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Walden University
2022

Abstract

How Teachers Write, Understand, and Carry Out the Transition Plan

by

Erin M. Lowe

MA, Kent State University, 2010

BS, Kent State University, 2011

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2022

Abstract

This project study focused on the writing and implementation of the transition plan that gives students with disabilities the proper guidelines and tools to help them in life after high school. Guided by the human capital theory in education, the purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of how high school special education teachers understand and implement the transition plan. The research questions comprised of how teachers write and utilize the transition plan for each of their students. The project study design follows the basic qualitative design and includes purposeful sampling of 12 high school special education teachers in a public school district in the Southeast United States. The data sources included in-depth interviews with high school special education teachers. Descriptive coding was used to analyze the data. Findings include that high school special education teachers in a public school district in the Southeast United States are not well equipped with the proper tools and information to help them write and carry out effective transition plans; therefore, transition plans have been found incomplete or not individualized for each student. High school special education teachers must have the proper tools and support when writing, individualizing, understanding, and implementing the transition plan. When high school special education teachers understand and individualize the transition plan, it impacts high school students with disabilities who make the transition from high school to life after high school.

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Dedication

First and foremost, I would like to thank God who gave me the wisdom, tools, and drive to complete this project study.

To my children, Bryson and Everly. So many nights you heard that Mommy has to do her homework. Hopefully, you will understand the hard work and perseverance that went into this project, and you will have the drive and ambition to reach your dreams.

To my husband, my biggest supporter. Thank you for staying up with me during those long late nights, and for celebrating all the accomplishments and tears. You were always there to keep me on track and to help me focus on the final goal.

To my parents. Mom, you have always taught me to push myself and to be a better writer. Dad, you have always held me accountable and taught me to do my best all the time. You both have always encouraged me to reach my goals and supported me in any way I needed. Thank you.

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To all my family and friends who have supported me through this journey, thank you.

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To Lyric and Eric who have always been my biggest cheerleaders and kept reminding me of the final accomplishment. Thank you.

To my sister, Christen, who I could talk to about anything. You helped me get through some of the most difficult parts of this journey and kept me grounded. Thank you.

To my small group friends who have always encouraged, supported, and prayed for me, not just with my paper but with my faith. Thank you.

To my chair, Dr. Hoffman, who always had something positive to say about my work and who stuck with me through it all. Thank you.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 mandated the transition plan for all students in special education who are 16 years and older and have an individual education program (IEP; Learning Disabilities Association of America [LDA], 2021). The transition plan is a section of the IEP and helps aid the student's transition from high school to postschool activities including furthering education, employment, and independent living (LDA, 2021). It is developed by the IEP team before the student turns 16 and must be individualized for each student in those three areas (LDA, 2021). The transition plan needs to be written so it is personalized and meaningful for each student in order to allow them to have successful postschool outcomes, like students without disabilities (LDA, 2021). Snell-Rood et al. (2020) found that many transition plans were incomplete, which led the student to miss out on proper transitional planning and postschool outcomes. To level the playing ground for students with disabilities, the transition plan is extremely important and must be well planned for students' success (Perryman et al., 2020).

The transition plan in the IEP focuses on three key areas: furthering education, employment, and independent living, so that students with disabilities can have goals as they transition out of high school (LDA, 2021). Ruble et al. (2019) found that good transition planning can improve postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities. For example, if the student had goals in their transition plan that were relative to the students' needs, then they were more likely to reach those goals with the support of the IEP team (Perryman et al., 2020). About half of students with disabilities have reported

that they received little to no transition planning services during their high school

education (Perryman et al., 2020).

The Local Problem

The problem that this study addressed is that transition plans in the IEP have been

found incomplete and/or not individualized for many high school students with

disabilities in a public school district in the Southeast United States. A transition

coordinator found that many of the transition plans she checks for the school system are

very similar, almost as if they are "copied and pasted" from one student's transition plan

to the next. A local parent recalled receiving no services from the transition plan and did

not quite understand what it was intended for. This particular school district is located in

the suburbs of a major city. The population is somewhat diverse, with about 60% of the

population being White. About 25% of the schools have Title-1 status. Title-1 status

includes having a large concentration of low-income students and is determined by the

number of students enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program (U.S. Department of

Education, 2018).

Further, to be in compliance with state indicators, transition plans must be

individualized in order to help the student succeed after high school. According to the

data manager for the local school board of education, approximately 81% of local

education agencies (LEAs) in all school districts within this particular state were in

compliance with their transition plans in 2019. The compliance indicator stated "that [the

transition plan] includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals … transition

services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those

postsecondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to the student's transition service needs" (Woods, 2018, p. 3). The other 19% of LEAs that were not in compliance show a large portion of transition plans that were incomplete or not individualized in this particular state in the Southeast United States. The gap in practice that this study addressed is why transition plans in a public school district in the Southeast United States have not been adequate and how these high school special education teachers understand and implement the transition plan in the IEP.

<div align="center">**Rationale**</div>

To prepare students with disabilities for life after high school, high school special education teachers must be able to guide students by carrying out the transition plan in the IEP (May et al., 2018). A recent study showed that there is a disconnect between transition planning policy and transition planning practice which leaves the student to suffer the loss of proper instruction and transition (Snell-Rood et al., 2020). Many students with disabilities have also reported that they did not receive transition planning services during their high school education (Perryman et al., 2020). High school special education teachers must be able to understand and implement the transition plan to allow their students to find appropriate and adequate postschool opportunities (May et al., 2018).

At the local level, high school special education teachers have shown that writing the transition plan has been challenging when individualizing it for each student. When looking at transition plans in a suburban school district in the Southeast United States, a transition coordinator found that many of the transition plans she checks are very similar,

almost as if they are "copied and pasted" from one student's transition plan to the next. Further, in order to be in compliance with state indicators, transition plans must be individualized in order to help the student succeed after high school. According to the data manager for the board of education, approximately 81% of LEAs throughout the state were in compliance with their transition plans in 2019. The compliance indicator states "that [the transition plan] includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals … transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to the student's transition service needs" (Woods, 2018, p. 3). Overall, high school special education teachers relate that writing the transition plan has been a challenge and is a cause for concern.

Definition of Terms

The following words and phrases relate to the transition plan in the IEP. They are common terms used when working with the transition plan. Below, the terms are further defined to provide an understanding of each term and how it fits into this study:

Individualized – Having the student be directly involved in the decision making and the planning process of the transition plan, so it revolves around their likes, interests, wants, and needs (Cavendish & Connor, 2018).

Individualized education program (IEP) – "a written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with §§300.320 through 300.324" (IDEA, 2004, Sec. 300.22).

Postschool outcomes – Areas of life after high school such as employment, postsecondary education, and independent living (Snell-Rood et al., 2020).

Transition IEP team – A group of people that consists of the student, the parents of the student, at least one regular education teacher, as least one special education teacher or provider, an LEA, an assessment specialist (can be a teacher), and other agencies that have expertise on the student (IDEA, 2004, Sec. 300.321).

Transition plan – The focus of the transition plan is to help students with disabilities, beginning no later than their 16th birthday, make the transition from school to postschool by improving areas of postsecondary education, employment, and independent living (LDA, 2021).

Significance of the Study

Individualizing and implementing the transition plan in the IEP is not only a state standard for compliance (Woods, 2018), it also is a federal special education law under IDEA (LDA, 2021). When special education teachers can individualize effective transition plans, they are complying both with state and federal laws (Cavendish et al., 2017). More importantly, when special education teachers implement successful transition plans, they are helping their students work toward goals that will help them to reach those goals once they exit high school (Szidon et al., 2015). Miller-Warren (2015) found that with individualized transition plans, special education students will have better opportunities for success after high school. If the transition plan can drive the IEP, teachers may be more likely to utilize the goals and objectives of the students' transition plans in lessons to help prepare their students for success (Szidon et al., 2015).

Ultimately, this project study resulted in data that school stakeholders can use to gain an understanding of how high school special education teachers understand and

implement the transition plan. Through in-depth interviews with high school special education teachers in the public school in the Southeast United States, data showed how high school special education teachers prepare their students with disabilities for life after high school. Further, high school special education teachers and leaders can use the data garnered from this project study to understand why it is so important to individualize and implement the transition plan for each high school student with disabilities.

Many stakeholders can benefit by evaluating the problem that transition plans in the IEP have been found incomplete and/or not individualized for many high school students with disabilities in a public school district in the Southeast United States. First, due to better instruction, students with disabilities can have a better chance of reaching their transition plan goals after they exit high school. Second, their teachers can teach positively, knowing that they are helping their students succeed by instructing them in needed skills for life after high school. Finally, the families of these students can also benefit by understanding the instruction their child is receiving from the transition plan and can help guide them in order to be prepared for life after high school. The transition plan is a team effort to help the student with disabilities reach their goals once they exit high school.

Implications for social change from this project study may include encouraging and supporting high school special education teachers when writing, individualizing, understanding, and implementing the transition plan in the IEP. This may allow their high school students with disabilities to make the best possible transition from high school to life after high school in order to be successful without the support of the public school

system. Positive social change may occur because students are the future. Everyone, including those with disabilities, should have the opportunity to live life to its fullest potential. When the transition plan is written for the betterment of the student, then their future may encourage a life full of potential.

Research Questions

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to gain an understanding of how high school special education teachers individualize and carry out the transition plan in the IEP as well as what tools or information they use to help them write it. By using the human capital theory in education as a framework for this research study, the research questions allowed insight on how high school special education teachers are receiving the information and tools to individualize and carry out the transition plan for their students. The following research questions were answered to gain a better understanding of how high school special education teachers individualize and carry out the transition plan in the IEP as well as what tools or information they use to help them write it. The research questions that guided this investigation are as follows:

RQ1: How do high school special education teachers individualize the transition plan?

RQ2: How do high school special education teachers carry out the transition plan?

RQ3: What tools or information do high school special education teachers use to help write the transition plan for each of their students?

Review of the Literature

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is the human capital theory in education founded and popularized by Schultz. The human capital theory in education refers to having useful skills and knowledge to perform a specific task (Schultz, 1961). Schultz (1961) explained that people invest in themselves, and by doing so, people can be considered an investment (i.e., human capital). The human capital theory in education explains that people need an individualized skill set to obtain personal goals (Schultz, 1961), just like students with disabilities need a transition plan in their IEP to help guide them in postschool outcomes (IDEA, 2004; LDA, 2021). The human capital theory creates a framework for this study in many different aspects across all stakeholders involved regarding the transition plan in the IEP.

To complete personal goals, in education or in life, individuals generally work toward learning particular skill sets and tasks (Flair, 2019). As stated above, the human capital theory involves people having the appropriate knowledge, tools, and skills to perform tasks (Schultz, 1961). Working on personal goals as early as high school would allow students with disabilities to understand their goals and help guide them to postschool outcomes (LDA, 2021). The transition plan in the IEP is individualized in order to guide a particular student in the direction of his/her personal goals in the areas of furthering education, employment, and independent living (LDA, 2021). As long as special education teachers obtain the useful skills and knowledge to individualize,

understand, and implement the transition plan, their students may be able to learn the necessary skills they need in life after high school.

Schultz (1961) explained that useful knowledge and skill sets are actually a form of capital and investment in oneself. To grow and succeed, people must have the right skills and knowledge in place (Schultz, 1961). When looking at education, there is a positive relationship between the amount of schooling one receives and the wages one makes (Schultz, 1961, 1963). There is also a direct relation to those that have more experience (both in age and on-the-job training), in that they tend to earn more wages as well (Schultz, 1961). By working toward specific goals and interests as early as high school, one can be more successful in life by obtaining the required skills for a particular job or career.

The human capital theory in education provides a framework for this study across all areas. The problem that this study addressed is that transition plans in the IEP have been found to be incomplete and/or not individualized for many high school students with disabilities in a public school district in the Southeast United States. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of how high school special education teachers understand and implement the transition plan in order to prepare high school students with disabilities for life after high school. The research questions in this study guided further insight on special education teachers receiving the proper skills and strategies to write and implement the transition plan for their students. Applying the human capital theory provided an understanding of what knowledge, tools, and skills special education

teachers need to understand and implement the transition plan in the IEP for each of their students.

The human capital theory in education refers to having the needed skills to perform a task (Schultz, 1961). In this project study, the transition plan in the IEP requires many different people to learn different skill sets. Specifically, high school special education teachers must have the appropriate tools, knowledge, and skills to understand and implement transition plans, to allow their students to have positive postschool outcomes (Snell-Rood, 2020). Overall, the human capital theory in education guided this study so the reader can comprehend how high school special education teachers understand and implement the transition plan in the IEP for each of their students with disabilities.

Review of the Broader Problem

To further my insight into how high school special education teachers can individualize, understand, and implement the transition plan in the IEP, I conducted literature searches using online databases through the Walden Library. The database that was most instrumental in my search was ERIC. Search terms used included *high school, IEP, individualize, individualized education program, personalize, post-secondary, secondary transition, special education, successful,* and *transition plan*. I ran multiple searches through Walden's library to find literature on the transition plan in the IEP and started finding themes on how high school special education teachers can successfully individualize and employ the transition plan in order to guide their students with disabilities to a successful life after high school. The following literature review is

arranged into seven subsections on the themes that I saw fit for a successful transition: Sections in the Transition Plan, Teacher Training for the Transition Plan, Effective Transition Planning, Assessments in Transition Planning, Including the Family in Writing the Transition Plan, Students Who Choose Postsecondary Education, and Different Ways to Teach Transition Skills.

According to the IDEA 2004, the transition plan in the IEP must include goals and opportunities for the student to further education, work, and live independently (LDA, 2021). Many students with disabilities might not consider a college or university, but with the transition plan, a goal is created to target education or further training after high school (IDEA, 2004). Snell-Rood et al. (2020) found that students with disabilities experience low employment rates, but according to IDEA (2004), the transition plan has a section for goals in the area of employment opportunities after high school. The transition plan also allows students with disabilities to create an independent living goal for life after high school (LDA, 2021). Research has been conducted in each of these three areas to show ways that students with disabilities can be successful.

Alverson et al. (2019) found that transition planning in the high school had a positive effect on students with disabilities who pursued postsecondary education when there were specified goals in their transition plan. For students with disabilities, postsecondary education may be something that many would not even consider, but with the transition plan, individualized goals for this area in life after high school are looked at and even created (IDEA, 2004). Alverson et al. found that creating postsecondary goals in the transition plan led to a greater chance of the student going on to pursue education

after high school, even if it was not what was indicated in the transition plan. In order to be successful in the postsecondary endeavor, students were more likely to complete their course of study when they sought out supports and accommodations, which were noted and discussed in the transition plan (Wadlington et al., 2017). It was also found beneficial if teachers could collaborate with local postsecondary institutions when developing the transition plan, in order to ensure proper documentation and requirements were met for both the student and the institution (Wadlington et al., 2017). When looking at postsecondary education options for students with disabilities during the creation of the transition plan, students can start to plan for these activities, like many students without disabilities do as well.

When looking at postschool employment, students with disabilities reported higher career readiness scores when they were provided with meaningful intervention in the area of career readiness while in high school than other students who did not receive intervention (Lombardi et al., 2020). Snell-Rood et al. (2020) found that students with disabilities experience lower employment rates than their general education peers. Having a support system including family and friends can also help provide students with disabilities better opportunities for postschool employment (Yeager et al., 2020). Research supports the need for the transition plan, the supported instruction from the special education teachers, and the need for providing the student with meaningful employment experiences (Hatfield et al., 2018). Kraemer et al. (2020) also supported that and suggested that positive experiences in the classroom often led to positive experiences after the student made the transition. Other factors that have led to successful postschool

employment included career awareness training and attending a vocational school, which are areas discussed in the transition plan (Snell-Rood et al., 2020). Also, exposure to different work tasks and skills had a positive impact on postschool employment success for students with disabilities (Brendle, Lock & Brown, 2018). One final aspect that led to successful postschool employment was the student being involved in their transition plan and actively participating by creating goals to work on throughout high school (Hatfield et al., 2018). By having an individualized and effective transition plan during high school, students with disabilities will have more success in employment after high school.

Students with disabilities have been shown to be more successful at independent living when those students were able to understand, help prepare, and direct their own transition plan (Morgan et al., 2017). Mandak and Light (2018) also found that, for the transition to independent living, it was beneficial to have the family involved because it can require family adjustment as well as the individual making an adjustment. J. Chen et al. (2019) discussed that families want their child with disabilities to be as independent as possible, even though the future is hard to predict and full of uncertainty. This might mean living at home still, living in a supported environment, or living on their own. Overall, families need to be involved in the transition process in order to help guide their child with disabilities to live as independently as possible after high school (Ruble et al., 2018).

The transition plan is developed for a student with disabilities and is used to help make a smooth transition when they exit the high school (IDEA, 2004; LDA, 2021). The three areas that the transition plan covers are further education, employment, and

independent living (IDEA, 2004; LDA, 2021). One area that students with disabilities

might not consider is further education, but they can create a goal in the transition plan

that allows them to think about future education and training (IDEA, 2004). Another area

that is looked at in the transition plan is postsecondary employment, which has found to

be unsuccessful for students with disabilities (Snell-Rood et al., 2020). The last area in

the transition plan is independent living, which has been found that students with

disabilities are only about 17% successful in performing daily living activities (Lipscomb

et al., 2017). Together, these three areas of life, make up the transition plan and help

guide and prepare students with disabilities for life after high school (IDEA, 2004; LDA,

2021).

Teacher Training for the Transition Plan

High school special education teachers need training both in preservice years as

well as ongoing training on the transition plan in the IEP in order to properly

individualize and implement it for each of their students. Unfortunately, it has been found

that teacher preparation programs have not been fully successful in teaching all

transition-related skills to future special education teachers due to the allotted amount of

time for the required classes (May et al., 2018). High school special education teachers

have also reported limited understanding of transition planning because this section in the

IEP often gets overlooked (Mazzotti et al., 2018). And only about 22% of preservice

teachers had high confidence in providing transition services to their students with

disabilities (May et al., 2018). Recently, it was found that there is a continual need for

teacher training on postschool practices (Blaskowitz et al., 2020). High school special

education teachers need training on the transition plan during their preservice years as well as ongoing training in order to develop and implement individualized transition plan for their students.

May et al. (2018) explained that teacher preparation programs do not have enough time to successfully teach all transition-related skills to future special education teachers. It was reported that it is difficult to completely teach all transition-related skills during preparation programs (May et al., 2018). Plotner et al. (2020) found that high school special education teachers had limited understanding of the transition plan, which was also paired with limited understanding of stakeholder roles and little communication. Mazzotti et al. (2018) suggested that professional development for teachers should include local information about transition services and community information. Southward and Davis (2020) described the importance of special education teachers having confidence in creating and carrying out the transition plan for high school students with disabilities.

