisfied with the training they received?

Independent and Dependent Variables

The three dependent variables that were examined in this study were knowledge of the transition process to post-secondary education, perceptions of parent involvement, and training satisfaction. The independent variable was the training session that was provided.

Data Analysis Strategies

To examine changes in knowledge, the researcher conducted a 2 x 3 x (2) mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA). A mixed ANOVA involves a mixture of a between-groups factor and a within-subjects factor. More specifically, the researcher examined if changes in knowledge (a) depended upon training, (b) differed by role [student, parent, and teacher], and (c) differed by role and level of training [training or no training]. In each of these cases the dependent variable was knowledge. In the first case the independent variable was training with two levels (training or no training). In the second case, the independent variable was role with three levels (student, parent, and teacher). In the third case the independent variable was the interaction of role and training.

In order to examine differences in perceived levels of parent involvement, student responses on the parent involvement questionnaire were compared to their parents' responses. These responses were examined by conducting an analysis of variance with classification (parent vs. student) as the independent variable and the responses as the dependent variable. The researcher compared the means of the student scores and the parent scores.

Each student and parent was assigned a code so that the questionnaires could be matched. For example, the code for the first student in the treatment group was S102 and the code for his or her parent was P102. The first number of the code identified the group (1 = Treatment, 2 =

Control) they were assigned to and the last two digits of the code identified the first student or parent for that group.

To examine levels of satisfaction after receiving the training, the researcher conducted a one-way analysis of variance. Levels of satisfaction for students, parents, and teachers were compared. The dependent variable was satisfaction and the independent variable was training.

Summary

This primary purpose of this study was to examine the effects of training on knowledge about the process of transitioning to post-secondary education. A secondary purpose of the study was to examine students', parents', and teachers' perceptions of parent involvement. Data for this study were gathered from scores obtained on a knowledge-based pre-test and post-test, as well as the Parent Involvement in Education Survey, and the satisfaction questionnaire.

The participants for this study were gathered from 3 school systems in Alabama and the Alabama Parent Training and Information Network for Children with Disabilities. Students had to have a learning disability and be in 7th, 8th, 9th, 10, or 11th grade. Parents had to have a child with LD and teachers had to have experience working with students with LD. Quantitative data was examined to determine the effect of the training session that was provided to individuals in the intervention group.

With the gain in knowledge about the process of transitioning to post-secondary education, students can make more informed decisions about college. Parents can use their increase in knowledge to assist their children in planning for college. Teachers can provide information to their students and aid them in planning as well.

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

This study investigated the knowledge of students with learning disabilities, their parent(s), and special education teachers regarding the process of transitioning from high school to post-secondary education. More specifically, the researcher wanted to determine if changes in knowledge depended upon training, differed by group, and differed by group and level of training after the intervention was provided. A second purpose of this study was to examine perceived levels of parent involvement as reported by students, their parents, and special education teachers. A final purpose of this study was to examine students', parents', and teachers' level of satisfaction with the intervention.

The results of these analyses are presented in this chapter. First, the sample and demographic data are presented. Next, the research questions and data analysis will be provided for the pre-tests and post-tests, the Parent Involvement in Education Survey, and the Satisfaction Questionnaire.

Sample and Demographics

There were 31 individuals that participated in this study. The sample was composed of students with learning disabilities from middle schools and high schools in three school systems in Alabama, their parent(s), and special education teachers from middle schools and high schools in three school systems in Alabama. Parents and special education teachers were also recruited through the Alabama Parent Training and Information Network for Children with Disabilities.

All participants were either assigned to the intervention group or the control group. Students and their parents were assigned to the same treatment group for the purposes of examining parent involvement. Both treatment groups received the pre-test before the intervention. The remainder of this section provides a description of demographics for each participant group (students, parents, and teachers), which is followed by a chart representing demographic information by intervention and control group for each participant group.

Ten students with learning disabilities participated in the study with four students in the intervention group and six students in the control group. There were four male participants and six female participants. Of the student participants, four were African American and six were Caucasian.

Students were asked to indicate what grade they were in at the time of the study. Nine out of ten students responded to the question. There were four students (44.4%) in the 8th grade, four students (44.4%) in the 9th grade and one student (11.1%) in the 11th grade. Of the ten student participants, one (10%) attended Chelsea High School, one (10%) attended Opelika High School, three (30%) attended Smith Station High School, two (20%) attended Wacoochee Junior High School, and three (30%) attended Thompson Middle School.

Table 3

Students' Demographic Information

Characteristics	Sample (n = 10)	Intervention (n = 4)	Control (n = 6)
Gender			
Male	4 (40%)	2 (50%)	2 (33.3%)
Female	6 (60%)	2 (50%)	4 (66.7%)
Ethnicity			
African American	4 (40%)	2 (50%)	2 (33.3%)
Caucasian	6 (60%)	2 (50%)	4 (66.7%)
Grade			
8 th grade	4 (44.4%)	1 (25%)	3 (60%)
9 th grade	4 (44.4%)	2 (50%)	2 (40%)
11 th grade	1 (11.1%)	1 (25%)	0
School			
Chelsea High School	1 (10%)	1 (25%)	0
Opelika High School	1 (10%)	0	1 (16.7%)
Smith Station High School	3 (30%)	2 (50%)	1 (16.7%)
Wacoochee Junior High School	2 (20%)	1 (25%)	1 (16.7%)
Thompson Middle School	3 (30%)	0	3 (50%)

Six parents (54.5%) participated in the study as members of the intervention group and there were five parents (45.5%) in the control group for a total of eleven parents (35.5%) that

participated in the study. Of the eleven parent participants, there was one male (9.1%) and ten females (90.9%). Six parents (54.5%) were Caucasian and five parents (45.5%) were African American.

One of the demographic questions asked parents if they had a disability and ten out of eleven parents responded to the question. Four parents (40%) responded yes, indicating that they do have a disability and six parents (60%) responded no. Parents were also asked to indicate their highest level of education. Ten of the eleven parent participants responded to this question. Four (40%) indicated that they were a high school graduate, two parents (20%) had some college, one parent (10%) had an Associate Degree, two parents (20%) indicated that they have a Bachelor's Degree, and one parent (10%) has a Master's Degree.

Table 4

Parents' Demographic Information

Characteristics	Sample (n= 11)	Intervention (n = 6)	Control (n = 5)
Gender			
Male	1 (9.1%)	1 (16.7%)	0
Female	10 (90.9%)	5 (83.3%)	5 (100%)
Ethnicity			
African American	5 (45.5%)	3 (50%)	2 (50%)
Caucasian	6 (54.5%)	3 (50%)	3 (50%)

(table continues)

Table 4 (continued)

Characteristics	Sample (n = 11)	Intervention (n = 6)	Control (n = 5)
Disability			
Yes	4 (40%)	3 (50%)	1 (25%)
No	6 (60%)	3 (50%)	3 (75%)
Highest Level of Education			
High School Graduate	4 (40%)	2 (33.3%)	2 (50%)
Some College	2 (20%)	1 (16.7%)	1 (25%)
Associate's Degree	1 (10%)	1 (16.7%)	0
Bachelor's Degree	2 (20%)	1 (16.7%)	1 (25%)
Master's Degree	1 (10%)	1 (16.7%)	0

There were ten special education teachers (32.3%) that participated in the study; four (40%) in the intervention group and six (60%) in the control group. There were two (20%) male teacher participants and eight (80%) female teacher participants. Nine (90%) of the ten teacher participants were Caucasian and one (10%) was African American.

Teachers were also asked to indicate how many years experience they had as a special education teacher, what their certification was in, and what grades they taught. Two (20%) of the ten teachers had 1–5 years experience, four teachers (40%) had 6–10 years experience, one teacher (10%) had 11–15 years experience, one teacher (10%) had 16–20 years experience, and two teachers (20%) had 21 or more years experience. In response to the certification question, five teachers gave two answers. The first answer that was given by each respondent is used in the

analysis here. Five teachers (50%) indicated that their certification was in Collaborative Teacher, two teachers (20%) responded that their certification was in Mental Retardation, two teachers (20%) had certification in Mild Learning Behavior Disorders, and one teacher (10%) had certification in Special Education. In response to the “grades taught” question, only one teacher (10%) indicated a specific grade, 6th, which he or she teaches. The remaining nine teachers provided a range of grades, which means they may have interpreted the question as “What grades are you certified to teach?” Four teachers (40%) responded 6th– 8th grade, two teachers (20%) responded 6th–12th grade, two teachers (20%) indicated they taught 9th–12th grade, and one teacher (10%) responded p–12th grade.

