Secondary Transition Planning:

Responsibilities and Strategies

A Meta-Synthesis

Art Arnold

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Education in Special

Education degree at the University of Alaska Southeast

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Abstract

This meta-synthesis of the literature, on transition planning for youth with disabilities, examines several important facets that impact the post school outcomes for students with disabilities. Eight specific areas have been highlighted that point out the common theme areas of this metasynthesis. Research recognizes the responsibilities of the regular and special education teachers to the secondary transition process and the roles of the student and parent are not minimized at all. Professional development and continuous training are needed and highlighted for teachers, counselors, administrators, parents and students. There are specific successful strategies and methods to apply to the transition planning process. Raising expectations will likely result in positive post school outcomes as well. However, it is only too often that teachers, counselors, parents, and students are ill prepared for secondary transitions from high school to employment or further training. Expectations are too low and students are not prepared to make decisions about their employment or training in spite of the fact that self determination and self advocacy are strong tools that can and will promote positive outcomes for students. Indeed, individualized transition planning and person centered planning are valuable tools.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The 1980s show that Congress worked long and hard at bringing all relevant legislation together in a more coordinated set of authorities or federal initiatives with a focus on transition and employment of people with disabilities. Significant legislation capitalized on the Job Training Partnership Act of 1982, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1983 (IDEA 1983), the Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984, the Rehabilitation Act of 1986, and the Developmental Disabilities Act of 1984. This legislation is the foundation for modern transitions services mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 (Flexer, Simmons, Luft, & Baer, 2005).

The 1990s clearly ushered in a whole new set of legislation that expanded and clarified the earlier mentioned initiatives. The wave of legislation in the 1990s began with the ground breaking Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and spread to several other legislative areas, such as the Rehabilitation Act of 1992, the Workforce Investment Act and Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, Goals 2000, the Educate America Act of 1994, the School to Work Opportunity Act of 1994, and the Perkins Acts of 1990 and 1998 (Flexer et al., 2005).

IDEA of 1990 established the basis for transition by mandating the inclusion of transition services in the IEP. The focal point is the student's post-school goals. This significant change was ultimately movement away from procedural compliance issues and processes to an outcome oriented process. Finally then all activities of the IEP should be supporting the acquisition of those outcome oriented student goals (Flexer et al., 2005).

IDEA of 1997 states the term *transition services* means a coordinated set of activities that will meet these three requirements. First, the activities must be designed within an outcome-

oriented process that promotes movement from school to post school activities, employment but also including postsecondary education. Next, the activities must be based upon the student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests. And finally, the set of activities must include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment, and other post-school objectives. And, when appropriate, transition services must include acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluations.

1.2. Authors beliefs and experiences

Merriam (1998) recommends that researchers clarify the biases they hold by describing and commenting on their personal experiences, beliefs, and orientations that have helped to shape their interpretations and analysis of their research topics. The author of this review of literature agrees with the intent of Merriam and would like to provide the reader with information about his experiences, beliefs, and orientations.

This author began his career teaching and working with young people at the high school level in a residential care setting. The students were identified as emotionally disturbed (ED), emotionally and behaviorally disordered (EBD), developmentally disabled (DD), and learning disabled (LD). These students were predominantly non-readers, or "poor readers." Because of the failure and barriers that met them at the classroom door, the greatest focus in the classroom was on reading. We followed a phonemic approach to skill acquisitions using the Haig-Kirk & Kirk methodology. Students made significant progress over the course of a year of drill and interventions. Student often left the residential center and school after a period of one to two years of residence. Students would graduate with a regular high school diploma. Movement from school to employment and or further training was the norm. There was always a strong commitment and expectation for students to seek and acquire employment.

After five years the author was hired to teach and prepare student for the Graduate Equivalency Degree. Students would often enter the residential care facility depraved of school credit. The scholastic records of students were so void that there was little to no hope for them to make up lost credits. An avenue that would allow them to attain success was that which seemed unachievable, a High School Degree/Diploma. Still focusing on student reading skills development, the majority of training was allowing the student to learn how to prepare for and take the High School Equivalency test. This series of exams were proctored and timed. There was a great deal to do to prepare test phobic kids who had little success with school, let alone test taking, to rise to the occasion and meet the expectations that I had for them and which I had try to instill in them. They too, needed to raise their own expectations of themselves. These students generally made significant progress over the year and transitioned back home to their communities with a big accomplishment, their High School Equivalency Degree.

I was able to move from rural Fairchild, Wisconsin to Anchorage, Alaska as a young but experienced teacher. I brought my teaching skills into community based programs and incidental learning environments that were more organic. Students were primarily developmentally delayed between the ages of 19 and 25, and the focus on learning was more concrete and directed to activities of daily living, functional life skills acquisition. These were students who for the most part were taken from their families and home villages at early ages because of "their need for services." I noticed that one concerning factor among all of the young people that I worked with was the lack of continuity. No one could remember the last person that worked and lived with them. Nor could they really remember who they lived with and where they had lived in the community over the very recent past. We set out to learn about ourselves and each other. Make no mistake, everyone worked hard on functional life skills, (ie. laundry, cooking, grocery

shopping, meal preparation, personal hygiene, mobility training, use of public transportation, voter registration, voting, and getting along with others). But the most important, we set about making a record of the present that we would have in the future. We made scrap books and albums to record what we were learning, where were learning, how we learned, and why. Although it has been quite some time, I still encounter these students and we will often reminisce about our time together. These students become workers are steadfast and true in their employment tracks and careers. They have shown great loyalty to the businesses that have employed them and they are now nearing their retirement years.

I was able to manage a great area of the state as the Statewide Community Service Coordinator for Developmental Disabilities. Our focus was to close the only institution for people with developmental disabilities (Harborview - Valdez, Alaska). Management of grants and grantee agencies with responsibilities for care plans and support plans for children from birth to old age was particularly fulfilling and challenging. I became well grounded in the day to day activities of state and federal bureaucracy and community based programs including Medicaid services, Medicaid waivers, and public insurance programs, like Medicaid or TEFRA (Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act). These programs have become the foundations for post school supports to people with significant disabilities.

I was able to achieve a strong foundational understanding of the key indicators in Special Education as Alaska's State Director of Special Education. This is a position that had an average length of stay of 18 months. I was able to hold the position for nearly 9 years. During this time the State was able to achieve significant recognition as a leader in Special Education across the country. I have considerable knowledge about the requirements for special education compliance which includes Secondary Transition Planning and Post School Outcomes for students.

Most recently, I have been employed by the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation as the Transition Coordinator II. This brings the focus of my career directly in line with secondary transition planning for special education students and all of the activities and requirements that will lead to strong post school outcomes in employment or future training. I am familiar with the excellent tools and materials, Alaska Career Information Systems (AKCIS) and the Self Determination Training Kit, available to students, their families, teachers and community support providers.