Due to the lack of time that preparation programs spend on teaching these skills (May et al., 2018), high school special education teachers are not able to gain all the knowledge needed to fully understand the transition planning process. One example is that many high school special education teachers reported that they had limited or little understanding of the transitional assessments used in the transition plan (Brendle, Lock, & Brown, 2018). This is a required component of the transition plan, and high school special education teachers should be prepared to discuss any areas of concern. Another example shows at least 20% of schools did not offer training programs to address

teachers' questions (Blaskowitz et al., 2020). Mazzotti and Plotner (2016) found that the

transition section often gets overlooked and, therefore, special education teachers lack the

knowledge to fully individualize and implement the transition plan in the IEP. In general,

Blaskowitz et al. (2020) found that teachers continually need training on postschool

opportunities that the transition plan addresses.

Problems such as lack of time in learning the transition plan (May et al., 2018)

and limited understanding of assessments (Brendle, Tucker, & Lock, 2018) cause new

high school special education teachers to go into a position not fully prepared and force

them to depend on professional development sessions throughout the school year in order

to write, individualize, and implement the transition plan. Problems have been apparent

in different sections of the transition plan including the assessment component (Brendle,

Tucker, & Lock, 2018; Greene, 2018). Due to a lack of training and education in the

transition plan, high school special education teachers are often not fully prepared to

effectively individualize and implement it for their students with disabilities (May et al.,

2018). May et al. (2018) found that preservice teachers could increase their confidence in

understanding transition-focused education and the transition plan by applying

conceptual knowledge through service-learning opportunities. Further, it was found that

with more training, special education teachers were more confident in their abilities in

creating a transition plan (Mazzotti et al., 2018). Essentially, high school special

education teachers play a major role in preparing their students with special needs for life

after high school and therefore, need the appropriate amount of training to understand the

transition plan and how to properly individualize and implement it for each of their students.

High school special education teachers are responsible for individualizing and employing the transition plan for each of their students with disabilities, but research has shown that they are not fully prepared to do so (Mazzotti et al., 2018). The transition plan in the IEP is a required section and should not be overlooked by any stakeholders because it sets up students with disabilities for a successful school life after high school. Simonsen et al. (2018) found that as transition has evolved over the years, teacher credentials have not followed suit. They suggested that teachers continue to need adequate training in this area (Simonsen et al., 2018). If and when high school special education teachers have the proper knowledge and skills to carry out the transition plan, they will have confidence in individualizing and implementing the transition plan for all of their students with disabilities (Simonsen et al., 2018). It is imperative that high school special education teachers receive the proper education and training to prepare students with disabilities for a smooth and successful transition to life after high school (Scheef & Mahfouz, 2020).

Effective Transition Planning

To prepare students with disabilities for life after high school, high school special education teachers must be able to guide them by writing individualized and effective transition plans, which was not the case in recent studies. Students with disabilities were shown to be more successful when they can understand, help prepare, and direct their own transition plan (Morgan et al., 2017). Alverson et al. (2019) found that transition

planning in the high school had a positive effect on students with disabilities when there were clear postschool goals. Also, when the transition plan goals were paired with skill-building and community relationships, students were able to maintain employment after high school (Snell-Rood et al., 2020). Overall, individualized and effective transition planning in the high school has been shown to have positive outcomes for students with disabilities in life after high school (Test & Fowler, 2018).

One factor to effective transition planning for students with disabilities is having the student help with transition planning. When a student with disabilities can understand and help create goals in his/her own transition plan, the outcome will have more success (Morgan et al., 2017). Alverson et al. (2019) found that students with disabilities were more successful in their transition when the family was involved in the transition plan process. Morgan et al. (2017) discussed how using a self-directed transition plan can help prepare special education students to positive post school outcomes. Test and Fowler (2018) discuss that both the student and the family need to be involved in the transition process as early as elementary school. Also, the student and family not only need to help with the transition plan, but they need to understand and be educated about postschool options (Test & Fowler, 2018). Hoyle et al. (2021) also agree that the family should be a part of the transition plan because they understand the specific health care and needs for a particular student. As for students with disabilities, creating a transition plan with postschool employment, education, and living, allows them to understand and plan for their future (Perryman et al., 2020).

It was found that many students do not perceive their transition experience in a positive light with suggestions of more guidance and preparation (Bourscheid, 2018). One factor to effective transition planning is having specified goals (Alverson et al., 2019). When there was clear, specified goals in the transition plan, it showed to have a positive effect on high school students with disabilities once they graduated high school (Alverson et al., 2019). Harrison et al. (2017) found that students and families had very limited involvement in the development of their transition plan, which lead to a lack of planning. Morgan et al. (2017) stated that, "students who can articulate their postsecondary goals and the supports that they need to achieve those goals are well on their way to self-advocacy" (p. 69). By using the student's strengths and interest, goals can be created to fit each individual student (Morgan et al., 2017).

One more factor that was proven effective in transition planning was having meaningful opportunities during high school. Families have discussed that they would like their child with disabilities to have meaningful opportunities after high school graduation (J. Chen et al. 2019). Rowe el al. (2018) noted that when students with disabilities were provided with meaningful opportunities while in high school, they were more successful in those areas once they graduated. For example, if a student had community-based opportunities in high school, he/she was more likely to be employed after graduation (Snell-Rood, 2020). B. B. Chen and Yakubova (2019) found that meaningful experiences for students with disabilities included audio and video prompting to help promote long-term independence. Krishnan (2021) discussed that the use of videos and images allowed classroom instruction to be more meaningful for the students.

For examples, when students saw themselves performing an activity in a video, the goal of the lesson was more meaningful (Krishnan, 2021). Also, Oertle et al. (2021) discussed that school collaboration with the community provided opportunities, funding, and even success stories for the students. Finally, Roux et al. (2020) found that students had about four times higher odds of postschool employment if they received on-the-job services or training. Overall, if students with disabilities receive meaningful experiences while still in high school, they will be better prepared and have more successful outcomes after graduation (Perryman et al., 2020).

Mellow et al. (2021) found that just over 50% of students with disabilities received transition services. In order to have effective transition planning, high school special education teachers must provide these opportunities to their students (Mellow et al., 2021). When students can help direct their transition plan and understand what they are working toward, postgraduation outcomes have shown to be more successful (Morgan et al., 2017). By having specified goals in the transition plan, students with disabilities showed to have better postschool outcomes (Perryman et al., 2020). And, meaningful opportunities allowed students with disabilities more options and better success for postschool outcomes (B. B. Chen & Yakubova, 2019; Rowe et al., 2018). When these factors are provided to students with disabilities during transition planning, their postgraduation outcomes will be successful (Krishnan, 2021).

Assessments in Transition Planning

There is a requirement in the transition plan where students are to perform in a type of assessment and the results are then reported in the transition plan. Greene (2018)

stated that the "transition assessment results are an essential part of [the transition plan] because these results help educators identify a student's postsecondary strengths, interests, preferences, and needs" (p. 146). The assessment component in the transition plan is required according to IDEA 2004. Assessments help the individualization process by receiving appropriate information and guidance as well as evaluating each student's strengths and deficits for the transition plan (Brendle, Lock, & Brown, 2018). Brendle, Tucker, and Lock (2018) found that teachers did not fully understand the assessment component in the transition plan. The assessment component in the transition plan is required by law and teachers should know and understand what and how to use this component.

With the help of the high school special education teacher, students may be given a variety of assessments to complete in order to appropriately individualize the transition plan. It was found that teacher observation, interest inventories, student surveys, and student interviews were the most used methods of assessment for the transition plan (Brendle, Tucker, & Brown, 2018). Because the transition plan needs to be individualized for each student (IDEA, 2004; LDA, 2021), the required transition assessments can differ from student to student and can also be given in different ways. Perryman et al. (2020) discussed how the transition assessment should be adapted to each student's needs to gain accurate results, which will help high school special education teachers create functional and age-appropriate transition goals (Snell-Rood et al., 2020). The best practice is that the family should help with the transition assessment process (Perryman et al, 2020).

Brendle, Lock, & Brown (2018) found that students can be examined by using hands on assessments that were familiar to each student while on the job.

It seems that many teachers do not understand how to use the assessment component in the transition plan (Brendle, Lock, & Tucker, 2018; Greene, 2018). Greene (2018) reported that many transition plans lacked quality assessment results, which resulted in a failed compliance with IDEA requirements. Brendle, Lock, and Tucker (2018) studied this component and found that teachers have limited understanding of the assessment component in the transition plan. They also found that their participants had very limited understanding of what to do with the results of the transition assessments. And, they reported that teachers used a limited amount of vocational and transition assessments for the transition planning. Scheef and Mahfouz (2020) suggested that all schools should have a transition coordinator to help high school special education teachers with the transition plan. The transition coordinator would help with assessments as well as identifying appropriate goals and services for the students (Scheef & Mahfouz, 2020).

The assessment component in the transition plan allows for the student to identify strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes as well as future plans after he/she graduate from high school (Brendle, Lock, & Brown, 2018). A variety of assessments can be given in different formats, depending on what supports the student needs. Unfortunately, teachers do not fully understand the assessment component in the transition plan, which can cause a failure of compliance with law requirements (Greene, 2018). It is important that high school special education teachers recognize the importance of all aspects of the

transition plan in order for accurate individualization and proper implementation of the transition plan.

Including the Family in Writing the Transition Plan

Family involvement in the transition planning process is essential in a successful outcome for the student (Francis et al., 2019). The family knows the student best as well as his or her potential for postschool options, such as living arrangements or future jobs. Cavendish and Connor (2018) found that many families were not even involved in the IEP and transition process. Unfortunately, this causes a lack of knowledge to the families for postschool options and lack of involvement in the planning process (Cavendish, & Connor, 2018). Family involvement is not only beneficial to the student and IEP team, but it is required by law to have the family part of the IEP team (IDEA, 2004). In order for the student to be the most successful after high school, the family is an integral part in the transition planning process (Van Hees et al., 2018).

Research shows the benefits and positive postschool outcomes when the families are involved in the transition planning process. For example, MacLeod (2017) conducted a case study where the participant "stressed that he always felt his parents believed in him" (p. 201). With other supports in place, this particular student with disabilities was able to have a successful transition into life after high school (MacLeod, 2017). Cavendish et al. (2017) found that family involvement in developing the IEP before, during, and after the meeting was beneficial for all stakeholders. By having continual open communication and establishing a relationship with the family prior to the meeting, it allowed for regular family involvement (Cavendish et al., 2017). When including the

family during the meeting, it showed optimal involvement for families and the student by collaborating with the teacher to create an IEP and transition plan that is best for the student (Cavendish et al., 2017). Finally, when the teacher followed-up with the family, it showed continue collaboration and the willingness to continue collaboration (Cavendish et al., 2017). From the support, involvement, and collaboration of the family, students with disabilities will have more a successful transition to life after high school (Van Hees et al., 2018).

Much research has supported that many families are not involved in the IEP and transition planning process (Cavendish & Connor, 2018; Harrison et el., 2017; Wilt & Morningstar, 2018). Families have a lack of involvement due to meeting attendance or not understanding the IEP in general (Cavendish & Connor, 2018). Specific barriers that may prevent parent involvement in the IEP and transition planning process include communication barriers, differences in beliefs about what is appropriate for the student, and lack of communication about the transition process (Wilt & Morningstar, 2018). Bourscheid (2018) also suggest that improved communication and preparation was needed for a successful transition. Ju et al. (2018) found that many families either do not attend or are passive participants in the meetings. Francis et al. (2019) discovered that families felt the transition was exhausting and time-consuming, and they also felt guilty asking teachers for resources in the community. This is a huge problem that families are not involving themselves in this important transition planning process, and it can hinder the student in having a successful transition to life after high school.

In addition to poor family involvement in IEP meetings, Harrison et al. (2017) found that many parents and students do not understand how the transition plan even relates to the individual student. The family does not understand how to be involved nor have time to be involved (Cavendish & Connor, 2018). Families had been faced with disappointment and distrust when something did not work out or was inaccurate (Francis et al., 2019). Harrison et al. (2017) found that there was limited family involvement because the family did not understand the goals in the transition plans or the transition plan did not reflect what they thought it should include. They suggest that this lack of knowledge of the transition plan that needs to be addressed because the transition from school to postschool life will not only affect the student, but the family will be impacted too (Harrison et al., 2017). Not only in living situations, but the student might need assistance in areas such as transportation, daily living tasks, etc. Alverson et al. (2019) discuss that during the transition period, the best practice for students with disabilities to transition to life postschool would be to include the family in all the planning. Because the transition will involve the family and the student, all should be involved in individualizing the transition plan.

IDEA (2004) requires that families and school staff are involved in the transition planning process. Not only is it a federal law, but with the support of the family, the student will be more successful in their transition to postschool activities (Cavendish & Connor, 2018; Cavendish et al., 2017; MacLeod, 2017). Cavendish et al. (2017) discussed how to be compliant with the law in the transition plan process and part of that includes having the family participate in the transition planning process. Some

recommendations to increase family involvement in the planning process and how to facilitate successful IEP meetings include establishing a teacher-family relationship prior to the meeting, allowing the student to take a lead role in his/her IEP meeting, and including family input (Cavendish et al., 2017). Ju et al. (2018) found that families do not understand the legal requirements of transition planning, nor do they understand how it relates to their student. In order to be compliant with federal law, families must be involved in the transition planning process.

Overall, the family needs to be involved in the transition planning process for the student to have the most successful transition to adulthood. Research (Cavendish & Connor, 2018; Harrison et al., 2017) has shown that with the support of the family, the student will have a more successful transition. Many families are not involved due to a number of reasons: The family does not feel needed (Ju et al., 2018), the family does not have time (Cavendish & Connor, 2018), the family does not understand the IEP or transition plan (Harrison et al., 2017) or due to a variety of communication barriers (Wilt & Morningstar, 2018). In order to do what is best for the student and to follow the federal law (IDEA, 2004), the family should do their best to be involved in the transition planning process.

Students Who Choose Postsecondary Education

Just like students without disabilities, there are many different options for students with disabilities to do after high school, such as choosing a career path or continuing their education. Students with disabilities may want to work or they may choose to continue their education through a postsecondary education option (Alverson et al., 2019).

Students with disabilities must be proactive in working with IEP team members to create a successful transition to a postsecondary education option (Raines & Talapatra, 2019). Wadlington et al. (2017) found that most postsecondary education institutions do not participate in the transition planning process. In order for students with disabilities to make the transition to from high school to a postsecondary option, the transition team must work together to reach those specific goals of each individual student (Raines & Talapatra, 2019).

Students with disabilities are very diverse and have different likes, interests, strengths and needs (LDA, 2021). More recently, postsecondary education option for students with disabilities has become increasingly more accessible with laws protecting this particular population: The Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Dieterich et al., 2017). Theobald et al. (2021) found that students with disabilities who were exposed to different pathways in high school led them to further their education in some sort of college level program. The transition plan in the IEP allows students and their families to be proactive in planning for life after high school, including planning for postsecondary education options (LDA, 2021). On the other hand, Perryman et al. (2020) found that many students with disabilities reported that they received no transition planning services during their high school education. Therefore, it is important for students with disabilities to be proactive and plan for life after high school through the transition plan.

When a student with disabilities makes the goal that he or she wants to attend a postsecondary education institution, all team members must be involved, including the

postsecondary education institution (Wadlington et al., 2017). Wadlington et al. (2017) found that many of these institutions do not participate in the transition planning process, but that is no fault of the institution. Mask and DePountis (2018) reported that students with disabilities, who were successful in completing a bachelor's degree, collaborated with postsecondary education personnel while still in high school, prior to attending the institution. Not only should the goal to attend a postsecondary institution be indicated on the transition plan, there should be objectives and activities to support it (Mask & DePountis, 2018). Personnel from postsecondary institutions suggested that an updated comprehension evaluation along with the diagnosis of the student be provided to the institution, as well as past accommodations and modifications that were successful for the particular student (Wadlington et al., 2017). One key team member to help make this transition successful is the speech-language pathologist that can guide collaboration between the student with disabilities and others through successful and meaningful communication in order to facilitate independence in the student (Perryman et al., 2020). Overall, all IEP team members must be included in the transition planning process to help the student with disabilities make a positive transition from high school to a postsecondary option (Raines & Talapatra, 2019).

For a student with disabilities, the transition from high school to a postsecondary education program requires much support. Collaboration is a key factor in making the transition successful (Raines & Talapatra, 2019). Current laws support students with disabilities access and proper support in and through postsecondary education options (IDEA, 2004). It is imperative that the student, family, and teacher are proactive about

planning for the transition from the high school setting to life post high school, with whatever that entails for each individual student.

Different Ways to Teach Transition Skills

Snell-Rood et al. (2020) explain that transition skills include self-determination skills, job related skills, and independent living skills. These skills are taught to students with disabilities to prepare them for college, a career, and to live as independently as possible (Snell-Rood et al., 2020). Bartholomew and Griffin (2018) discuss how transition skills can be taught within the Common Core State Standards, so special education teachers are not losing valuable teaching time. Research shows that transition skills can be taught with the use of technology (Williams-Diehm et al., 2018). There are also multiple transition related curriculums that can help aide special education teachers to teach transition skills to their students with special needs (Flowers et al., 2018; Lingo et al., 2018). Like any other subject, transition skills can be taught in numerous ways both inside and outside of the classroom.

Because teachers are required to teacher transition skills to students with disabilities (IDEA, 2004), but it is not necessarily taught in a core class, it can be hard for special education teachers to find time for this area of instruction (Lingo et al., 2018). Ressa (2021) suggest that students with disabilities have a difficult time working toward their transition goals as well as keeping up with their curriculum. (Bartholomew and Griffin (2018) found that teachers can design transition skills instruction into the CCSS, so that students with disabilities acquire the needed transition skills as well as learn CCSS. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) checklists are another way that special

education teachers can integrate transition skills into CCSS (Bartholomew & Griffin, 2018). Teachers can utilize the UDL Secondary Transition Checklist in order to find areas that students with disabilities need further instruction, create lessons based off those areas, and finally, reflect on the outcome of those specific lessons (Bartholomew & Griffin, 2018).

The Collaborative Model for Promoting Competence and Success (COMPASS) is an evidence -based practice that provides structure in the classroom (Ruble et al., 2019). High school special education teachers were able to help students with disabilities achieve their transition goals when using COMPASS (Ruble et al., 2019). Another program that was found to be successful was Brain Injury Rehabilitation: Improving the Transition Experience (BRITE), which specifically helped students with traumatic brain injuries (Fann et al., 2021). Another program that was found successful in teaching transition skills was Virtual Interview Training for Transition Age Youth (VIT-TAY; Smith et al., 2021). VIT-TAY allowed students to practice transition skills, and the results found that the program was successful because students had a greater chance of finding employment once they completed the program (Smith et al., 2021). Overall, special education teachers need to be creative in coming up with ways to teach transition skills to their students with disabilities and can do so by integrating those skills into CCSS (Bartholomew & Griffin, 2018).

Technology has become very prevalent within the school culture and the 21st century in general (Williams-Diehm et al., 2018). Some have found that teaching transition skills with the use of technology was beneficial for students with disabilities to

learn these skills Flowers et al., 2018; Williams-Diehm et al., 2018). Flowers et al. (2018)

found that students with disabilities learned transition skills when they were able to use

and present their own strengths, needs, and goals through technology. Alverson et al.