Table 5

Teachers’ Demographic Information

Characteristics	Sample (n = 10)	Intervention (n = 4)	Control (n = 6)
Gender			
Male	2 (20%)	0	2 (33.3%)
Female	8 (80%)	4 (100%)	4 (66.7%)
Ethnicity			
African American	1 (10%)	0	1 (16.7%)
Caucasian	9 (90%)	4 (100%)	5 (83.3%)

(table continues)

Table 5 (continued)

Characteristics	Sample (n = 10)	Intervention (n = 4)	Control (n = 6)
Years Experience			
1–5	2 (20%)	0	2 (33.3%)
6–10	4 (40%)	3 (75%)	1 (16.7%)
11–15	1 (10%)	0	1 (16.7%)
16–20	1 (10%)	0	1 (16.7%)
21–Over	2 (20%)	1 (25%)	1 (16.7%)
Certification			
Collaborative Teacher	5 (50%)	3 (75%)	2 (33.3%)
Mental Retardation	2 (20%)	0	2 (33.3%)
Mild Learning Behavior Disorders	2 (20%)	0	2 (33.3%)
Special Education	1 (10%)	1 (25%)	0
Grades Taught			
6 th	1 (10%)	0	4 (66.7%)
6 th –8 th	4 (40%)	2 (50%)	0
6 th –12 th	2 (20%)	1 (25%)	1 (16.7%)
9 th –12 th	2 (20%)	0	1 (16.7%)
p–12 th	1 (10%)	1 (25%)	0

Data Analysis Results

To examine changes in knowledge, the researcher conducted a 2 x 3 x (2) mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA). A mixed ANOVA involves a mixture of a between-groups factor and a within-subjects factor. In order to examine perceived levels of parent involvement and satisfaction with the training session a one-way ANOVA was conducted for the parent involvement and the training session. In this section, each research question will be presented along with the corresponding data analysis and results of that analysis. The data analyzed for this section includes scores on the knowledge-based pre- and post- tests, ratings on the Parent Involvement in Education Survey, and ratings on the Satisfaction Questionnaire.

Reliability estimates were conducted for all instruments used in the study. Test-retest estimate of reliability was computed for the knowledge-based pre- and post-test. The value of the coefficient alpha was .85, which indicated satisfactory reliability. Co-efficient alpha, an internal consistency estimate of reliability was computed for the Parent Involvement in Education Survey and the Satisfaction Questionnaire. The reliability for the student version and teacher version of the parent involvement survey was satisfactory as indicated by a .81 and .85 coefficient alpha, respectively. The reliability for the parent version of the parent involvement survey was not satisfactory because the coefficient alpha was .56. The Consumer Satisfaction Questionnaire used in the study had a coefficient alpha of .65, which is not satisfactory.

Research Question 1: To what extent do changes in knowledge over time depend upon training?

To examine the effects of the intervention on knowledge over time, a 2 x 3 x (2) mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The dependent variable was knowledge and was measured with a knowledge-based pre-test and post-test. The independent variable was the training session that was provided and it had two levels, intervention and control. Presented in

Table 6 are the pre-test and post-test means. The means are the average percentage of items on the pre-test and post-test that each group got correct.

Table 6

Average Percent of Items Correct for Students, Parents, and Teachers

Group	Role	N	Pre-test	Post-test
			Mean (<i>SD</i>)	Mean (<i>SD</i>)
Intervention				
	Student	4	.54 (.10)	.63 (.21)
	Parent	6	.62 (.12)	.80 (.06)
	Teacher	4	.77 (.09)	.90 (.03)
	Total	14	.64 (.13)	.78 (.16)
Control				
	Student	6	.58 (.12)	.57 (.11)
	Parent	5	.64 (.09)	.64 (.09)
	Teacher	6	.74 (.09)	.77 (.08)
	Total	17	.65 (.12)	.66 (.12)
Total				
	Student	10	.56 (.11)	.59 (.15)
	Parent	11	.63 (.10)	.73 (.11)
	Teacher	10	.75 (.08)	.82 (.09)
	Total	31	.65 (.12)	.71 (.15)

After examining the results, the researcher found that all participants in the study increased their knowledge over time ($F(5, 25) = 22.819, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .48$). However, a significant interaction effect ($F(5, 25) = 19.380, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .44$), indicated that the overall change was different for the intervention and control groups. The intervention group improved more than the control group. The training session was effective in increasing knowledge about the transition to post-secondary education. The mixed ANOVA results for effect of intervention on knowledge are reported in Table 7. The table reports results for the comparison of participants in the intervention group with participants in the control group.

Table 7

Mixed ANOVA Results for Effect of Intervention on Knowledge (N = 31)

Measure	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	η^2
Within-Subjects Effects			
Knowledge	22.819	< .001	.477
Knowledge x training	19.380	< .001	.437

To follow up on the knowledge by training interaction, a paired-samples t-test was conducted for each group (intervention or control) to determine the level of significance of the change in scores from the pre-test to the post-test. The change in the intervention group from pretest ($M = .64, SD = .13$) to posttest ($M = .78, SD = .16$) was significant, $t = -4.87, p < .001$. The change in the control group from pretest ($M = .65, SD = .12$) to posttest ($M = .66, SD = .12$) was not significant, $t = -.53, p > .05$. The group differences for the paired-samples t-test are reported in Table 8.

Table 8

Paired-Samples t-Test for Group Differences

Treatment Group	M	SD	df	t	P
Intervention	.64	.13			
n = 14	.78	.16	13	-4.87	< .001
Control	.65	.12			
n = 17	.66	.12	16	-.53	.605

Research Question 2: To what extent do changes in knowledge over time differ by role?

To examine the effects of role on knowledge over time, a 2 x 3 x (2) mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The dependent variable was knowledge and was measured with a knowledge-based pre-test and post-test. The independent variable was role with three levels: student, parent, and teacher.

The results indicate that all participants in the study increased their knowledge over time. The within-subjects main effect of knowledge was significant ($F(5, 25) = 22.819, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .48$). The within-subjects interaction effect of knowledge by role was not significant ($F(5, 25) = 1.105, p = .347$, partial $\eta^2 = .081$). Increases in knowledge over time may be dependent upon role (i.e., student, parent, and teacher). The mixed ANOVA results for effect of role on knowledge are reported in Table 9.

Table 9

Mixed ANOVA Results for Effect of Role on Knowledge

Measure	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	η^2
Within-Subjects Effects			
Knowledge	22.819	< .001	.477
Knowledge x role	1.105	.347	.081

Although increases in knowledge were not dependent upon role, the results indicate that there are differences among the roles. An analysis of the data shows that the between-subjects main effect for role was significant ($F(2, 25) = 11.99, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .49$). Members of one role had a greater increase in mean scores. When comparing mean scores on the pre-test and post-test between each role, there was a significant difference in the means between teachers and students and teachers and parents. Teachers showed a greater increase in mean scores in comparison to students and parents.

Research Question 3: To what extent do changes in knowledge over time differ by role and level of training?

To examine the effects of role and level of training on knowledge over time, a $2 \times 3 \times (2)$ mixed analysis of variance was used. The dependent variable was knowledge and was measured with a knowledge-based pre-test and post-test. There were two independent variables. The first independent variable was role with three levels: student, parent, and teacher and the second independent variable was training with two levels: intervention and control.

An examination of the data shows that the within-subjects effects for knowledge by role by training are not significant ($F(5, 25) = .827, p = .449, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .062$). Therefore, changes in knowledge over time may not be dependent upon the interaction of role and level of training.

Research Question 4: To what extent do students and their parents agree about the level of perceived parent involvement?

To examine levels of perceived parent involvement, all students in the intervention and control group and their parents completed the Parent Involvement in Education Survey. In the first part of the survey, individuals rated overall parent involvement, as well as parent involvement in specific activities such as attending Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, participating in IEP meetings, attending events at school, assisting with homework, volunteering at school, assisting with educational decisions, and talking about plans after high school.

The second part of the survey allowed the researcher to capture qualitative data in that all individuals had to respond to open-ended statements about other ways in which parents get involved and barriers they face when trying to get more involved in their child's education. Students reported on their parent's level of involvement in various activities and parents reported on their own level of involvement in the same activities. The surveys were coded so that each student's survey could be matched with his or her parent's survey for data analysis.

To analyze the quantitative data, an overall parent involvement mean was computed for both students and parents. A paired-samples t-test compared the student mean ($M = 4.25, SD = .56$) for parent involvement to the parent mean ($M = 4.57, SD = .25$) for parent involvement. The comparison of mean ratings was not statistically significant, $t(8) = -1.515, p > .05$, which means that parents and students did not differ in their ratings of parent involvement. The mean scores

are very similar which may indicate that students and parents agree about the level of perceived parent involvement. The paired differences for parent involvement are reported in Table 10.