Through my work as a teacher, direct care provider, Statewide Community Service Coordinator, Education Specialist with the Department of Education, Alaska State Director of Special Education, and now with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development as a Transition Coordinator II, my experiences, beliefs and orientations are all very focused on this point of interaction for students and young people with disabilities. From my point of view, students who experience a disability must begin making decisions about their lives, long before age 16. Decision making is what all students do. Some students need training in how to make decisions. Making decisions about what is important to oneself, is normal practice. Communicating those ideas to an IEP Team or group of advocates is a crucial, achievable, and necessary to finding one's own voice. Being a strong advocate for oneself is an extension of being a strong citizen advocate. The IDEIA provides significant guidance to teachers, schools, and school districts regarding secondary transition planning. The planning process includes parental input and participation. And I believe without a doubt that the lead in the transition planning must be the student.

1.3. Purpose of the metasynthesis

Prior to the reauthorization of IDEIA 2004, the Presidential Commission found that transitions services were less than adequate and not being implemented to the fullest extent possible. Meaningful results were not happening. The Commission and congress removed the requirement for transition services to begin at age 14. The law now reads as follows:

Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child is 16, and updated annually thereafter—

(aa) appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills;

(bb) the transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals; and

(cc) 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 this title, if any, that will transfer to the child on reaching the age of majority under section 615(m). Section 614(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII)

The new language of the IDEIA 2004 requires measurable goals based upon transition assessments. The definition of *transition services* was amended to include language requiring that the transition process focus "on improving the academic and functional achievement of the student with a disability to allow the student movement from school to post-school activities" (Section 602(34)).

The purpose of this meta-synthesis has several points. The primary point was to establish and to determine the responsibilities and strategies to secondary transition planning. A second was to search for, identify, and review articles written after 2004 that focused on IEPs and

transition plan development. The third point was to locate articles that would highlight those secondary transition activities that showed promising results as identified in the IDEIA 2004 that would promote better post school outcomes for students with disabilities. A fourth point was to classify each article by an established set of criteria identified as publication type, research design, participants, and summary of the findings of each study. The final point of this meta-synthesis was to identify common themes in the reports and articles that connect to successful responsibilities and strategies to secondary transition planning, and to connect these themes to the author's experiences as direct service provider, teacher, special education administrator, and transition coordinator.

2. Methods

2.1. Selection criteria

The journal articles included in this meta-synthesis met the following selection criteria:

1. The articles addressed issues related to individualized transition planning for 16-21 year old secondary student with disabilities.

2. The articles were published in professional journals typically read by special educators, teacher educators, rehabilitation counselors, paraeducators, and other professionals who work with secondary students with disabilities in transition programs.

3. The articles explored individualized transition plans, guides, and processes.

4. The articles were published after 2004 (when IDEIA was last reauthorized).

2.2. Search procedures

In the fall of 2010, the author conducted a systematic search of the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC, Ebscohost) database that has indexed articles related to the disciplines of teacher education, special education, rehabilitation, and disability studies. The

following search term combinations were used to conduct Boolean searches of the ERIC

database:

1. ("Transition Programs") AND ("Individuals with Disabilities Act" OR "IDEA").

2. ("Individualized Transition Plans").

These database searches yielded a total of 52 articles that met the selection criteria. Upon

review and reading, eight articles were determined to not be relevant to this study and have been

omitted from the thesis. The remaining 44 articles are as follows: (Agran, Wehmeyer & Cavin,

2008; Baer, Flexer & Dennis, 2007; Benitez, Morningstar & Frey, 2009; Breihan, 2007; Bryan,

Stiles & Burstein, 2007; Cameto, Levine & Wagner, 2004; Carter, Trainor & Sun, 2009; Carter,

Trainor, Owens, Sweden & Sun, 2010; Carter, Lane, Pierson & Glaeser, 2006; Chambers,

Hughes & Carter, 2004; Finn & Kohler, 2009; Fore & Riser, 2005; Geenen & Powers, 2006;

Garrison-Wade & Lehmann, 2009; Gartland & Strosnider, 2007; Heslop & Abbott, 2007;

Johnson, 2008; Kallio & Owens, 2004; Kim & Turnbull, 2004; Kochhar-Bryant, 2007; Kosine,

2007; Lillenstein, Levinson & Sylvester, 2006; Michaels & Ferrara, 2006; Milsom & Hartley,

2005; Moffett, Alexander & Dummer, 2006; Nelson, 2005; Noyes & Sax, 2004; Ofiesh, 2006;

Ofoegbu & Azarmsa, 2010; Owen, Hubert & Hollins, 2008; Payne-Christiansen & Sitlington,

2008; Robertson, Emerson & Hatton, 2007; Sabbatino & Macrine, 2007; Savage, 2005;

Scarborough & Gilbride, 2006; Sitlington, 2008; Sitlington & Clark, 2007; Skouge, Kelly &

Roberts, 2007; Steele, Konrad & Test, 2005; Thoma, Pannozzo & Fritton, 2008; Trainor, 2005;

Walker, Uphold & Richter, 2010; Wehmeyer, Garner & Yeager, 2008; Wolf-Branigin, Schuyler

& White, 2007)

2.3. Coding procedures

A coding form was used to organize and capture the information presented in each of the 44 articles. The coding form was based upon (a) publication type; (b) research design; (c) participants; (d) data sources; and (e) findings. (Table 2).

2.3.1. Publication type

Each article and chapter was evaluated and classified according to standard methods and practice in review of publication type, (e.g., study, descriptive article, position paper, guide, assessment, annotated bibliography, or review of the literature.) Each *study* gathered or analyzed quantitative or qualitative data. Studies employ systematic methodology. *Descriptive works* do not employ systematic methodology but identify and describe experiences or phenomena. *Opinion pieces/position papers* advocate for and explain specific policy positions, particular philosophical perspectives, theoretical frameworks, or educational models. *Guides* are intended to provide specific strategies to employ or to explain how to implement strategies, procedures, methods, programs, or models. An *annotated bibliography* provides a brief summary of each article in a list of books, articles, or other documents. A *review of the literature* summarizes and systhesizes the essential themes of previous works on specific topics (Table 1).

2.3.2. Research design

Each article and publication in the meta-synthesis has been read, reviewed, and analyzed. Each study was categorized by research design (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods). A *qualitative* study uses language-based data and provides a description of experiences and phenomenon presented by the study. A *quantitative* study collects, analyzes, and reports numerical data, and the study will be defined by that quantitative or numerical data. When

qualitative and quantitative research methods are combined within a single study it is

distinguished as *mixed method* research design (Table 2).

2.3.3. Participation, data sources, and findings

Participants in each of the studies were identified (e.g. middle school students, high school

secondary education students, young adults with disabilities, university students with disabilities,

teachers and other providers of transition services). Data sources for each of the articles were

analyzed (e.g. interviews, observations, focus groups, scales, and surveys). Finally, the findings

of each article and study are summarized (Table 2).