(2019) found that some students with disabilities were able to improve their problem-

solving skills and generalize those skills with the use of technology. The *TechNow*

curriculum was a technology-based program that was found to help bridge the gap of

personal experiences with course content being presented in class (Williams-Diehm et al.,

2018). Rowe et al. (2018) noted that special education teachers need to teach students

how to safely navigate the internet and learn steps to find needed resources that relate to

transition. Overall, special education teachers can use technology to help teach transition

skills to their students with disabilities.

Like other subject areas, curriculums and models have been created to help high

school special education teachers teach transition skills to their students with disabilities.

COMPASS, as explained above, can be adapted to fit the transition skills and goals to

better help teachers implement for students (Rowe et al., 2019). Special education

teachers also reported that COMPASS was usable and was feasible to implement (Rowe

et al., 2019). Another curriculum, TechNow. was also shown to improve transition skills

and technology skills to students with disabilities (Williams-Diehm et al., 2018). If

teachers find that there is not enough time to teach transition skills, Lingo et al. (2018)

found that with just ten minutes per week, students with disabilities were able to improve

their transition knowledge with weekly instruction through the *ME! Bell Ringers*.

Students with disabilities were able to improve skills such as self-awareness, self-

advocacy, disabilities awareness, and IEP meeting skills (Lingo et al., 2018). A model

that helped improve transition skills in students with disabilities was the Communicating

Interagency Relationships and Collaborative Linkages for Exceptional Students

(CIRCLES), which provided opportunities for students with disabilities to work with

different services providers to learn new skills (Flowers et al., 2018). CIRCLES allowed

students with disabilities to learn self-determination and participate in their own IEP

meetings in order to learn transition skills needed for life after high school (Flowers et al.,

2018). Through transition skill curriculums and models, students with disabilities can be

taught transition skills in order to be prepared for the transition to life after high school

(Lingo et al., 2018; Rowe et al., 2019).

 According to IDEA 2004, it is necessary that special education teachers teach

students with disabilities transition skills. Special education teachers can do this through

a multitude of ways including incorporating the use of technology (Flowers et al., 2018;

Williams-Diehm et al., 2018) or using transition skills curriculums (Lingo et al., 2018;

Williams-Diehm et al., 2018). Special education teachers can also integrate transition

skills within the CCSS in order to teach transition skills to students with disabilities

(Bartholomew & Griffin, 2018). In conclusion, special education teachers can get

creative and teach transition skills to students with disabilities through a variety of

techniques.

Implications

 The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to gain an understanding of how

high school special education teachers individualize and carry out the transition plan in

the IEP as well as what tools or information they use to help them write the transition plan. By completing in-depth interviews with high school special education teachers, I gained an understanding of their individualization process of the transition plan, how they carry out the transition plan in their classrooms, and what tools and/or information they use to help guide their writing process of the transition plan for their students. Further, high school special education teachers had the opportunity to explain what can help them in the future when individualizing and carrying out the transition plan in the IEP.

The results of this project study led to areas of professional learning sessions and/or training sessions (see Appendix A) for special education teachers in the public schools in the Southeastern United States. Implementing new professional learning sessions and/or training sessions will allow teachers to gain an understanding of how to write individualized transition plans in the IEP and how to carry out the transition plan in the classroom. New professional learning sessions and/or training sessions might also allow the LEAs to be in compliance with state standards. Most importantly, individualized transition plans may allow students with special needs to have better postschool outcomes and be successful in life after high school.

Summary

Section 1 of this project study examined a problem in a public school district in the Southeast United States where high school special education teachers are not individualizing the transition plan in the IEP for their students. This section included a rationale for the study, definition of terms, the significance of the study, research questions that guided the study, and implications of the study. A detailed look at the

conceptual framework that guided this project study and a literature review of research articles that helped identify key issues are included. Section 2 of this project study includes information about the process to collect and analyze data as well as report the findings.

Section 2: The Methodology

In this section, I describe how I used a basic qualitative study design to understand the phenomenon of how high school special education teachers individualize and carry out the transition plan in the IEP as well as what tools or information they use to help them write it. I address the following areas: qualitative research design and approach, participants, data collection, data analysis, and data analysis results.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

The nature of this study is a basic qualitative study design of how high school special education teachers individualize and carry out the transition plan in the IEP as well as what tools or information they use to help them write it. I sought to gain insight into how high school special education teachers individualize the transition plan as well as how they use it in their classrooms to help guide their students through a smooth transition into life after high school. This also includes understanding what tools or information high school special education teachers use to help guide them to write the transition plan. This section includes an explanation of the research design and how and why the basic qualitative study was chosen for alignment of this study.

Research Design

Basic qualitative research allows the discovery of perceptions of a particular phenomenon, perspectives, or preferences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this project study, I wanted to understand the phenomenon of how high school special education teachers individualize and carry out the transition plan in the IEP as well as what tools or information they use to help them write it; therefore, a basic qualitative research design

was best to use with this study. The transition plan in the IEP should be individualized for each student based on his/her strengths, wants, and needs (LDA, 2021). The transition plan should be written to fit each individual student, so no two transition plans should be alike. Ravitch and Carl (2016) explained how, in qualitative research studies, the questions are based on the stakeholders involved in the particular phenomenon that are being researched. The following research questions were answered through this study:

RQ1: How do high school special education teachers individualize the transition plan?

RQ2: How do high school special education teachers carry out the transition plan?

RQ3: What tools or information do high school special education teachers use to help write the transition plan for each of their students?

Once these qualitative research questions were answered, there was an understanding of high school special education teachers' perspectives in regards to how they individualize and carry out the transition plan in the IEP as well as what tools or information they use to help them write it. I conducted in-depth interviews with high school special education teachers to further understand how they individualize and carry out the transition plan and understand what tools or information they use to guide them when writing it. Because special education teachers are responsible for writing the transition plan for each of their students, they have the most understanding about how to individualize it for each student based on their strengths and needs (LDA, 2021). A basic qualitative study approach was used to answer the three research questions (RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3) because this research design allowed for the description of a particular

phenomenon (Babbie, 2017), namely the techniques of understanding and writing the transition plan in the IEP.

Quantitative Versus Qualitative Research

The difference between the quantitative and qualitative research is that quantitative is numerical and qualitative is nonnumerical (Babbie, 2017). A quantitative study measures variables and numbers and involves relationships between independent and dependent variables (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative study includes one where the researcher wants to understand theories or beliefs through relationships based on a certain topic (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Because I am not looking to measure something or collect numerical data, a quantitative study would not be appropriate. In this study, a qualitative study was fitting because I sought to understand how high school special education teachers understand and implement the transition plan in the IEP.

Justification for Basic Study Design

Other qualitative designs were considered for this study, such as case study research, grounded theory research, and phenomenological research. A case study required multiple sources of data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), not just interviews like in this study. In grounded theory research, a theory is derived from the collected data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), but in this project study, I wanted to understand a particular way that teachers performed a task. Phenomenological research is "to understand an individuals' lived experiences" (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 24), whereas in this study, I sought to understand how and why individuals do something. The basic qualitative study design allowed me to discover perceptions of a particular phenomenon, perspectives, or

preferences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, a basic qualitative study design was used for this study.

<div align="center">**Criteria for Selecting Participants**</div>

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

Participants were employed at a public school district in the Southeast United States where I was employed. There were five high schools in this district, and the participants who were selected did not work at the same high school where I was employed. After consent from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB; approval number 11-20-20-0731287), local board of education, and the principal of each participating high school, I contacted potential special education teacher participants via email. I sent out an email to all possible participants that explained the project study and their role in the study. The first 12 teachers who responded to the email were selected to participate in the in-depth interviews. This type of purposeful sampling allowed me to select participants who were experienced and knowledgeable (Ravich & Carl, 2016) in the transition plan and who were the most representative (Babbie, 2017).

Number of Participants

According to an employee in the human resources department, out of about 250 special education teachers in a public school district in the Southeast United States, approximately 49 teachers met the following criteria:

- were employed in a particular public school district in the Southeast United States

- were high school special education teachers with at least 1 full year of teaching special education in the high school setting

- had at least 1 full year of experience in writing the transition plan in the IEP

- had at least 1 full year of experience of implementing the transition plan in the IEP for high school students with disabilities

Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select participants who are experienced and knowledgeable with a phenomenon of interest (Ravich & Carl, 2016) and that will be most useful and representative (Babbie, 2017). I used purposeful sampling in this project study to identify the teachers who were willing and able to participate in this project study. First, all possible 49 participants who met the criteria above were notified of the project study via email. The first 12 teachers to respond and sign the consent form willingly participated in the project study. When those 12 teachers were identified, I ensured their availability and continued with the study by setting up an interview time. Finally, one-on-one, in-depth interviews were the form of data collection used for this study. Due to COVID-19, the participants had the option to complete a face-to-face interview or video call interview. All participants chose the video call interview. Each in-depth interview took approximately 1 hour, as expected.

Researcher-Participant Working Relationship

I have been a part of this school district for about 7 years. I have seen many of the teachers in district-wide trainings. Although I have seen many of these teachers, I only consider our relationships that of an acquaintance. I have always been kind, quiet, and friendly when at those district-wide trainings. In order to build trust and rapport with the

12 selected participants, I needed to be an active listener, show concern, ask questions, and continue to be friendly and kind. Going forward, I may cross paths with one of the 12 selected participants. All of the interviews went smoothly, and I would expect a friendly wave or short conversation.

Ethical Protection

After obtaining consent from the Walden University IRB, the board of education of the district, and the principal of each of the four schools, I obtained teacher consent for personal in-depth interviews. Participants signed a consent agreeing to participate in the interview or interviews, if needed. No second interviews were needed. Participants understood that they had the right to stop or withdraw from the study at any time. All participants' information and interviews are and will continue to be kept confidential. They are labeled by using numbers instead of names (for example: Interviewee 1).

<div align="center">

Data Collection

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In-Depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with each participant. Due to COVID-19, the participant had the option to complete a face-to-face interview or a video call interview, with audio only or audio and video. The participants had these options due to the size of the school district and having personal commitments. All participants chose the video call interview. With permission of the participant, the in-depth interview was recorded and transcribed using a recording application on a cellular phone. Each participant was assigned a number and was referred to as a number, for example Interviewee 3, during the interview and in the data of the project study to show anonymity. The interviews were

semistructured with planned-out questions (see Appendix B), but I did ask further

questions for clarification or more information.

Member Checking

Member checking was used as a trustworthiness and credibility strategy. Member

checking is described as participant validation and allows qualitative researchers to

establish credibility (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I provided transcripts to each participant

within 1 week of the interview. If needed, a second follow-up interview or phone

conference was to take place to clarify any questions or misconceptions the participant or

I may have had. No follow-up interviews were needed.

Access to Participants

I am currently a teacher in the public school district in the Southeast United

States, so I was able to access other teachers by working with the human resources

department in the district upon approval from the IRB, the board of education, and the

principal of each school. After approval from these three groups, an employee from the

human resources department sent me email addresses to 49 high school special education

teachers in the district who met the requirements listed above.

By working with the human resources department of the school district, I was able

to find the teachers who had already met these requirements, which is how I used

purposeful sampling. In the email I sent to the participants, they were asked to verify the

requirements before being selected for the study. I felt that these qualifications would

allow the participants an adequate amount of experience to understand how to write the

transition plan and implement the transition plan for their students. Once the participant

gave consent, I worked with the participant to arrange a time for each individual interview.

Role of the Researcher

I have been a special education teacher for 10 years and teaching in the high school for the past 7 years. In this project study, I worked in the same district as the participants. I did not have a supervisory role in the school, nor over the participants. The participants were high school special education teachers and held no supervisory role in the school either. All teachers in the district received the same training as a new teacher or tenured teacher every year; therefore, all the participants had the same trainings.

As the researcher, I needed to take a step back out of the teacher role and step into a researcher role when I participated in the in-depth interviews. This allowed me to dig deeper into why the participants feel a certain way instead of assuming. I had to listen and ask questions to understand the participants' point-of-views. I did not try to defend the school district or other teachers, nor did I agree or disagree with the participants in order to avoid biases of the school district or myself. I was respectful, honored promises, and put no pressure on the participants, so they were comfortable and not harmed when participating in the interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I was and continue to be a safeguard to the participants and their responses from the interview. By doing these things as a researcher, I was able to obtain the most accurate data.

Data Analysis

How and When the Data Will Be Analyzed

As soon as approval was granted from the IRB, the school's board of education, and the principals at the participating schools, I started contacting participants to set up interviews. In-depth interviews took place as soon as possible. Each interview was recorded and transcribed during the interview using an application on my phone. Within 24 hours, I double-checked the interview to the scribed notes. Within 1 week, I provided a copy of the notes to the participant. If the participant or I wanted a follow-up interview, it would have been scheduled as soon as time permitted, but no follow-up interviews were needed. Member checking ensured that the data was credible.

The human capital theory refers to having useful skills and knowledge to perform a specific task (Schultz, 1961). In this project study, I looked to find how high school special education teachers individualize and carry out the transition plan in the IEP as well as what tools or information they use to help them write it. The correlation to the human capital theory and each research question has been laid out in Table 1.

Table 1

Research Questions and Relation to Conceptual Framework

	Research question	Correlation to framework
RQ1	How do high school special education teachers individualize the transition plan?	Individualized skills
RQ1	How do high school special education teachers individualize the transition plan?	Writing as a useful skill
RQ2	How do high school special education teachers carry out the transition plan?	Implementation skills
RQ3	What tools or information do high school special education teachers use to help write the transition plan for each of their students?	Useful skills

Evidence of Quality and Data Analysis Procedures

The purpose of this project study was to seek information about how high school special education teachers individualize and carry out the transition plan in the IEP as well as what tools or information they use to help them write it. Once the data were collected, coding allowed me to group and organize the data into a pattern, so I could easily understand and present it (Saldaña, 2016). For this project study, I used descriptive coding. Descriptive codes summarize a section in just a word or a few words (Saldaña, 2016). The descriptive codes allowed my data to be summarized into literal terms that I organized into themes that answered the research questions.

The research questions I sought to answer in this project study were as follows:

RQ1: How do high school special education teachers individualize the transition

plan?

RQ2: How do high school special education teachers carry out the transition plan?

RQ3: What tools or information do high school special education teachers use to

help write the transition plan for each of their students?

To code the data from the interviews, I sorted and categorized the transcribed notes into priori codes that were aligned with the research questions. Subcategories were developed for each code, as needed. As I analyzed the data, I developed inductive codes, as needed.

Discrepant Cases

A discrepant case is a piece of data that does not fit with a particular patten that the rest of the data follows (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In this case, there seemed to be two interviews that did not agree with the majority. Interviewee 2 and Interviewee 5 discussed how they had useful tools and adequate help to write and carry out the transition plan. Interviewee 2 said that the transition plan was not hard to write, although she felt it was redundant throughout the entire IEP. "I have plenty of resources and tools, but the way we write our plan is redundant and confusing for parents" (Interviewee 2). Another interviewee, Interviewee 6, also felt that he had plenty of resources to go around when it comes to transition. "We do have very adequate support to help us write good transition plans" (Interviewee 6). Both of these interviewees talked about how they rely on the school's special education consultant if there are any questions regarding the transition plan. Overall, these two interviewees felt that they were equipped with the proper tools to

write and carry out the transition plan. Member checking did ensure that the data was credible, but there still seemed to be two discrepant cases. These discrepant cases are also noted in the data analysis.

Limitations

There were some limitations to this study. Because the research took place in a public school district in the Southeast United States, the data only provided a small and limited view of the transition plan. Because the transition plan is a federal law (IDEA, 2014), each state and even school district should have their own trainings and techniques for high school special education teachers to continue their learning on the transition plan. Overall, this training will vary from state to state as well as district to district. Actually, the transition plan is set up differently in different states, but all the goals and major concepts must be included. Finally, the scope of this study was small and will need to be replicated to confirm findings.

<div align="center">**Data Analysis Results**</div>

The purpose of this study was to seek information about how high school special education teachers individualize and carry out the transition plan in the IEP as well as what tools or information they use to help them write it. Twelve high school special education teachers volunteered in-depth answers through interviews about their current experiences with the transition and how they utilize it with their students. The results are as follows.

Process for Finding Data Results

Because I was a teacher in the school district where I conducted the study, I was able to work with the human resources department in the district upon IRB approval, approval from the board of education, and the principal of each school. After approval from these three groups, a representative from the human resources department of the board of education gave me names and email addresses to 49 high school special education teachers in the district that met the following requirements:

- were employed in a particular public school district in the Southeast United States

- were high school special education teachers with at least one full year of teaching special education in the high school setting

- had at least one full year of experience in writing the transition plan in the IEP

- had at least one full year of experience of implementing the transition plan in the IEP for high school students with disabilities

By working with the human resources department of the school district, I was able to find the teachers that had already met these requirements, which is how I used purposeful sampling. There were 49 teachers that met these criteria and were emailed an introduction to the researcher and a brief outline of the research project. In the email, the participant was asked to verify the requirements before being selected for the study. The first 12 teachers that responded, verified the requirements, and agreed to participate in the study became the participants for the study. Data collection started on December 7, 2020 and ended on January 21, 2021. Each of the 12 in-depth interviews was held via Zoom,

due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Within 24 hours of each interview, I transcribed the participant's responses and emailed the transcript to the interviewee for transcript verification. All interviewees approved their transcripts via email within seven days of receiving the transcript.

Summary of Themes

After all interviewees approved their transcripts, I developed descriptive codes by highlighting commonalities across all transcripts. Once all of the 12 transcripts were coded, five themes emerged that some or most transcripts had in common. The themes were (a) individualizing; (b) carrying out; (c) new knowledge about the transition plan; (d) preparing students and families; and (e) information, tool, and support. These five themes are explained below.

Review of Findings

The findings from the in-depth interview are explained below. The following research questions guided this project study:

RQ1: How do high school special education teachers individualize the transition plan?

RQ2: How do high school special education teachers carry out the transition plan?

RQ3: What tools or information do high school special education teachers use to help write the transition plan for each of their students?

Individualizing

When looking at individualizing the transition plan, high school special education teachers used many different resources. The interviewees seemed to gain as much

information as they could in order to write an appropriate transition plan for each student. Half of the teachers said they used some sort of questionnaire or student survey to help get to know the student. At least four teachers said they would interview the student before writing their transition plan in order to understand his/her goals and future plans. Other items that interviewees used to help them individualize the transition plan included using the students' levels of ability, needs, interests, and previous testing information. It is interesting to note that Interviewee 10 said, "I don't individualize the transition plan. I use a template from the county to fill it out."

Carrying Out

When carrying out the transition plan, high school special education teachers had similar skills. All of the interviewees mentioned that in order to carry out the transition plan, they would have the students complete their transition goals and activities. Only four teachers said that they helped their students complete their transition goals one-on-one or followed-up with the student to discuss their goals and next steps. Three teachers said that they would implement the transition goals through daily living tasks. Interviewee 8 added, "You integrate [the transition plan] into your daily activities, and you make sure the students are exposed to those skills that they can carry over after high school." Overall, the teachers knew that they had to complete the transition goals by the end of the IEP date, which were measured through the progress report sent home each quarter.