Table 10

Paired-Samples T-Test for Paired Differences for Parent Involvement (N=18)

Pair 1	M	SD	df	T	P
Student-Parent	-.31	.62	8	-1.515	.168

When responding to the open-ended questions, students and parents listed other ways parents try to get involved and obstacles they face when trying to get involved. Students indicated that their parents try to get involved by giving motivation, assisting with homework, attending meetings with teachers, and talking to teachers. Only 6 students answered the question about challenges faced by their parents. One student responded that her mom has a challenge with math. Another student indicated that time to do things was a challenge, while another student indicated that his or her parent had difficulty trying to get in touch with his or her teacher.

When listing other ways they are involved there were a variety of answers given. One parent mentioned keeping the social worker informed. Other answers were centered on preparation and work, mostly. For example, six parents mentioned providing summer lessons, assisting with projects, making sure homework and other assignments were completed, and providing learning materials. Challenges faced when trying to get involved were also listed by parents in the intervention and control group. Some of the challenges they face include getting an educational program to accommodate the disability, trying to get his or her son to study,

understanding the child’s work, understanding the teaching methods, and their own disability. At least three parents mentioned challenges they faced with teachers. These teacher-related challenges include teachers’ reactions to parental concerns, getting teachers on the same page, and the teacher’s ability to manage the students.

Research Question 5: What are teachers’ perceptions about levels of parent involvement?

To examine levels of perceived parent involvement, all teachers in the intervention and control group completed the Parent Involvement in Education Survey. With regard to at least half of their caseload, teacher’s rated levels of parent involvement on various activities.

To analyze the quantitative data, an overall parent involvement mean for teachers was computed ($M = 2.97, SD = .53$) and compared to the average of students and parents ($M = 4.41, SD = .30$) using an independent-samples t-test. The results of the independent-samples t-test were significant, $t = 7.188, p < .001$. When examining the group means for perceived levels of parent involvement, the teacher mean is lower than the student-parent mean. The teachers, who participated in the study, rated the involvement of their students’ parents lower than the parents and students, who participated in the study, rated parent involvement. Group statistics for the parent involvement in education mean are reported in Table 11.

Table 11

Group Statistics for Parent Involvement in Education Mean

	Role	M	SD	N
Parent Involvement in Education Mean	Student/Parent	4.41	.30	9
	Teacher	2.97	.53	10

Like students and parents, teachers were asked to respond to two open-ended questions. When asked what other ways parents are involved in their child's education, teachers simply responded, "They are not involved until their child gets in trouble." When asked what barriers parents face when trying to get involved in their child's education teachers listed many challenges that they believe parents face. The barriers listed by teachers include: their own disabilities, they are single parents, job constraints, lack of transportation and communication skills, educational status, and needs of other children.

Research Question 6: After receiving training, are students, parents, and teachers satisfied with the training they received?

To examine levels of satisfaction, students, parents, and teachers in the intervention group completed the Satisfaction Questionnaire after receiving the training. Satisfaction means for students, parents, and teachers were computed. In order to analyze the quantitative data, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the satisfaction means of students, parents, and teachers. The dependent variable is satisfaction and the independent variable is role.

An examination of the quantitative data shows that the between-groups effects for satisfaction by role were not significant ($F(2, 11) = .350, p = .713$). The group's mean ratings for satisfaction did not vary significantly from each other. Levels of satisfaction for students, parents, and teachers were very similar. It is evident from the data that all participants were satisfied with the training they received since the mean scores are relatively high. Group statistics for the satisfaction means are reported in Table 12.

Table 12

Group Statistics for Satisfaction Mean

	Role	M	SD	N
Training Satisfaction Mean	Student	4.81	.14	4
	Parent	4.83	.24	6
	Teacher	4.92	.12	4
	Total	4.85	.18	14

Participants who completed the satisfaction questionnaire were also asked to respond to four open-ended statements about the most helpful part of the session, how it could have been better, how they will use the information provided and what they would do as a result of the training session.

With regard to the most helpful part of the session, one teacher and one student responded that the handouts were the most helpful and at least 4 participants stated that the most helpful thing was the information presented. Other answers included, “going over stuff about college tests,” “what to do before college,” and “topics that should be addressed with parents in IEP meetings.” Different answers were provided for the second open-ended statement, “The session would have been better if...” One student suggested that the presenter talk slower, 3 parents suggested more interaction, 1 parent suggested less talking, 1 parent suggested handouts such as copies of financial aid forms, and one teacher suggested more time.

When asked how the skills and knowledge learned would be useful, parents responded that they would be able to help his or her child plan for college. One parent responded that the knowledge they learned helped them understand the use of Individualized Education Program

meetings and having their child participate in the meetings. Students responded that they would use the skills “later down the road” or in college and school. Teachers responded that they would use the knowledge to provide to parents and to prepare students for post-secondary education and exploring colleges.

The final open-ended statement was focused on outcomes. One student said he or she would “study harder to do good in life” and another student said they would “be better in college.” Parent responded by indicating that they would provide and go over the material with their child, have their child in the Individualized Education Program meetings, begin the search for a college to serve their child’s needs, and seek more information. Teachers stated that they would pass on the information to those that need it, use it on the job, and use the handouts to help students prepare for college.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the knowledge of students with learning disabilities, their parents, and special education teachers about the process of transitioning to post-secondary education. A secondary purpose was to determine levels of parent involvement in various activities in school.

A 2 x 3 x (2) mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted in order to examine changes in knowledge. Data from scores on the knowledge-based pre- and post- tests were analyzed in order to answer the first, second, and third research questions. With regard to the first research question, “To what extent do changes in knowledge over time depend upon training?”, the researcher discovered that there was a significant interaction effect and the overall change for the intervention group was great than the change for the control group. The training session was effective in increasing knowledge for the participants in this study.

The second research question was “To what extent do changes in knowledge over time differ by role?” The within-subjects interaction effect of knowledge by role was not significant. Although increases in knowledge over time are not dependent upon role, further examination of the data indicated that there were differences among the roles. The between-subjects main effect for role was significant. Teachers’ increase in knowledge was greater than students and parents.

“To what extent do changes in knowledge over time differ by role and level of training?” was the third research question. The data showed that the within-subjects effects for knowledge by role by training are not significant. This means that the interaction of role and level of training did not affect changes in knowledge over time.

An analysis of variance was conducted to examine perceived levels of parent involvement and satisfaction with the training session. Data analyzed included ratings on the Parent Involvement in Education survey and ratings on the Satisfaction Questionnaire.

“To what extent do students and their parents agree about the level of perceived parent involvement?” was the fourth research question. A paired-samples t-test compared the student mean for parent involvement to the parent mean for parent involvement and the comparison was not statistically significant which means that parents and students did not differ in their mean ratings. Since the mean scores are very similar, the researcher presumes that parents and students agree about the level of parent involvement.

The fifth research question was “What are teachers’ perceptions about levels of parent involvement?” The parent involvement mean for teachers was computed and compared to the average mean of students and parents. The results of the independent-samples t-test were significant. Teachers reported lower levels of parent involvement than students and parents did.

The final research question was “After receiving training, are students, parents, and teachers satisfied with the training they received?” The between-groups effects for satisfaction by role were not significant. The mean ratings of satisfaction ranged from 4.8125 to 4.9167. These ratings indicated that all individuals that participated in the training session were satisfied.

The training session provided to participants in the intervention group did increase knowledge about the process of transitioning to post-secondary education. Those that participated in the training session were satisfied with the information provided and the presenter. Students’ and parents’ perceptions of parent involvement were similar. Teachers perceived parent involvement to be very low.

CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the effects of training on knowledge about the process of transitioning from high school to post-secondary education. This was accomplished by examining pre and post-test scores on a knowledge-based test. A secondary purpose of this study was to examine students', parents', and teachers' perceptions about levels of parent involvement. Parent involvement was measured using a survey developed by the principal investigator. The final purpose of this study was to examine students', parents', and teachers' level of satisfaction with the intervention. Satisfaction was measured using a questionnaire that was completed after individuals in the intervention group participated in the training session.

There were 31 individuals who participated in the study. Students with learning disabilities who attended middle schools and high schools in 3 school systems in Alabama, their parents, and special education teachers participated in the study. Individuals associated with the Alabama Network for Children with Disabilities also participated in the study. There were 14 participants in the intervention group and 17 participants in the control group. The independent variables included in this study were *training* (intervention and control), and *role* (student, parent, teacher). Presented in this chapter is a discussion of the statistically significant results, conclusions, limitations and recommendations for further research.