2.4. Data analysis

A modified example of the Stevik-Colaizzi-Keen method previous used by Duke (2011)

and Duke and Ward (2009) was used to analyze the 45 articles included in this metasynthesis.

First, significant statements were identified within each article. For the purpose of this

metasynthesis a significant statement was defined as any statement that explicitly described

issues relevant to the process, preparation, and completion of secondary transition plans for

student Individual Education Plans. Then a list of nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping (verbatim)

significant statements with (nonverbatim) formulated meanings was developed. The formulated

meanings represented the author's interpretation of each of the significant statements. Finally

the formulated meanings from all 45 articles were grouped in collective theme clusters (or

emergent themes). For the purposes of this metasynthesis, the significant statements fell into the

following group of emergent themes: (a) training needs of teachers regarding transition planning;

(b) training needs of student and families regarding transition planning; (c) global needs,

concern, and suggestions for parents; (d) global needs, concerns, and suggestions for students;

(e) self determination and other essential interventions; (f) tools, models and assessments for

transition; (g) transition planning; and, (h) summary of performance. These emergent themes

represent the essence (or content) of the entire body of literature (Table 3).

3. Results

3.1 Publication type

Forty-four articles met the selection criteria. The publication type of each article is

identified in Table 1. Twenty-five articles (56.8%) represented quantitative or qualitative

research studies (Agran et al., 2007; Baer, et.al., 2007; Benitez et al., 2009; Breihan, 2007; Bryan

et al., 2007; Cameto, Levine & Wagner, 2004; Carter et al., 2009; Carter et al., 2010; Carter et

al., 2006; Chambers et al., 2004; Finn & Kohler, 2009; Geenen & Powers, 2006; Garrison-Wade

& Lehmann, 2009; Heslop & Abbott, 2007; Johnson, 2008; Noyes & Sax, 2004; Lillenstein et

al., 2006; Ofoegbu & Azarmsa, 2010; Owen et al., 2008; Payne-Christiansen & Sitlington, 2008;

Robertson et al., 2007; Steele et al., 2005; Thomas et al., 2008; Trainor, 2005; Walker et al.,

2010; Wehmeyer et al., 2008; Wolf-Branigin et al., 2007). Nine articles (20.5%) represented

descriptive works. (Kosine, 2007; Michaels & Ferrara, 2006; Milsom & Hartley, 2005; Moffett

et al., 2006; Sabbatino & Macrine, 2007; Savage, 2005; Sitlington, 2008; Sitlington & Clark,

2007; Skouge et al., 2007). Four articles (9.0%) represented opinion pieces/position papers (Kim

& Turnbull, 2004; Nelson, 2005; Ofiesh, 2006; Scarborough & Gilbride, 2006). Three articles

(7%) represented guides. (Gartland, & Strosnider, 2007; Kallio & Owens, 2004; Kochhar-

Bryant, 2007). One article (2.3%) represented a review of the literature (Fore & Riser, 2005).

Table 1

Author(s) & Year of Publication	Publication Type
Agran, Wehmeyer, & Cavin, 2008	Study
Baer, Flexer, & Dennis, 2007	Study
Benitez, Morningstar, & Frey, 2009	Study
Breihan, 2007	Study
Bryan, Stiles, & Burstein, 2007	Study
Cameto, Levine, & Wagner, 2004	Study
Carter, Trainor, & Sun, 2009	Study
Carter, Trainor, & Owens, 2010	Study
Carter, Lane, & Pierson, 2006	Study
Chambers, Hughes & Carter, 2004	Study
Finn & Kohler, 2009	Study
Fore & Riser, 2005	Review of Literature
Geenen & Powers, 2006	Study
Garrison-Wade & Lehmann, 2009	Study
Gartland & Strosnider, 2007	Guide
Heslop & Abbott, 2007	Study
Johnson, 2008	Study
Kallio & Owens, 2004	Guide
Kim, & Turnbull, 2004	Opinion Piece/Position Paper
Kochhar-Bryant, 2007	Guide

Kosine, 2007	Descriptive Article
Lillenstein, Levinson, & Sylvester, 2006	Study
Michaels & Ferrara, 2006	Descriptive Article
Milsom & Hartley, 2005	Descriptive Article
Moffett, Alexander & Dummer, 2006	Descriptive Article
Nelson, 2005	Opinion Piece/Position Paper
Noyes, & Sax, 2004	Study
Ofiesh, 2006	Opinion Piece/Position Paper
Ofoegbu & Azarmsa, 2010	Study
Owen, Hubert, & Hollins, 2008	Study
Payne-Christiansen, & Sitlington, 2008	Study
Robertson, Emerson, & Hatton, 2007	Study
Sabbatino & Macrine, 2007	Descriptive Article
Savage, 2005	Descriptive Article
Scarborough & Gilbride, 2006	Opinion Piece/Position Paper
Sitlington, 2008	Descriptive Article
Sitlington & Clark, 2007	Descriptive Article
Skouge, Kelly, & Roberts, 2007	Descriptive Article
Steele, Konrad, & Test, 2005	Study
Thoma, Pannozzo, & Fritton, 2008	Study
Trainor, 2005	Study
Walker, Uphold, & Richter, 2010	Study

Wehmeyer, Garner, & Yeager, 2008	Study
Wolfe, Branigan, Schuyler, & White, 2007	Study

3.2. Research design, participants, data sources and findings

As a metasynthesis, this report is a qualitative review of both qualitative and quantitative studies. Twenty-five studies met the selection criteria and were included in this meta-synthesis (Agran et al., 2007; Benitez et al., 2009; Breihan, 2007; Bryan et al., 2007; Cameto, Levine & Wagner, 2004; Carter et al., 2009; Carter et al., 2010; Carter et al., 2006; Chambers et al., 2004; Finn & Kohler, 2009; Geenen & Powers, 2006; Garrison-Wade & Lehmann, 2009; Heslop & Abbott, 2007; Johnson, 2008; Lillenstein et al., 2006; Ofoegbu & Azarmsa, 2010; Owen et al., 2008; Payne-Christiansen & Sitlington, 2008; Robertson et al., 2007; Steele et al., 2005; Thomas et al., 2008; Trainor, 2005; Walker et al., 2010; Wehmeyer et al., 2008; Wolf-Branigin et al., 2007). The research design, participants, data sources, and findings of each study are reported in Table 2.