Approximately half of the teachers said that they have their students complete the transition goals in the study skills class, but the other half wanted more time to focus on

carrying out the transition plan. "If a student has study skills, there is enough time for them to work on the transition plan because the study skills teachers are actively working on it" (Interviewee 10). The study skills class allowed the student and teacher to look at their transition plan goals while not missing academic classes. Interviewee 12 stated, "It is hard finding time during the day for those kids whose parents can't get them to school earlier because they are working bell to bell in their academics." Three teachers talked about how they would like to see a transition skills class, so their students could learn more about transition planning, rather than just looking at a few transition goals each year.

New Knowledge About the Transition Plan

When learning about changes or new knowledge within the transition plan, the majority (11 interviewees) of the high school special education teachers relied on their special education chair in their school to inform the teachers about it. "Typically, our LEA would get information from the office of exceptional children, which is usually very good at keeping us all aware of what is going on in the state department" (Interviewee 5). Interviewee 11 said that her special education chair would also show a few examples of the changes. Interviewee 4 added that she learned about changes in the transition plan through Professional Development and/or Trainings through their district. One interviewee said that he would find his own information through the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), which is a professional organization that provides professional development.

Preparing Students and Families

At least seven high school special education teachers noted that they needed to be realistic with their students when transition planning. The goals that are written in the transition plan need to be small steps that are obtainable in one year. "I find that when we develop goals that are obtainable and relevant to the situation they are in; it helps the student transition better and be more successful" (Interviewee 9). By having realistic future plans, the goals can be reachable by the student. Interviewee 7 offered information to the students about available resources because some students might not know what options they have. Interviewee 10 said that she does not feel like the transition plan really helps the students to make the transition to life after high school, but she would try to help the students think about realistic goals that they could plan for.

All of the interviewees agreed that when it comes to transition planning, the families should be included in the discussion. Five teachers who were interviewed said that they would talk to the family about the transition plan during the annual IEP meeting. "This is a good time each year to discuss current interests and goals," stated Interviewee 7. Four of the teachers talked about how the students' goals and future plans can change throughout high school, so the most important thing to understand was that the transition plan is not set-in stone and can change over the years.

Information, Tools, and Support

High school special education teachers found their information to write the transition plan in a variety of ways. Seven teachers said they found information through the inventories and interviews that were given to the students. Two teachers said they

found information from observations and data collection. But it was interesting to note that two interviewees said they usually had to conduct their own research to gain information in order to write the transition plan. Interviewee 2 stated, "It is not hard to write the transition plan, but our county provides little help and limited tools to write a useful transition plan." Also, Interviewee 1 said that they would like to see more training in this area because they felt like they did not have adequate information to help them write a transition plan.

Including student surveys and inventories, the teachers noted other tools that helped them write the transition plan. Two interviewees said that they would use Google to help them answer questions. One interviewee said that she would consult with other colleagues if she needed help. Five interviewees said that they would use guidance from the county. Interviewee 3 said that the county provided a goal bank for the transition plan, so it was pretty easy to just write in goals for each grade level. Interviewee 6 said that nobody really talks about the transition plan as a useful tool for the students, so they often have to make their own materials.

Nine interviewees said that they had some resources, but there was definitely a need for more. One interviewee said that the county provided a two-page list of resources that teachers could look through to help write the transition plan. Interviewee 4 stated, "It's my job as a teacher to be resourceful, so I have to find the resources and answers to do what has to be done." Another interviewee discussed that there was a need for a transition specialist, like other counties in the surrounding counties had. One interviewee said he would consult with the guidance office for postsecondary resources if he felt that

his student was interested in the college path. Ten of the interviewees agreed that there was a need for more training and/or resources to help write and carry out the transition plan.

When asked if teachers had enough tools and support to write and carry out the transition plan, many were hesitant to answer. I found that interviewees were unsure of where to look if they needed help or guidance and just depended on their own research or by asking a colleague. The interviewees shared that the transition plan was not really talked about, and it was more of an afterthought. Two interviewees felt like the transition plan was just another part of the IEP that was required and wasn't really helpful for teachers, students, and families. It was also noted that about three teachers said they did the bare minimum, even though it might not be individualized or suitable for the student. Most of the interviewees mentioned the same tools and resources that were given out by the county, but they all discussed the need for more time, help, and tools in order to write and carry out effective transition plans in the IEP. Overall, it was found that more guidance and more time was needed to write and carry out effective transition plans.

Salient Data

It should be noted that there were two interviewees who did not agree with the majority; they related that they did not have adequate help and enough tools to write and carry out the transition plan. Interviewee 2 and Interviewee 5 discussed how they had useful tools and adequate help to write and carry out the transition plan. Interviewee 2 said that the transition plan was not hard to write, although she felt it was redundant throughout the entire IEP. "I have plenty of resources and tools, but the way we write our

plan is redundant and confusing for parents" (Interviewee 2). Another interviewee,

Interviewee 6, also felt that he had plenty of resources to go around when it comes to

transition. "We do have very adequate support to help us write good transition plans"

(Interviewee 6). Both of these interviewees talked about how they rely on the school's

special education consultant if there are any questions regarding the transition plan.

Overall, these two interviewees felt that they were equipped with the proper tools to write

and carry out the transition plan.

Transcript Verification

After each in-depth interview, the interviewee received a transcript of the

interview via email within 24 hours (see example in Appendix C). The interviewee was

asked to approve the transcript by responding to the email within seven days. All

transcripts were approved within the given timeframe. I kept a log of all the dates each

interview was scheduled, the date the transcript was sent, and the date that the transcript

was approved.

Outcomes in Relation to the Problem

The problem that this study addressed is that transition plans in the IEP have been

found incomplete and/or not individualized for many high school students with

disabilities in a public school district in the Southeast United States. According to IDEA,

the transition plan needs to be written so it is personalized and meaningful for each

student in order to allow them to have successful postschool outcomes (LDA, 2021). A

summary of the findings that answer the research questions are explained below:

RQ1: How do high school special education teachers individualize the transition plan?

The interviewees wanted to gain as much information as they could in order to write appropriate transition plans. One way they did this was by interviewing the student and assessing their level of ability, needs, interests, and previous testing information. One interviewee noted that a template was used to create the transition plan for each student.

RQ2: How do high school special education teachers carry out the transition plan?

In order to carry out the transition plan, interviewees had students complete their transition goals and activities. They would implement activities through daily living tasks during school hours. Some interviewees noted that a transition skills class would be beneficial for all students.

RQ3: What tools or information do high school special education teachers use to help write the transition plan for each of their students?

The majority of interviewees said that they relied on their special education chair to gain new information or knowledge about the transition plan. Some interviewees said they usually had to conduct their own research to gain information in order to write the transition plan and another interviewee wanted to see more training in this area because they felt like they did not have adequate information to help them write a transition plan. It was found that teachers are given goal banks and outlines to use as guides when writing transition plans. Also, teachers do not have enough time to carry out the transition plan throughout the regular school day. Overall, my research shows that high school special education teachers in a public school district in the Southeast United States are not are not well-equipped with the proper tools and information to help them write and carry out

effective transition plans; therefore, transition plans are found incomplete and/or not individualized for each student.

Research Project

Overall, high school special education teachers said that they wanted more support and tools to help them write and carry out the transition plan; therefore, professional development pertaining to the transition plan will be valuable for teachers in the district. Through the training, high school special education teachers can learn more about the transition plans, what services the county has to offer, how to be creative in individualizing the transition plan, and how to carry out the transition plan for each student. With completion of the training, all of the high school special education teachers in the district would receive the same training and would likely understand the same expectations about writing and carrying out the transition plan in the IEP.

Section 3: The Project

For the final project of this study, I created a 3-day professional development course for high school special education teachers. Throughout this section, I will refer to the person in charge of conducting the training course the *trainer* and the attendees completing the professional development course the *teachers*. The professional development course contains three PowerPoint presentations with trainer notes, interactive breakout sessions and two forms of evaluations. The goals of this professional development course are the following:

Goal 1: To learn what the transition plan in the IEP is and who it is for.

Goal 2: To learn how to write the transition plan in the IEP.

Goal 3: To learn how to use the transition plan in the IEP.

Rationale

The problem that this study addressed was that transition plans in the IEP have been found to be incomplete and/or not individualized for many high school students with disabilities in a public school district in the Southeast United States. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of how high school special education teachers understand and implement the transition plan in order to prepare high school students with disabilities for life after high school. The human capital theory in education has provided a framework for this study. The human capital in education refers to having useful skills and knowledge to perform a specific task (Schultz, 1961). This framework can be applied across all areas of this study, including going forward with a professional

development course that will give teachers the right training and tools to individualize and implement the transition plan.

A professional development course was chosen because the interviewees did not receive training or tools regarding the transition plan from the same place. As noted in Section 2, the data analysis showed that many interviewees talked about how they found information about the transition plan from conducting their own research or by Googling any questions that had. Also, one interviewee said that they would like to see more training in this area because they felt like they did not have adequate information to help them write a transition plan. Providing a professional development course for high school special education teachers will give the right tools and information to help these teachers individualize and implement transition plans in their classroom. Also, the teachers can refer back to the professional development course instead of having to rely on their own research.

Review of the Literature

To further my insight into professional development for teachers, I conducted literature searches using online databases through the Walden Library. The databases that were most instrumental in my search included ERIC and Sage. Search terms used included *career development, professional development, special education,* and *teachers*. I ran multiple searches through Walden's Library to find literature on professional development for teachers and started finding themes on appropriate and adequate professional development trainings. The following literature review is arranged into four subsections on the themes that I saw as suitable for teacher professional development:

The Continual Need for Professional Development, Why Teachers Need Professional Development, Types of Professional Development, and Effective and Successful Professional Development.

The Continual Need for Professional Development

The continual need for professional development for any and all teachers is apparent in current research (Kervick et al., 2020; McLeskey et al., 2019; Smith & Robinson, 2020). After teachers complete their preparation program, the further need for more training or education (professional development) is mandated by the state or district (Teacher.org, 2021). Professional development gives teachers the opportunity to participate in ongoing learning through collaboration (Kervick et al., 2020), evidence-based practices (Hubbard et al., 2020), and learning and practicing new opportunities (Garberoglio et al., 2020). Because our world has more recently become more digital, professional development opportunities can be found almost anywhere (Trust & Prestridge, 2021). It is ultimately up to the teacher or school district to decide what professional development opportunities the teacher will partake in.

Professional development is a type of education for teachers that is required for certification renewal (Teacher.org, 2021). It is usually offered by the district as there is a need on certain topics (Smith & Robinson, 2020). Kervick et al. (2020) found that through professional development, teachers were given time to collaborate and build communities with in the school culture. In their case study, Kervick et al. (2020) noted throughout that leadership of the principal played a large role in creating these environments and promoting teacher buy-in. Hubbard et al. (2020) noted that

professional development allowed teachers to learn evidence-based practices and content in order to understand the constant change and need of students. It was found that teachers needed more time to practice their lessons before they taught them in the classroom (Hubbard et al., 2020), which would be achievable during professional development.

Further, professional development provides opportunities for teachers that are crucial to their practice that provide instruction for the best interest of students' success (Garberoglio et al., 2020; Morris-Matthews et al., 2021). Garberoglio et al. (2020) found that professional development was needed to help teachers learn and practice new strategies. For example, new teachers needed training to help students who were deaf (Garberoglio et al., 2020). In another case study (Kervick et al., 2020), teachers and staff were provided with professional development opportunities to implement a system to create a positive school culture and reduce disciplinary practices. Teachers wanted refresher courses as they implemented the system, so that the school would stay on the same page throughout the year (Kervick et al., 2020). A final example is that teachers were provided with professional development opportunities about students with disabilities (Morris-Matthews et al., 2021) or who were multilingual (Molle, 2021), it led to more support for these particular students in the classroom. These examples can be used in any new circumstance where the teacher has not had formal training for a particular topic.

Even though professional development is required, some teachers use these opportunities to learn content of their choice (Teacher.org, 2021). Trust and Prestridge

(2021) found that teachers are not waiting for the next professional development day because opportunities are so readily available. The world has become more virtual than ever, but this is also cause for alarm (Trust and Prestridge, 2021). Hubbard et al. (2020) noted that there are so many resources and different professional development opportunities that it is hard to know the best use of the teachers' time. Molle (2021) found that even during professional development, teachers had learning differences due to social and sociocognitive factors. Overall, the district must be proactive in what they want their teachers to learn each year.

In conclusion, professional development is continually needed for teachers when they are practicing in their profession (Kervick et al., 2020; McLeskey et al., 2019; Smith & Robinson, 2020). Because it is usually required through the state, each district can guide their teachers on what professional development opportunities to participate in (Teachers.org, 2021). There are a multitude of professional development opportunities and formats that hold a different focus for all types of teachers. Even though professional development can be found just about anywhere (Trust & Prestridge, 2021), these opportunities can allow teachers to learn and partake in formal training that will ultimately benefit their students.

Why Teachers Need Professional Development

Professional development is one part of teachers' responsibilities that helps build their capacity and qualifies them to perform (Johnson, 2020). Teachers need professional development for a multitude of reasons. It allows teachers to understand what they are teaching (Appelgate et al., 2020; Hallman-Thrasher et al., 2020) and creates learning

opportunities for both teachers and students (Byrd & Alexander, 2020). It provides

suitable work environments (Bettini et al., 2020) and allows teachers to gain self-

confidence in their profession (Francois, 2020). And, due to an ever-changing world,

professional development provides teachers with updated information to keep them

prepared and ready for each new school year (McLeskey et al., 2019).

Appelgate et al. (2020) and Hallman-Thrasher et al. (2020) found that

professional development helps teachers gain a deeper understanding of what they are

teaching. Appelgate et al. looked at utilizing professional development sessions as lesson

studies, which allowed collaboration and reflection among current teaching styles and

strategies. When teachers used this time to look at student work samples, teachers were

"exposed to the full spectrum of children's thinking" (Appelgate et al., 2020, p. 603).

This allowed the teacher to understand how the student perceived the information as well

as gaining a better understanding of the curriculum themselves (Appelgate et al., 2020).

Hallman-Thrasher et al. also found that teachers who participated in professional

development were able to strengthen their knowledge within their content. Teachers were

given an opportunity to collaborate, explain, and critique current practices, and by doing

so, teachers were able develop and enrich their current understanding (Hallman-Thrasher

et al., 2020) These examples of professional development (Appelgate et al., 2020;

Hallman-Thrasher et al., 2020) allowed teachers to better understand their curriculum,

which gave the students better learning opportunities.

When looking at better learning opportunities for both teachers and students, Byrd

and Alexander (2020) explained that students are provided with more opportunity when

teachers are allowed professional development. For example, when general education

teachers completed professional development about students with disabilities, they were

more knowledgeable and more comfortable with having students with disabilities in their

classes (Byrd & Alexander, 2020). Hallman-Thrasher et al. (2020) also explained that

when a teacher is better equipped with multiple ways of understanding different problem-

solving strategies, the student can benefit because it gives them different views as well.

Even if content is already presented one way, students learn better by having more than

one way of teaching (Hallman-Thrasher et al., 2020). Ultimately, professional

development allows teachers to provide students with a better education.

It has been noted that professional development provides suitable work

environments for teachers (Bettini et al., 2020). Douglas et al. (2021) found that when

teachers participate in professional development together, the teachers were able to test

new practices and create goals for themselves and students. This allowed for

collaboration within the school and the opportunity for shared knowledge for their

students (Douglass et al., 2021). Bettini et al. (2020) found that when teachers were given

the proper tools during professional development to use in the classroom, they were

better equipped to teach and more likely to stay in their role from year to year. On the

other hand, Woulfin and Jones (2021) found that unplanned or unrelative professional

development can lead to poor teacher retention rates.

It has been found that professional development can lead to confidence in

teaching (Douglass, 2021; Francois, 2020). When teachers can be confident in what they

are teaching, they are more likely to stay in their career. Francois (2020) found that

teachers who participated in professional development were more self-confident than before professional development. Woulfin and Jones (2021) also noted that professional development leads to teachers' self-confidence by helping to develop specialized skills. Finally, McLeskey et al. (2019) discussed the importance of professional development in order to learn changes in education. It allows teachers the opportunity to improve their current practice in the classroom.

Overall, teachers need professional development opportunities to continue a growth mindset (Burton, 2020). Burton (2020) noted that a growth mindset happened when teachers were able to collaborate and share information during professional development, which led to better opportunities for all teachers. Professional development has also provided a better understanding of content for teachers (Appelgate et al., 2020), learning opportunities for teachers (Byrd & Alexander, 2020), and more self-confidence in teachers (Douglass, 2021). Teachers need professional development to allow new opportunities for their students (Byrd & Alexander, 2020) and to keep up-to-date on new and improved information (McLeskey et al., 2019). Professional development betters the teacher as a whole, which allows the student to succeed.

Types of Professional Development

Fortunately, there are many types of professional development opportunities for teachers (Hubbard et al., 2020). Cardina and DeNysschen (2018) found that many teachers participate in workshops, conferences, or training sessions. Different types of professional development, such as literacy coaching (Cutrer-Párraga et al., 2020) or individualized professional development (Green et al., 2019) have been found effective

for teachers. Also, Green et al. (2019) found that how often teachers receive professional development played a factor in the effectiveness of the training. Whether teachers participate in professional development on their own (Trust & Prestridge, 2021) or partake in these opportunities through their school or district, there are many options to choose from.

There are many different types of professional development that teachers can participate in (Hubbard et al, 2020). Some schools might have literacy coaches who provide professional development for teachers (Cutrer-Párraga et al., 2020). These coaches would help individual teachers who are resisting a change or who need extra help to understand or implement a concept (Cutrer-Párraga et al., 2020). Appelgate et al. (2020) looked at lesson study as professional development. A lesson study is where teachers come together and look at a certain concept to develop teachers' knowledge about how the students might understand the concept in order to prepare teachers to teach the concept (Appelgate et al., 2020). Other strategies that have been found effective are the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (Douglass et al., 2021) and Restorative Practices (Kervick et al., 2020). Overall, professional development opportunities can be found in formats such as workshops, conferences, or training sessions (Cardina & DeNysschen, 2018) and can be for an individual or for groups (Green et al., 2019).

There are different reasons that teachers may want to participate in professional development. For example, teachers needed professional development when learning about Common Core State Standards (Hubbard et al., 2020). Green et al. (2019) completed a study where teachers learned about positive behavior interventions through

professional development, which was found to be effective. Some teachers completed professional development for the curriculum they are teaching, such as math (Appelgate et al., 2020). Douglass et al. (2021) looked at professional development for teachers to understand trauma-informed care, which has become increasingly needed since the COVID-19 pandemic. New teachers also feel more confident when they were allowed professional development opportunities during their first year of teaching (Cardina & DeNysschen, 2018).