Discussion of Findings

The results for the research questions tested in this study were presented in the previous chapter. By testing the research questions, the principal investigator was able to examine whether there were statistically significant differences in *knowledge* about the process of transitioning to post-secondary education by *training* (intervention and control) and by *role* (student, parent, teacher). Also examined were differences in *parental involvement* by role and *satisfaction* with the training session by role.

Scores from the pre-tests and post-tests were analyzed for research questions 1, 2, and 3. To analyze the quantitative data, mixed analysis of variance was used. Scores on the Parent Involvement Survey were evaluated for research questions 4 and 5. The principal investigator used Paired Samples T-test to compare student and parent means of parent involvement and Independent Samples T-test to compare teacher means to student and parent means of parent involvement. To examine levels of satisfaction for the final research question, a one-way Analysis of Variance was conducted.

Data Analysis Results

Knowledge

The results of this study related to knowledge of the process of transitioning to post-secondary education indicated that all participants in the study increased their knowledge over time. A significant interaction effect indicated that the overall change for the intervention group (N = 14) and the control group (N = 17) was different. The change in the intervention group from pretest ($M = .64$, $SD = .13$) to posttest ($M = .78$, $SD = .16$) was statistically significant, $t = -4.87$, $p < .001$. The change in the control group from pretest ($M = .65$, $SD = .12$) to posttest ($M = .66$,

$SD = .12$) was not statically significant, $t = -.53$, $p > .05$. The means are the average percentage of items on the pre-test and post-test that each group got correct.

The intervention group correctly answered an average of 64% of the items on the knowledge-based instrument correct before the intervention and an average of 78% of the items correct after participating in the training session. The change for the control group was not as great. The control group correctly answered an average of 65% of the items correct on the pre-test and only 66% percent correct on the post-test. This means that the training session that was provided to the intervention group had an effect on the difference in scores on the pre-test and the post-test.

Lack of knowledge and role confusion has been cited many times in research as a barrier to parent involvement (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1997; Lovitt & Cushing, 1999). Results from a study conducted by Lovitt in 1995 showed that some parents did not know what an Individualized Education Program or an Individualized Transition Plan was. If parents and other individuals do not have an understanding of the transition process and services, such as post-secondary education, that are available after high school, they cannot participate in the process meaningfully. It is important that students, parents, and professionals be provided with information about the transition process and post-secondary education options so that they may participate to the greatest extent possible. According to Cameto (2005), it is the school's responsibility to provide parents with information about post-secondary options and services available for students with disabilities. One way to provide information to parents and other individuals is through training sessions or seminars. As evidenced by the results of this study, such sessions can increase parents' and students' knowledge of the process.

Parent Involvement

Each student who participated in the study and his or her parent completed the Parent Involvement in Education Survey. The student and parent surveys were coded to be matched so that student mean rating of parent involvement could be compared to parent mean rating of parent involvement. Students and parents rated overall parent involvement, as well as involvement in specific activities in the first part of the survey and completed two open-ended questions in the second part of the survey.

A paired-samples t-test compared the student mean ($M = 4.25$, $SD = .56$) to the parent mean ($M = 4.57$, $SD = .25$). The comparison of mean ratings was not statistically significant, $t(8) = -1.515$, $p = .168$, which means that parents and students did not differ in their ratings of parent involvement. The mean scores are very similar which may indicate that students and parents agree about the level of perceived parent involvement. Mean scores between 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree) indicate high levels of agreement with the positive statements about parent involvement. The high levels of involvement reported by students and their parents are not surprising because those parents that agreed to participate in the study were interested in the information being provided and were more likely to be involved in their child's education.

Teacher perceptions of parent involvement were also reported and compared to the average of students and parents. The results of the independent-samples t-test were significant, $t = 7.188$, $p < .001$, which indicated that teachers perceive that parents are less involved than parents report they are. It is important to note that the teachers who participated in the study rated the involvement of parents of the students on their caseload, not the parents of the students who participated in the study.

Eight (80%) out of ten teachers who participated in the study indicated that the majority of the parents of their students were not involved in their child's education. Six of the eight (75%) teachers indicated that the majority of their parents did not attend Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and did not talk to them about their child's progress at school. The fact that teachers rate parent involvement lower than parents rate their involvement could be attributed to many things. Teachers listed many challenges that they believe parents face when trying to get involved in their child's education. Some of these challenges include: their own disabilities, they are single parents, job constraints, lack of transportation and communication skills, educational status, and needs of other children. Many of these same barriers are mentioned in the literature also (Deslandes, Potvin, & Leclerc, 1999; Stone, 2006; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1997).

Training Satisfaction

Results of the study related to training satisfaction indicate that participants in the intervention group were satisfied with the training session. The mean ratings on the satisfaction questionnaire were similar for all three groups. Teachers ($M = 4.92$, $SD = .12$) had the highest mean followed by parents ($M = 4.83$, $SD = .24$) and students ($M = 4.81$, $SD = .14$) respectively. The high mean scores indicated that all participants were satisfied with the training and the presenter.

Thirteen (93%) of the fourteen participants strongly agreed that they had a better understanding of the information that was presented. Eleven participants strongly agreed that the information was relevant and could be applied to their situation, two students agreed that the information was relevant and could be applied to their situation, and one participant was neutral

with regard to relevance. If participants find the information relevant to their situation, they may be more satisfied with the training session they are attending.

After rating the training session and the presenter, participants were asked to respond to 4 open-ended statements. These statements allowed the participants to provide additional comments about the most helpful part of the session, how it could have been better, how they will use the information provided and what they would do as a result of the training session. There were a variety of answers provided for each of the statements.

With regard to the most helpful part of the session, one teacher and one student responded that the handouts were the most helpful and at least 4 participants stated that the most helpful thing was the information presented. Other answers included, “going over stuff about college tests,” “what to do before college,” and “topics that should be addressed with parents in IEP meetings.” It was interesting to see how the answers varied with the different roles (i.e., student, parent, and teacher). When teachers responded to the question they were taking into account how the information they learned could be passed on to their students or how it might impact their parents. Parents were thinking about how they could help their child and answers were specific to each parent’s own situation.

Participants were asked to provide ways in which the session could have been better. This information is useful to the presenter so that she can revise the presentation to be more beneficial for the participants. One student suggested that the presenter talk slower, 3 parents suggested more interaction, 1 parent suggested less talking, 1 parent suggested handouts such as copies of financial aid forms, and one teacher suggested more time. The researcher believes that the various comments are indicative of the various learning styles. Some learn by listening, while others learn by doing. Although the presenter had 2 activities planned, it is evident from the

comments, that the participants would have enjoyed more interaction with each other and the presenter.

When parents responded to the statement of how the knowledge and skills provided during the training session would be used, the most common answer was to help his or her child plan for college. One parent responded that the knowledge he or she learned helped them understand the use of Individualized Education Program meetings and having their child participate in the meetings. Students responded that they would use the skills “later down the road” or in college and school. Students or young adults often do not see the need for planning, which is evident in the answers provided here. Teachers responded that they would provide parents with the knowledge and information they gained from the training session and use the knowledge to prepare students for post-secondary education and exploring colleges. Teachers see that there is a use for the information provided, so it would be important to provide the information to more teachers so they too can pass it on.

The final open-ended statement was focused on outcomes. Participants were asked to identify what they plan to do as a result of the training session. Many of the answers provided were vague and generic. For example, one student said he or she would “study harder to do good in life” and another student said they would “be better in college.” In general, parents and teachers were more specific. Some of the parents responded that they would provide and go over the material with their child, have their child in the Individualized Education Program meetings, begin the search for a college to serve their child’s needs, and seek more information. Teachers stated that they would pass on the information to those that need it, use it on the job, and use the handouts to help students prepare for college. It is evident from this qualitative data that all the participants had an idea of something they were going to do as a result of the information they

received. Although the students' answers were not as specific as the parents and teachers, they were still able to provide a course of action.

Conclusions

Preparing students for post-secondary education is a mission of many schools and organizations today. Even legislation strives to provide standards by which all students, with and without disabilities, are educated to the highest standard and prepared for training or education after high school. It is necessary to provide parents and other individuals with the information they need so they can be involved in preparing their young adults for post-secondary education. This study provided a training session for students, parents, and teachers as a means for providing the information they need to understand the process of transitioning to post-secondary education after high school.

The data gathered from the pre-tests and post-tests show that all participants in the study improved in their knowledge gained. This was shown by the difference in the mean average of items correct on the pre-test and post-test. Further, the results indicated that the intervention group improved more than the control group and the improvement was statistically significant for the intervention group. It appears that the significant increase in knowledge for the intervention group was due to the intervention provided. The training session provided during this study appeared to be effective in increasing knowledge about transitioning to post-secondary education. Other sessions like it could be effective in increasing knowledge about other transition related topics as well. This type of medium could be use for professional development for teachers or to provide school information to parents and students.