Table 2

Authors	Research Design	Participants	Data Sources	Findings
Agran, Wehmeyer, & Cavin, 2008	Qualitative	3 Jr. high school students with significant disabilities in a medium sized school.	Survey and observations by trained observers and inter-observers.	• The Self Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI) assisted students to meet and exceed goals and expectation. • Students showed significant performance gains on skills that allowed them to be more involved in the general curriculum.
Baer, Flexer, & Dennis, 2007	Qualitative	741 randomly selected Ohio special education students graduating in 2004.	Exit surveys consisting of two parts; student record review; student/family interview.	• Transition coordinators need to broaden their focus to develop expertise in assisting students to transition to college. • Transition supports must cross domains (secondary and post school environments). • Need to continue to build capacity with in general education. • Need to focus training of regular educators, and include training on high expectation.
Benitez, Morningstar, & Frey, 2009	Mixed Methods	1,800 middle and high school special education teachers from 31 states; 557 valid surveys were returned.	Secondary Transition Survey (STTS) was developed for the study; four types of analysis were employed: means and standard	• Teachers had at least one course in transition planning. • Transition planning had the highest means scores across all three levels: preparedness, satisfaction, and frequency. • There is a strong correlation between those teachers who

			deviations to determine levels of self reported competencies; Z score for independent variable analysis; correlation coefficients; analysis of variance (ANOVA).	are satisfied with their transition training and teachers who deliver transition services more frequently to youth with disabilities. • A mean of 28 hours was devoted to transition planning preparation.
Breihan, 2007	Qualitative	Directors of adult developmental disabilities agencies identified from the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS) 50 individuals – one from each state.	Telephone interviews of representative of each state. Data is reported as state data versus individual data.	• States significantly changed to consumer directed resource.
Bryan, Stiles, & Burstein, 2007	Qualitative	55 youth (young men and women, between the ages of 17 and 29) with special health care needs (YSHCN).	Telephone survey	Results focus on the following areas: education, health, employment, life experiences, SSI. • 71% are involved in educational and have future educational plans. • 98% had health insurance. • Only 60% were independent with self care. Only 40 % were get SSI or Medicaid. • Shows positive

				results for students in secondary and post school and continuing education. • There is great concern about depression and other mental health issues for students.
Cameto, Levine, & Wagner, 2004	Mixed Longitudinal Study	9,000 youth with disabilities between the ages of 14 and 18 from across the country. This is a ten year longitudinal study.	Parent telephone interviews and mailed surveys. school staff mailed survey.	Four major themes emerge from this longitudinal study. 1. Expectations are varied. 2. Transition planning process develops over time. 3. Transition planning reflects student diversity and needs. 4. Racial/ethnic background will impact transition planning process.
Carter, Trainor, Sun & Owens 2009	Qualitative	160 students with emotional, behavioral and learning disabilities from 26 high schools were selected. 99 special education teachers participated.	Use of the Transition Planning Inventory (TPI) to students, parents and teachers.	Only 69 students had TPIs completed by all three informants student, parent and teacher. Transition Planning Inventory is a valuable transition tool. • Finding shows that students with High incidence disabilities (LD) are more likely to be able to be placed across multiple transition domains. • Teachers rated students higher in

				leisure areas and lowest in health domains. ** Most important element is that sound transition assessments should drive the planning process and serve as a foundation of service delivery.
Carter, Trainor, Owens, Sweden, & Sun, 2010	Quantitative	196 students with cognitive disabilities (CD)emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) and learning disabilities (LD).	Students and teachers rated using the AIR Self-Determination Scale.	• Students rate themselves higher than both teachers and parents. • Although teachers were likely to rate students low, they consistently rated student higher than parents did. ***Self determination skills can and must be taught.
Carter, Lane, & Pierson, 2006	Quantitative	85 high school students with ED or LD were assessed by special educators, parents and students.	Completed the AIR Self Determination Scale. The tool is an assessment instrument designed to measure student's capacity for and opportunity to engage in self-determined behavior.	• Capacity for self determination was reviewed in areas of ability, perceptions, and knowledge. • Opportunities for self determination were reviewed at School and at Home. • Overall there was a strong correlation between the students capacity for self determination and the opportunities to engage in self determined behavior.

Chambers, Hughes, & Carter, 2004	Quantitative	8 students with significant cognitive disabilities (severe to profound range) age 14 or older. 8 parents of children with significant cognitive disabilities (severe to profound range) age 14 or older. 8 siblings (age 14 – 33) of children with significant cognitive disabilities(severe to profound range) age 14 or older.	Two questionnaires were developed to address three questions. 1. Parent perception. 2. Sibling perception. 3. Compare parent and sibling findings.	Parent expectations were low for students across all areas: post school, employment, social relationships, leisure, recreation, independent living skills. Sibling expectations often exceeded parent expectations. Students need training and support to participate in transition planning.
Finn & Kohler, 2009	Quantitative	166 special education students with IEPs.	Data Collection and analysis of pre-evaluation and post evaluation of students with IEPs using the Transition Requirements Checklist.	A. there is an overall increase in IEP transition compliance, and B. general improvement between the expected and observed frequencies of the 32 checklist items from initial to follow-up review.
Geenen & Powers, 2006	Quantitative	45 special education students in foster care. 45 special education students not in foster care system.	IEP Individual Transition Planning Tool (ITPT). Review for compliance using the Statement of Transition	Individual Transition Plans for foster youth are generally of poor quality. Factors that may impact foster youth ITPs: • No or limited parental involvement • Placement decision do not include the

			Services Review Protocol (STSRP).	student. • Placements happen too frequently. School based transition plans are less than adequate also. • Schools need to appoint surrogate parent for the student.
Garrison-Wade & Lehmann, 2009	Mixed Methods	100 college students with disabilities. 10 disability resource counselors	Meta analysis with a focus on a framework that compared 6 reviews of What Works in Transition.	Confirmed and redefined elements of the framework to include: high quality preparation, and self advocacy, peer/teacher awareness, college visits and orientation planning. 5 recommendations: 1. conduct needs assessment. 2. advocate and fund research. 3. Participate in P-16 councils. 4. Increase collaboration. 5. Establish strong student networks.
Heslop & Abbott, 2007	Qualitative	15 young people with disabilities in residential school or college classes (minus 1 ill and 1 upset) (no age range was indicated) 16 parents of young people with disabilities 27 support	Interviews held at convenient time for the participants. Discussions were tape recorded.	4 major themes 1. Be well connected with other parents and/or key professionals. 2. Be proactive. 3. Seek and use information. 4. Focus on forward planning.