There is an array of different factors in which teachers might choose to participate in professional development opportunities. Prestridge (2019) found that teachers' actions to seek professional development on an individual level are influenced by their goals, time, and their comfort or confidence with digital learning. Trust and Prestridge (2021) also note that relationships and support with their coworkers inside of the school setting played a factor in choosing professional development opportunities. Green et al. (2019) found that timing played a role in understanding the concept; for example, teachers preferred weekly in-person sessions, but at most, bi-monthly in-person sessions were found adequate. Also, a mixture of both in-person sessions and electronic information helped keep the teachers refreshed on new concepts (Green et al., 2019).

The topics that professional development cover are infinite. Teachers can learn about many educational matters such as positive behavior interventions (Green et al., 2019), teaching mathematics (Appelgate et al., 2020), literacy skills (Smith & Robinson, 2020), physical education (Cardina & DeNysschen, 2018), and restorative practices (Kervick et al., 2020) just to name a few. Trust and Prestridge (2019) discussed that

teachers can find professional development opportunities basically anywhere, in either a

digital format or in-person. Many factors also play a role in which teachers partake in

professional learning opportunities (Prestridge, 2019). Overall, it is important for teachers

to participate in professional development, not only because of state mandates

(Teacher.org, 2021) but also because these opportunities allow teachers to continue to

learn and develop (Garberoglio et al., 2020)

Effective and Successful Professional Development

Even though professional development is required for teachers (Teacher.org,

2021), it is valuable for them to participate in ongoing learning (Kervick et al., 2020).

Successful professional development allows teachers to benefit (Colson et al., 2021).

Studies (Colson et al., 2021; Cornelius et al., 2020) have been conducted to find the

extent of effective and successful professional development. Other factors that led to

effective and successful professional development were time for collaboration and

sufficient time (Billingsley et al., 2019). Further, Martin et al. (2019), Peterson-Ahmad et

al. (2018), and Shaw (2020) found that teachers' input for their own professional

development was beneficial.

Colson et al. (2021) found that professional development was effective when

teachers showed improvement in some way after completing professional development

(Colson et al., 2021). For example, after teachers participated in professional

development about co-teaching, they reported feeling more efficacious in engaging

students and classroom management (Colson et al., 2021). Cornelius et al. (2020) found

that professional development was successful when it was individualized for each teacher

based on their strengths and needs. It was also successful when it was changed over time to fit the needs of the teachers (Cornelius et al., 2020). Billingsley et al. (2019) conducted a study on how professional development can help teachers. It was found that when teachers have a sufficient amount of time to collaborate with other teachers and to complete professional development sessions, it was shown to be successful and effective (Billingsley et al., 2019).

Martin et al. (2019) reported that teachers should be able to direct their own professional development by giving input to the latest classroom initiatives. Peterson-Ahmad et al. (2018) found that teachers prefer to choose their own professional learning topics based on what they learned during their preservice preparation programs. Shaw (2020) backs this research in that teachers learned best when they could foster their own professional development. Further, teachers benefitted greatly when they could create their own professional learning communities, which allowed teachers to share knowledge and create support in professional development opportunities (Shaw, 2020). In general, when teachers have input in their own professional learning, it becomes successful overall (Martin et al., 2019).

Kervick et al. (2020) reported that professional development can be continual learning for teachers to develop new practices. Overall, professional development has been shown to be successful and effective (Colson et al., 2021; Cornelius et al., 2020). When teachers are given the proper amount of time, professional development can be both successful and effective (Billingsley et al., 2019). Also, it has been found to be beneficial when teachers have input in their own professional development (Martin et al.,

2019). In conclusion, studies have proved that professional development can be effective and successful for teachers (Colson et al., 2021; Cornelius et al., 2020).

Project Description

For the final project of this study, I created a 3-day professional development course for high school special education teachers. The recommended class size would be about 20-40 teachers. The professional development course contains three PowerPoint presentations with trainer notes, one for each day of the course. Interactive breakout sessions are throughout the PowerPoint, and all needed materials are included. There are also two forms of self-evaluations: a formative evaluation and a summative evaluation, which are for the teacher and not required for course completion. The goals of this professional development are as follows:

Goal 1: To learn what the transition plan in the IEP is and who it is for.

Goal 2: To learn how to write the transition plan in the IEP.

Goal 3: To learn how to use the transition plan in the IEP.

The professional development course can be completed in-person or virtually. The materials that are required for an in-person training are the professional development course that is located in Appendix A, printouts of the breakout sessions, pens or pencils, tables and chairs, and an open event space. The materials that are recommended for an in-personal training are a computer, a projector, printouts of the PowerPoints and schedule, and internet access. The materials that are required for a virtual session are the professional development course, a computer, and internet access. It is recommended that breakout materials are shared via email or mail with the teachers prior to the start of the

course. For both in-person sessions and virtual sessions, it is recommended that all course materials are shared with the teachers after completion of the course.

Potential barriers for an in-person session are finding the right space, the size of the class, no or slow internet connection, and technology or projector issues. Some suggestions for these barriers would be to plan ahead and know how many people are expected to attend the training as well as setting up early, before teachers start arriving. Potential barriers for a virtual session are no or slow internet connection, and technology issues. Some suggestions or these barriers would be to plan ahead test the internet connection before starting the training course. Other potential barriers for both in-person and virtual sessions might include lack of participation from teachers, interest level of teachers, and attendance of teachers. Solutions for these barriers would be encouraging and positive as the trainer and to have incentives for attending or participating.

The recommended timetable for this 3-day professional development course would be over three consecutive days or three days within a short period of time. The role of the trainer is to guide the teachers through the course by leading the PowerPoint and discussion and monitoring breakout sessions. The role of the teacher is to learn from the trainer and participate in discussion, breakout sessions, and evaluations. The ultimate goal of this training is to have teachers write individualized transition plans and use them successfully in the classroom.

<div align="center">**Project Evaluation Plan**</div>

The key stakeholders for this professional development course are high school special education teachers. As mentioned above, there will be two forms of teacher

evaluation: a formative evaluation and a summative evaluation. The summative

evaluation will be in the form of a 20 question, multiple choice pre and post assessment.

The teachers will take the pretest at the beginning of the first day of training prior to any

information. The posttest will be taken at the end of the last day of training after all

information. The tests will be the same questions, but the teachers will be able to see

what they learned throughout the training course. This evaluation plays a dual role: a self-

evaluation and an idea of what specifics the teacher will learn. The formative evaluation

will be writing a transition plan. This will be worked on each day during breakout

sessions. The ultimate goal of these evaluations will be to have teachers write an

individualized transition plan and use it successfully in the classroom.

Project Implications

Social change may occur across different stakeholders. First, high school special

education teachers who participate in the professional development course might be able

to individualize and implement transition plans for their students with disabilities. Next,

students will be receiving proper instruction from the teachers, who are implementing the

transition plan correctly. Once those students graduate high school and are out in the

community furthering their education, working, and living independently, they will have

the tools and knowledge they need to succeed. Finally, social change may occur

throughout the community. People in the community will be going to school, working,

and living with the students with disabilities that have graduated high school. By giving

these students the proper tools and knowledge through the transition plan, they will be

successful out in the community.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

A strength of this project study was the conceptual framework. I used the human capital theory in education founded and popularized by Schultz. Human capital refers to having useful skills and knowledge to perform a specific task (Schultz, 1961). This conceptual framework allowed me to be creative in asking questions during the interview and writing the findings in the data analysis. Not only did the human capital theory apply to the teachers having the proper skills and knowledge to write the transition plan, it also applied to the students who needed the proper skills and knowledge to transition into life after high school. The appropriateness of the conceptual framework of the human capital theory was two-fold in that it was applied in different ways throughout the project study.

This basic qualitative study provided unique viewpoints that no other type of study could have offered. By using in-depth interviews with only a semistructured interview format, I had a lot of room to ask more questions that pertained to the topic of the transition plan. Many teachers expanded on their knowledge of the transition plan and what tools they used to write the transition plan. Many teachers opened up about problems they saw and even offered their insight to solve them. These perspectives and insight would not have been possible with any other type of study. Although the in-depth interviews were time consuming and very involved, they were the best source of data for this project study.

Limitations

This basic qualitative study approach could have hindered teachers' participation in this project study. Because the in-depth interviews and member checking required personal time of the participants, they may have turned down participation in the study. It took about 2 months to complete the research because, at first, teachers were not willing to participate. Possible participants may not have wanted to go through the hassle of scheduling a meeting with a complete stranger and having to talk to someone else about issues or problems they see with the transition plan. Also, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people may not have been willing to meet with anyone outside of their normal schedule. A descriptive study may have increased teacher participation.

Purposeful sampling was used in this basic qualitative study. This allowed me to select participants who were experienced and knowledgeable (Ravich & Carl, 2016) in the transition plan and who were the most representative (Babbie, 2017). Because the sample was limited, the teachers may not have been willing to share everything they wanted to share in fear of their identity being exposed. Overall, this project study was geared toward a small population: high school special education teachers. Generalization of this project study may be difficult because of the smaller sample size.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

I felt that this project study took much longer to complete than anticipated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It seemed that qualified participants did not want to complete a 1-hour or longer interview, even if it was virtual. An alternate option for this study can be a survey with short- and long-answer questions. More people may be willing to complete

the survey on their own time, and it would probably not take as long as an interview. If this were the case, the researcher would probably have to find more than 12 participants to show credibility in the sources.

An alternative definition of the problem could focus more on the students, instead of the teachers. A researcher could complete a case study about students with disabilities transitioning out of high school into the real world and following their lives in the areas of education, employment, and living. A researcher could look at students' past transition plans in the IEPs and interview them about what transition services they received when in the school setting. Finally, the researcher could researched whether the student received the proper tools and education based on their postschool arrangements.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

Having been a teacher for 10 years, I had to take a step back and become a student again throughout this journey. Not just a student: a scholar and researcher. I grew in ways I never dreamed about and learned so many new skills. I pushed through and persevered. I overcame worldwide, professional, and personal challenges. As I reflect upon the process of this project study, I see that I grew in areas related to scholarship, project development and evaluation, and leadership and change.

Scholarship

I feel like I have been working toward this my whole life. I always tell people that I am a life-long learner, and I do not think I will stop here. From a young age, my mother told me I was a good writer. I could write papers pretty quickly and easily, but this one threw me for a loop. I like to be short and sweet in my writing, but this project study was

the exact opposite. I had to explain many things that I felt were obvious. I had to

elaborate and repeat and cite and use scholarly writing throughout the whole process. I

constantly referred to the 6th edition of the APA manual, only for it to update in 2019 to

the 7th edition, which changed some things throughout this paper. Many wrenches were

thrown into the writing of this project study, but I feel that I am closing it out more well-

versed, confident, and excited for what the future holds.

Project Development and Evaluation

While discussing this project study with my chairperson, we decided that a

professional development course would best fit my study, especially since the conceptual

framework was the human capital theory in education, which refers to having useful

skills and knowledge to perform a specific task (Schultz, 1961). We felt that providing a

tool for the participants in this study and other high school special education teachers

would be the most useful and effective.

When creating the professional development course, I came across some

struggles. I knew what I wanted to create and teach others in my head, but I had a hard

time creating that on paper. I wanted all the resources and PowerPoints to be consistent,

to match, and to be perfect. I was finally able to get some ideas down by creating a

schedule of events for the 3-day course. After that, I started creating the PowerPoint

presentations, and then it seemed that everything fell into place. By working through

creating this professional development course, I feel more confident when making

mistakes, planning and organizing projects, and being prepared in leading or instructing

adults. Moving forward, I would feel confident in teaching this professional development

course to a group of high school special education teachers in hopes that they would be able to take the information and use it in their classrooms.

Leadership and Change

As a special education teacher of 10 years, I still ask myself how I can better my teaching for the students. I am constantly reflecting on how I can do better for them or be more efficient in my teaching. Throughout this research, I have done the same thing. I continued to think of how what I was doing or what I was researching would impact my class or on a larger level of the district. I am in this profession for students with disabilities, so they can go on to live more independent lives as they graduate high school and transition into the real world. Moving forward, I will show leadership and change by putting my study out there to help other high school special education teachers who are struggling with the transition plan. I hope to be a leader who can work with other teachers, so their students can be better. And overall, I want to be a model that others can learn from, whether it be parents, other teachers, or students themselves.

<div align="center">

Reflection on Importance of the Work

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IDEA 2004 mandated the transition plan for all students in special education who are 16 years and older that have an IEP (LDA, 2021). The problem that this study addressed was that transition plans in the IEP have been found to be incomplete and/or not individualized for many high school students with disabilities in a public school district in the Southeast United States. This means that high school students with disabilities were not receiving an appropriate education according to the standards of IDEA. I wanted to know why the transition plans were incomplete and not

individualized, so I consulted with high school special education teachers, who write a

transition plan for each of their students. The purpose was to gain an understanding of

how high school special education teachers understand and implement the transition plan

in order to prepare high school students with disabilities for life after high school.

Overall, the goal was to help high school special education teachers write better transition

plans in order for their students with disabilities to receive the appropriate education that

they deserve.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Implications

Researchers conduct basic qualitative studies to discover perceptions of a

particular phenomenon, perspective, or preference (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this

project study, I wanted to understand the phenomenon of how high school special

education teachers individualize and carry out the transition plan in the IEP as well as

what tools or information they use to help them write it. I was hopeful that findings from

this study would close the gap in practice on why transition plans have not been adequate

and how high school special education teachers understand and implement the transition

plan in the IEP. The results of this study showed that high school special education

teachers were not equipped with the proper tools to help them individualize and

implement the transition plan.

Applications

With the professional development course that was created to combat the issue of

high school special education teachers not being equipped with the proper tools to help

them individualize and implement the transition plan, my hope is that these teachers will receive the resources they need to help guide their students through the importance of the transition plan in the IEP. This will allow them to teach and guide their students with disabilities to a smooth transition to life after high school and hopefully, a successful one. Finally, social change may occur throughout the community. People in the community will be going to school, working, and living with the students with disabilities who have graduated high school. By giving these students the proper tools and knowledge through the transition plan, they will be successful out in the community.

Directions for Future Research

There are many ways to expand on this project study for future research, so I will just point out a few ideas that I have. One researcher could look at students who have already transitioned out of high school to see what skills they learned from their transition plan while in high school. Another researcher could look at the professional development course included in this study and see how effective it is for high school special education teachers who are wanting to learn more about the transition plan and how it helps students with disabilities. Researchers could also look at solely the implementation of the transition plan in the classroom or the parent perspectives and what they need to help their child be more successful. There are endless possibilities that could be examined within this topic. I feel that looking at any aspect of the transition plan will be in the best interest of those students who benefit from it the most: students with disabilities.

Conclusion

The transition plan in the IEP has been found to be incomplete and/or not individualized for many high school students with disabilities. To examine this problem a basic qualitative design was used to conduct research into this observation. In this project study, I sought to examine the perceptions of high school special education teachers regarding information on the transition plan and how they implement it in their classrooms. In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 high school special educations teachers in a public school district in the Southeast United States. Data that were obtained offered insight into areas of concern for these teachers about not receiving the proper instruction and tools to guide them to individualize and implement the transition plan. This led to the creation of the project: a three-day professional development session titled The Transition Plan. The project could impact social change on a district level and perhaps a larger level by guiding and helping high school special education teachers write and implement the transition plan. Thinking forward, high school students with disabilities will be affected by having better quality transition plans as well as better experiences associated with the goals and objectives of their individualized transition plans.

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Appendix A: The Project

The project consists of three PowerPoints with speaker notes and three packets that each participant will receive at the training. One PowerPoint and one packet go with each of the three days required for this training.

Day 1: PowerPoint (with speaker notes)
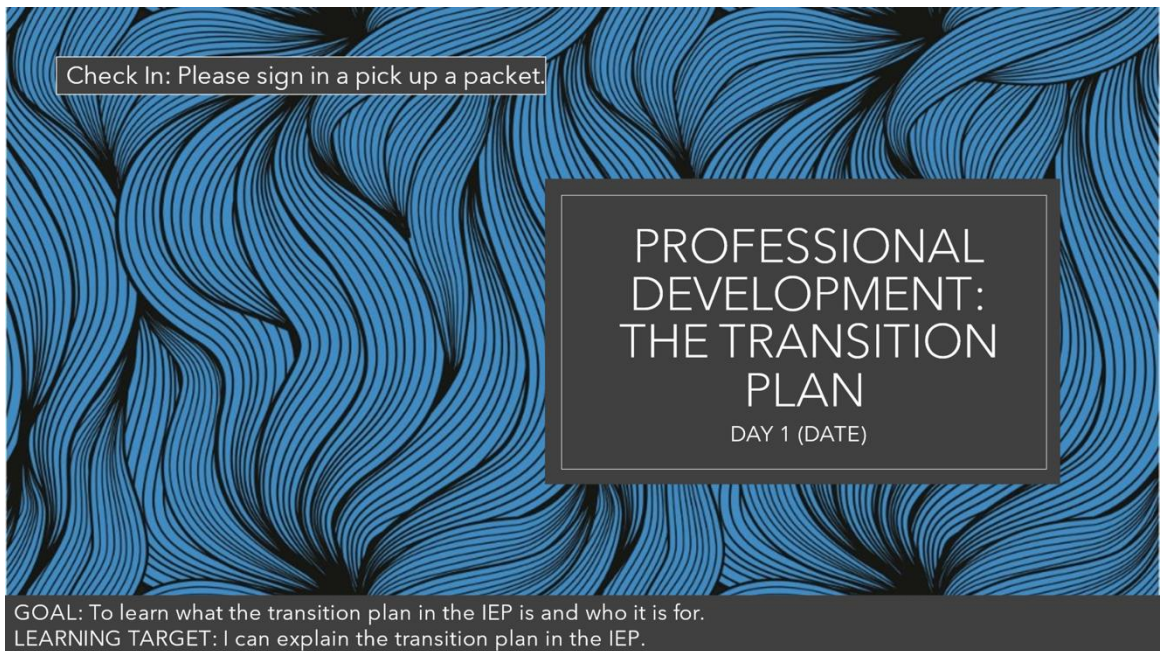
During the first 15 minutes, have teachers sign in and pick up the packet.

At the end of this time, discuss the topic "The Transition Plan"; the goal "To learn what the transition plan in the IEP is and who it is for"; and the learning target "I can explain the transition plan in the IEP".

Also explain that this is day 1 of 3.

DAY 1: Morning Schedule

Time	Activity
8:00 – 8:15	Check In
8:15 – 8:30	Introductions
8:30 – 8:45	Pre-Assessment
8:45 – 10:00	Full Group Session: What is the Transition Plan?
10:00 – 10:15	Break
10:15 – 11:30	Break-Out Session: Life After High School
11:30 – 12:30	Lunch

There is a copy of the schedule in your packet. Review the morning schedule.

(Remember to stick to the schedule. Set a timer if you have to.)

Introduce the trainers and their credentials. Each trainer talks about why they think this topic is important and how they got to where they are now.