Parent involvement was examined with the Parent Involvement in Education survey. Students and parents rated overall parent involvement and involvement in specific activities.

Students and parents rated their agreement or disagreement with the statement provided. Strongly agree (5) was the highest rating and strongly disagree (1) was the lowest rating.

The results showed that parents and their children did not differ in their ratings of parent involvement. Although the student mean ($M = 4.25, SD = .56$) was lower than the parent mean ($M = 4.57, SD = .25$), each parent-student pair agreed about the level of parent involvement because the means were very similar. While parents and their children reported high levels of parent involvement, teachers that participated in the study rated parent involvement very low ($M = 2.97, SD = .53$). This difference in the average means was statistically significant. It is evident that the parents who attended the training session are likely more involved in their child's education because of their willingness to participate in the study, hence their reported higher level of parent involvement.

The results of this study showed that training sessions such as the one conducted in this study can be effective. The participants increased their knowledge about the process of transitioning to post-secondary education. This increased knowledge can lead to more parent involvement which ultimately impacts a child in a positive manner. When students, parents, and teachers are equipped with the information they need, they can be effective agents in the planning process.

Limitations

When interpreting the results of this study, one must consider the limitations of the study. First, one of the major limitations of the study is the ability to generalize the results to other populations. Each of the student participants in this study had a diagnosis of a learning disability. Although the participants with learning disabilities (LD) make up the largest disability category in special education, they are from only one of the thirteen categories in which students can

qualify for special education according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. It would not be feasible to assume students with a hearing impairment would perform the same way that the students with LD did. In other words, it is not possible to generalize the results to individuals in the other disability categories.

The small sample size in this study is another limitation that must be considered when generalizing the results to other populations. There were had 31 participants in this study, which included 10 students, 11 parents, and 10 teachers from three school systems and one non-profit organization in Alabama. It is not appropriate to assume that a larger sample size would yield the same results as the participants in this study.

Another limitation that must be considered is the location from which the sample was drawn and the makeup of the sample. The participants in the study were from three school systems in Alabama and one non-profit organization. One of the school systems is a large school system located in North Central Alabama, while the other two systems are smaller and are located in south east Alabama. Originally, the participants who were selected were from one school system. Within that school system, participants were comparable in the respect that they came from schools that were similar in enrollment and in the percentage of students that received free and reduced lunch. With the addition of the two school systems and the parent organization in Wetumpka, the researcher could not determine if the participants were similar.

A final limitation of the study is the Parent Involvement in Education Survey, which requires self-report measures. The survey required the parents to indicate their level of parent involvement while their child rated their parent's level of parent involvement. Participants were supposed to answer honestly about the level of perceived parent involvement. As with all self-report measures, there is some possibility that students and parents were not completely honest

when they completed the survey. When the survey was developed, the researcher included many statements about ways parents could be involved in their child's education. However, there may have been other ways that parents were involved that were not captured in the survey.

Future Research

Presented in this section are recommendations for further research. The first recommendation is to continue to investigate the effects of an intervention, such as a training session, on knowledge about the process of transitioning to post-secondary education. It is difficult to generalize the results of the current study because the sample was small and it was drawn from a few places. Therefore, this type of research should be conducted in other school systems around the state of Alabama, as well as, in other states to individuals with learning disabilities, their parents, and their teachers, so that the results could be generalized.

The researcher also recommends providing the training session and information in a different format. With the abundance of technology today and the mass of online courses, an online format of the training session that was provided during the intervention might be beneficial to some. The training session could be accessed through the Alabama State Department of Education's website. An online format may allow more individuals to participate because of the flexibility it allows with scheduling. Another type of medium similar to books on tape would allow more individuals to receive the information.

One of the pitfalls of the current study is the inability to determine the impact of the intervention on actual outcomes. The researcher provided materials during the intervention that could be used to aid in the process of transitioning to post-secondary education. However, the researcher is not sure if these materials were used or will be used in the future. It is recommended that a future study be conducted to determine whether materials provided during

the training session were used and whether student participants actually explored and applied to post-secondary education institutions. If students were accepted their thoughts about their experience in college as it relates to the information they received during the training session would provide additional insight.

Another recommendation is to provide the same type of intervention to students with other disabilities, their parents, and their teachers. For example, it would be interesting to see if a training session which provided information about transitioning to the world of work would have the same effect on individuals with intellectual disabilities or another disability, their parents, and their teachers. This would be one way to increase knowledge about the transition process and opportunities that are available after high school for individuals with disabilities. The ultimate goal would be to increase knowledge which would hopefully increase parent involvement.

Finally, the principal investigator recommends continuing to study parent involvement for individuals with and without disabilities. Surveying parents and students when they begin middle school (i.e., 6th grade) and tracking them throughout high school would allow one to investigate the theory that parent involvement decreases as children get older. This type of study would also allow one to compare levels of perceived parent involvement for those with and without disabilities.

Implications for Practice

There are many things to be learned from the results of this study and they have direct implications for professionals and how they might best educate students and parents. From this study, it is evident that the intervention provided was effective in increasing knowledge about the process of transitioning to post-secondary education. Teachers and administrators should provide informational sessions to parents of students with disabilities in hopes of increasing knowledge

and awareness. These sessions should cover a variety of topics related to special education such as, getting to know the disability and its affects on the child, Individualized Education Program meetings, resources available for academic success and success after high school, and disability-specific resources. This is a short list of the many topics that could be covered. It is also important that the topics being covered are relevant to the participants. Many of the participants in the current study found the information to be relevant; consequently participation in the study was meaningful.

The researcher also learned from the participants in the study that the handouts were appreciated and were going to be helpful in planning. The teachers commented that they would use the handouts to help their students prepare for the transition to college. One teacher even commented that she was going to pass on the handouts to a general education teacher to use. Materials such as charts and planning guides can be useful tools for students and their parents during the transition process. Teachers need to find planning tools that are available, learn how to use them, and teach their students how to use them. This will only enable students to become more organized and methodic in their planning for life after high school. Parents should also be familiar with these planning tools because the use of these tools will allow parents to become more involved in the process and their child's education.

Summary

The scope of transition planning has expanded and postsecondary education and training are emphasized more (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). With a shift to a "results-oriented" mindset, more and more students with learning disabilities are attending some form of post-secondary education. According to the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (2005), 23% of all students with a learning disability now attend a 2-year

college and 11% attend a 4-year college. Although the rate of participation has increased over the years, when compared to their peers without disabilities, these numbers are low.

Many consider a learning disability (LD) to be a mild disability, and therefore, believe that transition planning is not necessary for those who have LD. That is not true. Transition planning is still important because post-secondary education is a goal of many students with LD. With appropriate planning that goal is attainable. For planning to be effective, it is important to include parents, as well as other key individuals, such as the student's teachers, the high school counselor, the vocational rehabilitation counselor, and a postsecondary admissions counselor (Mellard, 2005). Every person participating in the transition planning process must collaborate and share responsibility in the decision making process. In order to be effective team members, students, parents, and teachers must be equipped with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about the process of transitioning to post-secondary education.

The results from this study show the importance of providing information about college and the preparation process. The training session was effective in increasing the intervention group's knowledge about transitioning from high school to post-secondary education. This is evident from the scores on the knowledge-based pre-tests and post-tests. Informing students, parents, and teachers about the process of preparing for and transitioning to post-secondary education allows them to become more empowered and more involved in the transition process. This increased empowerment and involvement can lead to the successful transition to a post-secondary institution which may ultimately increase the number of students enrolled in 2-year and 4-year colleges.

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APPENDIX 1

TRAINING HANDOUTS: COLLEGE EXPLORATION, POST-SCHOOL GOALS–PARENTS,
POST-SCHOOL GOALS–STUDENTS, POST-SCHOOL GOALS–TEACHERS, WHAT’S
HIGH SCHOOL LIKE, POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

College Exploration

List the names of all of the colleges you would like to explore.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Beginning the search

Name of college	Address and phone number of admissions office	Website address
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Materials adapted from Dare to Dream for Adults, 2004, Florida Department of Education

Learning about the Schools

Name of College: _____

Feature of College	What I Learned	Good or Bad for me because
<i>Location</i>		
Where is the campus located?		
Is campus housing available?		
Can I live off-campus? Are there apartments or other housing options near campus?		
Is there a transit service available on campus?		
Is the campus is a large city or small town?		
<i>Environment</i>		
Are class sizes large?		
Are their clubs and organizations on campus I can join?		
Are there sports activities on campus?		
<i>Admissions</i>		
Does the school require and ACT or SAT? If so, what score?		
Does the school require a minimum high school grade point average?		