		professionals or teachers of young people with disabilities		
Johnson, 2008	Quantitative	4,223 special education students (3317 – 79% successful telephone interview) All students were recent graduates with a regular high school diploma. 247 districts	The survey was developed by the Center for Change in Transitions Services (CCTS). Investigators were trained on administering the survey. Completed survey since leaving school.	Data reflect status 6 months after leaving school. • Post school data shows 5 of competitively enrolled • 79% of all graduates were interviewed. • 57.3% of student competitively employed or in training. • 27.3% attending educational support.
Lillenstein, Levinson, & Sylvester, 2006	Qualitative	450 school psychologists (125 verified) 225 transition coordinators (55 verified)	Completed questionnaire similar to Staab (1996). Use of Likert scale instrument.	• The study indicates that school psychologists and transition coordinators maintain similar attitudes and perceptions regarding the level of involvement that school psychologists have in transition – related tasks and the importance of the school psychologist in those tasks. • Provided a summary of categories and items. • Ratings were surprisingly similar

				between the two groups. • Need for graduate training on transition for teachers transition coordinators.
Noyes & Sax, 2004	Qualitative	4 students/graduates with severe disabilities, ages 25-35. The student's parent. The student's primary teacher. The adult agency representative involved with the student's transition experience.	Focus of this research was on stakeholder perceptions. Investigators employed a case study methodology identified as observations, interviews and review of documents.	• A case study summary was provided for each individual. • Observational data was summarized to provide contextual information for each student. • Themes are noted with examples of positive impact. • Need remains for an accountable, integrated adults system of support.
Ofoegbu & Azarmsa, 2010	Quantitative	81 Students with Severe Emotional Disabilities (SED) and Learning Disabilities (LD)	Interview and questionnaires	Study shows positive results of Vocational Education Program (VEP) for initial job acquisition as well as retention of employment.
Owen, Hubert, & Hollins, 2008	Qualitative	4 individuals with severe disabilities, ages 25-35	Using ethnographic methodology, observations were conducted for 5 hour period every 2 weeks for the campus living group. 5-7 hours at various times every 3 months for a year.	• Anxiety and insecurity are highly prevalent. • Greater levels of aggressive and violent behavior persisted. • General lack of involvement and support during the transitions period. • Institutional practices, stigma and social exclusions persisted even into community settings.

Robertson, Emerson, & Hatton, 2007	Qualitative	93 people with Severe Intellectual Disabilities (ID) gave consent and participated in the study.	Questionnaires for key informants.	• Person Centered Planning (PCP) was ultimately maintained for 65 of the 93 participants. • The results are cautionary. • Some data the cell size was too small. • Student with mental health, emotional and behavioral issues were less likely to benefit from PCP. • Data points to the need for committed facilitators to ensure success with PCP.
Steele, Konrad & Test, 2005	Mixed Methods	28 high school graduates with disabilities	Survey and interview with each participant. Evaluation of projected outcomes to actual outcomes.	Table 6 outlines the correspondence between project outcomes and actual outcomes. Post School Employment 6 (21.4%) had exact matches 17 (60.7%) had partial matches 28 (82.1%) had some level of match Education and Training 3 (10.7%) had exact matches 4 (14.3%) had partial matches 21(75.0%) had no matches. Leisure and Recreation 0 exact matches 10 (35.7%) had partial matches 18(64.3) had no matches Residential Living

				9(32.1%) had exact matches 1 (3.6 %) had partial matches 18(64.3%) had no matches Schools participating in the study met tests' criteria by providing a comprehensive and coordinated transition program that emphasized self-determination and aligned with Kohler's (1996 Taxonomy), and evaluating their post school outcomes.
Thoma, Pannozzo, & Fritton, 2008	Qualitative	50 university students enrolled in graduate level distant delivered course on transition issues	Response to mid term exams	Major themes or concepts • Identified regarding the three questions posed. 1.definition of self-determination 2.identify appropriate research based methods to enhance student self-determination and 3. What misconceptions do you hold? • Had a basic understanding of self-determination. • Reports that self determinations was a priority for student with disabilities. • Could identify practices that facilitate self-determination skill development.
Trainor,	Qualitative	15 high school	Interviews, a	• Each student had a transition Plan.

2005		students with LD 16 years or older	subset of 4 students were observed.	- Student interests and preferences needed to be documented. - Exit goals need to be understood and documented in the plan. - Interagency agreements showed that outside agencies did not participate as regularly as needed or required. - The statement of goals and objectives makes the ITP a true PLAN.
Wehmeyer, Garner, & Yeager, 2008	Mixed Methods	15 students ages of 18-21 (13 students were "labeled" with mental retardation and 2 student were identified as having a "learning disability."	Goal Attainment Scaling were calculated. The Arc's Self-Determination Scale (SDS) was pre-tested and post-tested.	- Student involved in the multi stage planning system were very successful at set self –set goals. - Active student involvement is a hallmark of high quality transitions. - The multi-state, multiple component model outlined in the research article is one means of providing a high level of intensive support.
Wolf, Branigin Schuyler, & White, 2001	Mixed Methods	256 Adolescents receiving SSI with disabilities, ages 12-20 were recruited 178 completed baseline 132 agreed to participate in study 64 completed the	Used the Pediatric Quality of Life Inventory (PedsQL) to measure emotional, social and school functioning. Also used the	- The study points out the need for early intervention strategies and services. - Student will need additional supports as they move toward adulthood. - Pre vocational services peaked around age 13-14. - Transition process is vital to success.

		study.	Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) to measure employment readiness	

3.2.1. Research design

Thirteen of 25 of the studies (52.0%) included in this metasynthesis utilized a qualitative research design (Agran et al., 2008; Baer et al., 2007; Breihan, 2007; Bryan et al., 2007; Carter et al., 2009; Heslop & Abbott et al., 2007; Lillenstein et al., 2006; Noyes & Sax, 2004; Ofiesh, 2006; Owen et al., 2008; Robertson et al., 2007; Thoma et al., 2008; Trainor, 2005). Eight of 25 (32.0%) employed a quantitative research design (Carter et al., 2010; Carter et al., 2006; Chambers et al., 2004; Finn & Kohler, 2009; Geenen & Powers, 2006; Gartland & Strosnider, 2007; Johnson, 2008; Ofoegbu & Azarmsa, 2010). Six of 25 articles (24.0%) were mixed methods. A mixed methods research design entails collecting and analyzing a combination of both quantitative (i.e., numerical data) and qualitative (i.e., non-numerical data) as noted in each of the following articles (Benitez et al., 2009; Cameto et al., 2004; Garrison-Wade & Lehmann, 2009; Steele et al., 2005; Wehmeyer et al., 2008; Wolf-Branigin et al., 2007).

3.2.2. Participants and data sources

Of the 25 studies included in this metasynthesis, there was data collected from: K-12 students with and without disabilities; college student with disabilities; teachers who work with students with disabilities at either the K-12 or college levels; the parents and siblings of people with disabilities; school counselors; school psychologists; transition coordinators; rehabilitation counselors; foster children; school district personnel; and community based program personnel.

A majority of the studies (17 of 25 studies or 68.0 %) focused on K-12 students with disabilities (Agran et al., 2008; Baer et al., 2007; Bryan et al., 2007; Cameto et al., 2004; Carter et al., 2009; Carter et al., 2010; Carter et al., 2006; Chambers et al., 2004; Finn & Kohler, 2009; Garrison-Wade & Lehmann, 2009; Owen et al., 2008; Robertson et al., 2007; Steele et al., 2005;

Thoma et al., 2008; Trainor, 2005; Wehmeyer et al., 2008; Wolf-Branigin et al., 2007). Five

studies (20.0%) focused on college students or newly graduated high school students attending

college (Geenen & Powers, 2006; Heslop & Abbott et al., 2007; Johnson, 2008; Noyes & Sax,

2004; Ofoegbu & Azarmsa, 2010). Three of the studies (12.0%) center on school counselors,

school psychologists, transition coordinators, rehabilitation counselors and paraeducators (Carter

et al., 2009; Heslop & Abbott et al., 2007; Lillenstein et al., 2006). Three studies (12.0%)

converged on the area of community based programs, schools and school districts, as well as

states (Baer et al., 2007; Breihan, 2007; Carter et al., 2009). One study (4.0%) focused on

parents and siblings of students with disabilities (Chambers et al., 2004). One study (4.0%)

examined data from states (Finn & Kohler, 2009).

Several of the studies in this metasynthesis utilize various data sources. In some

instances the data was self reported. In some instance the studies utilized scale based

assessments, interviews, questionnaires, observations , surveys, checklists, and planning tools.

The majority of studies reviewed in this metasynthesis used interview data collected through

interviews and observations. Nine of the articles (36%) collected and analyzed data by

interviews or observations (Breihan, 2007; Cameto et al., 2004; Finn & Kohler, 2009; Heslop &

Abbott et al., 2007; Noyes & Sax, 2004; Ofoegbu & Azarmsa, 2010; Owen et al., 2008; Steele et

al., 2005; Trainor, 2005). Seven studies (28.0%) examined data gathered by surveys of

identified participants (Agran et al., 2008; Baer et al., 2007; Benitez et al., 2009; Bryan et al.,

2007; Carter et al., 2009; Garrison-Wade & Lehmann, 2009; Johnson, 2008). Six studies

(24.0%) examined the data acquired using scale based assessment instruments (Carter et al.,

2010; Carter et al., 2006; Gartland & Strosnider, 2007; Thoma et al., 2008; Wehmeyer et al.,

2008; Wolf-Branigin et al., 2007). Five studies (20.0%) appraised the data gathered by

questionnaires and checklists (Chambers et al., 2004; Finn & Kohler, 2009; Lillenstein et al., 2006; Ofoegbu & Azarmsa, 2010; Robertson et al., 2007).

3.2.3. Findings of the studies

I believe that the majority of the 45 studies in this metasynthesis can be summarized as follows:

1. Teachers, counselors, students, and parents are ill prepared when completing secondary transition plans. Clearly teachers require formal training and when necessary professional personnel development to better address transition planning. Equally important is the training that parents need because they are often completely unprepared for the transition planning process. Students are also highlighted as needing specific training on the planning process.

2. Students lack confidence, they require training in self determination, self advocacy, and supports to create, manage, and use e-Portfolios efficiently and effectively.

3. The role of the VR counselor is clearly a secondary support role. There need to be mechanisms in place to foster better collaboration.

3.3 Emergent themes

Eight themes emerged from my analysis of the 45 articles included in this metasynthesis. The emergent themes include: (a) training needs of teachers regarding transition planning; (b) training needs of students and families regarding transition planning; (c) global needs, concerns and suggestions for parents; (d) global needs, concerns and suggestions for students; (e) self determination and other essential interventions; (f) tools, models and assessments for transition; (g) transition planning; and, (h) summary of performance. The eight theme clusters and their associated formulated meanings are shown in Table 3. They are arranged in a sequence that might best be described as a linear progression regarding the secondary transition process.

Table 3

Theme Clusters	Formulated Meanings
Training Needs of Teachers Regarding Transition Planning	• Transition training needs to focus on regular educators. • Transition training needs to focus on special educators. • Transition training needs to focus on paraprofessionals. • Teachers and Paraprofessionals require training on the use of ePortfolio. • Training must include providing for and maintaining "high expectations" for students. • Teachers must have one course in transition planning. • Teachers need better training on Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicaid, and other entitlement benefit programs. • Teachers need better training and exposure to post school work, employment and community service providers. • Teachers need training and support to fully include students in the transition planning process. • Teachers must assist students in developing and using social networks. • Teachers must actively participate in teaching essential and daily living skills. • Essential skills are identified as self determination, self advocacy skills, People First skills.
Training Needs of Students and Families Regarding Transition Planning	• Parent expectations are low and it is necessary to raise parental expectation. • Parents need training in all aspects of transition planning. • Sibling expectations are higher that parents but it is also necessary to raise sibling expectation. • Students need training in all aspects of transition planning. • Students need training and support to participate in transition planning activities. • Students who receive instruction in self determination will meet their goals at higher than expected levels. • Teachers tend to rate students high in leisure areas and low in health areas. • Parents need training on ePortfolio use. • Parents must be more proactive in their search for supports, training and understanding with regard to assisting their children to move to post high school activities.
Global Needs, Concerns, and Suggestions for Parents	• Parents must have high expectations for their children. • Sibling expectations exceed parent expectations. • Teacher expectations also exceed parent expectations. • Parents require direct training regarding transition planning. • Parents need to be well connected to other parents. • A strong parent network is recommended. • Parents must be proactive regarding their children's transition planning.

	• Parents need to seek out and use information. • Parents need to focus on forward planning. • Parents need to be able to share information with others. • Transition is not a discrete time in life affecting only the individual, but as well the family as a whole is affected by the process and outcomes. • Parents must be influential in designing, implementing, and fostering a social network for the student to be able to participate in.
Global Needs, Concerns, and Suggestions for Students	• Students must be given opportunities to become more self determined. • Students must be given opportunities to practice and use self determination in their daily lives. • Students must be given opportunities to make decisions for themselves. • Students must be provided with tools to self advocate. • Students must be given instruction on how to describe and talk about their disability. • Students must take responsibility for their IEP and their Transition Planning Process. • Students should be given every opportunity to design, develop and save information about school, work and other relevant experiences. • Students must be the lead in all planning activities and processes. • Students must know how to develop and participate in a social network.
Self Determination and other Essential Interventions	• Self Determination is a necessary and teachable skill. • Teaching self determination is worthwhile. • Consumer choice has become a very strong force. • Self Determination can and must be taught. • There is a strong correlation between a student's capacity for self determination and opportunities to engage in self determined behavior. • Students who receive self determination training will meet their goals at higher than expected levels. • Cognitive decision making skills are essential for establishing and meeting goals. • Self Determination remains the most important aspect in addressing unemployment, under-employment and working in low status jobs with social isolation. • Preparation and instruction in self advocacy is imperative. • Self determination is a fundamental component of preferred outcome. • Successful transition activities must be results oriented, focused on the individual and follow a set of coordinated activities that include self determination training. • Students need to know what exists; be able to self advocate; and know their disability and plan. • Social skills and assertiveness can be taught in PE. • Self determination is essential for deaf blind students. • It is essential to foster development of social networks. • Active student participation and involvement is a hallmark of high

	quality transitions. • Student use of an ePortfolio system is essential.
Tools, Models, and Assessments for Transitions	• ePortfolios are essential tools for students, families, teachers, VR counselors and community based providers. • The Alaska Career Information Systems (AKCIS) is Alaska's ePortfolio. • Self Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI) is a very useful tool. • Planning for Life after High School: A Handbook is a useful tool for students and families. • Person Centered Planning (PCP) is an essential tool for students with disabilities. • The Transition Planning Inventory is a valuable tools for student and teachers.
Transition Planning	• The Transition Planning Inventory is a valuable tools for student and teachers. • Sound transition assessments and planning should drive the planning process. • There is an overall increase in IEP Transition compliance. • Planning should serve as a foundation of service delivery. • Always conduct a "needs assessment." • Increased collaboration across agencies is necessary and required. • Establish strong student networks. • Transition planning for foster care youth is generally poor quality. • School must be vigilant, and assign surrogates to foster care youth. • Parents need training and support working out transitions. • It is important to share information. • Planning for life after high school: A handbook has great material for students, teachers, and IEP Teams. • Person Centered Planning is very helpful to the transition Planning Process. • Collaboration is necessary and required for Person Centered Transition Planning. • Engaging in collaborative relationships is complex, time consuming, very human and grounded in reciprocity and genuine caring. • A Vocational Educational Program (VEP) is ideal for initial job acquisition as well as retention of employment. • Person Centered Planning will likely benefit emotional and behavioral students with mental health disabilities.
Summary of Performance	• Summary of Performance (SOP) provides strong student background information. • The Summary of Performance contains student post school goals. • The Summary of Performance offers current baseline data. • The Summary of Performance must include the student's input.

	• Accommodations and Modifications must be emphasized in the Summary of Performance. • The Summary of Performance is a summary of comprehensive evaluations that are necessary for successful student transition planning.

4. Discussion

This metasynthesis is an analysis of the 45 articles included in this review of the literature. The major themes that have emerged from this metasynthesis are arranged as emergent themes based upon a linear manner which is observed in this instance. I have attempted to connect each theme to my own experiences as a direct service provider, teacher, special education administrator and transition coordinator.

4.1 Training needs of teachers regarding transition planning

Transition planning is a primary function for teachers. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselors can be strong collaborators in the transition planning process. Research points out that teachers, both regular and special education, along with rehabilitation counselors and paraprofessionals, require focused training. This training and the experience of providing effective transition plans for students is intended to improve post school outcomes for students. Good transition plans promote successful post school outcomes for students. Teachers, counselors and paraprofessionals who have received at least one course in transition planning are likely to be more successful in preparing an appropriate secondary transition plan for students.

Teachers, counselors, and paraprofessionals are critical participants in the transition planning process. They must be well informed about the options that might be available to students across a wide variety of supports and services. Training must focus directly on community based supports and services. Specific knowledge about entitlement benefits and programs is required. It is impossible to think that a teacher, counselor, or paraprofessional would be able to assist a person with a disability without some basic understanding regarding financial benefits planning, Social Security Income, Medicaid, or Public Assistance, to name a few.

From my experiences as direct service provider, teacher, special education administrator, and now a transition coordinator, teachers will be influential in their role by creating and maintaining high expectations for students with disabilities. These expectations must be able to bridge many areas for students with disabilities. Active participation in learning and teaching essential skills and activities of daily living is crucial. The essential skills are identified as using an e-Portfolio, self determination, self advocacy, and assisting and supporting students and families in developing and using a social network.

4.2   Training needs of students and families regarding transition planning

The review of the literature clearly points out that students and families are also ill prepared when beginning or attempting to work on transitions planning. The disconnect seems to create several barriers. Parent lack of knowledge doesn't provide any confidence regarding their son or daughters skills and abilities. These low expectations might best be addressed by significant and direct prescriptive training and empowerment. We know that when parents have the information that they need when planning for their child's success, there will likely be a positive outcome. The same can be said for students regarding this transition planning process. Student participation is imperative. However, attendance does not necessarily equate with participation.

IEP teams must provide training to students to assist them in becoming better participants and hopeful better team leaders. Yes, students should be leading their IEP team meetings and their Transition Planning processes. Certainly direct training in transition planning process is required. But the literature points out, that students can be taught two skills that will be essential throughout their school career and into their community services areas. These two skills are comparatively equivalent. Self determination and self advocacy are the foundational tools that

are necessary for students to become self realized and empowered. Having the opportunity to make decisions and the empowerment to direct those decisions is essential to strong post school outcomes for students with disabilities. Both self determination and self advocacy can be taught. The literature is clear that beginning in middle school is not too late.

I believe that parents and students both require training and support in using e-Portfolio programs. Alaska has a an e-Portfolio system that is on-line and free to all students. It is called Alaska Career Information System (AKCIS). Such programs are essential for creating, storing and ultimately using information when needed in the future, such as: referral to Public Assistance for Medical Assistance, or completing an application for Division of Vocational Rehabilitation services, or making an application for community based services, or when working with a direct community based service provider, a community rehabilitation providers, a service provider. Use of e-Porfolio system beginning at home would likely reinforce the notion that work is an expectation upon graduation from high school. This is a critical foundational concept.

4.3   Global needs, concerns, and suggestions for parents

The literature reveals that there are global concerns and suggestions for parents of children with disabilities. Although it is clear that parents are poorly informed about IEP and Transitions Planning processes there needs to be emphasis placed upon stronger parent networks. Parents learn best from other parents. Parents have to take responsibility for information and training needs. Information is not looking for the parent. Parents must seek out and grasp information. Without a doubt parents must achieve and maintain high expectations for their children. This begins with parents having the expectation that their son or daughter will work or

attend school or training upon completion of high school. This expectation alone is imperative and provides sound foundations and clear direction to children who experience a disability.

Nothing is more debilitating than having a belief that you are waging a battle against the world by yourself. Parents must be able to share information with confidence and be able to get good advice in return. Of course the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) provides funding for Parent Training Initiatives (PTIs), which exist in every state across the country. But, it is good advice to parents to set up a strong network of friends and other parents of children with disabilities. Parent networks are proven supports for parents.

From my experience, the parent's role in the planning process is quite essential. The law requires school districts to obtain parental participation in the IEP planning process, which includes the Transition Plan. Parents are critically important when it comes to designing, arranging, and supporting the student's social network. And most certainly as the student's first teacher the parent is relegated to being a lifelong learner which may require them to seek out information.

4.4   *Global needs, concerns, and suggestions for students*

Research shows that students are the pivotal players when dealing with Individual Education Plans (IEP), or person center planning (PCP), or secondary transition planning. It is imperative to have the student participate in any planning process that involves them. Participating will provide opportunities for the student to engage in decisions that may or will affect their life. This opportunity to be more self determined can begin earlier but must at least start by middle school. Students must be given every opportunity, and they must take every opportunity to make decisions that will impact their day, throughout the day, every week throughout their life.

Self advocacy is a tool that students can begin to use in exercising their own freedom. Any student should be able to have the confidence to tell what it is they like or don't like, what they want or don't want. Such confidence does not come easy for students who experience a disability. Self advocacy can be difficult for anyone. It is a set of skills that can be taught and it must be taught to students who experience a disability.

From my point of view, we all need friends, and we can be a friend as well. It is shown that students who have a "circle of support," a "network of friends," a group of folks that can be voluntarily depended upon for appropriate social interactions, will likely be more successful than students who do not have such connections. Personally, I will continue to reach out to young people and adults with disabilities and to try to teach about "circle of support," "network of friends," or other means to engage socially with other people.

4.5 Self determination and other essential interventions

The set of articles in this literature review showed how significant Self Determination is as a tool. Self determination has been shown to be a very desirable outcome when working with young people moving from high school to employment and/or further schooling or training. To be able to make decisions for oneself is truly the apex of decision making. Self empowered decisions from students with disabilities will mean that they will be able to self direct the actions and activities surrounding them in their home, school, work and community environment. Training in and obtaining self determination is the single most important aspect of addressing unemployment, under-employment and working in low status jobs with social isolation.

There is no doubt that establishing and meeting goals requires cognitive decision making skills. These skills are essential along with strong social skills and assertiveness. Together these

sets of skills becomes helpful in establishing and fostering development of social networks so very important to young people who experience a disability.

I am truly excited about this particular set of teachable skills. I have professionally invested a good deal of time and effort to promote self-determination across the state of Alaska. I would direct readers and investigators to the work being done with the University of Alaska Center for Human Development. I continue to be actively promoting the advancement of self determination training.

4.6   Tools, models, and assessment for transition

We know that student participation and direct involvement is a predictor of quality transitions. A student's use of e-Portfolio products is an excellent manner in which to organize, display, and inform others about current work and activities. Self determined students might prefer to independently use e-Portfolio as an on line option for career preparation. We know that the Self Determined Learning Model is a very helpful tool (Agran et.al., 2008; Wehmeyer et.al., 2006), and that self determination, as a very teachable skill, can begin very early in a student's education. Having students who can make quality decisions is essential for planning purposes. And the research points out that there are many formal planning processes that are successful for students.

The first of three such planning processes that were highlighted in this review of literature was *Planning for Life after High School: A Handbook* (Kaillo & Owens, 2004). This was described as a very useful tool to students and families. The second is Person Centered Planning (Chambers et.al., 2004; Helsop & Abbott, 2007; Karon, S., 2007; Robertson et. al., 2007), a process that is self explained as being focused on the person. And the final is

indentified as the Transition Planning Inventory (Carter et.al., 2009). All three are acclaimed as being useful and valuable tools.

I have come to know the following. The State of Alaska has defined, developed, and promotes the use of a statewide online system called Alaska Career Information Systems (AKCIS). This product was designed for *all* students. It does not have a special education stigma. It can be used by all students including those who do experience a disability. It is important to remember that the State of Alaska does have a transition planning format that is required and is attached to the student's IEP.

4.7 Transition planning

Research points out that the planning process itself is important not only to document the plan and activities of the plan, but as a means to acquire sound assessments and to determine what goals, objectives, and actions are necessary to move forward, to make progress. It is well known that planning should serve as the foundation of service delivery. Collaboration is a required element of transition planning. There are many helpful tools to the transition planning process. These are a few of the tools mentioned only to highlight their importance here: *Planning for Life after High School: A Handbook* (Kaillo & Owens, 2004); Person Centered Planning (Chambers et.al., 2004; Helsop & Abbott, 2007; Robertson et. al., 2007); Vocational Educational Programs (VEP) (Ofoegbu & Azarmsa, 2010); Transition Planning Inventory (Carter et.al., 2009).

It is important to share information. When we as a group come together to look at, review, and talk about a common point of interest or concern, the likelihood is that we will be able to explore solutions, solve problems, be progressive and pro-active.

At a recent public forum on Youth Transitions, initiated by the Alaska State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee, one committee member pointed out that the "most important factor" with and impact on student outcomes was the process call person centered planning. "Person centered planning" says it all. When implemented properly. it can be helpful to a wide range of interventions and planning processes.

4.8 Summary of performance

The articles in this metasynthesis and the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, point out the significance of the Summary of Performance (Dukes et.al., 2007) to a student's post school outcomes. This documented background information about the student must contain direct student input, including post school goals and objectives, any current baseline information about the student's performance in academic and functional life skill areas.

This single piece of information, done well, will have a significant and positive impact on a student's post high school work and school/training experiences. Since it was added in the latest reauthorization of IDEIA, it is not being implemented as effectively as it might be, and currently it is not being enforced procedurally.

Most recently I had the opportunity to counsel a colleague whose grandson with a disability was graduating from high school back east. She wasn't exactly pleased with her grandson's IEP and the transition plan was completely lacking substance. Wasn't there something that she could encourage her son to do to advocate more strongly for his son and her grandson? Aside from the obvious right to procedural safeguards (mediation, administrative complaint, and Due Process Hearing requests) for the poorly written and crafted IEP and transition plan, there was the Summary of Performance. This required action and document

could be very helpful to the student regarding every aspect of his post high school experience and outcome whether it be work, school or any necessary further training. The Summary of Performance is a comprehensive review of how the student performed and what the student might continue to need.

5. Conclusion

This metasynthesis has provided me with an energized realization and understanding regarding the responsibilities and strategies associated with and necessary to sustain and accomplish secondary transition planning. On the one hand, completion of an IEP transition plan is the responsibility of the school district and the school district personnel. Yet the teachers are only one element in partnership with the student, their parents, and still others (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, VR Counselors, long term care providers, community rehabilitation providers, care coordinators, daily living skills trainers).

Students are critical to the planning process and they have substantial responsibility for completion of the transition plan as well as a substantial benefit for a well defined and well executed plan. It is essential that young people with disabilities begin focusing on employment following high school.

This metasynthesis highlights tools such as e portfolios, self assessments (Garrison-Wade & Lehmann, 2009; Sitlington & Clark, 2007), and strategies like self determination and self advocacy training (Agran et. al, 2008;Baer et.al., 2007; Carter, et.al., 2010; Carter, et.al., 2006; Fore III & Riser, 2005;Skouge, et.al., 2007). When students are not provided opportunities to self assess or self advocate or make decisions for themselves, we turn to parents to participate. Sometimes we rely too heavily on parents to make decisions for and with students. We know how important it is for parents to be well informed. In fact, we know that parents seek out

information on transitions and services for their children may become compromised. It is as important for parents to be, and to stay well informed, as it is for them to have high expectations for their children.

Finally, although I have been the Alaska State Director of Special Education, and though I had known how important and vital secondary transition planning was regarding compliance to the federal regulations of IDEIA, this metasynthesis has shown me how vitally important secondary transition planning can be to the real post school outcomes sought by every graduate with a disability that I know. If there is one thing that education can and must do, it is to have, and meet high expectations for every student with or without disabilities to be employed or to seek further training upon graduation from High School with a diploma.

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