Pre-Assessment

◦ By the end of the training you will be taught all this information.
◦ You will take another post assessment, so you can see your progress.
◦ Complete the pre-assessment included in your packet.

◦ Link for timer

The Pre-Assessment is in your packet. Please go ahead and find it. The pre and post assessment are for your information only. You will not need to pass this assessment to earn credit for this professional development. All of this information will be covered in this training. To conclude this training on the 3rd day, you will complete the post-assessment to see your progress.

Go ahead and take 15 minutes to complete this. I will set a timer to keep us on track.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) is a law that requires a free appropriate public education to children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children.

IDEA also mandated the transition plan for all students in special education who are 16 years and older that have an individual education program.

The transition plan helps aid the student to post-school activities including education, employment, and living.

Give examples of all three of those.

Ask for other examples.
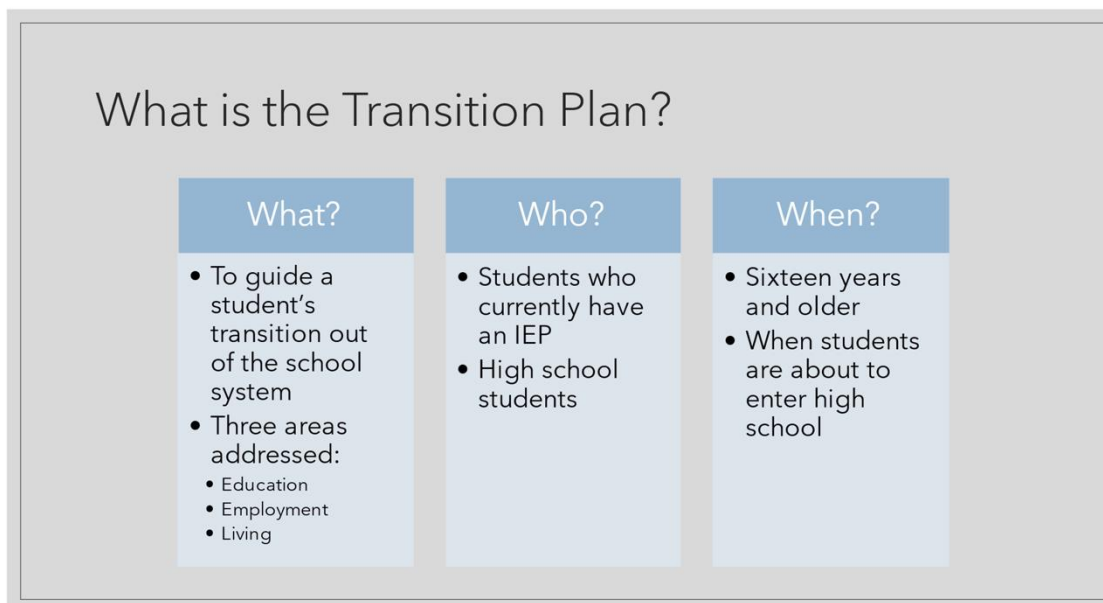
Here is a different visual. The transition plan helps guide a student out of the school system. The three areas that are addressed are education, employment, and living. It is for students who already have IEPs that are in high school (usually). Students must start the transition plan by the time they turn 16 (some states require it by the time the student turns 14). Some school districts start the transition plan as they are entering high school. It really depends on the district and perhaps even the state they live in.

What is the Transition Plan?

○ Developed by the IEP team during the annual IEP meeting

○ Must start by the age of 16

○ Personalized for each student

○ Includes goals and activities that are updated each year

IDEA also mandated the transition plan for all students in special education who are 16 years and older that have an individual education program. Some states start the transition plan as early as 14 years old. It depends on the district on when they start the transition plan. This district starts the transition plan on the entrance to high school, which might be between the ages of 14-17, depending on the nature of the disability for each student. The transition plan is personalized for each student with having those three ideas in mind: education, work, and living. A goal is created for each of those categories, then activities are created from that. An example is coming. It is developed and reviewed at least once per year, if not more.

Example of the Transition Plan

Transition Service Plan

Name: Carly Marley	Projected Date of Graduation: 5-24-18	Date of Initial Transition Plan: 5-12-15 Update: 5-10-16

Desired Measurable Post Secondary/Outcome Completion Goals *(These goals are to be achieved after graduation and there must be a completion goal for Education/Training and Employment)*

Education/ Training: Carly will attend a four-year college or university to pursue a degree in sociology.

Employment: Carly will obtain full-time employment as a social worker/counselor.

Independent Living (as appropriate): Carly will live independently, away from her parents.

Preferences, Strengths, Interests and Course of Study based on Present Levels of Performance and Age Appropriate Transition Assessments *(Areas for consideration include course of study, post-secondary education, vocational training, employment, continuing education, adult services and community participation)*
Carly is a 17-year-old junior with low vision due to Retinis Pigmentosa. Per a recent vocational evaluation, Carly's interests lie in the human services occupational cluster. According to the ECC Screening Interview tool, Carly needs to work on several functional skills in the areas of Social Interaction, Technology, Self-Advocacy, and Career-Vocational. She has strong verbal, organizational, and computer skills. Carly is pursuing a regular diploma, is in the top 1% of her class, and is taking classes in the Health and Human Services Career Pathway. She has successfully completed some Advanced Placement courses and received 5's on her AP exams. Carly works part time at CVS as a stock clerk.

Based on age appropriate transition assessments, in the spaces below, include measurable Transition IEP Goals and Transition Activities/Services appropriate for the child's post-secondary preferences, strengths and needs. Note: There must be at least a measurable Transition IEP Goal to help the child reach each of the desired Measurable Post Secondary/Outcome Completion Goals.

Here is an example of the transition plan. They may vary from state to state and district to district, but the same requirements will be in each one. Describe the post-secondary goals. (These are goals desired by the student and should be reasonable per the student's strengths and needs.)

(Have someone read the paragraph.) Describe what else might be found in this paragraph.

Example of the Transition Plan: Goals

I. Education/Training (Goals based on academics, functional academics, life centered competencies or career/technical or agricultural training needs and job training.)

Transition IEP Goal(s)	Transition Activities/Services	Person/Agency Involved	Date of Completion/ Achieved Outcome

1. Carly will demonstrate self-advocacy skills in 8 out of 10 situations, focusing on the following:
  a. Initiating personal involvement in group activities.
  b. Identifying her visual needs/ accommodations to teachers and staff.
	1a. Meet regularly with VI teacher to work on these skills.
	1b. Practice these skills in a "safe" environment (home, role playing with a trusted staff member or co-worker).
		1a. Carly, VI teacher
		
		1b. Carly, parents, VI teacher, employer	

2. Carly will utilize Assistive Technology at school, home and work, as needed in 9 out of 10 situations.	2a. Complete the "Student Self-Assessment" to determine AT needs. 2b. Try out various magnification devices and read-aloud software that may be helpful. 2c. Select and acquire the AT needed. 2d. Train Carly on how to use her AT. 2e. Complete trials and follow-up on the selected AT	2a. Carly, VI teacher 2b-2d. Carly, VI teacher, "Tools for Life" rep. 2e. Carly, VI teacher	

There are 6 goals with activities that the student can work on in the transition plan. They are

1. Education /Training

2. Development of Employment

3. Community Participation

4. Adult Living Skills

5. Related Services

6. Daily Living

Lets look at the education/training example.

Discuss the problem that was found about the transition plan. First, at the local level, then based on research.

Talk about the current project study that was completed.

Talk about the current project study that was completed including the conceptual framework and the review of findings.

Break

- 10:00 – 10:15

- [Link for timer](#)

Break-Out Session: Life After High School

◦ What was life like for you right after high school?

◦ What do you think it would be like for a student with disabilities?

◦ Work with your group to complete the packet based on your case study.

Create a group. Work with others in your group to discuss these questions. We will be sharing before lunch.

Lunch

- 11:30 – 12:30

- [Link for timer](#)

At this time we will break for lunch. I will set the timer to keep us on track.

DAY 1: Afternoon Schedule

12:30 – 1:30	Large Group Session: Education
1:30 – 2:15	Workshop: Writing the Transition Plan
2:15 – 2:30	Break
2:30 – 3:30	Large Group Session
3:30 –4:00	Conclusion & Questions

There is a copy of the schedule in your packet. Review the morning schedule.

(Remember to stick to the schedule. Set a timer if you have to.)

Furthering Education

◦ The first goal in the transition plan

◦ There are options for all students to continue their education through colleges or universities
  ◦ Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA)
  ◦ Student Disability Services
 ◦ Inclusive Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

◦ These are some of the specific colleges and universities in our area

Give example of the goal in the transition plan.

-Upon graduation, Samantha will attend an inclusive college program.

Talk about HEOA, which does not involve the transition plan, only colleges and universities.

Discuss the different options and talk about which colleges in your area offer programs and some of the accommodations.
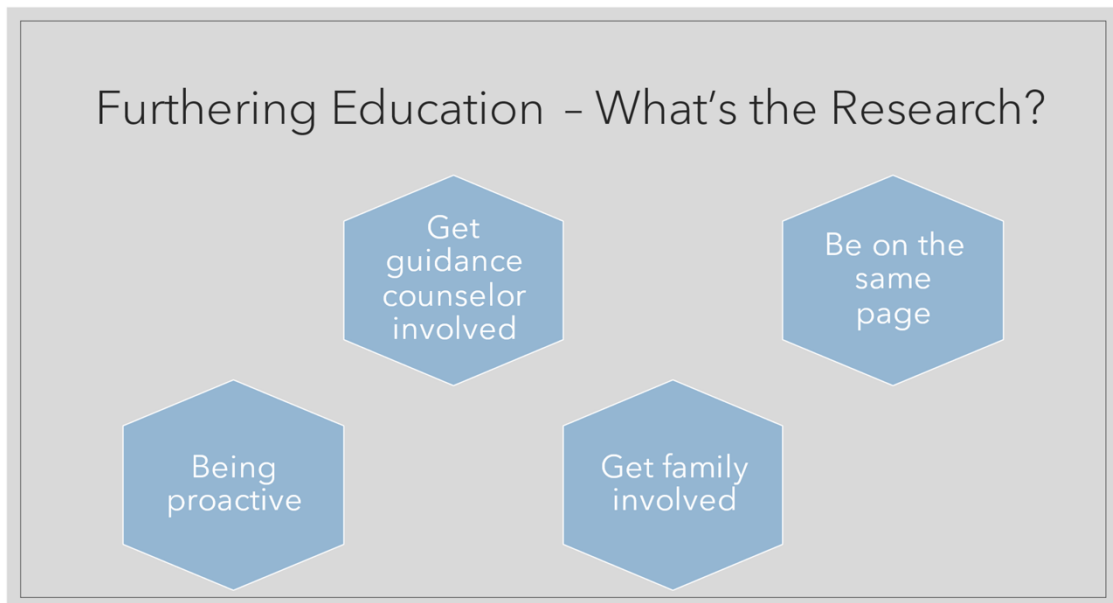
Being proactive

-increasingly accessible

-if students are exposed to different pathways, they are more likely to attend college

Guidance counselor

-post-secondary institution counselor

-need goals and objectives to support the education

-updated evaluation and diagnosis and accommodations and modifications

-practice independence

Family involvement

-need family support

Be on the same page

-stay updated

-follow the IEP

-have communication often

An Overview of Transition Services	
Who receives transition services?	o All students receiving special education services, ages 16 through 21, or younger if determined appropriate by IEP team members
When should transition services begin?	o Beginning no later than age 16, but many states start by age 14 or 8th grade o For most students, this process should be initiated when they are 15 so that the plan will be in place by their 16th birthdays o Updated and amended at each annual IEP meeting until exiting high-school
What transition service areas must be considered when developing the transition plan?	o Instruction (i.e., course of study) o Related services o Community experiences o Development of employment and other post-school adult-living objectives o Acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluations when appropriate
Why are transition services important?	o Provide the support necessary to allow students with disabilities to connect with post-secondary opportunities o Improve post-school outcomes for students with disabilities o Facilitate the assumption of adult responsibilities (e.g., working for pay, maintaining a bank account)
How are transition services provided?	o Through an individualized transition plan (a section of the IEP) o By the IEP team in coordination with the family, related service providers, and community agencies

(The Iris Center, 2015)

Review the day by reviewing each question.

Workshop: Writing the Transition Plan

○ Work with your group to complete the next section in the packet

Break

○ 2:15 – 2:30

○ Link for timer

Share and Explain

◦ Choose one person

◦ Explain your case study

◦ Discuss the education goal

◦ Discuss one activity that can help the student reach that goal

During our final large group session, we will share and explain what we have worked on for the last hour. First, choose one person to be the speaker. Next, please explain your case study, you can just read it if you choose. Then, read your education goal and discuss how that fits the student in your case study. Finally, discuss the activity you chose to help your student reach that goal.

Have audience listen and share any other advice or something that might work as well.

(Each case study should take about 20 minutes – there may be more than one group with each case study)

Case Study #1: Joe

◦ 18 year old, senior student
◦ Very shy and has a speech impediment
◦ Dad works at a mechanic shop and wants Joe to work with him after graduation
◦ Would like to go to a technical college to pursue automotive technology

◦ STRENGTHS: people pleaser and follows directions, working on projects
◦ NEEDS: help with deciding which path to take after graduation, test taking
◦ INTERESTS: cars, hanging out with his group of friends

Have the group read over the case study.

Case Study #2: Ted

◦ 16 year old, sophomore student

◦ Wants to be a football player and sing in a band

◦ Does not agree with parent/teacher/adult authority

◦ Thinks school is a waste of time and is in the way of his real dreams

◦ STRENGTHS: drawing, math, musical talents

◦ NEEDS: behavior and applying himself, socialization, reading comprehension

◦ INTERESTS: football, singing/playing drums/music,

Have the group read over the case study.

Case Study #3: Samantha

◦ 20 year old, high school student

◦ Communicates through eye gaze

◦ Uses a wheelchair for transportation

◦ Requires assistance with all daily living activities, including eating and using the restroom

◦ STRENGTHS: socializing and reading comprehension (for her abilities)

◦ NEEDS: assistance in all daily living skills, transitional help

◦ INTERESTS: baseball, socializing, the latest trends on Tic Toc

Have the group read over the case study.

Conclusion & Questions

◦ If you have any questions, please raise your hand.

◦ Contact Information
  ◦ Erin Lowe – erin.lowe@waldenu.edu

We have about 30 minutes left for questions. Please raise your hand to ask any questions you have.

My contact information in erin.lowe@waldenu.edu. If you feel more comfortable, you can send me and email, and I will answer your question tomorrow.

Tomorrow our goal will be to learn how to write the transition plan.

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Day 1: Packet

Professional Development: The Transition Plan

DAY 1 (DATE)
GOAL: To learn what the transition plan in the IEP is and who it is for.
LEARNING TARGET: I can explain the transition plan in the IEP.

8:00 – 8:15	Check In
8:15 – 8:30	Introductions
8:30 – 8:45	Pre-Assessment
8:45 – 10:00	Full Group Session: What is the Transition Plan?
10:00 – 10:15	Break
10:15 – 11:30	Breakout Session: Life After High School
11:30 – 12:30	Lunch
12:30 – 1:30	Large Group Session: Education
1:30 – 2:15	Workshop: Writing the Transition Plan
2:15 – 2:30	Break
2:30 – 3:30	Large Group Session: Share and Explain
3:30 – 4:00	Conclusion and Questions

The Transition Plan

Pre-Assessment

What is the Transition Plan?

1. What law requires the transition plan in the Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

a. The Transitional Act of 1998

b. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA)

c. Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

2. Who is the transition plan for?

a. High school students who have an IEP

b. Students with disabilities moving to a new school

c. All students who are transitioning out of high school

3. What are the three areas addressed in the transition plan?

a. Education, employment, and independent living

b. Independent living, management, and recreation/leisure activities

c. Education, employment, and emotional

4. When does the IEP team create the transition plan?

a. When students move up to middle or high school

b. When students move to a new school

c. When students move up to high school and are at least 16 years old

5. What is the transition plan intended for?

a. It plans out the adult life for students

b. It helps aid the student's transition from high school to post-school activities

c. It replaces the IEP

How to Write the Transition Plan

6. Why are we doing this professional development about the transition plan?

a. They are new

b. Teachers are not writing them correctly

c. All students need a transition plan to graduate

7. How many paragraphs should be in a transition plan?

a. 1 paragraph

b. 2 paragraphs

c. 3 paragraphs

8. What are the assessments used for in the transition plan?

a. To quiz the student on their plans after graduation

b. Assessments are not required

c. Provides a picture of the student

9. What are the goals in the transition plan for?

a. To create more work for the student

b. To guide the student's transition

c. To give to a future employer

10. What are the activities in the transition plan for?

a. To hold all stakeholders accountable

b. To create more work for the student

c. To allow the student to transition

How to Implement the Transition Plan

11. How can students help in the transition plan?

a. They can say how bad it is

b. They can just write it themself

c. They can complete assessments and help create goals

12. What three areas should students be given opportunities to practice?

a. Education, employment, and independent living

b. Independent living, management, and recreation/leisure activities

c. Education, employment, and emotional

13. What goal is the Independent Living goal in the transition plan?

a. 1st goal

b. 2nd goal

c. 3rd goal

14. Why is family involvement important for transition planning?

a. To gain more insight

b. To help the student stay out of trouble

c. To help the student get good grades

15. What barriers might the IEP team run into when planning for a student?

a. Computer issues

b. Communication barriers and appropriate goals

c. Failing grades

Case Study #1: Joe

- ◦ 18-year-old, senior student
- ◦ On track to graduate this year
- ◦ Very shy
- ◦ Only qualifies for speech services
- ◦ Struggles with all academics
- ◦ Dad works at a mechanic shop and wants Joe to work with him full time after graduation
- ◦ Would like to go to a technical college to pursue automotive technology
- ◦ Dad doesn't think that college will be useful

- ◦ STRENGTHS: people pleaser, follows directions, working on hands-on projects
- ◦ NEEDS: help with deciding which path to take after graduation, academics, test taking
- ◦ INTERESTS: cars, hanging out with his group of friends

Case Study #2: Ted

- 17-year-old
- Sophomore student
- Has failed multiple classes because he doesn't apply himself
- Wants to be a football player and sing in a band
- Does not agree with parent/teacher/adult authority
- Thinks school is a waste of time and is in the way of his real dreams
- Parents would like him to graduate high school
- Parents would like him to get a real job

- STRENGTHS: drawing, math, musical talents
- NEEDS: behavior and applying himself, socialization, reading comprehension
- INTERESTS: football, singing/playing drums/music

Case Study #3: Sam

- 20-year-old
- High school student
- Communicates through eye gaze
- Uses a wheelchair for transportation
- Participates in an adapted curriculum class to support all academic needs
- Requires assistance with all daily living activities, including eating and using the restroom

- STRENGTHS: socializing and reading comprehension (for her abilities)
- NEEDS: assistance in all daily living skills, transitional help
- INTERESTS: baseball, socializing, the latest trends on Tic Toc

Breakout Session: Life After High School

With your table group, discuss what life after high school was like for you. Use the following questions to guide your discussion.

- What were your goals after graduation?
    - o Education?
    - o Employment?
    - o Independent living?
- Who helped you reach your goals?
- What type of requirements did you need?
- What kind of obstacles did you encounter?
- How did you tackle those obstacles?
- How easy or difficult was it for you to talk to others?
- How easy or difficult was it for you find needed information?

Now, think about a student who has a disability. Discuss these questions again with your case study student in mind. How do you think things might change?

Workshop: Writing the Transition Plan
With your table group, write part of the transition plan for the student in your case study. Start with the education goal.

Education Goal:

- How did you come up with this goal?

- What academic skills does the student need?

- What work skills does the student need?

- What social and independent living skills does the student need?

- Are there any barriers the student might face?

- What is another possible education goal?

- How can these goals relate to employment goals?

Looking at all the information you have gathered on this student, think about services and activities the student might need.

Services:

Activities:

Additional Information:

Day 2: PowerPoint

During the first 15 minutes, have teachers sign in and pick up the packet.

At the end of this time, discuss the topic "The Transition Plan"; the goal "To learn how to write the transition plan in the IEP"; and the learning target "I can write the transition plan in the IEP".

Also explain that this is day 2 of 3.

DAY 2: Morning Schedule

8:00 – 8:15	Check In
8:15 – 8:45	Review
8:45 – 10:00	Full Group Session: How to Write Transition Plan
10:00 – 10:15	Break
10:15 – 11:30	Break-Out Session: Working After High School
11:30 – 12:30	Lunch

There is a copy of the schedule in your packet. Review the morning schedule.

(Remember to stick to the schedule. Set a timer if you have to.)

Review from Day 1

◦ What is the transition plan?

◦ Goals in the transition plan

◦ Research

◦ Furthering education

Review key points from Day 1

How to Write the Transition Plan - Research

○ Teacher preparation programs have not been successful (May et al., 2018)
  ○ Not enough time
  ○ Changes (Blaskowitz et al., 2020)

○ Limited understanding (Mazzotti et al., 2018)
  ○ Gets overlooked

○ Transition plans were found to be similar
  ○ Not individualized
  ○ Copy and pasted

A limited number of teachers use the transition plan because it only really relates to high school students. Here some of the research on the writing of the transition plan:

-Preparation programs have not been successful because there has not been enough time for teachers to teach the material. There also have been changes and each district might write it differently.

-New teachers have limited understanding of the transition plan. It often gets overlooked because only high school teachers need it.

-Transition plans were found to be not individualized. Some were copied and pasted and didn't have much thought put in them.

How to Write the Transition Plan

- Three paragraphs

  - About the student
    - Strengths, needs, preferences

  - What they currently participate in
    - Current work, things they enjoy doing

  - Assessments
    - Give some of the assessment results that pertain to transition

Discuss how your district prefers to write the transition plan. I like to write it in 3 paragraphs.

The first paragraph is about the student. What are their strengths and needs? What are they interested in? What do they like to do?

The second paragraph is what they are doing. What is their current work? What do they enjoy doing? What are their favorite chores?

The last paragraphs include the assessments. I talk about these on the next slide.

How to Write the Transition Plan: Assessments

- The transition plan may vary from district to district or even state to state
  - All require the same information
- Assessment results are required in the transition plan
  - Survey
  - Interview
  - Assessment
- Provides information to guide goals in the transition plan (Greene, 2018)
  - Strengths
  - Interests
  - Preferences
  - Needs
- Paints a picture of the student

Although the transition plan may look different, each one requires the same information according to IDEA.

Some sort of assessment is required prior to writing the transition plan. The results are required in the plan part. This can be a survey, an interview, or an assessment. There are many out there. We provide these as a district.

The assessment provides information to guide the goals. It can paint a picture of the student and point out strengths, interests, preferences, and needs.
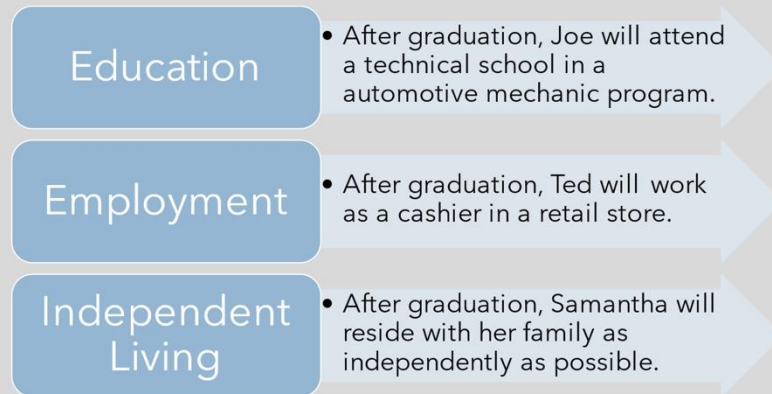
Read each goal separately and break it down. Refer to the case studies if needed.

- After graduation is important to state in a goal, so we know this is not happening right now

- Be as broad as possible

- Use future tense verbiage

- Be realistic with each student

- Use student's interest, don't just write something

How to Write the Transition Plan: Activities

○ Activities
  ○ Help guide the goals
  ○ Allow the student to stay on track
  ○ Help all stakeholders stay accountable

II. Development of Employment (Goals based on occupational awareness, employment related knowledge and skills and specific career pathway knowledge and skills.)

Transition IEP Goal(s)	Transition Activities/ Services	Person/Agency Involved	Date of Completion/ Achieved Outcome
1. Carly will identify and utilize 2 forms of transportation.	1a. Investigate Gwinnett Transit System and MARTA website to learn bus and train routes. 1b. Investigate/organize various taxicab/ van services in her community.	1a.and 1b. Carly, VI instructor, mobility instructor, parents	

Explain what the activities are in the transition plan. These help guide the goals. It allows the student to stay on track. And it helps all stakeholders stay accountable.

Go over example for the employment section.

How to Write the Transition Plan: Example

Transition Service Plan

Name: Carly Marley	Projected Date of Graduation: 5-24-18	Date of Initial Transition Plan: 5-12-15 Update: 5-10-16

Desired Measurable Post Secondary/Outcome Completion Goals *(These goals are to be achieved after graduation and there must be a completion goal for Education/Training and Employment)*

Education/ Training: Carly will attend a four-year college or university to pursue a degree in sociology.

Employment: Carly will obtain full-time employment as a social worker/counselor.

Independent Living (as appropriate): Carly will live independently, away from her parents.

Preferences, Strengths, Interests and Course of Study based on Present Levels of Performance and Age Appropriate Transition Assessments *(Areas for consideration include course of study, post-secondary education, vocational training, employment, continuing education, adult services and community participation)*
Carly is a 17-year-old junior with low vision due to Retinis Pigmentosa. Per a recent vocational evaluation, Carly's interests lie in the human services occupational cluster. According to the ECC Screening Interview tool, Carly needs to work on several functional skills in the areas of Social Interaction, Technology, Self-Advocacy, and Career-Vocational. She has strong verbal, organizational, and computer skills. Carly is pursuing a regular diploma, is in the top 1% of her class, and is taking classes in the Health and Human Services Career Pathway. She has successfully completed some Advanced Placement courses and received 5's on her AP exams. Carly works part time at CVS as a stock clerk.

Based on age appropriate transition assessments, in the spaces below, include measurable Transition IEP Goals and Transition Activities/Services appropriate for the child's post-secondary preferences, strengths and needs. Note: There must be at least a measurable Transition IEP Goal to help the child reach each of the desired Measurable Post Secondary/Outcome Completion Goals.

Here is an example of the transition plan. Remember they may vary from state to state and district to district, but the same requirements will be in each one. Read over and refer back to previous slides. Ask for any questions.

Break

- 10:00 – 10:15

- [Link for timer](#)

Break-Out Session: Working After High School

◦ What was work like for you right after high school?

◦ What do you think it would be like for a student with disabilities?

◦ Work with your group to complete the packet based on your case study.

Work with others in your group to discuss these questions. We will be sharing before lunch.

Lunch

- 11:30 – 12:30

- Link for timer

At this time we will break for lunch. I will set the timer to keep us on track.

DAY 2: Afternoon Schedule

Time	Session
12:30 – 1:15	Large Group Session: Employment
1:15 – 2:15	Workshop: Writing the Transition Plan
2:15 – 2:30	Break
2:30 – 3:30	Large Group Session: Share and Explain
3:30 –4:00	Conclusion & Questions

There is a copy of the schedule in your packet. Review the afternoon schedule.

(Remember to stick to the schedule. Set a timer if you have to.)

Employment

◦ The second goal in the transition plan

◦ There are options for all students to find employment after graduation
  ◦ Vocational Rehabilitation
 ◦ Supported Employment
  ◦ Day Programs or Workshops

◦ These are some of the specific employers that have been excellent with hiring our students

Give example of the goal in the transition plan:

-Upon graduation, Samantha will work at a local retail store.

Talk about different supports for employment.

Discuss the different employers where past students have worked and some of the accommodations employers made.
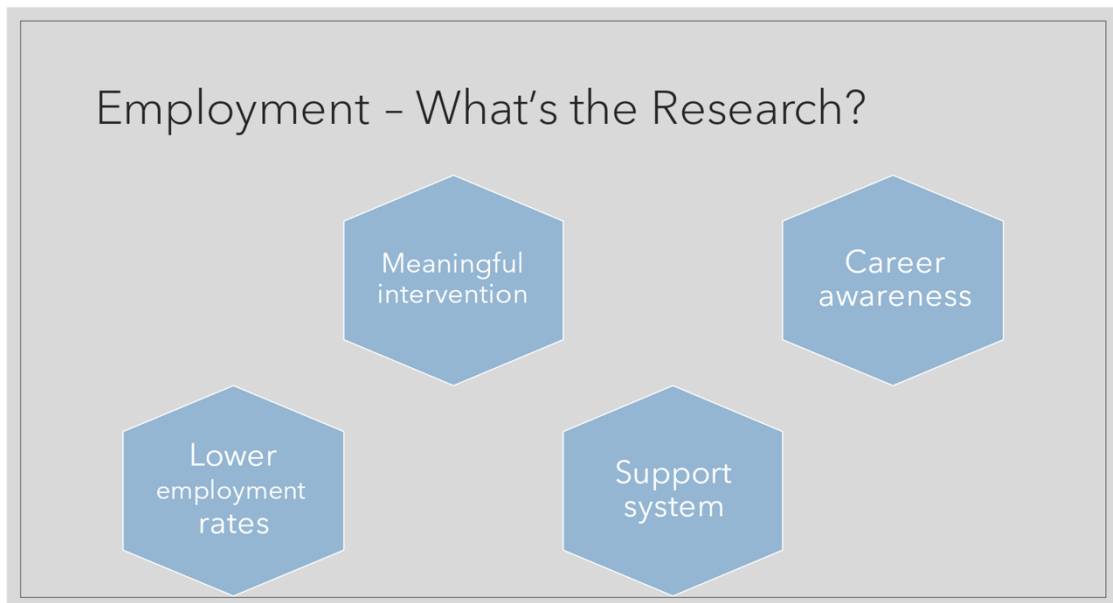
Employment – What's the Research?

- Meaningful intervention
- Career awareness
- Lower employment rates
- Support system

Students with disabilities experience lower employment rates than their general education peers (Snell-Rood et al., 2020)

When students had meaningful intervention and meaningful experiences in high school, they had higher career readiness scores than those that didn't (Lombardi et al., 2020)

Students with positive support system can help provide better opportunities for post-school employment (Yeager et al., 2020)

Students that were provided with career opportunities and to learn about different careers had successful post-school employment (Snell-Rood et al., 2020)

Takeaways	
How do I write the transition plan?	• 3 paragraphs • Use assessments • Individualize
What are assessments in the transition plan?	• Interviews or surveys • Help guide goals • Provides a picture of the student
What are the activities in the transition plan?	• Checklist • Allows everyone to stay accountable • More detailed goal
Why is it important to learn about the transition plan?	• To help students • Understand what is it • To individualize
Why should I individualize the transition plan?	• The law • Every student is different • Is a good tool for life after high school

RECAP

Review the day by reviewing each question.

Workshop: Writing the Transition Plan

◦ Work with your group to complete the next section in the packet

Break

- ◦ 2:15 – 2:30

- ◦ [Link for timer](#)

Share and Explain

◦ Choose one person

◦ Explain your case study

◦ Discuss the employment goal

◦ Discuss one activity that can help the student reach that goal

During our final large group session, we will share and explain what we have worked on for the last hour. First, choose one person to be the speaker. Next, please explain your case study, you can just read it if you choose. Then, read your education goal and discuss how that fits the student in your case study. Finally, discuss the activity you chose to help your student reach that goal.

Have audience listen and share any other advice or something that might work as well.

(Each case study should take about 20 minutes – there may be more than one group with each case study)

Case Study #1: Joe

○ 18-year-old, senior student
○ Very shy and has a speech impediment
○ Dad works at a mechanic shop and wants Joe to work with him after graduation
○ Would like to go to a technical college to pursue automotive technology

○ STRENGTHS: people pleaser and follows directions, working on projects
○ NEEDS: help with deciding which path to take after graduation, test taking
○ INTERESTS: cars, hanging out with his group of friends

Have the group read over the case study.

Case Study #2: Ted

○ 16-year-old, sophomore student

○ Wants to be a football player and sing in a band

○ Does not agree with parent/teacher/adult authority

○ Thinks school is a waste of time and is in the way of his real dreams

○ STRENGTHS: drawing, math, musical talents

○ NEEDS: behavior and applying himself, socialization, reading comprehension

○ INTERESTS: football, singing/playing drums/music

Have the group read over the case study.

Case Study #3: Samantha

○ 20-year-old, high school student
○ Communicates through eye gaze
○ Uses a wheelchair for transportation
○ Requires assistance with all daily living activities, including eating and using the restroom

○ STRENGTHS: socializing and reading comprehension (for her abilities)
○ NEEDS: assistance in all daily living skills, transitional help
○ INTERESTS: baseball, socializing, the latest trends on Tic Toc

Have the group read over the case study.

Conclusion & Questions

◦ If you have any questions, please raise your hand.

◦ Contact Information
  ◦ Erin Lowe – erin.lowe@waldenu.edu

We have about 30 minutes left for questions. Please raise your hand to ask any questions you have.

My contact information in erin.lowe@waldenu.edu. If you feel more comfortable, you can send me and email, and I will answer your question at the next session.

Tomorrow our goal will be to learn how to impelment the transition plan.

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Day 2: Packet

Professional Development: The Transition Plan

DAY 2 (DATE)
GOAL: To learn how to write the transition plan in the IEP. **LEARNING TARGET: I can write a transition plan in the IEP.**

8:00 – 8:15	Check In
8:15 – 8:45	Review
8:45 – 10:00	Full Group Session: How to Write the Transition Plan
10:00 – 10:15	Break
10:15 – 11:30	Breakout Session: Working After High School
11:30 – 12:30	Lunch
12:30 – 1:30	Large Group Session: Employment
1:30 – 2:15	Small Group Workshop: Writing the Transition Plan
2:15 – 2:30	Break
2:30 – 3:45	Large Group Session: Share and Explain
3:45 – 4:00	Conclusion and Questions

Professional Development: The Transition Plan
Day 2

Breakout Session: Working After High School

With your table group, discuss what life after high school was like for you. Use the following questions to guide your discussion.

- What were your employment goals after graduation?
    - High school job?
    - College job?
    - Career goals?
- Who helped you reach your goals?
- What type of requirements did you need?
- What type of training did you need?
- What kind of obstacles did you encounter?
- How did you tackle those obstacles?
- How easy or difficult was it for you to work with others?

Now, think about a student who has a disability. Discuss these questions again with your case study student in mind. How do you think things might change?

Workshop: Writing the Transition Plan
With your table group, write part of the transition plan for the student in your case study. Complete the employment goal.

Employment Goal:

- How did you come up with this goal?

- What academic skills does the student need?

- What work skills does the student need?

- What social and independent living skills does the student need?

- Are there any barriers the student might face?

- What is another possible employment goal?
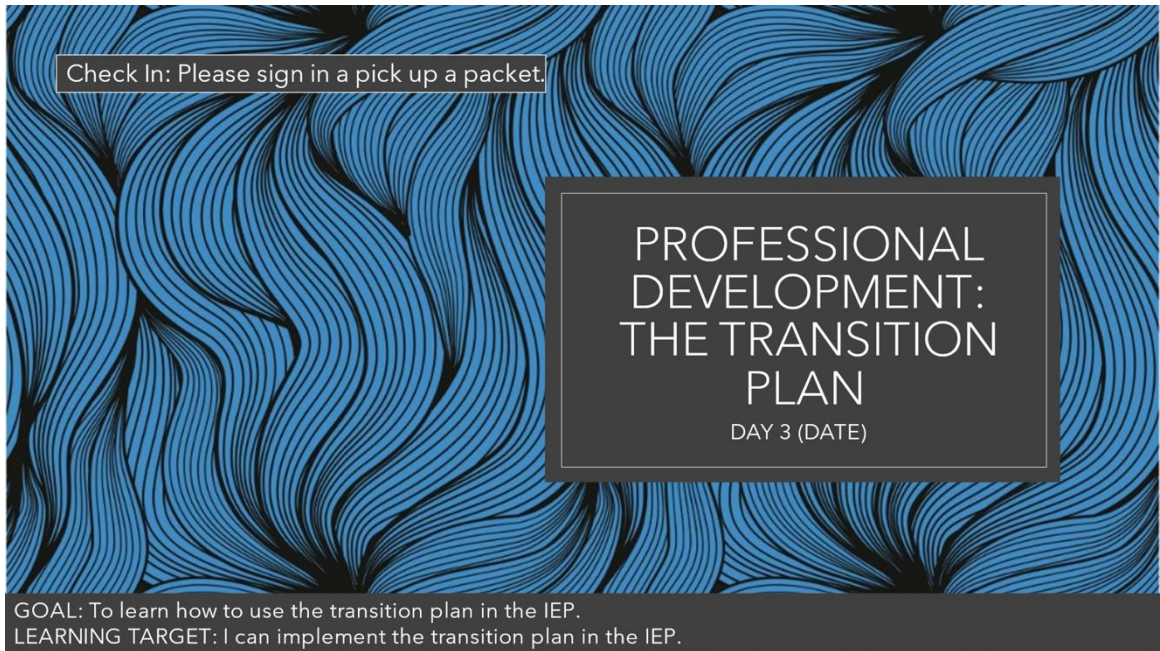
- How does this support the education goal?

Looking at all the information you have gathered on this student, think about services and activities the student might need.

Additional Information:

Services:

Activities:

Day 3: PowerPoint

During the first 15 minutes, have teachers sign in and pick up the packet.

At the end of this time, discuss the topic "The Transition Plan"; the goal "To learn how to use the transition plan in the IEP"; and the learning target "I can implement the transition plan in the IEP".

Also explain that this is day 3 of 3. This is the last day.

DAY 3: Morning Schedule

Time	Activity
8:00 – 8:15	Check In
8:15 – 8:45	Review
8:45 – 10:00	Full Group Session: Implementing the Transition Plan
10:00 – 10:15	Break
10:15 – 11:30	Break-Out Session: Adult Living After High School
11:30 – 12:30	Lunch

There is a copy of the schedule in your packet. Review the morning schedule. (Remember to stick to the schedule. Set a timer if you have to.)

Review from Day 2

◦ Why is the transition plan important?

◦ How to write the transition plan

◦ Assessments

◦ Goals

◦ Activities

Review key points from Day 3
Clarify any questions

First, teachers need proper training in the transition plan to understand and implement it correctly.

Students can help by completing assessments as talked about yesterday. They can help create realistic goals. This can include the family, so the whole IEP team can work together. Sometimes, teachers have students direct their own IEP meetings. This is called a self-directed meeting. They might create a PowerPoint to help guide their meeting. When students had clear goals, they were found to be more successful after graduation.
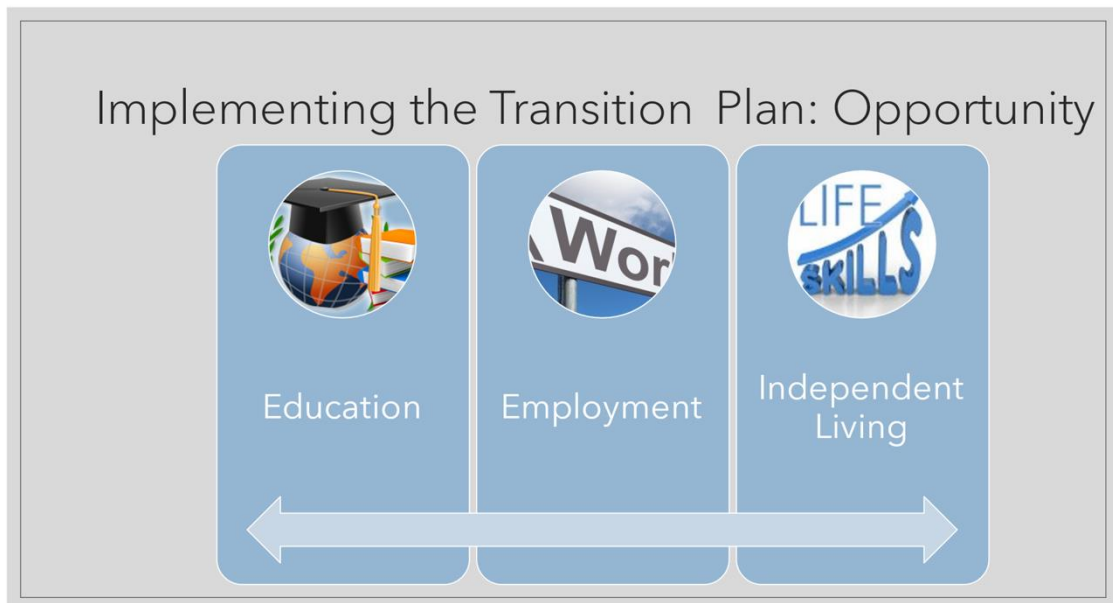
It is important to give students opportunity to prepare for each of these in high school. How can teachers help students prepare for…

Education?

- College research, filling out applications, going to college fairs, encouraging different opportunities

Employment?

- Work skills (having them complete work tasks or work boxes), mock interviews, resume building and writing, work/study programs

Independent Living?

- Daily living skills, banking, grocery shopping, organizing

What are other ideas?

Implementing the Transition Plan

◦ Completing activities

◦ Giving students opportunities

◦ Working with the families

◦ Preparing for future

First, you must complete the activities that are written in the transition plan. The teacher and IEP team wrote these goals thinking of the student in mind. They should be achievable in a year.

Next, teachers must give opportunities to students throughout the year. This should be in the curriculum to allow students to explore in their areas of interest.

Be sure to always be in contact with the families.

Ultimately, we are helping these students prepare for the future, so keeping them in mind and having them work towards their goals needs to be our priority.

Break

- 10:00 – 10:15

- [Link for timer](#)

Break-Out Session: Adult Living After High School

◦ What was living like for you right after high school?

◦ What do you think it would be like for a student with disabilities?

◦ Work with your group to complete the packet based on your case study.

Create a group. Work with others in your group to discuss these questions. We will be sharing before lunch.

Lunch

○ 11:30 – 12:30

○ Link for timer

At this time, we will break for lunch. I will set the timer to keep us on track.

DAY 3: Afternoon Schedule

12:30 – 1:15	Large Group Session: Independent Living
1:15 – 2:15	Workshop: Writing the Transition Plan
2:15 – 2:30	Break
2:30 – 3:30	Large Group Session: Share and Explain
3:30 – 4:00	Post-Assessment, Conclusions & Questions

There is a copy of the schedule in your packet. Review the morning schedule.

(Remember to stick to the schedule. Set a timer if you have to.)

Independent Living

◦ The third goal in the transition plan

◦ There are options for all students to find independent living opportunities after graduation
  ◦ Group Homes
 ◦ Supported Living
  ◦ Respite services for families

◦ These are some of the independent living services in our community

Give an example of the goal in the transition plan:

-Upon graduation, Joe will live in an apartment with a friend.

Talk about different supports for independent living.

Discuss the different independent living opportunities for students with disabilities in your area.
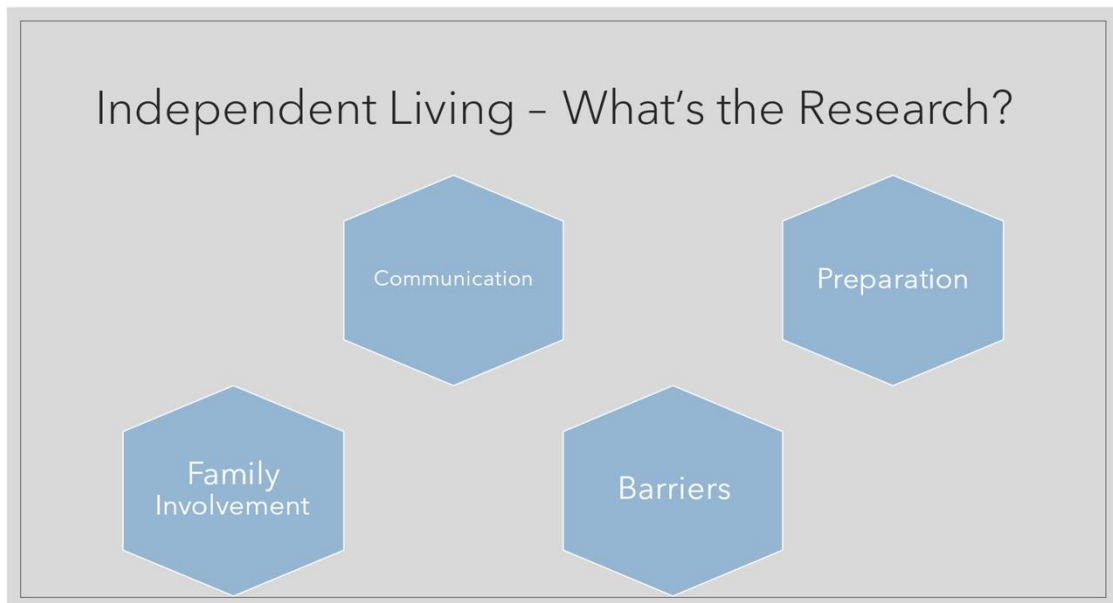
Family Involvement

- Positive outcomes (Cavindish et al., 2017; MadcLead, 2017)

- More insight

- Beneficial for all stakeholders

Communication

- Successful transition (Bourscheid, 2018)

- Everyone is on the same page

Barriers

- Communication barriers (Wilt & Morningstar, 2018)

- Differences about what is appropriate (Wilt & Morningstar, 2018)

Preparation (Bourscheid, 2018)

- Leads to successful transitions (Bourscheid, 2018)

Takeaways	
RECAP	
What does the research say about implementation of the transition plan?	• Proper training • Clear goals • Students can help
In what areas do students need to be given opportunities to support the transition plan?	• Education • Employment • Independent Living
What are some services that help students with disabilities live independently?	• Group Homes • Supported Living • Respite services for families
Why would the family want to be involved in transition planning?	• Positive outcomes • Same page • More insight
What barriers might the IEP team run into when planning a student's transition plan?	• Communication barriers • Lack of communication • What is appropriate for the student

Review the day by reviewing each question.

Workshop: Writing the Transition Plan

○ Work with your group to complete the next section in the packet

Break

- 2:15 – 2:30

- [Link for timer](#)

During our final large group session, we will share and explain what we have worked on for the last hour. First, choose one person to be the speaker. Next, please explain your case study, you can just read it if you choose. Then, read your daily living goal and discuss how that fits the student in your case study. Finally, discuss the activity you chose to help your student reach that goal.

Have audience listen and share any other advice or something that might work as well.

(Each case study should take about 20 minutes – there may be more than one group with each case study)

Case Study #1: Joe

○ 18-year-old, senior student

○ Very shy and has a speech impediment

○ Dad works at a mechanic shop and wants Joe to work with him after graduation

○ Would like to go to a technical college to pursue automotive technology

○ STRENGTHS: people pleaser and follows directions, working on projects

○ NEEDS: help with deciding which path to take after graduation, test taking

○ INTERESTS: cars, hanging out with his group of friends

Have the group read over the case study.

Case Study #2: Ted

◦ 16-year-old, sophomore student

◦ Wants to be a football player and sing in a band

◦ Does not agree with parent/teacher/adult authority

◦ Thinks school is a waste of time and is in the way of his real dreams

◦ STRENGTHS: drawing, math, musical talents

◦ NEEDS: behavior and applying himself, socialization, reading comprehension

◦ INTERESTS: football, singing/playing drums/music

Have the group read over the case study.

Case Study #3: Samantha

◦ 20-year-old, high school student
◦ Communicates through eye gaze
◦ Uses a wheelchair for transportation
◦ Requires assistance with all daily living activities, including eating and using the restroom

◦ STRENGTHS: socializing and reading comprehension (for her abilities)
◦ NEEDS: assistance in all daily living skills, transitional help
◦ INTERESTS: baseball, socializing, the latest trends on Tic Toc

Have the group read over the case study.

Post-Assessment

- ◦ Now, you should know all of this information.
- ◦ Complete the post-assessmentincluded in your packet.
- ◦ Compare your preassessment to your postassessment to see your growth over the past three days.

- ◦ Link for timer

The Post-Assessment is in your packet. Please go ahead and find it. The pre and post assessment are for your information only. You will not need to pass this assessment to earn credit for this professional development. All of this information has been covered in this training.

Go ahead and take 15 minutes to complete this. I will set a timer to keep us on track.

Once finished, look over your answers and compare your pre and post assessments.

Conclusion & Questions

◦ If you have any questions, please raise your hand.

◦ Contact Information
  ◦ Erin Lowe – erin.lowe@waldenu.edu

We have about 15 minutes left for questions. Please raise your hand to ask any questions you have.

My contact information in erin.lowe@waldenu.edu. If you feel more comfortable, you can send me and email, and I will email you back.

We have concluded our 3-day training.

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Day 3: Packet

Professional Development: The Transition Plan

DAY 3 (DATE) GOAL: To learn how to use the transition plan in the IEP. LEARNING TARGET: I can implement the transition plan.	
8:00 – 8:15	Check In
8:15 – 8:45	Review
8:45 – 10:00	Full Group Session: Implementing the Transition Plan
10:00 – 10:15	Break
10:15 – 11:30	Breakout Session: Adult Living After High School
11:30 – 12:30	Lunch
12:30 – 1:30	Large Group Session: Independent Living
1:30 – 2:15	Small Group Workshop: Writing the Transition Plan
2:15 – 2:30	Break
2:30 – 3:30	Large Group Session: Share and Explain
3:30 – 4:00	Post-Assessment, Conclusion, & Questions

Professional Development: The Transition Plan
Day 3

Breakout Session: Adult Living After High School

With your table group, discuss what adult living after high school was like for you. Use the following questions to guide your discussion.

- What were your daily living goals after graduation?
    - o Where did you live?
    - o Who did you live with?
    - o How did you manage your household?
- Who helped you reach your goals?
- What type of requirements did you need?
- What type of training did you need?
- What kind of obstacles did you encounter?
- How did you tackle those obstacles?
- How easy or difficult was it for you to live with others?

Now, think about a student who has a disability. Discuss these questions again with your case study student in mind. How do you think things might change?

Workshop: Writing the Transition Plan

With your table group, write part of the transition plan for the student in your case study. Complete the independent living goal.

Independent Living Goal:

- How did you come up with this goal?

- What academic skills does the student need?

- What work skills does the student need?

- What social and independent living skills does the student need?

- Are there any barriers the student might face?

- What is another possible independent living goal?

- How does this support the education goal?

- How does this support the employment goal?

Looking at all the information you have gathered on this student, think about services and activities the student might need.

Additional Information:

Services:

Activities:

The Transition Plan

Post-Assessment

What is the Transition Plan?

1. What law requires the transition plan in the Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

    a. The Transitional Act of 1998

    b. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA)

    c. Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

2. Who is the transition plan for?

    a. High school students who have an IEP

    b. Students with disabilities moving to a new school

    c. All students who are transitioning out of high school

3. What are the three areas addressed in the transition plan?

    a. Education, employment, and independent living

    b. Independent living, management, and recreation/leisure activities

    c. Education, employment, and emotional

4. When does the IEP team create the transition plan?

    a. When students move up to middle or high school

    b. When students move to a new school

    c. When students move up to high school and are at least 16 years old

5. What is the transition plan intended for?

    a. It plans out the adult life for students

    b. It helps aid the student's transition

    c. It replaces the IEP

How to Write the Transition Plan

6. Why are we doing this professional development about the transition plan?

   a. They are new

   b. Teachers are not writing them correctly

   c. All students need a transition plan to graduate

7. How many paragraphs should be in a transition plan?

   a. 1 paragraph

   b. 2 paragraphs

   c. 3 paragraphs

8. What are the assessments used for in the transition plan?

   a. To quiz the student on their plans after graduation

   b. Assessments are not required

   c. Provides a picture of the student

9. What are the goals in the transition plan for?

   a. To create more work for the student

   b. To guide the student's transition

   c. To give to a future employer

10. What are the activities in the transition plan for?

    a. To hold all stakeholders accountable

    b. To create more work for the student

    c. To allow the student to transition

How to Implement the Transition Plan

11. How can students help in the transition plan?

    a. They can say how bad it is

    b. They can just write it themself

    c. They can complete assessments and help create goals

12. What three areas should students be given opportunities to practice?

    a. Education, employment, and independent living

    b. Independent living, management, and recreation/leisure activities

    c. Education, employment, and emotional

13. What goal is the Independent Living goal in the transition plan?

    a. 1st goal

    b. 2nd goal

    c. 3rd goal

14. Why is family involvement important for transition planning?

    a. To gain more insight

    b. To help the student stay out of trouble

    c. To help the student get good grades

15. What barriers might the IEP team run into when planning for a student?

    a. Computer issues

    b. Communication barriers and appropriate goals

    c. Failing grades

Appendix B: Semistructured Interview Questions

1. How do you individualize the transition plan for each of your students? (RQ1)

2. How do you carry out the transition plan for each of your students in your classrooms? (RQ2)

3. How do you use the transition plan to prepare your students for the transition to life after high school? (RQ2)

4. How do you explain and talk about the transition plan with your students and parents? (RQ2)

5. What information, if any, do you use to help guide you to write each transition plan? (RQ3)

6. What tools, if any, do you use to help guide you to write each transition plan? (RQ3)

7. How do you gain knowledge in relation to the requirements of the transition plan in the IEP? (RQ3)

8. Do you feel that you have adequate support and tools to help you write the transition plan? Why or why not? (RQ3)

9. Do you feel that you have adequate support and tools to help you carry out the transition plan? Why or why not? (RQ3)

Appendix C: Sample Transcript

(Researcher) How do you individualize the transition plan?

(Interviewee) I will look at the goals of the student and their preferences. When we're looking at the IEP, I look at their desires and actually use their student surveys to get a grasp of which direction or pathway they're going in.

(R) How do you carry out the transition plan for your students?

(I) Basically, I will give them an email, so they can go and do the transition activities. We'll have a one-on-one conference and talk about what that will look like and the expectations of it.

(R) How do you use the transition plan to prepare your students for that transition?

(I) Well, with having different grade levels, I do different projects. At the high school level the students change as time goes on. So, if they're just given an overview of what it will look like, then we can see if they're still interested in it. So different activities are to see if that's something that they really want to do, even compare colleges. Also, one deal breaker for some kids is a salary when we do the comparison of the salary.

(R) How do you explain and talk about the transition plan with your students and parents?

(I) That would be in the meeting. I just break down the expectations of their pathways and what they're looking to get into, as far as whatever the career they decide. The actual meeting is the time to discuss that with the parents. Also, at the beginning of the year, I send out a parent survey to get background information, and the parents actually look at the transition plan and the responses of the students. They're also in the loop because teachers, students, parents, case managers, and counselors are involved in it all.

(R) What information, if any, do you use to help guide you to write each transition plan?

(I) Well, it's things that I've inherited through the system and having to adapt with the children. For instance, if they wanted to go to the military, I'll have to do some research myself and find some things that relate. I have to do the research in order to help them come up with the plan they're looking into.

(R) What tools, if any, do you use to help guide you to write the transition plan?

(I) Google and some ideas handed down from the department. Then, their surveys.

(R) If something were to change, like a legal requirement of the transition plan, how would you gain that information.

(I) I'm guessing that we would get that information from the department chair. I'm thinking that we will have a meeting and from the powers that be, that information would roll down, and we would have to amend IEPs or do whatever is necessary to abide by those rules or changes.

(R) Do you feel that you have adequate support and tools to help you write the transition plan why or why not?

(I) In a sense, yes. But I feel like you always have room for more knowledge. With being at the high school level there are different great levels, and sometimes I feel like with me having incoming freshman, the majority on my caseload, that some of them might know actually apply. Just looking into college, I know the exposure is good, but there are some kids that don't want to go to college afterwards. More so going into a career field. I feel like I need a little bit more background as far as that is concerned and even if it's not in one of their pathways, I would rather get more information on how to accommodate those kids.

(R) Do you feel that you have adequate support and tools to help you carry out the transition plan and why or why not?

(I) I do. I feel like the resources here as far as the department are good. With this being my third year here, just the exposure compared to other schools. We are more hands-on, and if I need information or any other help outside of what I already do, then that is available for me.

(R) Do you have anything you would like to add to help me with my research about transition plans?

(I) The only thing that presses for me is when schools don't have that career ready portion. If a kid wanted to be a welder and the school doesn't have it as a particular pathway, we have to do the research. And I don't know anything about welding! So it's a little bit more that you have to do in order to help that particular child. So the career readiness part. Now with college readiness, you can easily get the counselors. But, when it comes to career ready, that was one of my biggest customers.