Feature of College	What I Learned	Good or Bad for me because
Does the school require specific high school course work?		
Is there an application I must complete?		
Does the school require letters of recommendation?		
Are there other admissions requirements?		
<i>Services</i>		
Is there a program for students with disabilities?		
Who is the director of services for the program for students with disabilities?		
What kind of documentation is required by the college?		
How current must the documentation be?		
Do they require assessments or testing? If so, what kind?		
Is tutoring available?		
Is there a peer support group for students with disabilities?		
<i>Career</i>		
Does the school offer a program or major in my career choice?		
How long does it take to complete the program or degree?		

Materials adapted from Dare to Dream for Adults, 2004, Florida Department of Education

Feature of College	What I Learned	Good or Bad for me because
What are requirements for admission to the program of my choice?		
<i>Costs and Fees</i>		
What is the cost to attend? In-state and out of state if necessary.		
Does the school have a financial aid office? Who do I contact?		
What financial aid is available for me?		
Are scholarships available?		
Are there work-study jobs available?		
Other Features Important to Me		

Applying for College

List the names of the colleges you would like to apply to.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Getting the Application

Name of School	I already have an application	I can get an application on the website	I need to request an application
1.			
2.			
3.			

Materials adapted from Dare to Dream for Adults, 2004, Florida Department of Education

Completing the Application

Your complete name	
Your home address	
Your telephone number	
Your email address	
Names of parents or guardians	
Your social security number	
Names and phone numbers of people to contact in case of emergency	
The city and state you were born	
The city and state you have lived for the past year	
Your ethnicity	
What your parents do for a living	
Your parents educational levels	

Materials adapted from Dare to Dream for Adults, 2004, Florida Department of Education

Where you went to high school	
The date you graduated from high school and your grade point average	
Dates you took the ACT or SAT and the score	
Awards you received while in high school	
Extracurricular activities you were involved in (clubs and sports)	
When you expect to start college	
What your major will be	
Where you plan to live when you are in school	
Other information	

Name of School	Completed & submitted application/Date	I have gotten a response about my application	I was accepted
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Post-School Goals–Parents

Directions: Write what you think your child’s goals for life after high school are for each of the following areas.

Work/Career

Training/School

Living Arrangements

Post-School Goals—Students

Directions: Write what your goals for life after high school are for each of the following areas.

Work/Career

Training/School

Living Arrangements

Post-School Goals—Teachers

Directions: If you can remember, write what your goals for life after high school were when you were.

Work/Career

Training/School

Living Arrangements

What's High School Like?

Classes



Instructors



Studying



Testing/Grades



Welcome

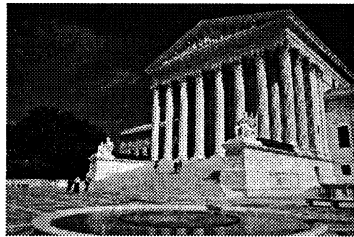
**Transition to Postsecondary
Education**

**Shelley R. Henthorne
Auburn University**

Laws

- **High School**

- Rights covered under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act



- **Post-secondary**

- Rights covered under American with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Disability Services

- **High School**

- Districts are required to identify students with disabilities
- Students receive special education and related services
- Individually designed instruction, modifications, and accommodations

- **Post-secondary**

- Students responsible for self-identifying and providing documentation of disability
- Formal special education services are not available
- Accommodations provide equal access and participation

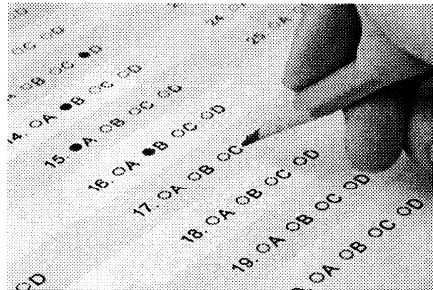
Introduction

- Who am I?
- Purpose of study
- Get to know you
- Agenda for today

Today's Agenda

- Introduction
- Parent Involvement in Education Survey
- What is Transition?
- Parent, Student, and Teacher Roles
- Differences in High School and Post Secondary Education
- Preparation During High School
- Wrap-up

Parent Involvement Survey



What is Transition Planning?

Activity

Post-school Goals

What is Transition?

- Transition services is a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability and must be
 - Results-oriented
 - Focused on academic and functional achievement
 - Facilitate movement from school to post-school activities
 - Based on child's needs

IDEA 2004

Transition Services

- Services must include
 - Instruction, related services, community experiences, employment and other post-school living objectives
 - Post-school goals related to training, education, employment, and independent living skills
 - Services to reach goals

IDEA 2004

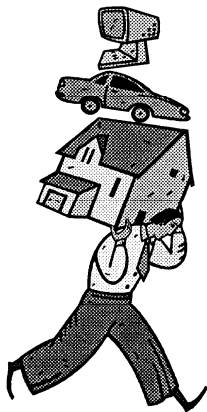
Transition Planning

- Planning for life after high school
- Involves students, parents, and school personnel
- Includes
 - Assessment
 - Setting transition goals
 - Selecting course of study and diploma/exit option
 - Services and agency linkages

Activity Review

Post-school Goals

Student, Parent, and Teacher
Responsibilities



Students

- Participate in development of IEP beginning at age 16
- Learn to identify strengths and needs
- Help select graduation option and determine courses of study
- Explore career interests and options
- Discuss and review IEP with team members

Parents

- Be an advocate
- Learn about post-high school options and resources
- Discuss future plans with your child
- Ensure academic advisement is provided for you child
- Ensure the IEP addresses all transition goals
- Monitor your child's progress on IEP goals

Teachers/Schools

- Provide instruction
- Learn about post-high school options and resources
- Encourage the student's active participation in IEP development and meeting
- Encourage students to communicate with school personnel

Activity

What's High School Like?

Differences in High School and Post Secondary Education

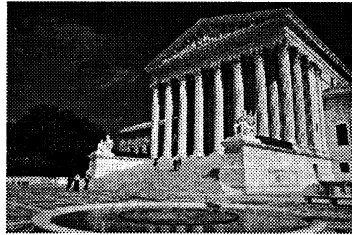
Differences in High School and Post Secondary Education

- Laws
- Disability documentation
- Classes
- Instructors
- Studying
- Testing
- Grades

Laws

● High School

- Rights covered under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act



● Post-secondary

- Rights covered under American with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Disability Services

● High School

- Districts are required to identify students with disabilities
- Students receive special education and related services
- Individually designed instruction, modifications, and accommodations

● Post-secondary

- Students responsible for self-identifying and providing documentation of disability
- Formal special education services are not available
- Accommodations provide equal access and participation

Classes

● High School

- Schedule determined by school
- Typically 36 weeks long
- Attendance mandatory and monitored
- No more than 30- 35 students
- Textbooks provided
- Modifications and accommodations offered in IEP

● Post-secondary

- Must manage own time and schedules
- Academic year divided into semesters or quarters
- Attendance policy varies
- Core classes may have more than 100 students
- Textbooks cost money
- Modifications and accommodations that change course outcomes are not offered

Instructors

● High School

- Grade and check completed work
- Often provide reminders
- May be available before, during, or after class
- Provide students with missed information during absence
- Write information on board
- Teach knowledge and facts

● Post-secondary

- Assume homework is done
- May not provide reminders
- Usually available only during class and office hours
- Expect students to get information from classmates
- May lecture nonstop
- Expect students to think independently

Studying

● High School

- Study time outside of class may be 1-3 hours per week (Example)
- Teachers may review class notes and materials
- Expected to read short assignments that are discussed and retaught

● Post-secondary

- Usually spend 2-3 hours outside of class studying for each hour in class (Example)
- Students responsible for reviewing class notes
- Large amounts of reading; may not be directly addressed in class

Testing

● High School

- Frequent with small amounts of material on tests
- Make-up tests often available
- Test dates can be arranged to avoid conflicts
- Frequently conducts review session

● Post-secondary

- Usually 2-3 tests per semester or quarter; covers large amounts of material
- Make-up tests are seldom and option and must be requested
- Tests scheduled without regard to other demands
- Rarely offer review sessions

Grades

● High School

- Given for most assigned work
- Overall grade consists of homework, tests, etc.
- Extra credit options usually available
- First test grade often does not adversely affect overall grade
- Graduation requirements may be met with a grade of D or higher

● Post-secondary

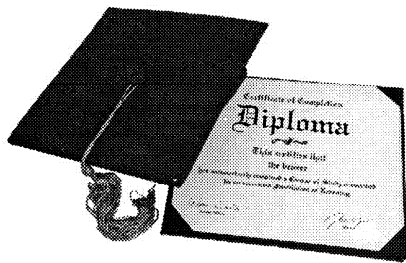
- May not provide grades for all assignments
- Overall grade consists of tests and papers usually
- Usually do not offer extra-credit
- First test is often a “wake-up” call
- Graduation requirements usually met with grade point average

Preparation for Post-secondary Education



Preparation

- Diploma Options
- Courses of Study
- College Exploration
 - Selecting a college
 - Applying for college
 - Financial aid
 - Disability programs and support services



Diploma Options and Courses of Study

Diploma Option/Courses of Study (8th and 9th Grades)

- In Alabama, must be selected in the **8th grade** IEP team meeting
- Three Diploma/Exit Options

Alabama High School Diploma (AHSD)

- Accepted at all 4 year colleges and universities and 2 year colleges
- Alabama High School Diploma (with or without endorsements)
 - Advanced academic endorsement (1st Choice)
 - Career technical endorsement
 - Advanced career technical endorsement
 - Credit based endorsement

Courses

- Courses to take will be dictated by the high school diploma chosen
- Alabama High School Diploma (AHSD)
 - Must pass 4 credits of (hand-out)
 - Math
 - Science
 - English
 - Social Studies

College Exploration

Selecting a College (Grades 10- 11)

- Talk to others
- Visit a variety of institutions
 - Get organized
 - Write down information you obtain about each institution
 - Internet search
 - Campus visits

Selecting a College (cont.)

- Consider the location, environment, admissions requirements, available services, and relationship to your chosen career
- Choose colleges you would like to apply to

Applying for College (Grades 11- 12)

- Get organized
 - Obtain application for admission
 - Complete the application
 - Mail application with fee
 - Wait for response
- If you do not get accepted, find out why

Financial Aid

Designed to help individuals met their educational expenses when their own resources are not sufficient.



Financial Aid (cont.)

- Four types of aid available
 - Grants
 - Loans
 - Work-study
 - Scholarships
- Federal government contributes to grants, loans, and work-study

Financial Aid (cont.)

- Grants- money that generally does not have to be paid back
- Loans- must be repaid usually with interest over time
- Work-study- employment that enables a student to earn money toward school costs during enrollment
- Scholarships- awards based on academic achievement, background, or other criteria

Federal Financial Aid

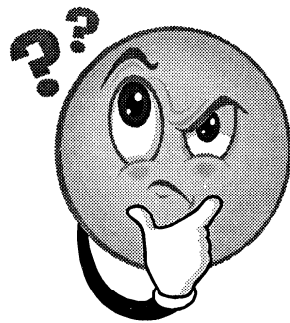
- Most federal financial aid is based on the financial need of the student and his or her family
- Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA)
 - No cost to complete or process the application
 - Requires tax information from previous year
 - Example- Filing FAFSA for the 2009- 2010 academic year requires 2008 tax information

Other Types of Financial Aid

- Contact your high school counselor
- Contact the financial aid office of the institution of your choice
- Other Resources
 - State Aid
 - Post-secondary Institution
 - Private Scholarships
 - Internet Searches

Disability Programs and Support Services

- Must self-identify and request accommodations
- Must provide recent documentation of disability
- Check with programs at institutions to determine what services they offer.



Questions
or
Comments?

Post-test
and
Consumer Satisfaction

Thank you for
participating!

APPENDIX 2

INSTRUMENTS — KNOWLEDGE-BASED PRE-TEST, KNOWLEDGE-BASED
POST-TEST, PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION SURVEY FOR
PARENTS, PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION SURVEY FOR
STUDENTS, PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION SURVEY FOR
TEACHERS, CONSUMER SATISFACTION QUESTIONNAIRE

**Understanding the Transition to Postsecondary Education
(Pre-Test)**

Directions:

1. Do not write your name on the Pre-Test.
2. Read each question and circle the appropriate answer.

Questions

1. Transition planning involves
 - a. Students
 - b. parents
 - c. school personnel
 - d. all of the above

2. In high school, a student's rights related to special education services are covered under
 - a. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
 - b. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
 - c. Americans with Disabilities Act
 - d. The Privacy Act

3. In post-secondary education, how many hours should students usually spend outside of class studying?
 - a. 0 hours
 - b. 2- 3 hours
 - c. 4- 5 hours
 - d. 6- 7 hours

4. In what grade must the diploma option and course of study be selected by the IEP team in Alabama?
 - a. 8th grade
 - b. 9th grade
 - c. 10th grade
 - d. 11th grade

5. The Alabama High School Diploma is accepted at
 - a. only the 2 year colleges
 - b. only the 4 year colleges
 - c. only the technical schools
 - d. all 2 year and 4 year colleges

6. Which Alabama High School Diploma is the first choice for all students?
 - a. the Alabama Occupational Diploma
 - b. the Graduation Certificate
 - c. the Alabama High School Diploma with Advanced Academic Endorsement
 - d. the Alabama High School Diploma with Career Technical Endorsement

7. Which of the following types of financial aid does the Federal government contribute to?
(Circle all that apply)
 - a. grants
 - b. loans
 - c. work-study
 - d. scholarships

8. Which of the following types of financial aid must be paid back over time usually with interest?
 - a. grants
 - b. loans
 - c. work-study
 - d. scholarships

9. Whose main responsibility is it to provide instruction to students with disabilities?
 - a. parents
 - b. teachers
 - c. students
 - d. all of the above

10. In high school, classes usually contain no more than 30- 35 students, but in post-secondary education, many core classes usually contain
 - a. 25- 50 students
 - b. 50- 75 students
 - c. 75- 100 students
 - d. 100 or more students

11. Which application should you complete in order to receive Federal financial aid?
 - a. Institution Financial Aid Application
 - b. Free Application for Student Aid
 - c. State Aid Application
 - d. Student Aid Application

12. When selecting a college, students should consider
 - a. location
 - b. admissions requirements
 - c. available services
 - d. all of the above

13. In what grade should you begin applying for admission to college?
- 8th grade
 - 9th grade
 - 10th grade
 - 11th grade
14. In high school instructors will write information on the board, but in post-secondary education, instructors usually do what non-stop?
- Give handouts
 - Lecture
 - Show movies
 - All of the above
15. In post-secondary education, how many tests do you usually have per semester?
- 0
 - 2- 3
 - 4- 5
 - 5- 6
16. Who should a student contact at their high school about financial aid for college?
- the principal
 - the math teacher
 - the custodian
 - the school counselor
17. Whose needs are transition services based on?
- the family
 - the special education teacher
 - the general education teacher
 - the student
18. What is the correct process for applying for admission to college?
- complete the application, mail the application, wait for the response, obtain the application
 - wait for the response, obtain the application, mail the application, complete the application
 - obtain the application, complete the application, mail the application, wait for the response
 - mail the application, wait for the response, obtain the application, complete the application
19. A student's overall grade in post-secondary education is usually made up of
- tests and papers
 - tests, papers, and homework
 - tests, papers, class work, and homework
 - none of the above

20. Transition services is a coordinated set of activities that should be focused only on academic achievement T F
21. The Alabama High School Diploma only requires 3 credits each in math, science, English, and social studies T F
22. In post-secondary education, students are responsible for self-identifying and providing documentation of their disability T F
23. Students should choose a college based on the school that their friends go to..... T F
24. Students, parents, and teachers each have responsibilities in the transition process..... T F
25. Transition goals should be developed before transition assessments are conducted T F
26. Most Federal financial aid is based on the financial need of the student and his or her family T F
27. Secondary schools must provide transition services to students that enable them to reach their post-school goals..... T F
28. Grants are awards based on academic achievement, background, or other criteria T F
29. Students should begin participating in the development of their IEP at age 18 T F
30. Parents should never discuss with their children their plans for the future T F
31. Classes in post-secondary education are typically large than classes in high school T F

**Understanding the Transition to Postsecondary Education
(Post-Test)**

Directions:

3. Do not write your name on the test.
4. Read each question and circle the appropriate answer.
5. Place your pre-test face down once you have completed it.
6. Place your pencil on the table.

Questions

1. In high school, a student's rights related to special education services are covered under
 - a. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
 - b. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
 - c. Americans with Disabilities Act
 - d. The Privacy Act
2. What is the correct process for applying for admission to college?
 - a. complete the application, mail the application, wait for the response, obtain the application
 - b. wait for the response, obtain the application, mail the application, complete the application
 - c. obtain the application, complete the application, mail the application, wait for the response
 - d. mail the application, wait for the response, obtain the application, complete the application
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 - a. Students
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 - a. (Circle all that apply)
 - b. grants
 - c. loans
 - d. work-study
 - e. scholarships

9. Which of the following types of financial aid must be paid back over time usually with interest?
 - a. grants
 - b. loans
 - c. work-study
 - d. scholarships

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 - b. admissions requirements
 - c. available services
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 - 75- 100 students
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 - State Aid Application
 - Student Aid Application
14. In what grade should you begin applying for admission to college?
- 8th grade
 - 9th grade
 - 10th grade
 - 11th grade
15. Whose needs are transition services based on?
- the family
 - the special education teacher
 - the general education teacher
 - the student
16. In high school instructors will write information on the board, but in post-secondary education, instructors usually do what non-stop?
- Give handouts
 - Lecture
 - Show movies
 - All of the above
17. In post-secondary education, how many tests do you usually have per semester?
- 0
 - 2- 3
 - 4- 5
 - 5- 6
18. Who should a student contact at their high school about financial aid for college?
- the principal
 - the math teacher
 - the custodian
 - the school counselor

19. A student's overall grade in post-secondary education is usually made up of
- tests and papers
 - tests, papers, and homework
 - tests, papers, class work, and homework
 - none of the above
20. Grants are awards based on academic achievement, background, or other criteria T F
21. The Alabama High School Diploma only requires 3 credits each in math, science, English, and social studies T F
22. Students, parents, and teachers each have responsibilities in the transition process T F
23. In post-secondary education, students are responsible for self-identifying and providing documentation of their disability T F
24. Students should choose a college based on the school that their friends go to..... T F
25. Transition goals should be developed before transition assessments are conducted T F
26. Most Federal financial aid is based on the financial need of the student and his or her family T F
27. Classes in post-secondary education are typically large than classes in high school ... T F
28. Transition services is a coordinated set of activities that should be focused only on academic achievement T F
29. Secondary schools must provide transition services to students that enable them to reach their post-school goals..... T F
30. Students should begin participating in the development of their IEP at age 18 T F
31. Parents should never discuss with their children their plans for the future T F

**Parent Involvement in Education
(Parent Survey)**

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the effects of training on knowledge about the transition process to postsecondary education. A secondary purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of levels of parent involvement for students with Learning Disabilities. The purpose of the survey attached is to provide information about parent involvement and specific activities in which parents of children with Learning Disabilities are involved in.

Directions

1. Fill in your code in the upper left hand corner on both pages.
2. Read each statement on the survey and circle the appropriate rating that reflects the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement.
3. After completing the survey please complete the demographic questions on the last page.
4. Once you have completed the demographic questions, place your survey face down and place your pencil on the table.
5. If you have questions or need assistance while completing the survey, please raise your hand.

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I am involved in my child's education.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I feel it is important that parents are involved in their child's education.	5	4	3	2	1
3. When parents are involved in their child's education, their child does better in school.	5	4	3	2	1

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. I am involved in my child's education by. . .					
(a) attending his or her IEP meetings	5	4	3	2	1
(b) participating (i.e., speaking, assisting in planning, making decisions) in his or her IEP meetings.	5	4	3	2	1
(c) assisting him or her with homework.	5	4	3	2	1
(d) attending school events.	5	4	3	2	1
(e) volunteering at his or her school.	5	4	3	2	1
(f) assisting my child with educational decisions about classes he or she should take.	5	4	3	2	1
(g) helping my child with educational decisions about the diploma type he or she should seek.	5	4	3	2	1
(h) talking to my child about what he or she wants to do after high school.	5	4	3	2	1
5. What other ways are you involved in your child's education?					
6. What challenges do you face when trying to get involved in your child's education?					

Demographic Questions (Place a check beside the appropriate response)

1. Gender

Male_____ Female_____

2. Ethnicity

Caucasian_____ African American_____ American Indian_____

Asian _____ Hispanic_____ Other (please specify) _____

3. What is your **highest** degree or level of school **completed**?

High School Graduate_____ Some college_____ Associate's Degree_____

Bachelor's Degree_____ Master's Degree_____ Other (please specify) _____

4. What is your occupation?

5. Do you have a disability?

Yes_____ No_____

**Parent Involvement in Education
(Student Survey)**

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the effects of training on knowledge about the transition process to postsecondary education. A secondary purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of levels of parent involvement for students with Learning Disabilities. The purpose of the survey attached is to provide information about parent involvement and specific activities in which parents of children with Learning Disabilities are involved in.

Directions

6. Fill in your code in the upper left hand corner on both pages.
7. Read each statement on the survey and circle the appropriate rating that reflects the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement.
8. After completing the survey please complete the demographic questions on the last page.
9. Once you have completed the demographic questions, place your survey face down and place your pencil on the table.
10. If you have questions or need assistance while completing the survey, please raise your hand.

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. My parent is involved in my education.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I feel it is important that parents are involved in their child's education.	5	4	3	2	1
3. When parents are involved in their child's education, their child does better in school.	5	4	3	2	1

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. My parent is involved in my education by . . .					
(a) attending my IEP meetings.	5	4	3	2	1
(b) participating (i.e., speaking, assisting in planning, making decisions) in my IEP meetings.	5	4	3	2	1
(c) assisting me with homework.	5	4	3	2	1
(d) attending events at my school.	5	4	3	2	1
(e) volunteering at my school.	5	4	3	2	1
(f) assisting me with educational decisions about classes I should take.	5	4	3	2	1
(g) helping me with educational decisions about the diploma type I should seek.	5	4	3	2	1
(h) talking to me about what I want to do after high school.	5	4	3	2	1
5. What other ways is your parent(s) involved in your education?					
6. What challenges do you think your parent(s) faces when trying to get involved in your education?					

Demographic Questions

6. Gender

Male_____ Female_____

7. Ethnicity

Caucasian_____ African American_____ American Indian_____

Asian _____ Hispanic_____ Other (please specify) _____

8. Grade

8th_____ 9th_____

4. What school do you go to?

**Parent Involvement in Education
(Teacher Survey)**

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the effects of training on knowledge about the transition process to postsecondary education. A secondary purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of levels of parent involvement for students with Learning Disabilities. The purpose of the survey attached is to provide information about parent involvement and specific activities in which parents of children with Learning Disabilities are involved in.

Directions

1. Fill in your code in the upper left hand corner on both pages.
2. Read each statement on the survey and circle the appropriate rating that reflects the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement.
3. After completing the survey please complete the demographic questions on the last page.
4. Once you have completed the demographic questions, place your survey face down and place your pencil on the table.
5. If you have questions or need assistance while completing the survey, please raise your hand.

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I feel it is important that parents are involved in their child's education.	5	4	3	2	1
2. When parents are involved in their child's education, their child does better in school.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Of the students on my caseload, more than half of my parents are involved in their child's education.	5	4	3	2	1

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. Of the students on my caseload, more than half of my parents are involved in their child's education by					
(a) attending their child's IEP meetings.	5	4	3	2	1
(b) participating (i.e., speaking, assisting in planning, making decisions) in their child's IEP meeting.	5	4	3	2	1
(c) assisting their child with homework.	5	4	3	2	1
(d) attending events at school.	5	4	3	2	1
(e) volunteering at school.	5	4	3	2	1
(f) talking to me about their child's progress at school.	5	4	3	2	1
5. What other ways are the parents of your students involved in their child's education?					
6. What challenges do you think parent(s) face when trying to get involved in their child's education?					

Demographic Questions

9. Gender

Male_____ Female_____

10. Ethnicity

Caucasian_____ African American_____ American Indian_____

Asian _____ Hispanic_____ Other (please specify) _____

11. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

12. In what area(s) are you certified to teach? (i.e., Collaborative Teacher, Mild Learning Disabilities, Mild Behavioral Disabilities) What grades do you teach?

**Understanding the Transition to Postsecondary Education
Consumer Satisfaction Questionnaire**

About the Training	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Objectives of the training were met.	5	4	3	2	1
2. All topics on the agenda were addressed.	5	4	3	2	1
3. The materials (e.g., overheads, handouts) were relevant to the training content.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Adequate illustrations and examples were used during the presentation.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Time was well organized	5	4	3	2	1
6. The information is relevant and can be applied to my situation.	5	4	3	2	1
7. I believe that I now have a better understanding of the subject presented.	5	4	3	2	1
About the Presenters	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The presenter was well prepared and organized.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I learned enough to implement the concepts presented.	5	4	3	2	1
3. The presenter used a variety of activities that corresponded with the content.	5	4	3	2	1
4. The presenter was easy to listen to.	5	4	3	2	1
5. The presenter valued our input.	5	4	3	2	1

Your Comments

1. The thing I found most helpful about the session was...

2. The session would have been better if...

3. The knowledge and skills learned today will be useful to me to...

4. As a result of this training I will...

5. Other comments: