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An Examination of the Student-Focused Transition Planning Process in a Rural Setting

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
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Walden University
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Abstract

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MA, Minot State University, 2010

BS, University of Maryland University College, 1999

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

In the local state special education transition aged postoutcome survey measurements, high school students with disabilities (HS-SWDs) continue to demonstrate problems with unemployment, independent living, and postsecondary education as they transition to adult life. HS-SWDs receive instruction from transition planning teams (TPTs) to address educational attendance, independent living, agency collaboration, and employment skills. When these knowledge and skills are not acquired, HS-SWDs cannot gain employment or attend postsecondary institutions. The purpose of this qualitative, bounded case study was to explore the TPT members' perspectives of the transition planning process. Kohler's transition taxonomy guided this study. The research questions were used to identify TPT members' perspectives of the transition planning process. A purposeful sample of 3 special education teachers, 2 general education teachers, 3 district administrators, 3 agency representatives, 2 graduated HS-SWDs, and 3 parents volunteered and participated in semistructured interviews. An inductive approach was used to analyze the interview and data were coded using open and thematic coding strategies. Participants identified challenges in student-centered planning related to family involvement, student development, support and resources, and TPT team collaboration. Based upon the findings, an electronic meeting preplanning tool was created to increase team member participation and input in the transition planning process. These endeavors may lead to positive social change when TPT members increase participation in student-centered meetings to provide quality transition planning that results in HS-SWDs' success in attaining employment or postsecondary education as well as adult independence.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to all teachers who work tirelessly to support students within special education and the amazing students they teach. You both have demonstrated an unrelenting spirit and passion. Teachers, you dedicate your lives to your students and do what it takes to ensure they are offered the dignity of risk and futures filled with promise and hope. Your desire to fight for equality and justice in the educational setting has always driven me to be a advocate. Students, your compassion, dignity, and drive have provided me with the energy to pursue. It is from so many of you that I have learned to face adversity with knowledge and perseverance. You have taught me that there is always a way and that goals can be accomplished. I stand by you both, I stand with you, and I will help lead you to futures faced with acceptance, equality, and dignity

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

Special education students across United States experience challenges regarding postschool employment and participation in postsecondary educational opportunities. The number of high school students with disabilities (HS-SWDs) who enter postsecondary education and competitive employment limits the future success of HS-SWDs. HS-SWDs lack effective transitional skills as exhibited through lower postsecondary outcomes than their nondisabled peers (Crockett, Billingsley, & Boscardin, 2012; Newman et al., 2011). This gap in practice affects the lives of many young people. Mazzotti and Plotner (2016) identified that only 35% of graduated youth with disabilities have the skills to maintain employment compared to over 70% of nondisabled peers.

Significant limitations in self-advocacy exist for students who are limited in academic skills when entering postsecondary educational settings (Dong & Lucas, 2016). Although transition planning teams are required to focus on the creation of effective transition plans to increase student success, plans are implemented differently across locations the United States Department of Education (USDE, 2007) outlined the importance of the transition process as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). According to IDEA, transition planning should include a coordinated set of efforts that provide support and development of skills to increase successful transition from high school to postsecondary life (USDE, 2007).

Transition concerns are also evident at the state and local levels, but rural areas experience unique challenges regarding transition planning. This gap in practice is evident within the local research site through a comparison of local postsecondary outcomes. Students within a rural educational service unit (ESU) have responded to postoutcome surveys that indicate a lack of effective transition planning when compared to state-wide figures. According to postoutcome surveys provided to the local rural ESU conducted by the Bureau of Sociological Research (BSR, 2014, 2015, 2016) for the state Department of Education, concerns exist regarding student access to instructional transition planning within the areas of postschool employment and postsecondary educational attendance, independent living, agency collaboration, and employment skills. Additionally, many young adults served in high school special education programs shared that they did not have adequate skills to gain employment or attend postsecondary educational programs (BSR, 2014, 2015, 2016).

Rationale

The state has continued to meet target indicators, but the local ESU postsecondary outcome targets for the areas of employment and postsecondary education continue to lag behind state data. The BSR (2014, 2015, 2016) reported that although the state has met identified targets over the examined period, the local ESU exhibits data with a 15-20% differential. In addition, transition planning team members have expressed a lack of knowledge regarding the roles and responsibilities of transition planning team members, methods of student transition support, and access to resources (Local ESU Meeting

Notes). A clear understanding of team member roles and support services was not identified from educators and agency members (Local ESU Meeting Notes).

In student outcome reports, the BSR (2014, 2015, 2016) indicated the limited numbers of students having access to agency support or attending postsecondary programming and maintaining employment. According to this most recent postsecondary outcome survey (BSR, 2016), state-identified target were not met in the areas of postsecondary education and training opportunities. A significant difference in enrollment in higher education exists for students in the local, rural ESU. In addition, a 30% difference in local students who were enrolled in higher education or working existed from the state figures (BSR, 2016). This differential was not only noted in the recent report but had been evident for the previous 3 years.

Evidence of the Problem in the Literature

A significant gap in practice was reported within the transition planning process (TPP) in a local, rural ESU. For the previous 3 years, the local ESU continued to fall behind the state data for the same population. Exploring transition planning team members' perspectives of the effectiveness of the TPP, at the local level, could lead to more effective TPPs. Weaknesses in the TPP can be seen through limitations in communication and support (Plotner, Mazzotti, Rose, & Carlson-Britting, 2016). Consistent limitations of graduated HS-SWDs continue to be shown within the local rural ESU (See Table 1).

Table 1

Target Indicators

Target indicators	2014 ESU Data Met	2014 State Data Met	2015 ESU Data Met	2015 State Data Met	2016 ESU Data Met	2016 State Data Met
Target A: Percent Enrolled in higher education	27.5	36.8	19.1	34.9	6.2	33.1
Target B: Percent enrolled in higher education or competitively employed	67.5	66.9	42.4	65.0	27.1	61.4
Target C: Percent enrolled in higher education, or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed	81.4	82.9	63.4	83.7	61.1	81.0

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding about the perspectives of all local, rural ESUs' transition planning team members regarding the transition process. I sought to identify transition team members' beliefs that may be leading to the differential between the local and state postsecondary outcomes. Increasing understanding of TPPs among all transition planning team member groups can help to create a student-centered, outcomes-based approach. Effective transition planning teams

focus on academic skills, self-determination support, and agency collaboration to develop effective plans for HS-SWDs (Leucking & Leucking, 2015). Kohler, Gothberg, Fowler, and Coyle (2016) identified that when all team members work together in a collaborative framework, HS-SWDs' postoutcome data were enhanced. Therefore, research into transition planning team member perspectives of rural special education TPPs could enhance positive change for postsecondary opportunities for students with disabilities. A qualitative case study approach was used to explore the transition planning team members' perspectives of the transition process in a rural setting. TPP team members included those previously identified, but an adjustment to HS-SWDs was made to meet ethical considerations. Team members in this study included special and general education teachers, administrators, community agencies, parents, and HS-SWD graduates of adult age regarding their perceptions with the TPP for HS-SWDs.

Definition of Terms

Educational service unit (ESU): According to ESU Coordinating Council (2012), state ESUs were established to provide supplemental services to schools that are complementary to those offered by the supported schools. Early services provided by ESUs were primarily in special education. Current services provided include support from special services departments to member schools.

Individualized education plan (IEP): NDE (2014) defined an IEP as "the document that describes the services a child needs to receive educational benefit" (p. 1).

HS-SWDs: This term is used to identify high school students with disabilities.

This term includes all students within transition age, 16-21, who are currently served under mild disability categories in special education programs located within a secondary education social setting (NDE, 2004).

Local, rural ESU: This term rerfers to the local research site. The research site was an ESU within the research state. The site was located in a highly rural region of a Midwestern state (ESUCC, 2012).

Postoutcome survey: This term identifies data collected from a state or area regarding students' status for an amount of time after they leave high school (Repetto et al., 2011). The purpose of the postoutcome survey to increase overall services through a data approach.

Transition planning: This term identifies the coordinated process of preparation and planning that is required by federal law within secondary programs (USDE, 2007). According to the most recent revision of Rule 51 (NDE, 2004), the transition process was put into place to help with positive movement to post-chool services including postsecondary education, independent living, community employment, and agency services.

Transition planning process (TPP): According to Rule 51 (NDE, 2004), the TPP is completed in the IEP process by the age of 16 and continues through exit from special services.

Transition planning team: According to NDE (2016), the transition planning team includes special education teachers, general education teachers and staff, parents or

guardians, students, and agency representatives,

Transition planning team member: Transition planning team members in this study refer to a group consisting of special education teachers, general education teachers, administrators, agency representatives, parents, and students (NDE, 2016).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant to all transition planning team members in rural school settings. Transition planning team members share a common focus when identifying goals of the TPP. They all want a positive, successful transition for HS-SWDs that provides fulfillment for each individual. The struggle arises in the methods and processes to achieve the end goal. Developing a capacity initiative is critical to create a unified focus on the end-result. All transition planning team members play a part in the planning process, and all of them needs to understand their roles and strengths they have to offer. Transition must not be the sole responsibility of the special education staff, and all team members must work collaboratively to achieve goals (Morningstar, Bassett, Kochhar-Bryant, Cashman, & Wehmeyer, 2012). Knowing perspectives of all transition planning team members is necessary in developing transition planning skills as a cohesive team.

Significance at the Local Level

This study affected a diverse group of transition planning team members by defining and creating understanding regarding transition capacity and planning initiatives within a local rural ESU. Team members included special education teachers, general education teachers, administrators, agency representatives, parents, and graduated high

school students.

Parents. Reisen, Schultz, Morgan, and Kupfermann (2014) found that parents identified that they maintained a desire for their children to be successful, but they often lacked knowledge of the TPP and service availability in their local communities. Many parents are unable to advocate for their children due to feelings of inadequacy and a lack of understanding of support concepts (Burke, 2013). Parents shared their transition concerns, and they provided understanding of support and training that may close the gap of understanding. Inviting families and empowering them to participate in the TPP is a component in successful transition planning (Kohler et al., 2016).

Graduated individuals with disabilities. Student-focused planning is an element in Kohler's et al. (2016) taxonomy for transition programming 2.0. Student input in the TPP is a part of any program. Students offer information regarding their strengths and abilities, goals, and reflections (Collier, Giffin, & Wei, 2016). In addition to being active in meetings, students share perspectives through completion of the transition assessment process. Identifying the perspectives of graduated individuals with disabilities helped gain insights into lived experiences and reflections regarding their experiences. Their perceptions of the process are central to any change that may occur.

Agency representatives. The TPP requires interagency collaboration built through a collaborative framework (Kohler et al., 2016). A component of effective collaboration is definitions of team member roles. Agencies often understand their roles, but they do not understand the roles of other school transition planning team members or

other available resources (Reisen et al., 2014). Agency representatives struggle to reach all students in rural environments, and an understanding of their roles and services may help to increase connections and develop a framework for collaboration.

Special education teachers. Special education teachers are often the facilitator in the TPP, and they ensure that the components of effective collaboration occur. Teachers faced barriers related to time available to provide instruction and support student goals. In addition, many secondary special education teachers reported limited efficacy relating to student support in the transition process (Morningstar & Benitez, 2013). Teachers are the leaders of transition planning teams, and their perceptions are critical to the growth and development of transition planning teams.

General education teachers and administrators. Limited research is available regarding general educators and administration in the TPP. As career and technical education (CTE) opportunities are increasing in schools, data were becoming available for a select group of general educators. Identifying general education teachers' and administrators' perspectives of the transition process provides information and insight regarding strategic planning, resource development, and the school climate.

Research Question

According to ostsecondary outcomes for HS-SWDs within the local ESU, there were limitations in employment, independent living, and postsecondary education. To gain insight into strengths and limitations within the TPP, perceptions from transition planning team members was necessary. Qualitative, open-ended interviews took place,

guided by the following question:

What are the rural high school transition planning team members' perspectives of the TPP within a local, rural ESU?

Review of the Literature

Examining current research and perspectives of multiple transition planning team members can provide an understanding of concerns facing rural Nebraska youth. This study was based on Kohler's (1996) taxonomy of transition planning, transition taxonomy. This framework allowed for an understanding of the need for transition capacity in the planning process. Adult transition planning team members must create an understanding of transition planning to support youth. Teachers guide the TPP as the leaders of teams, but researchers have not offerred the perspectives of other transition planning team members. Subsequent topics will create an understanding of this concern while examining the historical elements of transition, benefits of the TPP, natural and human barriers within the process, and transition planning team members' attitudes and roles.

Identifying transition planning team member barriers can be used to explain limitations to effectiveness within the TPP; it also helps create an understanding regarding current roles and challenges faced by all transition planning team members. To develop the concept further, I used Walden University Library's search sites including Education Source, ERIC, ProQuest, and Sage databases. Search terms to identify articles supporting this research included *transition planning, parent collaboration, secondary*

education transition planning, vocational rehabilitation, general education and transition, special education collaboration, rural special education and transition, rural special education, district administration and transition, adult learning, and *Nebraska special education.* In addition, multiple personally subscribed peer-reviewed journals through the division of the Council for Exceptional Children were physically accessed in this research.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used in this research study was based on Kohler's (1996) transition taxonomy. The transition taxonomy was developed to offer practices and competencies required for successful TPPs (Kohler, 1996). Kohler created a conceptual model to stress the importance of collaboration, strategic planning, and a student-centered focus. The transition taxonomy provides structure to transition planning teams allowing for evaluation of their ability to reach HS-SWDs' needs. A gap in practice exists within the TPP, and limitations can be explored using Kohler's conceptual framework. The key components of this model are the following: (a) student development, (b) family involvement, (c) program structure and attributes, (d) interagency collaboration, and (e) student-focused planning.

Development of a Conceptual Framework

A link between research and practice was lacking in the historical context of transition. Earlier theoretical models were used to inform research and policy, but a framework did not exist on defining transition as a collaborative or student-centered

process. Lists of transition planning steps were developed from previous research, but little information regarding practices existed (Kohler, 1996). Measurement systems were not developed in earlier transition models and were difficult to compare, track, and predict future success. As a result, Kohler (1996) proposed transition planning as a process that requires participation and support, which must be understood by the student participating in the transition process. Kohler listed practices and organized them into a conceptual framework that all users of the process could understand. A concept mapping approach arose, and the transition taxonomy was developed through a series of three phases.

Phase 1. Phase 1 included the identification of transition practices. Practices were identified within the following areas: career and vocational development, student-focused systematic planning, interagency and interdisciplinary teaming, collaboration, and service delivery (Kohler, 1996). This phase was developed to validate previously known information and identify transition planning practices.

Phase 2. When practices were identified, Kohler (1996) sought to identify conceptual similarity among the data. Rating, sorting, and graphically representing common practices took place to identify commonalities. Conceptually sorted, all data offered information to build the key components of the taxonomy.

Phase 3. External validity and social validation of the model took place in Phase 3 (Kohler, 1996). Sequential evaluation took place by participants to identify if the end-user could understand the conceptual clusters. Values were also measured to ensure that

concepts that mattered to the end-users were included.

Transition Taxonomy

Kohler's (1996) model moved transition planning teams from a theoretical or conceptual processing approach to one offering substance and activities and actions. Transition teams can follow the transition taxonomy to identify collaborative, student-centered plans to help HS-SWDs achieve success. The transition taxonomy (Kohler, 1996) was organized as a continuous model to indicate that all elements must be present to achieve successful transition planning. According to the transition taxonomy (Kohler, 1996), five key elements must be in place for successful transition planning.

Student development. Effective instructional practices must be in place to ensure that HS-SWDs have the accommodations and supports necessary. Instruction must take place in life skills, employment, and career and vocational skills (Kohler, 1996). Effective vocational assessment must drive structured work experience.

Student-focused planning. Student development must be paired with a student-centered focus (Kohler, 1996). Students must not only participate in the planning process, but their interests must be assessed. Not only is their attendance critical to the planning process, but their participation must drive the process (Kohler, 1996).

Family involvement. Parents and families were added as an integral part of the TPP (Kohler, 1996). Families must be empowered and involved within the process. Self-determination and choice-making must exist and transition planning teams must provide training and support to make this happen.

Interagency collaboration. Another key element of the transition taxonomy is interagency collaboration (Kohler, 1996). Within this component of the taxonomy, Kohler (1996) suggested that a collaborative service delivery model can reduce the barriers to collaboration, increase funding and resources, and increase information dissemination. Kohler identified that a transition planning team must be managed by a lead individual, but all members must have equal participation.

Program structure and attributes. In order for effective transition planning to take place, programs must maintain a student-centered philosophy that maintains an outcomes-based focus (Kohler, 1996). Policies must be in place to support transition team members to participate in the planning process. Community-level and state-level teams must lead transition teams by guiding them through policy and resource allocation which leads to successful plans.

Historical Background of Transition

TPP

Transition planning is a process initiated to support HS-SWDs' successful transition to adult life. According to Wehman (2011), positive transition planning should prepare all youth to live independently, gain employment, and participate in everyday life activities. Legal elements defined the transition process as a coordinated set of efforts involving a team of individuals who have an interest in the HS-SWD's success. As required by law, all students ages 16 and above who are served on an IEP should participate in the TPP. Bouck and Joshi (2016) identified that 100% of students surveyed

received transition planning supports in high school. Despite student involvement, concerns in planning and employment outcomes continue to exist.

Local TPP. The local ESU uses a statewide IEP development system that drives the TPP. All transition team planning is based upon the same framework to guide the discussion of the transition plan. The transition plan is embedded into the students' yearly IEP. The steps are as follows:

1. Postsecondary goals are identified in employment, education/training, and independent living. The first two goals are required. However, teams may decide to identify an independent living goal based on student needs.
2. A clear course of study is developed to support the student's goals identified by the team. High school courses are identified that would support student goals and assist them in exploring and developing career paths for the future. The course of study should also identify if students maintain enough credits to graduate.
3. Statements of student assessments, progress, and goals are identified and discussed based on the following transition domains: (a) instruction strengths and needs, (b) related services, (c) community experiences, (d) development of employment and other postschool options, (e) daily living skills, f) functional vocational evaluation, and (g) interagency linkages and responsibilities.
4. Transition activities are selected that will support youth in an action plan to reach goals.

All steps in the TPP require the collaboration of all transition planning team

members. Every member of the transition planning team has ideas and information to share. Although they all share information, they serve in different roles on the team.

Transition Planning Team Roles

The TPP requires collaboration of several team members who plan for the HS-SWD's skill development and opportunity (Wehman, 2011). Team members should include special education teachers, general education teachers, district administration, agency representatives, parents, and HS-SWDs (Neubert & Leconte, 2013). NDE (2016) identified these team members as part of the process. According to the transition taxonomy (Kohler, 1996; Kohler et al., 2016), team members support areas including student-focused planning, student development, interagency collaboration, family involvement, and program structure for successful student transition. Team members should believe in helping HS-SWDs move from high school to postschool activities. Movement must include planning for employment and postsecondary education with support from multiple community agencies (Hughes & Carter, 2012). Collaboration of all members increases collective capacity of the team and can increase transition plans through strength, improvement, and growth (Morgan & Openshaw, 2011; Morningstar et al., 2012).

The transition taxonomy (Kohler, 1996; Kohler et al., 2016) offers a framework to identify necessary supports and team member roles. In the most recent revision, Kohler et al. (2016) identified the role of team members as developing transition plans, achieving skill standards, and empowering families and students. According to Reisen et al. (2014),

limitations exist in transition planning team members' understanding of their roles in the process. Unclear roles and responsibilities can lead to a lack of understanding and knowledge. Each team member maintains a role.

Special Education Teachers

Secondary special education teachers maintain roles in the TPP. Transition planning teams rely on special education teacher leadership and guidance for successful processes (Morningstar et al., 2012). Special education teachers have been noted as the "key-and sometimes the dominant-contributors to the TPP, drawing upon information learned through their work with students over time" (Carter, Brock, & Trainor, 2014, p. 246). As the key team leader, special education teachers ensure that all transition planning elements are supported through collaboration and capacity. Teachers ensure that student programming is met by providing effective assessments, planning lessons for skill attainment, and building collaboration amongst teams (Kohler et al., 2016).

General Education Teachers

Although research is limited regarding the role that general education teachers hold in the TPP, Wehman (2011) reported that general educators and vocational educators provide consultation information to teams for program planning and vocational education opportunities. General education teachers understand the academic and vocational skills necessary to achieve goals (Bartholomew, Papay, McConnell, & Cease-Cook, 2015). Collaboration with general education teachers is critical to ensure that students have transition skill attainment opportunities within the classroom

(Bartholomew et al., 2015). General education teachers also support development of self-direction, developing students who can self-advocate for their wants and needs (Bartholomew et al., 2015). Kohler's (1996) transition taxonomy framework identifies academic, social, and life skill development as a role of general educators.

District Administrators

Administrators within rural school systems often have complex roles requiring knowledge to support diverse special education populations. Accountability for policy and procedural knowledge is the responsibility of administrators (Schaaf, Williamson, & Novak, 2015). According to Ricci and Zetlin (2013), administrators use knowledge of procedures and policy to create funding pathways that meet service requirements. Administrators also can provide emotional, instructional, and informational support to team members when managing disagreements or frustrations (Cancio, Albrecht, & Johns, 2013).

Agency Representatives

Outside agency participation in the TPP is a requirement mandated under IDEA. According to Luft (2015), agency service providers have a duty to provide student supports to help students achieve goals. Kohler's (1996) transition taxonomy framework identifies interagency support as a component of the process. Agency involvement offers benefits, and many states develop interagency teams to establish collaboration among team members (Noonan, McCall, Zheng, & Erickson, 2012). The local research site includes agency representatives in capacity building initiatives to increase transition

understanding. Services are meant to be delivered collaboratively through transition planning meetings and teaming (Kohler, 1996). Agency resources can provide funding for postsecondary educational opportunities and employment skill development for HS-SWDs.

HS-SWDs

Student input in the TPP is a component of transition success. Student-centered planning is the basis of the transition taxonomy (Kohler, 1996). Without student involvement, student engagement and practices are not possible. HS-SWDs offer information during transition planning meetings regarding strengths and abilities, goals, and reflection (Collier et al., 2016). Involvement of HS-SWDs leads to independence and helps develop a plan that meets individualized needs (Getzel, 2014; Shogren, 2013; Test, 2012). HS-SWDs' involvement helps assure the shift in planning control is transferred successfully when students graduate (Morningstar et al., 2012).

Parents and Guardians

Family empowerment and engagement can increase effectiveness of TPPs. Kohler et al. (2016) reported that family involvement should take place in all steps, including assessment, program planning, and transition planning meetings. Parents and guardians contribute information regarding student values, skills, abilities, and goals (Cheney, 2010; Espiner & Guild, 2012). Parent support and expectations have been shown to predict the success of HS-SWDs as they transition to adult life (Doren, Gau, & Lindstrom, 2012). Parents are the one consistent resource that students will maintain

after graduation.

Rural Transition Planning Environment

Local Research Site

The local, rural research site maintains a different geographical make-up. Understanding the geography and isolation of the research setting helps gain understanding regarding the concerns that may arise. Approximately 99.8% of the state is considered rural with only nine of 93 counties having urban population clusters (United States Census, 2012). The rural makeup of the local ESU covers a geographical region over 14,000 square miles (Local ESU, n.d.). The remoteness of the local research site often leads to limited resources. Due to the geography of the area, transition team planning can be hindered. Regional transition teams were developed to provide resources and support for transition planning teams.

Regional planning teams. The local ESU is part of a regional transition team with over 15 members representing three ESUs (NDE, 2016). The team seeks to gain grant funding to provide opportunities for transition planning team education, student events, and project development. The goals of the regional team are to plan and develop capacity building initiatives, provide professional development for secondary special education teachers, and provide family empowerment. Regional goals are established by the team, and support is provided throughout the three ESUs to support local transition planning teams.

Local planning teams. Each student within the local ESU has a transition

planning team to support transition plan development. Transition planning teams meet together for the annual IEP and work together on developing the written transition component of the document. Teams are developed by the standards of the state department of education. Transition planning teams typically include special education teachers, general education teachers and staff, parents or guardians, students, and agency representatives (NDE, 2016). Agency representatives and general education teachers often are selected for participation based on student needs and interests. Teams work together to overcome challenges that result from the rural environment.

Challenges Facing Rural Transition Planning Teams

Geographic isolation. Geographic isolation is a significant challenge facing rural transition planning teams. The local research site's remote setting requires all team members to support HS-SWDs in isolation. This region is considered remote based on the geographical distance from urbanized clusters. Gross and Jochim (2015) defined the terms *distant* and *remote* as anywhere from 2.5 to 10 miles from an urban cluster. Many of the local research site schools are between 30 minutes to 2 hours' travel time by car from the local ESU support offices. Rural teachers have identified frustrations due to added requirements and increasing isolation within rural settings (Sutton, Bausmith, O'Connor, Pae, & Payne, 2014). The distance was noted, by transition planning teams, as a limitation of timely service implementation (ESU meeting notes, 2016). Team members are not always able to provide necessary support and many individuals must overstep their roles to ensure appropriate students services exist. Role clarity is difficult

to achieve because confusion arises.

Role clarity. Kohler (1996) identified that transition must be a coordinated set of efforts with a goal to develop effective plans for HS-SWDs. Collaboration among all transition planning team members must occur in the development of effective plans and outcomes (Kohler et al., 2016). Kohler (1996) sought to clearly identify roles in her transition taxonomy. However, rural concerns may impede clarification from occurring. Many rural transition planning team members work alone and must perform roles independently, because support is not available. Teachers in the local, rural site have expressed concerns regarding the misunderstanding of roles (ESU meeting notes, n.d.). Limitations in student supports can directly be linked to concerns with role clarity (Gross & Jochim, 2015). When role clarity results from isolation, team members do not have support resources to provide knowledge and information.

Knowledge and information sharing. Due to distances within the local ESU, many team members attend meetings through electronic methods, or they do not attend at all. This can significantly limit knowledge and information sharing. Within the local research site, the transition coordinator must typically travel 1 to 2 hours to attend transition planning meetings or meet with families to provide support services. Direct support of the transition coordinator and agency staff is not always possible.

A lack of local organizational and agency support can limit knowledge of the team (Gross & Jochim, 2015). A limitation of knowledge can impede plan development. The geographic isolation also places restrictions on time spent serving students, and it

also reduces the degree of collaboration that can occur (Cimera, Gonda, & Vashak, 2015). Collaboration is critical to support all team members, because it is difficult to gather individuals' perspectives when concerns and ideas cannot be discussed. Rural special education teachers often are the only individuals in the building aware of needs and services required of HS-SWDs (Berry, Petrin, Gravelle, & Farmer, 2012). Many teachers must make decisions and work outside of their scope to meet student needs (2013). External supports from transition planning team members provide increased perspectives leading to more effective plans (Kohler, 1996). Student-centered plans must be built through student-focused planning and development planning and development.

Student-focused planning and development. Young adults develop skills related to employment while supported in the TPP (Kohler, 1996). In the transition taxonomy (Kohler, 1996), planning is student-centered. Morningstar et al. (2012) identified that students are a vital part of the TPP, and teams must shift control to HS-SWDs as they reach graduation age. Transition planning teams work collaboratively to increase self-advocacy and self-determination for students. They do this by creating student-focused plans. The goal is to increase post-school outcomes for students and increase independence (Kohler et al., 2016). The goal within rural environments is not always attained because of limitations. Student preparation in employment and postsecondary skills was reported by students as limited with only 70% believing that they were prepared for postsecondary education experiences (Repetto et al., 2011). Challenges exist across the key components of the transition taxonomy (Kohler, 1996).

Concerns in the literature have been noted within the areas of interagency collaboration, family involvement, and program structures.

Interagency collaboration. Effective transition planning requires transition planning team members to work together. Within the transition taxonomy (Kohler, 1996), the term *interagency* refers to all transition planning team members. The focus is on collaboration and coordination of all views and services (Kohler, 1996). For collaboration to occur, a collaborative framework and collaborative service delivery model must exist (Kohler, 1996). Due to the limitations within rural environments, success is not always possible within both areas.

Collaborative framework. A collaborative framework in the transition taxonomy (Kohler, 1996) identifies that shared understanding of roles and responsibilities exists through the support of a lead agency or team member. Lead agency support in the local setting typically comes from the secondary special education teachers. Teachers engage in the challenging task of developing a collaborative framework within the rural areas. Distance and time significantly hinder involvement of all parties within transition planning meetings. Attendance at IEP meetings and collaboration time is not always possible in rural areas and many planning meetings do not include all support services (Povenmire-Kirk et al., 2015).

Because of distance and time restrictions, continuity of services is limited (Cimera et al., 2015). This directly affects the development of effective transition goals. Efforts must be taken in the rural areas to develop collaborative planning opportunities. Trainor,

Morningstar, and Murray (2016) reported that only 38% of transition plans were created through joint, collaborative efforts. Papay and Bambara (2014) reported similar findings with young adults identifying a lack of transition team member attendance in 57.5% of meetings. Limitations in the attendance from vocational rehabilitation staff was also identified as a concern with only 20% of transition planning meetings including representatives of a key organization (Trainor et al., 2016). While certain team members are required, they are not always present to identify their services as acceptable to place within the plan.

Collaborative service delivery. The transition plan identifies which services must be delivered in the educational setting and by whom. According to Kohler (1996) , a collaborative service delivery model requires effective collaboration regarding the coordination of requests for information, combined and collaborative staffing efforts, and the collaboration of special, general, and career and tech education teachers. Neubert and Leconte (2013) extended the discussion of collaborative agencies to include counselors, psychologists, employers, and agencies. Information in a collaborative service delivery model is shared prior to and after meetings. When teams work together and use data from inventories, vocational assessments, and skill evaluations, HS-SWDs will achieve higher levels of successful employment opportunities (Stevenson & Fowler, 2016). Rural limitations including distance and staffing issues hinder the sharing of information and participation in the TPP (Povenmire-Kirk et al., 2015). Effective plan development results because team members do not have adequate time for idea development. They

must offer what they can identify within the hour of the meeting.

Supports in the local school setting often include special education teachers, general education teachers, and career and technical education teachers. While many teachers practice teaming, a collaborative service delivery model does not always occur. The attainment and generalization of transition-based skills require instruction in the general education setting since HS-SWDs attend a higher number of academic-based courses (Bartholomew et al., 2015). Transition skills practiced in the classroom may include employment-based skills, self-determination, and self-advocacy. According to Trainor et al. (2016), only 63% of general education and 43% of vocational education teachers attended transition planning meetings. A lack of attendance limits the ability of a collaborative service delivery model especially in the support of employment skills. When teachers do not attend transition planning team meetings, it is difficult to know what skills they are supporting. The problem is often deeper in isolated schools because CTE teachers are not staffed within many of the local rural ESUs. If they are staffed, they often do not attend transition planning meetings. Schmalzried and Harvey (2014) reported limited attendance with only 40% of meetings having a CTE or vocational teacher in attendance. It is difficult to support students and families when a collaborative service model does not occur.

Family involvement. Kohler et al. (2016) stressed the importance of family empowerment and engagement in their advanced transition taxonomy 2.0 model. Espiner and Guild (2012) reported the value of families in developing student goals and programs

since they know their children best. Family involvement is critical for student success and when involvement occurs, student success exists (Doren et al., 2012). According to Espiner and Guild, families are important members of the transition planning team and contribute vital information including student values, skills and abilities, and goals. Landmark, Roberts, and Zhang (2013) reported barriers for parent participation as cultural, time elements, and attitudes towards the process. Two key concerns existed in rural transition planning teams that limit the interaction of parents and guardians in the TPP.

Family participation. Partnerships with families and guardians help increase effectiveness of transition plans, but rural areas struggle to include families in the TPP. Doren et al. (2012) reported that parent and family participation is vital to increasing student autonomy. Parents were often involved in meetings, but they did not always feel included. According to Miller-Warren (2016) many families have reported that they did not always leave transition planning meetings feeling like their input was valued. Parents and guardians reported feeling more effective when they were considered effective transition planning team members (Espiner & Guild, 2012). HS-SWDs were more likely to attend postsecondary educational opportunities when parents were involved in the planning process (Papay & Bambara, 2014). Cheney (2010) identified that parents help to make interagency connections and link students with health providers and service personnel. Connections are vital to increase supports and services in rural areas where resources are limited.

Family training. Limited research exists on the level of family training in rural areas of the United States and general concerns of parents can be considered for the purpose of this study. Rural parents share concerns regarding the TPP and team's capacity to serve students (Miller-Warren, 2016). According to Skaff, Kemp, McGovern, and Fantacone (2016), parents did not feel that they receive capacity development. Trainor et al. (2016) reported that as many as 33% of parents sought higher levels of skills and involvement in the TPP. Parental knowledge exists as a barrier regarding services and supports available to HS-SWDs (Reisen et al., 2014). An important method used to develop parent and guardian capacity is to provide literature. Many parents preferred to learn about transition from literature. However, Young, Morgan, Callow-Huesser, and Lindstrom (2016) identified that other parents and guardians preferred training to develop their transition capacity. Many concerns regarding family involvement can be linked to a limitation in program structures.

Program structure. Limitations in program structure exist within the rural areas regarding resource allocation and resource development. Limited staffing, funding, and time all impede effective transition planning. Kohler (1996) identified that capacity building refers to the internal resources within team members and the external resources to support team members. Building capacity within the transition taxonomy 2.0 model (Kohler et al., 2016) requires program development and support for all team members. Development and the building of capacity within transition planning teams is critical for effective services to occur.

Resource allocation. Sufficient resource allocation is necessary in the development of highly staffed and trained teams to support HS-SWDs (Kohler, 1996). Rural populations struggle to administer resources appropriately as required by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act due to disadvantages resulting from geographical locations and lack of monetary funding (Yettick, Baker, Wickersham, & Hupfield, 2014). Reductions in rural populations continue to decrease budgets and staffing resources within schools (Blauwkamp, Longo, & Anderson, 2011). Staffing is also a concern within rural vocational counselors. A limited number of counselors are available causing reduced job experiences and exploration for HS-SWDs (Goe & Ipsen, 2013). Collaboration with transition planning team members is becoming critical in providing necessary supports and services. Collaboration allocates resources where they are needed. In a study conducted by Berry et al. (2012), 27% of administrators identified struggles to fill rural special education positions. With special educators as transition planning team leaders, limited training of staff could significantly impede the transition process.

Resource development. Kohler (1996) included resource development in the transition taxonomy to identify the importance of sufficient allocation of staff and resources, education of transition planning team members, and transdisciplinary staff development. Transition planning teams are not effective if they do not experience development opportunities to enhance and expand their skills (Neubert & Leconte, 2013). Reisen et al. (2014) reported that a lack of development leads to reduced participation

and communication.

Parents and agency staff members lacked necessary skills to support HS-SWDs as they transition to adult life because they are often left out of development opportunities (2014). Schaaf et al. (2015) reported that 72% of district administrators felt that they were not prepared to support transition collaboration. Concerns with development are not exclusive to administration. Evidenced-based transition practices are not effectively offered to transition planning team members (Mazzotti & Plotner, 2016). According to Papay and Bambara (2014), negative postoutcomes result when a lack of development in evidenced-based practices occurs. Development is not always accessible within the local research site. Many of the trainings in transition evidenced-based practices (EBP) are held over four hours from many team planning members' homes. The ability to access training and development opportunities is limited. A lack of development and capacity can lead to limitations in supports for employment and postsecondary educational preparation.

Local ESU Transition Planning Concerns

Employment

General limitations. Student transition planning in employment skills can lead to increased self-efficacy and success when students experience positive outcomes. Limitations in planning processes to prepare students with employment skills can affect the overall earning potential of young adults (Lindstrom, Doren, & Miesch, 2011). According to Wehman (2011), 35% of adults with disabilities achieve gainful

employment. Current transition planning regarding employment skills does not meet employer needs as demonstrated by the low employment rates of graduated HS-SWDs (Wehman, 2011). According to Papay and Bambara (2014), over 40% of HS-SWDs did not receive effective instruction on employment skills. Opportunities for HS-SWDs are limited compared to their nondisabled peers. Mazzotti and Plotner (2016) further identified that only 19% of transition planning teams implemented community-based employment to provide authentic learning experiences. Only 20 to 30% of rural HS-SWDs experienced internships, job mentoring, or job shadowing experiences more than twice, while in high school (Weiss, Hutchins, & Meece, 2012). General employment concerns related to TPP have been noted in the local postoutcome data within the local research site.

Local concerns. Employment of graduated HS-SWDs has been an increasing concern over the last 3 years (BSR, 2014, 2015, 2016). In 2016, only 2.4% of graduated HS-SWDs reported that their high school transition programs prepared them for employment compared to 19% in 2015 and 29% in 2014 (BSR, 2014, 2015, 2016). When asked why they were not working, students identified that they did not have the job skills, or their disabilities impeded their abilities. On the average, only 20% of graduated HS-SWDs surveyed accessed Vocational Rehabilitation services to support employment (BSR, 2014, 2015, 2016). The local postoutcomes also have demonstrated increasing concerns in postsecondary education.

Postsecondary Education

General limitations. Rural educational environments offer unique challenges for HS-SWDs regarding postsecondary education and training opportunities. Compared to nondisabled peers, HS-SWDs in rural schools' experience significantly less drive to pursue postsecondary educational opportunities than their nondisabled peers (Weiss et al., 2012). Only 78% of HS-SWDs said they would like to continue compared to 90% of nondisabled peers (Weiss et al., 2012). Many transition plans do not indicate that HS-SWDs should take the college entrance exams, and only 15% of HS-SWDs had taken the ACT and 17% the SAT (Weiss et al., 2012). All transition planning team members can support the growth of postsecondary supports. Many teams did not include anyone outside the educational setting and the limitation can affect data. Agency connections have positive impacts on postsecondary success if they demonstrated cultural competence, optimism, and professionalism (Papay & Bambara, 2014; Tilson & Simonsen, 2013).

Limited opportunities. Due to the geographic makeup of the rural areas, postsecondary educational opportunities are not located in the local community, and students must identify and obtain resources to move outside of their community (Weiss et al., 2012). Two major postsecondary institutions exist within the boundaries of the local, rural ESU. One is a 2-year community college and the other is a small private 4-year institution. If students are exploring programs not offered at the local institutions, then they must travel a minimum of 4 to 6 hours from home to access other alternatives.

A lack of adequate instruction. Effective preparation for postsecondary education requires proper student development in self-advocacy and academic skills (Kohler, 1996). All transition planning team members have an opportunity to provide instruction and support to lead to successful postsecondary options. Kohler et al. (2016) further identified that direct instruction in learning strategies can help achieve transition development. According to Dong and Lucas (2016), limited academic skills directly affect graduated HS-SWDs' ability to advocate for accommodations and needs. Because of limited self-advocacy skills, students do not access supports and are often placed on academic probation. Wehman (2011) identified that collaborative transition team planning can help to increase academic skills and prepare students for postsecondary settings.

Local concerns. Limitations in postsecondary success within the local ESU have been reported in the BSR's (2016) report. Up to 82% of graduated HS-SWDs did not consider enrolling in a postsecondary education program (BSR, 2014, 2015, 2016). Of those who did not intend to enroll, 41% reported concerns with their health or a lack of academic ability as the main reasons they would not pursue an educational or training path (BSR, 2014, 2015, 2016).

Implications

Transition planning team members all have a stake in the success of HS-SWDs as they transition into adult life. Examining the perspectives of all transition planning team members may help inform practices in the local, rural ESU by providing a framework for

community-based capacity building and transition education. Findings led to the development of a TPP preplanning tool to help increase collective capacity.

Preplanning Tool

The development of a TPP preplanning tool will offer team members the opportunity to prepare for meetings. Preparation would increase participation, satisfaction with meetings, and quality of planning. Implementation and accessibility were central in developing the preplanning tool (Appendix A).

Summary

Postoutcome transition reports indicate that HS-SWDs are lagging behind their nondisabled peers in the areas of employment and postsecondary educational opportunities. A significant gap in practice is evident as local, rural ESU graduated HS-SWDs lag 15-20% behind state data for the last three years (BSR, 2014, 2015, 2016). Rural settings face challenges unique to the area that are unable to be generalized from previously conducted studies. The purpose of this study was to explore the rural, transition planning team members' perspectives of the TPP. The TPP is a collaborative effort based on the expertise of multiple team members. Special education teachers, general education teachers, district administration, agency representatives, parents or guardians, and HS-SWDs all add unique perspectives to help inform and guide practice. Results may lead to capacity building initiatives leading to strong transition planning development.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

According to Yin (2011), qualitative researchers offer depth by creating meaning through the examination of perceptions or perspectives. Structured and semistructured interviews allow researchers to gather base information, but also explore detailed perceptions and perspectives and probe further (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study as the purpose of this study was to examine the rural, transition planning team members' perspectives of the TPP. Analyzing the perspectives of all transition planning team member groups allowed for a broader view of the overall problem. This section will explore research study design and approach, access and selection of participants, and protection of study participants.

Research Design and Approach

Design

A qualitative, bounded case study was used to explore perspectives of the rural research site's high school special education teachers, general education teachers, district or special education administrators, community agency representatives, parents, and graduated adult aged HS-SWDs regarding the TPP. Case studies are used when examining a phenomenon with a goal to identify why and how processes happen (Yin, 2011). Researchers select a case study when they have no control over the elements in real life that happen. The TPP being explored occurs within every IEP meeting and is a required portion of the yearly process. The TPPs involved in the study occurred as a

normal part of the IEP planning process. I was not a part of that process within the local ESU. Qualitative, case-study methodology was appropriate for this study because I conducted an exploration of perspectives focused on experiences that have occurred. A qualitative, instrumental case study was also selected because the goal of the study was to understand participants' perspectives of TPPs on a deeper level. Yin (2011) identified that qualitative case studies explore participant perspectives and offer meaning to concepts. This allows those conducting research to get into the thoughts of participants (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). The selected method allowed me to develop the thoughts of transition planning team members to identify and plan for support services and activities.

Alternate qualitative methods. Alternative qualitative methods were considered, but they were rejected because they do not have the characteristics required of this study. Because transition is not a new concept and theoretical frameworks have been developed, grounded theory would not be an acceptable method for this study. Grounded theoriests seek to develop theories based on data collected within the field (Creswell, 2012). The purpose of this study was to examine perspectives to inform areas of need within transition planning teams. Kohler's (1996) transition taxonomy framework was the basis for this study. Grounded theory would not be appropriate because new theoretical frameworks are not being developed.

The experiences faced by all participants within this study were also different and unique to their situation and setting. Phenomenologists examine experiences of individuals over an extended period of time to reach data saturation (Yin, 2011). In this

study, I sought to examine perspectives at one point in time. Growth and development occurs as a natural part of the rural environment from the local ESU. Because of this, perspectives may change over time, and it was not possible to use phenomenology in this study.

Ethnography was considered but rejected because I did not seek to examine a culture. According to Yin (2011), ethnographic scholars examine rituals and norms through a lengthy evaluation. I did not seek to examine life in depth for participants. Instead, the goal was to identify a single experience in the lives of the transition planning team members. For this reason, ethnography was not selected as the study methodology.

Alternative case study methods were considered but rejected. Because little is currently known about TPP member perspectives, an intrinsic case study would not be an acceptable choice. In intrinsic case studies, scholars seek to develop an understanding of participant thoughts and feelings (Creswell, 2012). Depth and breadth were obtained through responses to open-ended interview questions to gather the perspectives of special and general education teachers, administrators, community agency representatives, parents, and graduated adult aged HS-SWDs pertaining regarding the TPP.

Alternative Quantitative Methods

A quantitative study was considered but was rejected because it does not allow researchers to identify the impact and influence of the participant group. Quantitative methods offer numerical data to determine rank, scores, and rates (Lodico et al., 2010). Although a survey could gather opinions on a Likert scale and offer descriptive statistical

data, qualitative methods allow for open-ended continued probing questions to establish a personal connection with participants (Yin, 2011). Compared to quantitative methodology, the goal of using qualitative methods is to gather deeper meanings from participants' personal perspectives (Yin, 2011). Quantitative questions do not allow researchers to adapt to the flow of an interview or insert additional questions (Yin, 2011). In addition, quantitative research may be used to compare the effects of a treatment on a dependent variable. Transition planning is required and necessary for all HS-SWDs; therefore, it is not possible or ethical to test the effects and methods against a control group.

Participant Selection and Access

Transition planning team member participant selection took place through purposeful sampling within the boundaries of a rural, local ESU. Purposeful sampling was chosen because it enabled me to examine perspectives of individuals with specific characteristics. All participants were members of the following transition planning team member groups: special education teachers, general education teachers, school administrators, community agency representatives, parents of HS-SWDs, and graduated adults with disabilities.

Team Member Selection

Participant selection aligned with federal and state transition planning team laws. Federal law requires the participation of several members in the transition planning and IEP process (USDE, 2007). According to the Nebraska Department of Education Rule

51 (NDE, 2004), the transition process has helped make the transition to postschool life positive, and any member who has a stake in that process should be involved in issues relating to postsecondary education, independent living, community-integrated employment, and agency services. Transition planning team members, identified by NDE (2016), include special education teachers, general education teachers, district administration, parents, and students. Agency representatives are also an NDE required team member provided that parental consent forms have been signed. All team members included in this research were adults over the age of 18. Each participant followed the access procedures outlined below.

Qualifications to Join Study

To qualify for participation in this study, transition planning team members met the criteria described below. Participation qualification was identified through the completion of a screening survey. The survey included questions regarding qualification. The screening survey was created using a Survey Monkey basic format. Questions were asked regarding demographics and participation requirements. Potential participants identified if they wished to participate in the interview process, if they were selected. If they marked that they wanted to participate, they entered their name and their phone number, so they could be contacted to schedule an interview.

The screening survey was sent to potential participants by Nebraska (NE) Disability Rights, Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (NE VR), the local ESU 13 special services director, and myself, using public e-mail addresses. The local disability rights

office, local VR office, local ESU special education director, and I do not maintain any authority over the participants. Upon receiving the participation letter with the link to the screening survey, potential participants completed the screening questions and identified if they were willing to participate in an interview with me. The process for each participant group was as follows:

Special education teachers. Three special education teachers (SETs) were identified as qualified participants through the following steps:

1. A participant e-mail list was created by examining e-mail access for schools in the study site area. Only 13 high schools offered e-mail contact information on their school website. Eighteen e-mail invitations were sent to SETs. The participant sample was achieved within the first set of e-mails.
2. The e-mails to SETs teaching on the secondary level contained a link to the screening survey. SETs then completed the survey.
3. Potential participants checked one of the following boxes: "I wish to participate in the study," or "I do not wish to participate in the study." Seven individuals within this category agreed to participate in the interview. If they agreed to participate, they shared their e-mail and telephone number for contact.
4. I determined who I would contact first by taking the first three respondents in the order that they completed the screening survey. The first and third participant responded immediately, and interviews were scheduled for the

following week. The second participant completing the survey did not return phone calls or e-mails within 2 weeks. Three messages and calls were left for the participant. After 2 weeks, the fourth participant was contacted for participation and responded. They agreed to participate, and the interview was scheduled for the following week.

5. I contacted volunteers by telephone to determine if the participants would like to schedule telephone or Skype interviews. All participants requested a telephone interview. If they agreed to do so, discussion of the informed consent took place, and the participants were informed of the e-mail consent procedure.
6. Informed consent was e-mailed to each participant. Consent was received prior to the interviews.

To qualify for the study, teachers must have been licensed special educators in the state for at least the last 2 years and be under contract with a school district served by the local ESU. Over 21 districts are served by the local ESU, and each school employs at least one provisional or standard licensed secondary special educator to implement transition practices. Qualified teachers must have been teaching as a secondary special education teacher at least part time. Teachers must also have attended and participated in the IEP TPP at least one time each year for the last 2 years.

General education teachers. Multiple attempts were made to gain access to three general education teachers (GETs). Only two general education teachers were willing to

participate in this study. Those eligible were identified as qualified participants through the following steps:

1. I e-mailed the screening survey to secondary GETs who could be accessed through public database. Over 112 initial e-mails were sent requesting participation. The required sample size was not reached within the first set of e-mails with no individuals completing the survey. A second attempt was made, and 112 e-mails were sent a second time. Two participants completed the survey, but did not return telephone calls or e-mails after a period of 2 weeks. A third attempt to gain participants was made and an additional 45 e-mails were sent to potential participants. Two participants responded and returned e-mails and telephone calls. The required sample size was still not achieved. A fourth attempt was made, and an e-mail request was sent to 45 potential participants with districts requiring e-mails to be sent directly through the website. No responses to the screening survey took place. The invitation process was exhausted, and the required sample size was not achieved.
2. Potential participants checked one of the following boxes within the screening survey: “I wish to participate in the study,” or “I do not wish to participate in the study.” Participants identifying that they wished to participate were contacted.
3. Potential participants answered the screening questions and offered their e-

mail and telephone information if they wanted to participate in the interview process.

4. I contacted the GETs by telephone to determine if they would like to schedule telephone or Skype interviews. All participants requested to complete the interview through a telephone interview. Discussion of the informed consent took place, and the participants were informed that they will receive it within 1 day.
5. Informed consent was obtained through e-mail prior to the interviews taking place.

To qualify for the study, teachers must have been licensed secondary educators in the state for the last 2 years and currently be under contract with a school district served by the local ESU. Teachers must also have attended and participated in the TPP as the required GET at least one time each year for the last 2 years.

District administration representatives. Three special education administration representatives (SEAs) were identified as qualified participants through the following steps:

1. I e-mailed the screening survey to high school SEAs who could be accessed through public databases and e-mail connections on their schools' public websites. Only 13 districts offered e-mail contact for staff through public access. In all, 26 e-mails were sent inviting administrators to participate. Responses were immediate, and the required sample size was achieved within

3 days.

2. Potential participants checked one of the following boxes: “I wish to participate in the study,” or “I do not wish to participate in the study.”
3. Potential participants answered the screening questions and offered their name, e-mail, and telephone information for contact. Five participants responded within a short time, and the required sample size was achieved. They were contacted in the order that they responded to the survey. The first three participants responded to phone calls and e-mails, and interviews were scheduled within the next week.
4. I contacted the participants by telephone to determine if the participants would like to schedule telephone or Skype interviews. If so, discussion of the informed consent took place and participants were informed that they would receive it within 1 day.
5. Informed consent was obtained through e-mail prior to the interviews.

For this study, district administration included the first participants to respond. For this reason, I included directors of special services who were licensed by the state with an administration certification. Over 21 districts were served by the local ESU, and each school employed at least one principal, and many employed a director of special services. Administrators must have been under contract with a school district served by the local ESU to participate in this study. Administrators must have attended and participated in the TPP at least one time each year for the last 2 years.

Agency representatives. Three agency representatives were selected, from a pool of study volunteers gathered through the following steps:

1. I e-mailed the screening survey to seven local agency representatives (AR), who were accessible through public website contact information. Only one participant responded during the first e-mail cycle. A second set of e-mails was sent to the same group, and an additional four ARs also received the invitation to participate and screening survey link. The required sample size was achieved after the second attempt.
2. Potential participants checked one of the following boxes: "I wish to participate in the study," or "I do not wish to participate in the study" within the screening survey.
3. Those willing to participate offered their name, e-mail, and telephone information if they wished to participate in the interview process.
4. I contacted the volunteers by telephone to determine if the participants would like to schedule telephone or Skype interviews. All participants asked to participate through telephone interviews. Discussion of the Informed consent took place and participants were informed that they would receive it within 1 day.
5. Informed consent was obtained through e-mail prior to the interviews.

For this study, ARs were selected from three different agencies who provide services to students and attend IEP meetings as the adult service agency. Participants

were required to be employed through a local service agency. Participants must have attended and participated in the TPP at least one time each year for the 2 years.

Parents and guardians. Three parents or guardians were identified as qualified participants through the following steps:

1. The local ESU special education director and local Disability Rights office disseminated the screening survey by e-mail. Because I did not disseminate the invitation to this group, it is unknown how many e-mails were sent. One participant responded to the screening survey in the first round. A second request was asked of the ESU special education director and Disability Rights to disseminate the invitation to participate a second time. The required sample size was achieved after the second e-mail set.
2. Participants checked one of the following boxes: "I wish to participate in the study," or "I do not wish to participate in the study."
3. Participants answered the screening questions and offered their name, e-mail, and telephone information to participate in the interview process.
4. I contacted the participants by telephone to determine if the participants would like to schedule telephone or Skype interviews. All participants requested telephone interviews. Discussion of the Informed consent took place and participants were informed that they would receive it within 1 day.
5. Informed consent was obtained through e-mail.

Qualifying parents or guardians had an HS-SWD attending a district within the

local ESU service area. For this study, parents and guardians were required to have attended IEP transition planning meetings for their children. Parents must have attended and participated in the TPP at least one time each year for the last 2 years.

Adult, graduated HS-SWDs. Two adult, graduated HS-SWDs (GHS), were the only respondents to the request to participate. Two GHS participants were identified as qualified participants through the following steps:

1. NE VR and Disability Rights office disseminated the study invitation and screening survey by e-mail. Because I did not disseminate the invitation to this group, it is unknown how many e-mails were sent. No participants responded within round one. A second request was asked of NE VR and Disability Rights to disseminate the invitation to participate a second time. One participant was gathered after the second invitation was sent. A final participant was received through snowball sampling.
2. Participants checked one of the following boxes: "I wish to participate in the study," or "I do not wish to participate in the study."
3. Participants answered the screening questions and offered their names, e-mail, and telephone information if they wished to participate in the interview process.
4. I contacted the participants by telephone to determine if they would like to schedule telephone or Skype interviews. All participants requested to be interviewed on the telephone. Discussion of the Informed consent took place

and participants were informed that they will receive it within 1 day.

5. Informed consent was obtained through e-mail and received prior to interviews.

All graduated, adult students were required to be over the age of 19. According to Nebraska's revised statute (Nebraska Department of Education, NDE, 2016), the legal age of majority has been set at the age of 19. To qualify, students must have been supported on an IEP with a transition plan in place throughout high school, and they must have attended their IEP meetings. In addition, students must have attended a district served by the local ESU for their entire high school education.

Sampling of Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to identify participants. This study examined 16 transition planning team members' perspectives of the TPP. The goal of the study was to have three participants from each TPP team group participate. All groups had three participants with the exception of GET and GHS. Purposeful sampling provided the opportunity to examine perspectives of transition planning team members (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The identification of group affiliation led to the selection of participants from each group. All participants were required to have attended IEP and TPP meetings and had contact with an HS-SWD undergoing the transition process. This was the case for all participants, except for the graduated, adult participants. Graduated HS-SWD participants attended two high school transition planning IEP meetings. This study involved small sample sizes. Qualitative research requires smaller sample sizes to gather

in-depth data (Creswell, 2012). This study explored transition planning team members' perspectives through a single case sampling.

Researcher and Participant Relationship

Researcher's role. Qualitative case studies require researchersand participants to establish a relationship encouraging conversation to take place (Lodico et al., 2010). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) recommended building rapport and sharing of a clear understanding of the research purpose. The conversation began with the researcher explaining who was included as part of the TPP and the purpose behind the study. Participants were allowed to ask any questions necessary to establish and build rapport between researchers and participants.

Participants should understand what I will provide throughout the process. My roles were shared through a role sheet e-mailed to participants. The following elements on the role sheet defined my role in this process: (a) I will ask and record answers to interview questions, (b) transcription will be completed as accurately as possible and offer a clear view of the perceptions of participants, (c) my role in this study was solely as an instrument to gather perspectives of the TPP, and (d) my role in the local ESU was explained openly and accurately so they are aware of any bias that may arise as a result of the position. my role was shared with participants in the consent form and a role and responsibility page was developed and shared.

Participant role. Participants agreed through an electronic consent form to participate. As a participant, individuals agreed to: (a) provide contact and basic

demographic information with the researcher, (b) participate in a telephone interview, lasting approximately 45 minutes, (c) answer questions as openly and truthfully as possible, and (d) review a two-page findings summary. Participants' roles and responsibilities were identified in a role and responsibility page.

Protection of Participants

Permissions. According to Creswell (2014), the primary goal of researchers is to ensure that no harm would be placed upon participants. To ensure this happened, the study was approved by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), number 08-25-17-0442975, expiring on August 24, 2018, to ensure ethical research practice occurred. Because contact information for school and agency staff are public knowledge and available on the web, I had access to e-mails, and no district consents were necessary within this research study. Informed consent was sought when potential participants replied to the survey indicating their willingness to participate. Informed consent forms were verbally explained to all participants when the phone call to schedule the interview took place. Participants completed informed consent forms through e-mail communication. Participants returned the e-mailed consent form by replying "I consent" if they wished to proceed with the study. Informed consent forms clarified any risks or limitations resulting from the study, participant roles and responsibilities, and the ability to discontinue participation, if requested. Participants were verbally reminded throughout the process that they may revoke their permission if they wished to do so.

Protection of identities. Because the information being discussed was sensitive,

all participants were of adult age and completed individual informed consent forms. An alphanumeric system (i.e. GE 1 for general education teacher 1, GE 2 for general education teacher 2, and GE 3 for general education teacher 3) was assigned to participants (See Table 2).

The identifier list was stored separately, in a locked cabinet, from the data. Participant data transcription only took place under initials and the alphanumeric code. Participants' full names and identities were not used on the transcription documents. Identification of participants on the recorded interview devices was by first name only if the conversation warranted the name. Date and time of recordings was noted on the hand-written notes to identify which interview they participated in. If participants were referred to within the study report, they were identified by their alphanumeric code and not by name to offer anonymity. All information used in the data analysis portion of the report was de-identified. No indication of where the individuals lived, what district they were attached to, or their place of employment will be entered into reports. If information clearly identified who they were, then it was omitted from the final report. Participants' supervisors and district staff were not made aware of who participated in the study to ensure that coercion concerns do not arise. All participant identities remained anonymous throughout the study.

Table 2

Alphanumeric Identifiers

Participant groups	Alphanumeric Identifier
Special Education Teacher	SET 1, SET 2, SET 3
General Education Teacher	GET 1, GET 2
District Administration	SEA 1, SEA 2, SEA 3
Agency Representative	AR 1, AR 2, AR 3
Parent	P 1, P 2, P 3
Graduated High School Student with Disabilities	GHS 1, GHS 2

Protection of data. Data storage methods were put into place to ensure that protection exists. All transcribed data reports were stored on my personal, password protected computer and removable flash drive. Printed reports were used as necessary to complete coding and then placed in a locked filing cabinet. I was the only one with access to any reports. When not in use, the computer, flash drive, and interview recording device were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my office. Only I have keys for the locked cabinet, and the information was not accessible to anyone else. Upon completion of the research, the computer, flash drive, and transcribed data will be kept for 5 years based on Walden's research requirements. They will continue to be locked for the entire time. After the 5 years, all data will be erased or shredded.

Data Collection

There are four main types of data collection methods within qualitative methodology. Yin (2011) identified that interviewing, observing, and collecting are the key methods to obtain data. Qualitative methods methods include audio-visual, observational, interviewing, and document data collection (Creswell, 2014). The selection of the data collection method is determined by the type of data needed to conduct a study. Data obtained from personal interviews was chosen for this research study. Yin (2011) reported that interviews provided an opportunity for participants to share their points of view in a conversational manner. Observation was considered, but the goal of this study was not to identify behaviors of participants. Other methods considered were data collection through audio-visual methods. However, audio-visual collection would not provide the perceptions sought in this study.

This qualitative, case study was based upon the following primary research question:

> Research Question 1: What are the rural high school transition planning team members' perspectives of the TPP within a local, rural ESU?

Interview Data

Perspectives were examined using telephone interviews for all participants. Participants were offered the choice of using the telephone or Skype for an interview. All participants selected the telephone option. All interviews were recorded by an Olympus hand-held recording device to ensure that information was recorded accurately. The

hand-held recording device had USB connection capability, and interview recordings were downloaded onto my personal computer and stored securely. Questions were asked based on a semistructured interview protocol. Interview questions in the semistructured interview protocol were adapted from a survey and focus group instrument developed by Cawthon et al. (2016). The original questions offered by Cawthon et al. were previously piloted and validated. My study made minimal adaptations to identifiers within the interview questions offered by Cawthon et al. to fit the needs of the different team groups. Specific changes are discussed below. Permission to adapt the survey has been received from Cawthon through e-mail.

Data Collection Instrument

A previously validated instrument offered within research of Cawthon et al. (2016) was used as the data collection instrument for this study. Cawthon et al. provided an opportunity for secondary special education teachers, who support individuals diagnosed within the deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) category, to provide perspectives regarding HS-SWDs' transition planning experiences. Professionals also provided their perspectives regarding preparedness of teams regarding transition support services and services available to students. An examination of the same elements of transition planning took place in the current research study. Therefore, this data collection instrument was identified as appropriate for this study.

Interview instrument. One single interview protocol was administered in a semistructured format (Appendices B, C, & D) to ensure maximum validity. Adaptations

were completed with permission to align the problem and purpose statement of this study. Cawthon et al. (2016) examined perspectives of teachers regarding effectiveness of the TPP for students who were diagnosed as DHH. While the Cawthon et al. study gathered perspectives of only special education teachers and examined one disability category, the instrument was relevant to the current study. Questions were asked regarding teachers' training in transition, how they viewed the planning process, and how effective the processes were. The goals of the Cawthon et al. study were the same, but the current study expanded the participant base to include all transition planning team members. In addition, perspectives regarding all disability categories were offered within the current research.

Adaptations to interview. Structured interviews follow a set of preprepared interview questions, but they do allow for adjustments to the protocol and probing within the actual interview (Lodico et al., 2010). Probing is an integral part of qualitative research, because it allows examination of unexpected items as they arise. Interview protocols were adapted to meet each participant group's identifier and relevant connections. E-mail permission was received from Cawthon to use the study's interview questions with agreement to cite the original study, if using questions from that component (Cawthon et al., 2016). As a result of the agreement, a full copy of questions was shared with me. Adaptations were made to include the following elements:

1. Identifier words were adjusted to align with the participant group's roles and responsibilities.

2. Questions with responses of yes and no were adapted to develop open-ended questions.
3. Wording was clarified as needed to increase understanding for participants. Several participants asked for clarification on questions, so either clarification was given, or probing questions were asked.
4. If a question was previously answered in another response or did not apply, then it was omitted in the process of the interview.

Identifying words were adjusted to match the participant being interviewed, but I worked to ensure that the questions remained as similar to the initial document as possible. Changes were made to ensure that questions related specifically to participant roles and responsibilities (Creswell, 2012). Questions were asked across two steps.

Process Completed

The first step was to contact participants to schedule the interview and identify if they selected the interview by phone or Skype. All participants selected to participate through telephone interviews. The second and final step consisted of telephone interviews. Participants were interviewed individually at a time of their choosing.

Step 1: Interview scheduling. Selected participantswere called. They received information about receiving and completing the Informed consent form and its completion. Interviews were scheduled by telephone. All participants were initially offered one-hour slots between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. to ensure interviews did not occur on their contracted or work time. Four participants requested interview

times outside of the offered time slots. Not all participants followed a school or traditional work schedule. It was necessary to schedule daytime interviews for those who worked in the evenings or had a day off.

Step 2: Interviewing of participants. Interviews took place at the previously agreed upon time. All interviews were recorded through a telephone recording device to ensure that the data were transcribed accurately. An Olympus hand-held device was used to record the conversation. Participants were made aware of the administration methods and had the right to discontinue participation if they were uncomfortable.

An explanation of the process and the descriptions of terms was given to the participants. Then, the interviews were conducted using interview protocols (Appendices B, C, & D) to match the TPP participant category. Participants were asked questions in the order of the protocol. Adjustments were made as conversations continued to include predetermined probing questions noted in Appendices B, C, and D and in-the-moment probes. In-the-moment probes were based on participant answers and responses. The focus was to gain deeper information.

Descriptive field notes were taken throughout the interview. Field notes were used during interviews to record the exact words used by participants. Then, recordings were listened to and verified for accuracy. Field notes were helpful as a backup to recording devices in case of failure and to help cognitive recall of the interview. Field notes were used in this study to help begin the process of understanding for the material. According to Yin (2011), field notes aid me in developing memory for responses.

Probing was used to allow participants an opportunity to elaborate. Creswell (2012) identified that probing increases the amount of information received. Probing questions have been added to the interview questions (Appendices B, C, & D), andthey were asked as needed.

Location of the interview. Due to the concern of geographical participation in the rural sample, interviews were conducted using the telephone. The option of Skype was offered to provide convenient access for participants. All participants in this study selected to participate in telephone interviews.

***Interview times and days*.** Interviews were scheduled with participants. All but one interview lasted no more than 46 minutes. One interview was conducted in two sessions due to a request from the participant. Interviews took place on days and times convenient for the participants. Their requests varied.

Systems to Gather Data

Interviews were recorded using an Olympus hand-held recording device with USB transfer capability. Notes were also taken throughout the interview to supplement recordings. This made it possible for interviews to be transcribed verbatim. Transcription of interviews was immediately completed within Microsoft Word and typed verbatim by myself. Microsoft Excel was used to organize the coded data. Charts, visuals, and graphics were all created using both Microsoft Word and Excel.

Role of the Researcher

Researchers maintain an instrumental role in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2012).

Researchers must examine values and biases that exist and could affect data (Creswell, 2014). Identifying my role is an important part of the process to ensure that coercion and bias does not exist. Yin (2011) offered that research integrity requires a focus of offering my perspectives.

How the researcher's role affects data collection. I worked as a transition coordinator for the local ESU for the previous 2 years. The transition coordinator position provides services, training, and support to all transition planning team members in the local ESU. While a relationship exists with some participants, my current position does not maintain any authority over the participants in this study. I act as a consultant who provides support and answers to questions, as requested. I do attend TPP meetings as requested by schools and parents. This part of the job allows me to understand the TPP and the importance of each team member. Parent outreach and student activities are planned and conducted by my department, but I do not provide direct services to students.

Because of the duties of my position, I believe that data collection was not affected by my position. It is possible that the opposite effect took place. Some participants knew me or knew of me, and I believe they shared more than they would have with a stranger. They openly shared concerns with me and felt comfortable offering specific examples and details.

Relationship with transition planning team members. Direct contact with team members did exist, but interaction was minimal. I do not have authority over any of the participants. The greatest degree of interaction with any TPP team member group

exists with secondary special education teachers and district administrators. I have provided parent and agency trainings, but a limited number of participants have taken advantage of these events across a large region. While contact exists with each TPP team member group, the transition coordinator does not work for any of the participant groups and only provides support, information, and services. For this reason, I may know some participants; however, relationships have been established in a work basis, because I am new to the area. This also has ensured that a long-standing relationship with participants has not existed.

Researcher bias. I have only lived and worked in this geographical area for a period of 2 years. Relationships have not been established for long periods of time; therefore, bias should not result from previous situations, settings, or connections. Because of my role, I do have ideas about what specific groups may think regarding the effectiveness of the TPP, but I am open to new ideas that could inform practice. Previous data requires an understanding of the communities and people from years past. I am new to the area, and I do not have biases about what has happened in the past.

It is important for researchers to identify their bias in order to overcome it. My personal connection with the TPP could increase my degree of bias within specific areas. I have been a part of the National Technical Center on Transition Capacity Building state team, so I may have bias in the importance of the TPP and federal support and processes. Being a state board member of the Parent Training Information center and a parent who has assisted her own child through the TPP, my perspective of the importance of parents

may be stronger than many individuals in special education. Also serving a past role as a SET may impact my opinion on what roles and needs are within the process.

My bias will be acknowledged in all phases of this research project. Awareness is a critical process of eliminating bias in addition to being open about my views. I will use my data collection methods and triangulation process to reduce assumptions and biases. Triangulation will be used to identify when three different member groups or four participants make a similar comment on a similar theme. This will reduce the possibility of my bias entering in the data analysis phase. Discrepant data will be evaluated for importance and reported in limitations and future areas of study as appropriate. These measures should help to reduce the bias in the reporting process.

Data Collection Process

Data collection began August 28, 2017 and lasted for about 3 months. Invitations to participate were sent by me to the following groups: SET, GET, SEA, and AR. NE VR, NE Disability Rights, and ESU 13 disseminated participation requests to P or GHS. All participants were invited to complete a Survey Monkey screening survey. Responses were collected as they were turned in and participants were contacted via telephone to schedule interviews and gain e-mails to send the Informed consent. I also received a contact and phone call through snowball sampling for the GHS groups. Overall, participant sampling lasted longer than anticipated as repeated e-mails were sent to GETs, Ps, and GHSes. Two or more follow up e-mails were sent to these groups. The goal of participant numbers was not achieved in the GET and GHS groups; thus,

limitating the study's findings.

Participants were interviewed at times that were convenient for each of them and each interview lasted no more than 46 minutes. Interviews were made as convenient as possible for participants and some breaks or time shifts were necessary because of participants' previous commitments or work schedules. All changes are noted on transcribed documents. Interview data were recorded using a pseudonym and a number (i.e. SET 1, SET 2, SET 3, AR 1, AR 2, AR 3, and so forth). The participant number was selected based on the order in which they participated. Each interview was recorded with a hand-held recording device and interviews were transferred to the documents file on my personal computer. A copy of each interview was then stored on a flash drive which was placed in a locked file cabinet in my home office.

Each interview began with a description of the study and each transition planning member grouping. Some participants offered a work e-mail in their screening survey response, so I also asked for participants' e-mail addresses of where I could send the summary of their interviews. I wanted to respect their confidentiality and sent summaries to a different e-mail, if requested. The summary process was explained to each participant and they were informed of the step.

Participants were informed that their interview would be recorded. I began asking the questions verbatim from the group's set of prepared questions. Question four (Appendices B, C, & D) proved to be difficult to understand for almost all groups, so I adjusted the wording based on the participant. I also waited to ensure that understanding

was achieved. For several participants, I was asked to repeat the question. I repeated the questions and attempted to explain the question the best I could. If participants answered a question with a confused response or interesting comment, I probed further to gain deeper insight into the question. The content of each interview did vary based on the personality of the interviewee. For some interviewees, natural conversation with the participants of the transition process occurred rather than following the interview protocol verbatim. I interwove the questions' content to ensure that all the key elements were covered in interviews. For other participants, the questions continued to be asked verbatim through the interview.

Answers were offered for interview questions, and I took notes on a pad of paper. Notes were not taken word for word. Unique comments, phrases, or utterances were recorded to increase my ability to remember them. I also noted any interesting comments that could lead to future areas of research or any limitations that I noted through the process.

Data Systems

To ensure that the data offered depth into perceptions of the TPP, a 4-phase data analysis process was completed. Continued analysis took place throughout the entire process. An inductive approach was used to conduct this study as data were collected and analyzed (Creswell, 2012).

Preparation

Data preparation is critical to understanding the perspectives of the TPP**.** Time

was spent to prepare the data for evaluation so that the transcription and coding process would move smoothly. A well done qualitative research study involves "a substantial amount of time in fieldwork, careful, then repeated sifting through information sources . . . repeated analysis of data to identify patterns" (Mertens & Wilson, 2012, p. 330). To increase the quality of the data, careful preparation took place.

Careful preparation began with ensuring that data were not lost. Files were created in the computer's Documents file for each group of participants. All interviews were downloaded immediately to my personal computer in case they would be accidentally erased or destroyed. Each interview was stored in the correct TPP team member file. Microsoft Word documents were opened and labeled with the participants' alphanumeric identifier. Then, the file was placed into the correct folder for their respective TPP groups. An additional file was created and labeled with the alphanumeric identifier and summary. This file was also placed in the correct folder for their respective TPP groups.

Interview notes were stapled and labeled with the alphanumeric identifier of the participant and then placed into the corresponding file with the same identifier. All files were physically stored in my private office, in a locked filing cabinet. The list of names and identifiers was stored separately from the list.

Transcription

The transcription process took place after each recorded interview was completed. Each interview was transcribed within 3 days after the interview. According to Saldaña

(2013), the coding process begins with careful transcription of verbal interviews. Careful transcription helped to ensure that participants' views were recorded accurately. The process for transcription for this research was as follows:

1. Recordings were listened to once without action to increase familiarity with data.
2. Then, recordings were listened to for the second time, and initial, raw transcription was completed per question. This took place through a naturalized transcription method within Microsoft Word. Participants' spoken words were written verbatim and notes regarding any hesitations or nuances were recorded within the document. Significant gaps or pauses were noted in the document.
3. Recordings were listened to for the third time to compare the written transcription with the oral recording.
4. A final step of preparing the transcribed document took place. The goal was to identify who was speaking, correct formatting errors, and fix margins. Participants' words were deidentified for their protection using alphanumeric identifiers and descriptions instead of names, proper nouns, and pronouns that identified any information.

Storage and Organization

Organization and storage prior to coding. Oral recordings were transcribed and entered into Microsoft Word. Forms were then rganized and prepared for coding.

Saldaña (2013) recommended that margins be placed on the right side of the paper to document, take notes, and record thought processes while coding. For this reason, all transcriptions were recorded in a Microsoft Word document in a double-spaced format with a one-inch margin on the right side of the paper. Paragraphs were separated by spacing to identify changes in thoughts or timeframes. All documents were printed, labeled using the alphanuemeric identifying code, and stapled for the coding process to begin.

A summary of participants' interview transcription was written within 2 weeks and sent to participants for review. Each participant responded back to let me know if the interview was acceptable. No changes were requested by participants, so transcribed documents were used as they were initially written.

Data Exploration and Coding

Exploration and coding took place to increase connections with data. A large amount of data were gathered within the study and coding allowed for the volume of data to be reduced to a manageable amount (Saldaña, 2013). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), an important element of qualitative analysis is the reduction of data. Coding allowed for patterns within the data to emerge and ultimately to identify findings (1994). This phase allows researchers to understand the depth and breadth of their data (Lodico et al., 2010). Because the study used an inductive process of coding, pre-assigned coding systems were not put into place. The goal of coding is to search through the data to identify patterns that lead to effective linking of data (Bogdan & Biklen,

2007). Coding was completed using two cycles. The cycles were open coding and thematic coding.

Open coding. Initial identification of categories or patterns were completed through the process of open coding (Yin, 2011). Saldaña (2013) identified patterns as common elements relating to similarities, differences, frequencies, sequences, correspondence, and causation. Notes were completed on the printed transcriptions to identify initial code sets. As the documents were read, initial thoughts and ideas regarding common perspectives, differences, and frequencies were recorded in the right margin. The creation of coding categories allowed for more accurate sorting of data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Categories that arose followed the key concepts recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (2007) and included setting or context codes, situation codes, perspectives of thinking, activities, events, strategies, relationship or structures and methods. A multistep process was adapted from Tesch's eight steps (Creswell, 2014) of open coding and is as follows:

1. All transcripts were read thoroughly one time without a focus on coding.
2. All transcripts were read a second time. Notes on concepts, key phrases, and emerging code ideas were written in the margins to identify the main ideas generated within the data.
3. A list for all identified topics was created. Topics were grouped in like categories and titled as the first set of coding. Multiple codes emerged from this process. Some temporary, first line coding themes that arose were: local

training, experience, ESU activities, on the job, meeting attendance, social skills, functional living skills, self-advocacy, postsecondary education knowledge, employment, independence, hopes and dreams, school attitudes, student attitudes, meeting preparation, collaboration and communication, family follow through, family knowledge, course of study, job shadowing, time, money, graduation requirements, state standards, career academies, service area, and rural concerns.

4. Data were re-read to ensure a complete, clear process took place. Data were examined for any missed codes from the original read through.

Thematic coding. A second cycle of coding was necessary to reanalyze data or review the organizational system established in the first cycle. The open coding process identified multiple codes that are too numerous to manage. According to Saldaña (2013), the process of second cycle thematic coding helps to reduce the data and make it manageable. Themes identified in the previous coding process may not be beneficial to the overall research as they may not connect to other elements (2013).

Thematic coding was used as a second style coding. Thematic coding methods are used to reorganize data and identify common themes or constructs (Saldaña, 2013). According to Creswell (2014), the creation of themes allowsfor effective organization of identified codes into the big picture concepts. Connections were identified among the first-cycle codes and then were consolidated. Analysis took place relating to the study purpose, theoretical framework, and guiding question. Evaluation and reorganization of

data took place in the following process:

1. Previously developed codes were analyzed to identify similarities. Similar codes were combined. Creswell (2014) recommended approximately five to seven themes be used to report data. The coded data were presented within five themes.
2. As the analysis took place and codes combined into like concepts, themes relating to Kohler's (1996) components of the transition taxonomy began to emerge. Codes from the open coding process fit into five key themes: family involvement, student development, student-centered planning, interagency collaboration, and program structure.

Validity Methods

Qualitative validity is a critical part of identifying accuracy in research (Creswell, 2014). Validity measures in qualitative research help identify that accuracy of findings occurs and all views are shared. To ensure that the research findings were portrayed accurately, two key measures of validity were used. Having participants review a summary of the findings helps to identify errors in data, acknowledge researcher bias, and document misinterpretations of emotion and exaggerations

Member checking. Member checking allowed participants to view a summary of findings to analyze accuracy of their data in the findings. Performing member checking can help to increase the credibility and accuracy of the research project (Creswell, 2012). Participants received a follow up e-mail to review a two to three page summary of

transcribed data. This allowed them the opportunity to check the accuracy of their data. If corrections were needed, then they were to e-mail me and set a time to discuss concerns. All participants responded that they had no concerns with the interview summaries.

Triangulation. Individuals representing six groups of transition planning team members were asked to participate in this study. Different responses regarding strengths, challenges, and roles emerged from each participant. To avoid reporting bias, data triangulation was used to ensure researcher bias did not dictate results.

Data triangulation occurs when several methods of data collection exist (Creswell, 2014). While the only qualitative data collection method used in this study was through interviews, for the purpose of this study the team member groupings were used as separate units of data collection. Yin (2011) reported that different units of data were not always available, and researchers may find the information from different people or groups useful for triangulation.

Data source triangulation took place to compare data from like sources. Data reported by a minimum of three different team member groupings was identified as a triangulated set of data and used in the data analysis process. This process helped me to avoid any bias or assumptions from one or two answers from participants. While some of them may have appeared valid for the responder, if three or more participant groups did not support the element, then it was not used in data analysis. This helped to ensure bias was as limited as possible, and findings related only to supported elements. Non-

triangulated responses were reported as discrepant cases.

Procedures for Discrepant Cases

Qualitative research yields data that are categorized into themes. According to Creswell (2014), discrepent data occurs when it can not be categorized into one of the identified themes or differs significantly from the coded data. Yin (2011) refers to discrepant data as rival data. Rival data were carefully analyzed to identify if current views or the rival view should be accepted. If rival, discrepant data were found to be stronger, then careful attention was given to these data as they may be used to review, develop, and substantiate the emerging themes. Rumrill et al. (2011) reported that discrepant data "must be rigorously examined, along with supporting data, to determine whether the research findings (i.e. categories, themes) are to be retained or modified." (p. 172). Rigorous examination of discrepent data took place.

Atypical responses were also evaluated to provide an explanation or gain an understanding. Discrepant cases also can help to identify future areas for research or identify what other data may be useful. For this reason, data not included within the themes were carefully evaluated to ensure perspectives were not dismissed simply because they did not fit into a theme. Discrepant data were recommended as further areas of study to identify if the rival data would yield more substantial results in studies focusing on the element.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data emerges as a result of a deep, consistent review of data (Creswell,

2012). Continuous review of the data were conducted to ensure the transcriptions were as thorough as possible. Interviews were transcribed in a Word document within 3 days to ensure comments and feelings were noted accurately. Each recording was listened to in a 3-phase process to ensure it was transcribed correctly for effective data analysis. Validity measures were put into place for the data analysis process. These measures make the results of this study reasonably valid for evaluation purposes.

Setting

Data collection took place in a Midwestern state's local ESU boundaries. The participant sample came from TPP team members from any of the 21 schools within the boundaries. Populations within the region are small with only two of the schools in cities identified as urban clusters. The remaining cities and schools are located in rural areas.

Demographic

Nineteen of the 21 schools were located in rural areas with only two schools identified as being located within urban clusters (U.S. Census, 2012). Anonymity concerns exist in identifying the number of each group that came from rural populations and those who came from urban clusters. Because the area is limited in population, it could be possible for readers to identify participants. In addition, identifying subjects taught or time in service of SETs, GETs, or SEAs may offer readers information to determine who participants are. For this reason, limited demographic information is being reported to protect the anonymity of participants.

Descriptive Data

A total of 16 participants volunteered for personal interviews. Three participants from each of the following groups were included: special education teachers, special education administrators, agency representatives, and parents. Two participants from the following groups were included: general education teachers and graduated HS-SWDs. Each individual was identified by an alphanumeric identifier (see Table 2). The number noted the order they volunteered for the study. Special education teachers were noted as SET 1, SET 2, SET 3. Special education administrators were identified at SEA 1, SEA 2, and SEA 3. General education teachers were identified as GET 1 and GET 2. Agency representatives were identified as AR 1, AR 2, and AR 3. Graduated high school students with disabilities were noted as GHS 1 and GHS 2. Parents were identified as P 1, P 2, and P 3. All participants met the required criteria and had attended at least two IEP/transition planning meetings in the last 2 years.

Data Analysis Results

The purpose of this case study was to explore TPP team members' perspectives of of the TPP. Sixteen individuals within six different categories offered in-depth answers sharing their personal life situations and experiences with the TPP. All participants shared their training related to transition and identified team member roles.

Demographic Information

According to participants, formal training in the TPP is limited (See Table 3). Most team member exposure regarding the TPP arose from on the job training or experiences within the TPP. Participants identified the second most frequent source of training was local school or ESU professional developments related to transition for the SET, SEA, and P participant groups. For students, the only source of education and training for TPP was the actual process. This was similar for the GET participants unless they sought out additional training.

Table 3

Training of TPP Members

	Formal Education	Local ESU/School Trainings	Work Experience	Other
SET	None; One class in pre-service	Teacher trainings; Trainings on IEP	School Employment	State Transition Conference
GET	Master's level program	Training on 504/IEP		
SEA		TPP Trainings	Member of the TPP team; Work Experience	Community Councils/Activities
AR			Member of TPP team; Mentors	Self-taught; Read; Participate
P		Parent conferences; Parent activities		Dual role as parents/educators; State conferences
GHS			Member of the TPP team	

Formal education and experience. The primarymethod of training and preparation for individuals in the professional field categories of SET, SEA, and AR was postsecondary educational programs and job experience. Contrary to the other professionals, GETs identified they had not attended structured training in the TPP. GET

1 and 2 identified they received instruction during their preservice programs on IEPs, but they were not educated on the transition process. GET 1 shared that training on IEPs and the TPP would be beneficial. She felt this was important especially considering she was a required team member. Several SETs, SEAs, and Ps all replied that they had no preservice training in the TPP. GHS 1 and GHS 2 could not recall receiving any training or instruction on the TPP.

Professional development opportunities. Eight of the participants in the SET, SEA, and P groups received training through local professional developments and conferences for community members. P 1, P 2, and P 3 all shared that parent events and conferences were noted as beneficial activities to support the attainment of transition team skills. ARs did not receive training through professional development.

On the job training. On the job training was a key source of information. According to ARs, on the job training was the primary method of information and no other training was offered. Two SEAs also shared that on the job training was the method in which they learned about transition elements. Even SETs did not come into their positions with transition knowledge. Within the first 2 years, SET 2 had no training in transition and little education from pre-service programs. After 6 years, knowledge was gained through on the job training.

Roles, Knowledge and Skills of Transition Planning Team Members

Participants were asked the role of TPP members and the knowledge or skills they brought to the process. Each participant offered views of their own role and other team

members' roles. No difference was noted regarding how the groups viewed team member roles. Roles were identified as follows:

Special education teachers. The training and education SETs hold was noted as a benefit to the TPP team. Almost all participants identified the SET as the facilitator of the team. GET 1, GET 2, P 3, and GHS 2 agreed that leading the meeting was the primary role of the SET. According to SEA 3, her school's SET is "the most trained." AR 1 saw SETs as a resource to the team through the knowledge and education they offer. The transition process can be complicated, and P 3, GET 1, and GET 2 felt the SETs were the most highly trained in laws and paperwork protocols. This strength helps guide the team through the process.

In addition, participants viewed the role of the SET as the person who prepared the other team members to participate in the meeting. All SETs also shared that this was one of their primary roles along with connecting to students. SET 2 stressed the importance of student support and said that all SETs should be, "on the side of the student, no matter what. I don't care who they are, that's your job." Several team members identified SETs are integral in preparing students for the meeting. AR 1 views the SET's role as the resource to provide education and support to parents. SEA 1 also saw this, but also added that SETs have to ask families, "Is this a goal you're willing to support? Are you going to be able to support your child?"

General education teachers. The primary role of GETs, identified by all participants, is to share progress and information about the educational setting. This

element does not always happen. P 2 shared, “They are so important and they don’t talk much either, other than to say I see it in my class.” SET 2, SET 3, AR 3, P 2, and GET 1 all shared GETs have perspectives very different from the rest of the team. GETs hold expertise in their subject area and can offer insight into accommodations and modifications. Knowledge of social skills, career-based skills, and academic abilities are included in TPP meetings because of GETs. Many teachers are skill-based instructors and can offer insight regardingstudent skills and career readiness. Monitoring progress is another role noted by GHS participants. GHS 1 and GHS 2 reported progress monitoring as an importantrole of the GETs.

Decisions on course planning and support methods can be offered by GETs. According to P 3, a GET in attendance at her youth meeting was “able to evaluate her skill set. To see where she was. She offered, she brought up that she teaches this class offered . . . and she thought that (student name) would be a good fit.” SET 1 felt GETs offered a view of what is expected in the real world, outside of the special education environment. “I think one skill they bring is that it is important to do a good job at what you are doing, whether assignments or whether it be show on time.”

Agency representatives. SET 1, SET 2, SET 3, SEA 1, SEA 3, AR 3, P 2, P 3, and GET 2 all identified the role of agencies as a source to provide knowledge regarding agency programming and offerings. Agencies can offer reality beyond high school, according to P 2, “I think the outside agencies have a much more realistic picture to what’s available to those kids when they are adults.” According to P2, when ARs attend

meetings they are able to explain options to families and update them on activities. If ARs are not in attendance, confusion exists for team members regarding application processes and services. According to SEA 3 agencies should be able to explain, "This is what we can do, this is what we can't. And this is what you need to have in place to make that happen."

In order to receive the benefits of agency involvement, parents have to be willing to accept services. According to SEA 1, this is not always the case and may hinder attendance, "The agency role in meetings is as valuable as the parents will allow it to be." Consent to invite must be given, by parents, for attendance to take place. SET 3 identified that trust is a huge deterrent in the support of agency invitations. AR 1 also shared that the trust level affects the level of agency involvement.

Special education administrators. Providing support to the TPP was the key role identified by several participants. GET 1 offered that the legal knowledge held by SEAs is beneficial to the team. In addition, administrators were identified as having skills for facilitating conversations between participants and engaging students. When asked what administrators brought to the team, AR 2 shared, "I'm sure they facilitate a lot of other types of meetings . . . working with all different families and all different teachers."

Experience in supporting teachers and the team with resources were identified as a positive skill by GET 1, GET 2, SEA 3, and SET 2. According to SET 1, "I definitely think their role is this process is to support me in this job." Being understanding about

the need to travel to transition related activities is important to SET 1. SETs cannot do their job effectively if they are not supported. According to SEA 3, "My job is to make it so she can go to that and bring that back."

It is important to note that administrators' roles varied based on disability diagnosis category and needs of the team. SET 3 reported that based on the disability related needs, their administrator takes on different roles. Ps also notice that this does occur. However, P 1 reported a key role of administration should be to support all students the same.

Parents. Almost all participants agreed that parents were partners in the process. They offer advocacy support and guidance for students. Advocating for students and ensuring their hopes and dreams were shared within the TPP was the most mentioned role of Ps in the process. SET 1 felt they advocated for "hope and support too for the child and what they want to do." Both GHS participants shared that this was a critical role. GHS 1 remembered the parents' role as discussing home life and attitudes. This recollection was similar for GHS 2, "They're to say what's going on with me during school and help figure out what would be best for me."

Sharing what P 3 called the "private side" of the student, is a role several participants felt was fulfilled by parents. Parents were identified by SEA 2 as the "most important person." Many of the participants agreed parents know their children best and can offer student hopes and dreams to the team. SET 3 saw the parent role as critical, "They know what we don't see." and P 3 described it as knowing their "private side."

Participants shared that parents also offer historical perspectives on health and disability that schools do not know. SEA 1, 2, and 3 agreed parents know a side of behavior and learning that educators cannot see. P 2 saw a very different side of her child at home, "I know some things that he really can do, but that he will let you do it if you don't say no." Knowing this helps to develop stronger, more realistic goals.

Students. Students were identified by several participants to be the most important member of the team, because they know their own hopes and dreams the best. SET 2, SEA 1, SEA 2, AR 1, AR 3, GET 1, GET 2, P 2, and P 3 all agreed the key role of students was to identify needs and to self-advocate. SEA 2 identified the TPP as being all about students, "I hope and I do mean hope that our kids know that this is about them." If students do not believe they are central to the process, SEA 1 felt there is no "buy in" in the process.

According to SET 2, students bring the ability to say what their strengths are, "I always want them to be able to say what they are good at." Sometimes participants felt it is hard for students to show their knowledge and skills in TPP meetings but SET 3 has "them write their strengths and weaknesses on the board because I know they won't talk to anybody." Alternative methods are given until "they are an active part of their meeting" and share their knowledge and skills on their own. According to SEA 2, students know what they want, and this is their process. GET 1 shared that students know how they learn best, and this helps in goal development. All team members agreed on the role, but it is not always fulfilled by SETs.

Interview Results

Due to the rural nature of this region, demographic information and descriptions may decrease anonymity for participants. Detailed descriptions relating to participants' years of experience, time in positions, and roles have not been given. For this reason, all quotes and information have been de-identified within the data offered. Information was evaluated per question asked. As the coding process progressed, it was identified that the perspectives shared aligned with the themes within the transition taxonomy (Kohler, 1996).

Theme 1: Family Involvement

The theme of family involvement arose within participant perspectives. Participants identified that families were involved in the TPP, but they may not always feel prepared to support youth. Participants indicated this may be related to a lack of understanding and concerns relating to trust.

Strengths. Participants shared that families demonstrate a vested interest in their students. They care aboutfuture success of their children and their involvement helps to increase success of youth. According to participants, families offered input because they valued the TPP. SEA, P, and GHS groups identified that family involvement was an important factor in transition success. GHS 1 always knew her family was supportive: "They didn't give up on me." GHS 2 noted that his parents were an important part of his planning team. Ps also shared that they felt it was important to advocate for their children, and P 1 even shared that she had to "fight" for services for her son: "He needed

someone behind him to support him and if he wasn't going to do it, I'd have to." The value of parent input and support was also identified as a strength by SET 1. Parent input on goals has helped to support students gain checking accounts, money management skills, and similar supports.

Challenges. Participants agreed that parents often felt unprepared to support youth through the transition process. Concerns were shared regarding their own ability to assist youth through the TPP. P 3 voiced that she "felt inept" when working to plan for her child's transition process. SETs and SEAs also shared that parents often do not know how to support their children through the process. SEA 2 identified that moving from elementary IEPs to the Transition IEP was a "mind shift for them." Several participants shared that Ps often do not understand the purpose of the TPP. According to SET 3, many parents see their students as "fine" and do not see how the process can support them. GET 2 shared that this process is overwhelming for Ps and that they are not always able to process the supports available for their children. The process happens in every participant's setting, but SET 2 identified that, "I just don't know that although we have the IEP and we talk about it, I don't know if it's processed." According to P 2 and P 3, processing of the need is limited. They know they need to move their students through the process, but they do not always get it done or follow through on the transition tasks.

A lack of understanding of the process limits the degree of buy in for parents and affects levels of trust among TPP team members. SET 2 identified that a significant disconnect exists between parents and TPP team members. SET 3 offered that maybe the

disconnect and lack of trust arises from the sharing of information. Parents often ask SET 3, "Who are you trying to give my information to?" when forms are signed or paperwork to connect students is discussed. AR 1, SET 3, and SEA 2 all shared concerns regarding limited information sharing because of parents' needs to be private. The need for privacy was noted by team members as a reason for reduced communication amongst team members. AR 1 and AR 2 shared that parent privacy often hindered the team's ability to plan appropriately for the youth.

Communication and follow through were affected by relationships established between families and schools. Some parents shared that they were not sure the team strived to bring positive growth to their children. P 1 felt that she always had to "fight" for what she wanted and that the team did not always understand what they were asking for. In addition, the SET and SEA groups shared concerns related to information sharing about tasks completed in a community or home setting. Growth or challenges were not shared with the team and documentation of progress does not exist. SEA 3 shared significant concerns relating to an unwillingness to communicate and work together. Several tasks can no tbe completed in a school setting, and this makes it difficult to follow progress.

> Transition is such a hard piece, because without collaboration with the family there is just limitations. I can't fill out the FAFSA, I can't do those things for them . . . If nobody at home is giving them that, I can't make it happen for them.

Theme 2: Student Development

The area of student development includes the educational opportunities available to students and the efforts taken to support transition. Participants shared perspectives indicating that student development was both a strength and a challenge in the process. Many participants felt they held a global view of the needs and importance of student development. However, struggles were identified in implementation.

Strengths. Members of the TPP all agreed that student development in the process was a strength within all districts. Supports offered in life skills and vocational support were identified by participants as successful in developing the skills of youth. While participants noted that the resources were not always available to offer everything students needed, they shared that students received educational skill development.

Several transition planning teams offer life skills programs within the school setting. GET 2 shared that his team utilized life skill programs to support goals in meal planning, gaining access to needed supports, and taking care of a home. One of the benefits to the TPP that GHS 2 experienced was the ability to learn life skills in a real setting: “Learning to plan meals and stuff like that.” In addition, GHS 1 identified programming related to responsibility, bill payment, and tax completion as positive elements from her experience. GHS 1 acknowledged that teams implemented life skills instruction, but that students did not always pay attention: “The thing is in high school, you think you know everything.” Despite it “being my own fault for not paying attention

in class", GHS 1 felt that her team did a good job of preparing her for her future. AR 3 agreed that students gain transition skills through the real-life skill programs offered.

The changes in the state and school policies regarding career academies and career education courses was noted as a student development strength by AR 2, SEA 2, GET 2, P 2, and GHS 1. According to AR 2, teams are able to align the course of study with classes and experiences offered through career academies in the general education setting. SEA 2 shared that the career academies have provided meaningful opportunities to students in the TPP because they "see a purpose behind what they are doing." SEA 2, SEA 3, AR 2, P 2 and SET 3 all saw vocational activities and experiences offered by local agencies as a strength. According to SEA 2, P 3, AR 2, and AR 3, the local VR office has also provided positive opportunities for work experience opportunities through summer employment grants. Realistic job experiences have been helpful in assistingstudents to attain their employment goals. For GHS 2, work experience significantly changed his level of social skill development and talking to others.

Challenges. Many team members were prepared in the area of understanding of student development needs but implementing them was an area of unpreparedness. SET 2 noted it was hard to plan for students when the options they need are not available to them: "We need to have some classes that just aren't theory classes." Transition related courses do not exist across many settings. According to SEA 2, student activities to address transition are "difficult to access to do because of timing or because of lack of balance between academics and transition." Knowing how to support students served in

special education compared to their general education peers is something SEA 2 did not feel prepared to do. "In reality those two things match and neither one of them get that." Limited time in the schedule existed to support and prepare students appropriately. They often shared that they understood and supported the purpose of the TPP, but outside elements made it difficult to implement.

While the school supports in place for student development were noted as a strength of many teams, the logistics of implementing them caused challenges. According to many SET, SEA, AR, and P participants, small rural communities have seen a negative economic impact in the past few years. SET 1 shared that her school wants to offer work opportunities, but that it is difficult with few options available:

> I guess part of the difficulty is that we are in such a small area that trying to get them to . . . they are kind of stuck in a little box. There are not a lot of opportunities for different programs to look at. There might be an auto shop or a nursing home.

P 2 shared that her youth's school community is so small and has no businesses, so transportation concerns arise for families and schools. If businesses do exist, the opportunities are so limited. According to SET 2, students may only have opportunities to learn the job skill of cleaning because no other jobs are available. If they want students to have experiences, they have to find funding and time for transportation to the next largest community. While positive attitudes are growing towards employment for

non-verbal youth with more significant disabilities, AR 2 and P 2 identified that student development is a challenge for students in rural communities.

Theme 3: Student-Centered Planning

The theme of student-centered planning includes the IEP/TPP process development and the involvement of students in the TPP. Support and training were noted by participants as key components of gaining the global picture of transition. A majority of the team members understood that students are central in the process and that the TPP should be student-focused. Participants identified that confusion appears to exist amongst TPP team members regarding how to improve and gain involvement of the student-focused process. According to participants, the people available to support youth is a strength.

Strengths. Student focused planning was noted as a strength in two key areas. Teams currently effectively use assessments to help guide the IEP development process. Students are also beginning to advocate for themselves within the school environment and ask for their accommodations and modifications. However, participant perspectives identified that getting students to advocate beyond the school setting was a challenge.

Input from team members identifying student hopes and dreams was considered beneficial by AR 3. Effective goal development was possible by use of transition assessment within the teams represented by SET 3 and SEA 1. Transition assessment was reported as a helpful tool when writing transition goals and tasks. Team members

strive for growth and SET 3 shared that positive effects have been seen within IEP development. SET 3 shared:

> My mindset has changed a lot. In the past my goals were things like getting their driver's license, getting their college applications done, things like that . . .. They weren't as tailored as I know they should be . . . now with increased training, and I'm not there yet, I'm better.

GHS 1 and GHS 2 felt that goals identified met areas that they needed support in. Both participants felt that their team worked to support them. According to AR 2, the connection of goals and students' course of study provided real learning opportunities for students. This strength was also noticed in transition planning meetings attended by GET 1. GET 1 shared that when students have goals to attend college, they often are placed in dual credit courses to help them prepare for the next step. According to GET 2, career course enrollment is helping to offer meaningful experiences.

Several participants noted that there have been increases in the number of students advocating for accommodations developed in the TPP. Participants including SET 3, SEA 2, AR 1, P 1, P 2, GET 1, and GHS 1 shared the value of students advocating for accommodations and needs. SET 3 has been working on students' ability to advocate and "was really proud of some kids this week when I was gone . . . and they told the test administrators that they test in the resource room." GHS 1 shared that she increased in her self-advocacy abilities towards the completion of high school. Self-reflection and guidance led GHS 1 to get more support:

> I needed to get my stuff together and actually focus on school and focus on what was important, so I went in the mornings for help . . .. Yeah, during my senior year I did because I pretty much thought that was my last year of getting help and understanding.

Challenges. Supporting students in the transition process is an area many team members do not feel prepared to support. The level of student participation in the process is a concern. Every participant identified that students are central in the process, but many shared that they do not always participate in developing their TPPs or encouraging the implementation of them.

Many participants felt that TPPs were limited because of a lack of participation from team members. While participants shared that all team members (with the exception of ARs) attend meetings, their participation was limited within the actual meeting. GET, AR, and P participants shared that they do not always feel welcome to participate in the process, because SETs often spoke for a majority of the time. GET 1 also shared they do not feel important in the TPP, "I'm sitting and listening to someone else talk the whole time and I wonder if I really need to be there." P, AR, and GET participants shared that team members also did not always participate in the TPP. P 3 shared that drafts of goals were often set prior to meetings: "I felt like my voice didn't matter and decisions were already made." She further shared that team members helped change them, but they often did not build them. GET 1 attended meetings, but she was was not sure that her input affected the student-focused outcomes. Limited

understanding and input during meetings was noted. GET 1 shared that understanding the process may help to increase her participation: "Since it is a requirement of general ed teachers to be in an IEP meeting, they should have some kind of previous knowledge or background to enter in." GET 2 identified that implementation of decisions was difficult and he does not always receive support.

Participation concerns were also shared by SET, AR, P, GET, and GHSes regarding the degree of student participation within meetings. According to GET 1, "They are a part of it and they are there, they are asked questions, but this is what you are going to be doing." Student participation was a significant limitation noted by GET 1. Students interviewed identified that their participation and other team members' participation was limited. According to GHS 1, P 1, and P 3, students often feel uncomfortable and engage in limited sharing. They believed this was the result of students not feeling involved or because they worry about upsetting someone. According to P 1, her son did not speak during meetings because, "I don't want to make anyone mad." From GET 1's perspective, students were involved, but "adults did all of the talking in meetings." GET 1 also shared concerns regarding team member involvement.

Even if participation is occurring, participants held concerns relating to meaningfulness and relatedness. According to AR 2, current TPP meetings do not always address students' full potential and lack challenge and rigor. P 3 also voiced concerns relating to IEP development and planning believing that, "It's kind of the status quo and 'I can get them through' is good enough. Instead of, let's challenge them and

see what they are capable of." Participants believed that this led to general TPP formats without individualized goals or tasks. P 1 shared that this way of planning caused negative attitudes within her son's TPP team meetings. When setting a goal for college, team members shared concerns and said, "You really think college is going to be his thing?" She forced a goal for college, and her son did enroll. P 1 and P 3 shared that gaining support for meaningful and challenging goals was difficult. Students also shared concerns with attitudes and supports offered by team members. GHS 1 shared that while everyone seemed to be supportive, classes and subjects were only taught to one group of students and not differentiated, "They would cheer you on, but that was it."

Theme 4: Interagency Collaboration

Interagency collaboration includes the coordination of ideas and activities of all individuals within the process. Coordinated, shared services do not always exist in the spirit of the transition taxonomy offered by Kohler (1996). Attendance of agencies was lacking, which led to a decrease in understanding of agency information. As a result, TPP team members felt unprepared to connect families or students to the correct agencies. Increased information on how to access agencies was noted as necessary to help families and teachers collaborate with internal and external agencies within the TPP settings.

Strengths. Collaboration among agencies has been noted as an increasing area of growth. AR 1 and AR 3 reported that schools are discussing local and available agencies with families and other team members. According to AR 1, growth has occurred:

"They're starting to get a better feel for that and being open and honest and try to help these kids as much as possible." According to SEA 1, AR 2, and P 2, collaborative activities offered to students and parents by the local ESU and state were seen as a strength. P 2 felt that this connection has helped her to establish beneficialrelationships with ARs. P 2 stated, "I do have a good relationship with them, so I can ask. I never feel stupid asking questions." Students also gained a great deal from the VR and ESU/school collaborative employment grants and work-based opportunities, according to AR 2.

Challenges. Perspectives regarding interagency collaboration concerns existed among transition planning team members. Having team members collaborate is a critical part of the process, but many participants feel this does not occur. Concerns were noted regarding knowledge of agencies, access to agencies, follow through of agencies, and communication among school agencies.

Having collaboration amongst all interagency individuals is something SET 3 would like to see increase. P 3 added parents do not know too many people who can help, nor do they know agencies to support them. P 1 and P 2 identified concerns regarding knowledge relating to agencies to support students. Collaboration and connections are not always possible because of policies and procedures existing within the agencies. AR 1 shared the agency cannot offer services until students reach the age identified by their guidelines. Increased information on how to access agencies was noted as necessary to help families and teachers collaborate with internal and external agencies within the TPP settings.

Concerns were voiced regarding the ability of agencies to work together through a collaborative framework by the SET, SEA, AR, and P groups. SET 3, SEA 1, SEA 2, AR 2, P 2, and P 3 felt team members do not always understand the role of agencies and agencies do not understand the legal requirements and needs of other team members. "I don't know what their guidelines are" "Stigma attached to resources. . ." "There's a ton of resources out there . . . getting out information on what is available and how soon to start the process would be most important." These were all comments made by participants regarding a lack of understanding and collaborative framework. Knowing what services are available and their role is difficult for many team members. According to SEA 1, a lot of confusion surrounds the roles the agencies play in the TPP. Cooperation and communication are a significant weakness to SET 1:

> I think agencies have great info and things to offer. I just don't think that the cooperation and communication between them and the schools, between all the different agencies and such . . . I think it's lacking in a few different areas.

SEA 2 shared, "Agencies can talk about their own personal agency but not others . . . you don't have others at the table attend, then they attempt to guide kids to their agency versus being able to share what happens in other agencies." Cooperation amongst agencies was shared as a significant concern by several participants. SEA 2 noted it seems like getting clients is a competition instead of matching clients to the right resources.

Confusion may arise relating to how to access agencies or how to connect with

them because of complicated qualification processes. AR 2 and P 3 shared that knowing what age to apply, how to apply, and how to access agency services is a confusing process. AR 1 believed that this hinders the TPP because parents and students are not always aware of resources available to them. When asked what resources would have been beneficial for her child's transition, P 1 replied, "There could be more, but I don't know who they are," and "I think there's better ways to have help, but I'm not sure how to get it." GHSes also struggle to know who is available and do not have adequate exposure. When asked about resources that could support them, GHS 1 became irritated and said, "I don't know any agencies!" but she thought that there is someone who could help her. Both AR 2 and P 3 shared it would be helpful to develop one agency, which could have knowledge on all services and application processes.

Collaborative concerns exist within the school settings as well. P 2 shared concerns regarding the level of collaboration across the levels within the schools. According to P 2, special education and a transition focus does not appear to be in the conversation with scheduling, adding, "If they had a conversation at the level there would be more understanding and that would help." SET 2 also identified the need for administration and the district level to believe in the process, "I think the district has to decide it's a priority . . . and the state needs to decide that some things that aren't."

A consistent concern in the discussion about challenges was regarding follow through by agency representatives to support students. Several participants shared that a recent staff change in a local agency left a gap in services for many students. SEA 1

addressed the concern with the frequent changes and inconsistent staffing of local agencies. Even prior to the staff change, SET 2 shared that things were discussed and promised in IEP meetings, but she had no knowledge of what actually happened. Communication was limited as described by SET 2:

> I don't know if there was any follow through with (specific agency) last year when she came and did stuff with the kids. I don't know what happened. 'Cause I e-mailed her a couple times and I never heard from her.

The lack of follow through is frustrating to many team members because promises are made to parents and students. Connection and investment in students was something AR 2 shared concerns about. AR 2 shared connections were difficult to establish with team members. A lack of follow through and connections were reasons P 3 and SET 3 shared for parents not wanting to connect students to agencies.

Theme 5: Program Structure

The positive philosophy of team members was a constant theme when participants identified strengths. The theme of program structures included concepts relating to philosophies and policies. Many participants felt students receive positive support. Concerns were noted regarding graduation policies and procedures.

Strengths. Student support and team member encouragement was shared by SET 3, SEA 2, GET 1, GET 2, GHS 1, and GHS 2. This sentiment was also shared by GET 2, "We're pretty much on the same page, if somebody needs an accommodation on their IEP, we try to be supportive of them." An attitude of support by team members and

school professionals was something appreciated by GHS 1. While GHS 1 may have been a difficult child, "They didn't give up on me . . . That is mainly all I needed to not give up on me because I was a difficult kid." The feel of the school and team members was very "encouraging and helpful" to GHS 2. Other members of the team also noticed this. SEA 2 reported that teacher support and guidance is noticeable, and teachers demonstrate that they want her child to succeed. This philosophy seems to be gaining throughout schools with SET 2, SET 3 and AR 1 identifying huge areas of growth in the acceptance of transition support as a serious need within schools. Attitudes like these are creating strengths to overcome challenges.

Challenges. Program structure concerns were identified by participants in the key areas relating to philosophy, policies, and resource allocation. Several team members shared they were not connected or had negative or indifferent attitudes regarding the TPP. Parents, P 1 and P 3 felt schools did "just enough" or had negative attitudes regarding student success. SET 3 even questioned whether some teachers and team members wanted students to fail. Concerns regarding the philosophy of some teams and settings regarding the fairness of accommodations and needs arose from members of the SET, GET, and AR groups. Concerns were also noted relating to graduation requirements.

Policies of educational settings regarding credits and academic work were seen as a significant challenge by members of the P, SET, SEA, GHS, and AR groups. The focus of transition planning is negligent to many respondents, because of a focus on academic requirements, standards, and graduating. SET 1 and SET 2 also believed courses

focusing on transition planning opportunities were limited due to the graduation requirements students face. Students struggle to have any time in their schedules during their freshman year to focus on transition. This is when the TPP process begins and critical first steps take place. SET 3 shared, "There's no really good opportunity when you should be starting all the transition stuff, they're swamped in required. If I could find a way to fix that so I could build more of that plan of where we are going, I think the kids would see a better reason for high school." P 2 felt this is a key reason there is a lack of connection between courses, and students do not maintain buy-in in the TPP.

Resources of time and money were noted at the most challenging element regarding resource allocation. Scheduling time for transition is limited and students do not have a great deal of time to work on transition planning skill development. P 2, SET 1, SET 3, SEA 1, SEA 3, AR 2, and GET 2 shared that more time with students is a resource needed to increase transition planning. According to AR 3, more time and individual attention to students could enhance the TPP. SETs voiced that resources relating to money and classroom structure would be helpful at increasing effective transition instruction. Transportation resources would be beneficial in supporting youth. Being in rural communities, transition events and experiences cannot take place without transportation.

Discrepant Cases

Discrepant cases arise in the process of qualitative research. Rival statements can provide further insight into concerns and should be evaluated within the study (Yin,

2014). In this study, three rival responses arose. These responses deserve attention because they offer insight into concepts which strengthen the TPP.

School counselors were not included in the study because they are not a required team member noted by the state (NDE, 2016). When participants were asked who attends meetings, six individuals shared counselors always attend meetings. They also noted the role of the counselor in those meetings is important in transition success. SET 1, SET 2, and SET 3 all agreed counselors support the growth and career development of students. SEA 2 also saw the counselors as maintaining a critical role. Although triangulation did not occur among this element, the importance stressed within the responses warrants attention towards the importance of school counselors in the TPP.

Attitudes of schools and professionals towards students was a concern shared by a couple of participants. P 3 shared a concerning comment regarding her son's level of comfort with sharing his opinions and ideas within meetings. According to P 1, negative views towards student growth are a concern in her child's environment. AR 1 also shared that sometimes schools appear negative towards comments and input within meetings. Comments regarding fear of retaliation and negative perceptions were few, but they are a significant concern requiring attention. They are concerning and should be acknowledged because of the seriousness of the comments.

In four interviews, participants saw the focus on the TPP as increasing within their school or organization. AR 3 shared a positive outlook on the TPP and identified occurring growth. SET 1 and SET 3 shared this sentiment and continually referenced

growth and acceptance from administration on the importance of transition. Due to triangulation methods, these perspectives were not reported in the data findings. Attention should be given to these comments as it does show an upward trend and possible changing environment for transition in the local ESU.

Evidence of Quality

There were two key methods of validity established in this research to identify existing qualities. Member checking was used to ensure the transcribed documents recorded the participants' thoughts and ideas accurately. In addition, to reduce researcher bias, triangulation amongst team members was completed to identify elements to report as findings.

Member Checking

All 16 participants received summaries of the study's findings to ensure the main focus and concepts were interpreted correctly. Entire transcriptions were not sent to participants to avoid any inconveniences related to time in viewing 10-16-page documents. All participants did not see existing errors and replied that the summary reflected their ideas and perspectives.

Triangulation

Only data reported by three or more TPP team groups was included in data analysis findings. This step was taken to reduce potential researcher bias regarding specific strength, concerns, or roles. Triangulation was initially planned among 3 of the 4 professional TPP team members. However, final data indicated much of the data

reported were triangulated among almost all of the participant categories. In many cases, five or six of the TPP team groups agreed on key concepts. Findings supporting quality and validity arose. This indicated proof for quality within this study.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

Transition planning team members identified concerns relating to student-focused planning. The development of a supplemental, student-focused, preplanning tool for teachers provides a resource to increase meeting participation, team member satisfaction, and transition plan quality. The combination of the TPP, and a person-centered, student-focused planning approach was used to create materials and a digital implementation guide for the project (Appendix A). For the purpose of this paper, the tool is called the prepanning tool.

The goal of the preplanning tool is to positively impact student-centered planning, student self-advocacy, and quality plan development. This project was the direct result of study findings. Two key elements arose within the findings to guide the components of this project. Challenges related to student-centered planning and participation within the TPP were noted as concerns. Although team members often attend TPP meetings, concerns regarding their ability to speak during meetings and maintain a student-centered focus arose. TPP team members also shared concerns about the purpose of meetings and preparation levels of team members. Many TPP members wanted to increase their participation and collaboration in the process, but they did not feel they were given the ability to do so.

This project will provide a resource that develops student-focused meetings. Using a blend of person-centered planning and gap analysis strategies, team members

will be able to organize thoughts to create a more meaningful, student-focused approach. This deliverable method will provide a resource available to members of the local ESU wishing to facilitate meaningful, student-centered TPP meetings. To be respectful of facilitators' time, the project is easy to access and implement. A verbal implementation recording will make the project accessible and usable on a larger scale to affect social change. Project evaluation will take place to examine both short-term outcomes and long-term impact.

Project Description

The purpose of this project is to address concerns in the local, rural ESU regarding the postsecondary outcomes relating to the TPP. According to participants, the key holder of transition capacity is the SET. When discussing team member roles, all team members agreed that SETs were the primary source of special education law, transition ideas and processes, and plan development processes. Professional capacity is important in the TPP process, but engagement of other team members is critical in achieving postsecondary outcomes (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Kohler, Gothberg, Fowler, and Coyle (2016) identified that the capacity of all TPP team members helps to achieve transition outcomes. The overarching goal of this project is to increase capacity amongst all TPP members to develop collective capacity. Collective capacity will allow for the development of plans with shared direction through student-focused methods.

The participant team members noted concerns in the transition taxonomy (Kohler, 1996) of student-focused planning in the areas of student participation and IEP

development. Meaningful participation requires a student-centered focus with students and families as central contributors (Yell & Bateman, 2017). According to the participants, almost all TPP team members attended IEP/TPP meetings, but they did not meaningfully share their expertise or knowledge. Student participation was noted as limited by many participants. Students often did not attend their meetings because they lacked perceived value and felt disconnected from the process (Leiter, 2014). Empowerment of students did not happen because other team members were not prepared and did not share student-focused information. Some participants shared that meeting goals and agendas appeared pre-etermined by the educational setting, and team input did not always create TPP plans. As a result, participation, satisfaction, and planning may be lacking in local TPP meetings.

This project was created to increase TPP capacity using a whole team, student-focused planning approach. The creation of a preplanning tool that would increase input and participation was developed and made accessible to all TPP teams. This project was constructed to respect the concerns of time and resources noted by participants. The preplanning tool was created to allow SET facilitators the opportunity to help TPP team members prepare for meetings. Enhancing team preplanning can affect member participation, satisfaction, and quality TPP plan development.

Purpose

Effective change can occur if goals and visions are backed by a purpose. The belief that all youth deserve a planning process that defines individualized wants and

needs is critical in creating TPP change (Yell & Bateman, 2017). Teams must allow parents and students to be central change agents in the process. High expectations must be placed on all TPP team members so young adults can achieve positive postsecondary outcomes and create meaningful processes.

Kohler (1996) identified how teams can achieve positive outcomes through the taxonomy for transition planning. Kohler addressed a student-centered approach in the area of student-focused planning. This component consists of three elements that make the transition process effective for students. IEP development, planning strategies, and student participation were identified as critical in the TPP. Concerns within all three areas of this component were expressed by TPP team members interviewed within this study.

The purpose of this project is to increase collective capacity to keep student-focused practices central to the TPP. Creating a tool for all team members to increase participation can lead to increased student participation and support. Through increased participation, the development of meaningful transition plans will develop. The goal is to increase student planning to build effective, more meaningful outcomes.

Goals

Increasing the collective capacity of all TPP team members is the overarching goal of this project. Collective input and participation in meetings will drive TPP meetings to maintain a focus on individualization (Kohler, 1996). This project will provide SETs and team members with a tool to build a student-focused culture.

The goals of this project include the following:

1. Provide an accessible, deliverable, and usable preplanning tool to aid in creating student-focused TPPs
2. Offer a digital administration guide, accessible online, to create ease of implementation and increase span of outreach
3. Increase the participation levels of SEA, AR, GET, P, GHS, and guidance counselors within the TPP planning meetings
4. Increase TPP team members' level of satisfaction with the planning process
5. Obtain and share outcome data to provide support for project use on a larger scale

Outcomes

Two key outcomes are expected from the project. It is proposed that the project will provide positive short-term and long-term outcomes. The desired short-term outcome from this project will be to increase collective capacity to support student-focused planning in the TPP process. Success will be demonstrated by increased team member participation, high levels of satisfaction with the TPP, and the development of TPP plans. The project will address all elements of student-focused planning as identified in Kohler's (1996) taxonomy of transition planning. Short-term outcomes should drive increasing long-term outcomes. Long-term growth will be demonstrated through increasing local, rural, ESU postsecondary outcomes.

Target Audience

The preplanning tool and technological resources were created to reach two key audiences. The primary target audience included facilitators of the TPP meetings held within the local, rural ESU. Resources will be distributed by SETs to a secondary audience including TPP team members.

Primary audience. The primary target audience for the preplanning tool will be the facilitators of students' TPP. Each team will have a facilitator who provides preplanning and coordination activities. It is assumed that the SET serves as the facilitator for these meetings. When asked the primary role of the SET in the TPP, most of the participants identified that SETs were facilitators of the TPP. Primary audiences will be the first line of distribution for the preplanning tool and materials. SETs will provide team implementation of the tool to secondary audiences.

Secondary audience. The secondary audience will consist of the following individuals: SEA, GET, AR, P, GHS, and SGC. SGCs were added to the final project based on research findings. A majority of participants noted that SGCs maintained a role in the TPP. When asked what input SGCs offered, team members identified that they understood and supported postsecondary education opportunities. Because this is a component of postsecondary outcomes and planning is necessary, they are included within this project.

The goal of the preplanning tool will be to provide a resource for each team member. The resource will allow all audiences the opportunity to think about the input

they offer. Although the SET is the facilitator and will handle the initial distribution of materials to each teams' members, the project will provide resources to all TPP team members to complete them through technological methods and access.

Rationale for Selecting the Project

When asked about challenges facing the local TPP process, participant groups all shared concerns relating to student-focused planning. Kohler (1996) identified student-focused planning as an element in meaningful transition engagement. According to Yell and Bateman (2017), meaningful engagement is essential based on court findings from *Endrew F. v. Douglas County Schools,* Legal implications strengthen the need for increased collective capacity through student, parents, and team TPP input.

Student-Focused Planning Needs

In the transition taxonomy, Kohler (1996) and Kohler et al. (2016) identified three areas of focus relating to student-focused planning. Student preparation and participation, meeting planning strategies, and IEP development are all elements that define a student-focused TPP process (Kohler 1996; Kohler et al., 2016). All three elements were noted as challenges by the research participants. Meaningful student participation and activity within meetings must exist to develop transition goals and plans (Yell & Bateman, 2017). Mapp and Kuttner (2013) reported the need for shifting views regarding student and family participation and input. Student participation cannot improve if TPPs are teacher-centered (Woods, Martin, & Humphrey, 2017). Involvement and student-focused practices will lead to more meaningful IEP/TPP plan development.

Planning strategies. Concerns within the current study were shared relating to the IEP/TPP development process and participation in the process. Many participants stated that it seemed like the process was only completed to meet legal requirements. It was generally felt that several TPP team members had input, but they did not speak within the meeting. Some P, AR, and GET participants voiced concerns about planning decisions that were made prior to the TPP meeting. Not all decisions were made through a collective approach, leading to reductions in student participation levels. Leiter (2014) reported that students do not participate when they are bored or feel that decisions are made external to their needs.

GET 1 shared that having preparation opportunities would help increase her participation. According to study participants, SEAs, GETs and SGCs provide information related to academics and do not offer additional input. According to Fleming-Castaldy and Horning (2013), focusing solely on academics does not help achieve TPP goals. P 3 also shared that GETs and ARs had student-focused information to share, but they often did not voice it in the meetings. Preplanning methods through person-centered planning approaches have increased involvement of parents and team members (Corrigan, 2014; White & Rae, 2016). Wehman (2011) reported that an essential component of the TPP is to connect team members and students through collaborative participation.

Student participation. All team members within the study agreed that the most important attendees were GHSes. However, concerns about their level of participation

were noted by several interviewees. GHS 1 and GHS 2 shared that they only participated if team members made incorrect statements. They did not lead their discussions and did not see themselves as central to developing the TPP. Wehman (2011) reported that an essential component of the TPP is to connect team members and students through collaborative participation.

IEP development. Recent findings from the *Endrew F.* case identified that all team members must be equal participants in the TPP process (Turnbull, Turnbull, & Cooper, 2018). State and local districts meet the requirements set by the federal government relating to process and development of IEPs. However, I found concerns regarding the development of collaborative TPP plans. Some participants noted that decisions and plans were partially created prior to the meeting. According to SET 2, GETs were released prior to the TPP stage of the IEP meeting to allow decrease time requirements. IEP/TPPs are detailed documents that require detailed collaboration and planning (Yell & Bateman, 2017). Yell and Bateman (2017) further stated that the Endrew F. findings focused on developing a plan that rose above the minimum and was not a developed form. Postsecondary outcomes within the local, rural ESU lag the state measures (BSR, 2014, 2015, 2016).

Project Considerations

It became apparent a project was necessary to address limited collective capacity within the area of student-focused planning. Several project genres were considered and evaluated based on their potential impact to postsecondary outcomes and social change.

Although all projects considered would impact TPP team members and processes, I sought one that would enact the greatest degree of social change.

Alternative considerations. Four project genres were considered to address the problem identified within this research. When examining options, the ability for the project to affect the greatest number of TPP team members was considered. I identified that the creation of a visual, student-centered curriculum would provide an opportunity for an accessible, usable tool.

Professional development. A professional development program was considered to address capacity building challenges. It was not selected because participants shared that time was a resource they did not currently have. A professional development program would require a time and resource commitment on the part of the entire team to be effective. SEA 1 shared that their job requires them to select someone to attend development opportunities because they do not have the time. Time was also shared as a concern by SEA, AR, GET, and P participants. Web-based training was considered but was rejected due to time constraints. SEA 1 shared that she does not have the time to personally attend all trainings, even if they are in digital format.

In addition, the local, rural ESU requires some teams to travel over 2 hours to reach the local training site. Travel time and cost could provide undue hardship to many members. Because of the travel and time constraints, participation may be limited. A professional development program could only impact partial teams and may not achieve goals. It is believed social change would be limited in the selection of this genre.

***Curriculum*.** Consideration was given to the development of a student-focused curriculum. The visual, student-centered materials could be written into a direct student development curriculum, but time would be required to implement the curriculum. All SETs and SEAs reported that there is not enough time to spend on transition planning activities and time was a limited resource within schools. Due to graduation requirements, many SET, SEA, and GET participants shared that direct instruction time on transition is limited within schools.

A virtual curriculum could be developed, but this would also require time for students to view it. Curriculums must be implemented with fidelity, and the resource constraints reported by team members make it a nonusable option within the local, rural ESU. While a virtual curriculum would be available to all team members, there is no way to require team members to participate in this process outside of the school setting. The impact on social change may be minimal or unknown in using this genre.

***Policy paper*.** Time was noted as a significant deterrent that is often coupled with overwhelming graduation requirements. SET, SEA, GET, AR and P participants shared that increasing graduation requirements have limited the impact the school setting has on transition implementation. The development of a policy paper was considered to address these concerns. However, it was rejected because of the limited impact on social change resulting from the paper. Other options offered an opportunity to affect TPP teams on a greater scale.

Accepted Project

A preplanning tool was created to assist SETs in increasing collective capacity within teams. The creation of a preplanning tool was selected because it enables team facilitators to reach all team members in the least restrictive manner possible. Additionally, it could impact all team members and be shared outside of the research area. This would potentially allow for a greater impact on social change.

When asked what the role of the SET was in the process, almost every participant agreed that the SET was the facilitator. This was a common area of agreement by all team members. When asked what resource could improve TPP across the research site, SET, AR, and SEA participants identified that time and money were in short supply for teachers. This project focused on reducing the amount of implementation and preparation time required. In, addition, this project will be a free, internet-based resource or printed toolkit to use. A simple format for implementation will make it easy to implement.

Addressing the problem is a critical reason for the development of the supplemental, student-centered planning tool, but it will also highlight the importance of preplanning through a student-focused format. According to Tilson (2016), a transition preplanning tool helps individuals see their strengths, needs, and goals more clearly. In addition, preplanning tools help youth and team members prepare to meaningfully participate in TPP meetings (2016). Tools supporting planning and gap analysis can provide a scope and sequence that helps teams create effective plans (Gothberg, Peterson,

Peak, & Sedaghat, 2015). The preplanning tool will help focus the TPP on the central component identified by the current research participants; the student. A goal of this project was to increase accessibility to TPP resources.

In addition, this project could impact the culture of TPP meetings on a greater level by increasing the focus on student-focused approaches. It is anticipated that participants could benefit directly and indirectly from participation in this project. More importantly, this project would benefit the quality of TPP for youth. Participants will increase their understanding of the progression, identifying planning components, and follow through required in TPPs. It could potentially reach all secondary educators within the United States as it will be accessible, in its entirety, for free and completion descriptions will be available online.

Review of the Literature

Historical and current research reported that the use of a person-centered, student-focused approach in the TPP can yield results. This project is timely as recent case rulings have impacted the degree educational professionals must create meaning in educational process. According to the law, it is no longer acceptable to meet minimal policy guidelines (Yell & Bateman, 2016). Facilitators must strive to create student-centered planning opportunities which involve all team members (Turnbull et al., 2018). The requirements of student-centered planning and capacity building amongst all TPP team members must take place to increase level of meaning. Tools and processes increasing preplanning have been shown to impact collective capacity. Visual, student-

centered tools have been used to increase student participation, planning quality, and satisfaction of team members.

Meaningful Planning Processes

The TPP combines a collective effort of team members to achieve educational benefit. Educational benefit extends to the services planned within the IEP/TPP process, but also to involvement and activities of team members. Recent court rulings have impacted how the court system views IEP documents and processes. It is no longer acceptable for schools to provide the minimum services possible and they must take an active role in offering a meaningful decision-making process to teams (Howell, 2017).

Endrew F. v. Douglas County Schools. Prior to the *Endrew F v. Douglas County Schools* case, schools were required to provide minimum benefit to students served in Special Education (Yell & Bateman, 2017). As long as some benefit was shown, schools were meeting the requirements under the law. Recent changes have impacted the way IEP/TPP teams must view services they offer youth and their families. Achieving some progress is no longer acceptable, and teams must work together to reach meaningful levels of progress. The ruling could affect TPP teams across the country when considering educational programming, progress and family involvement.

Educational programming. In *Endrew F. v. Douglas County Schools* (Yell & Bateman, 2017), schools must provide educational programming that is "reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances." (p. 13). According to Turnbull et al. (2018) decisions should support

student needs and desired outcomes. TPPs should include allcomponents of the IEP process. Therefore, the programming for a student's transition phase of the IEP applies to this finding.

According to Turnbull et al. (2018), plans must be developed which provide advancing goals and meet assigned tasks and activities. Increasing relevance ensures that students reach their full potential. Key findings from the court identified that IEPs should not be written to meet legal protocols but developed through a process partnership with team members (Howell, 2017). Increased responsibility ensures that meaningful processes take place (2017).

Student-centered processes were a focus of the courts in the *Endrew F* case. Howell (2017) reported that courts do not view the IEP document as a standard form. Each plan should be individualized to meet the needs of the student (2017). Each member of the team must play an integral part in planning for educational benefit. deFur (2012) identified that "partners define roles and responsibilities they hold themselves and one another accountable for carrying out responsibilities" (pp. 58-59). deFur further identified that partnerships should include the following characteristics:

- Hold a joint interest and set clear goals.
- Communicate with one another and use strengths and limitations to benefit the team.
- Share a common vocabulary or language.
- Share power and decision making and recognize other perspectives.

- Solve problems together and work on positive problem solving.

Family and team involvement. Parents have always held an important role in the planning of IEPs/TPPs as identified within IDEA (Yell & Bateman, 2017). The TPP approach requires student-focused planning and family involvement remain a central component (Kohler, 1996; Kohler et al., 2016). Findings from *Endrew F.* identified that teams must evaluate parent involvement to ensure it is meaningful (Turnbull et al., 2018).

Within the *Endrew F.* decision, Justice Roberts acknowledged that school professionals and parents should collaborate, and parental input should be a central focus of planning teams (Yell & Bateman, 2017). TPP team members are vital in successful transition planning, but a hierarchy should not exist within teams (Turnbull et al., 2018). Decisions must be made together and no one person on the team should have more authority than the other to make decisions. Compliance requires that teams must provide reasonably calculated plans and decisions that provide relevant, challenging goals that can be measured and assessed to identify progress (Yell & Bateman, 2017).

Meaningful participation. According to Turnbull et al. (2018), meaningful educational benefits not only include services planned within the IEP/TPP process, but also involvement and activities of team members. Rehfeldt, Clark, and Lee (2012) reported that active parent and student participation is necessary in the development of meaningful IEPs. Meaningful practices require collective capacity amongst all TPP team members. Test and Grossi (2011) offered that planning must exist prior to the IEP meeting and that collective views must be respected and considered.

Furthermore, deFur (2012) identified communication as a critical element in team collaboration. Meaningful communication does not exist when the information is just given; ideas must also be welcomed and flow in a natural format (deFur, 2012). According to several participants, Ps, GETs, GHSes and some SEAs do not always actively participate in the meeting process. This could indicate a concern regarding meaningful participation. GET 1 shared that she did not undergo any preparation materials prior to meetings. P 3 shared that GETs often do not participate in the entire meeting, but they have so much valuable input. In addition, GHS 1 and 2 both shared that they only participated in the process when they did not agree with what the adults in the meetings were discussing. While SEAs participated in meetings, other TPP team members voiced that their input was typically only related to credits and graduation requirements. Raising the ability of team members' participation can help to increase the meaningfulness of the TPP.

Educational benefit is viewed differently by each member of the TPP team. A majority of the TPP team members interviewed shared that meaningful processes hold student goals and interests as a central focus. P 1 and P 2 hoped that the school setting would see their child full of potential and promise. SETs, SEAs, ARs, and Ps all shared that the goal of the TPP was to plan with the student in mind. Participants admit that the school setting is doing what they are required to do, but many feel more could be done. A lack of participation from all team members, other than the SET (facilitator), was a concern amongst participants.

Current postsecondary outcomes identified that the state is meeting the basic standards identified in the postsecondary outcomes, but students in the local ESU continue to fall behind when postsecondary outcomes are measured (BSR, 2014, 2015, 2016). Concerns within the research indicated that a lack of meaning may exist within local meetings. Meaning is often discussed, but it is not always backed with action. SET 2 shared that administration and policies have to create action to show TPP are important and not just speak about them.

Student Focused Planning

According to Wehman (2011), the primary goal of transition planning is to identify the future goals of students and align supports. Wehman acknowledged that TPPs draw on processes identified within the person-centered planning process. The process combines approaches which focus on roles of others in the student's life and balances it with the student-centered approach which identifies the need to build student capacity. Planning must be completed by a team of supports to identify a clear path to align goals and the future.

Endrew F. offered a new perspective regarding the value of educational programming within the transition process. Gothberg et al. (2015) suggest that transition planning is not just a component of the IEP, but it should drive the process. Students' future needs and goals should not be considered additional activities (Gothberg et al., 2015). A student-focused transition planning process helps to ensure that student's needs, wants and desires are central to all decisions.

Definition of student-focused planning. One component of Kohler's (1996) Taxonomy for Transition Planning and the transition taxonomy 2.0 (Kohler et al., 2016) is student-focused planning. This component of both models includes the successful development of IEP/TPP plans, student participation, and planning strategies. A central component is to ensure that students are prepared to participate in every aspect of their TPP (Gothberg et al., 2015). The current research project participants identified limitations within the local ESU in their ability to meaningfully participate. Many students and team members did not participate within meetings even though they have significant value and input. Students do not lead their meetings and GHS 1 and GHS 2 shared that they only spoke if something was incorrect. IEP processes seemed like a protocol to many and often did not include planning strategies providing a collaborative IEP process.

Involvement in the TPP. A continued lack of involvement from TPP team members is a concern noted in current and previous research. Kaehne & Beyer (2014) reported that decreased postsecondary outcomes exist when team participation is limited. Meetings offer opportunities for teams to come together and plan for student needs and goals (Kaehne & Beyer, 2014). All team members do not feel like their input is considered valuable in a student-centered approach. Participants including SETs, SEAs, ARs, Ps, and GETs reported limitations regarding participation and did not always feel invited to participate. Skaff, Kemp, McGovern, and Fantacone (2016) reported that only 27% of parents feel like they have opportunities to participate. Concerns regarding

involvement exist amongst all team members.

Student involvement in student-focused planning. Woods et al. (2017) called for a change to how student participate. Students need to be prepared through preplanning methods, so participation can be more meaningful and increase positive outcomes (Woods et al., 2017). Preplanning is a critical factor in the success of TPPs. Test and Grossi (2011) reported that planning must occur long before the end of the IEP meeting. Goals and materials used to organize IEP/TPP meetings must be student-centered (2011). Student needs and interests should remain central to the planning process (Turnbull et al., 2018).

Fleming-Castaldy and Horning (2013) reported that positive TPP existed when self-determination, parental support, and appropriate skill development are essential focuses. Leiter (2014) reported that only five of 52 youth are considered to be empowered in their TPP process. Students continue to struggle with participation in meetings and using self-determination skills. Further research by Woods et al. (2017) reported that only 10% of respondents identified increased student participation in meetings. According to Leiter, students feel more inclined to participate in a transition meeting because they focus on the student's life after high school. Students do not participate when they are bored or do not feel material applies to them (2014). Team members must make efforts to plan to make the process valuable.

According to deFur (2012) families must have "a choice and a voice" in all decisions (p. 64). To offer this choice, participation is critical. In the current study,

student attendance did not seem to be a concern at their meetings, but their participation was noted by many participants as a concern. It is not known why students did not participate in the meetings, but P 1 shared that for her son it was to not make teachers upset. Fleming-Castaldy and Horning (2013) shared a student's voice in their research identifying that students may not speak up because they do not demonstrate trust established with the TPP team members in her meeting. It was further identified that the relationships among team members must exist in order for students to feel comfortable to express their wants and needs clearly (Fleming-Castaldy & Horning, 2013).

Team member impact on student-focused planning. A student-centered focus and participation of all TPP team members is concern noted in the research. Hirano Garbacz, Shanley, and Rowe (2016) addressed the disconnect between professionals and families relating to the TPP. Kohler's (1996) transition taxonomy and the transition taxonomy 2.0 (Kohler et al., 2016) both offer attention to the importance of including parents and professionals. The transition taxonomy focuses on creating an empowering environment for families and making them active in the IEP process (Hirano et al., 2016). Involvement of families begins with teachers who support and believe in the role families play. Current research identified that all TPP team members valued the critical role that families hold in the process. However, team members shared that their participation could be more meaningful. TPP team members can significantly impact the involvement of students. When collective capacity is shared within the team, postsecondary attendance and employment outcomes increase (Shogren, Palmer, Rifenbark, & Little,

2015).

Building the capacity of interagency teams, professionals, students, and families is a critical aspect of the new Taxonomy for Transition Planning 2.0 (Kohler et al., 2016). Like all TPP team members, parents may benefit from resources and supports to participate in the process (Hirano et al., 2016). Capacity building amongst team members must be student-centered. Hirano et al. (2016) offered that capacity building must be systematic processes that are integrated into TPPs.

Capacity Building among TPP Team Members

Collaboration and collective capacity are critical to the development of TPP teams. Kohler and Gothberg (2016) recommended the development of capacity initiatives which focus on local capacity. Povenmire-Kirk et al. (2015) identified that building collective interagency capacity is not a simple process. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) reported that administrators have identified family involvement as one of the most difficult activities to implement. Professionals want to be students' support systems, but they often do not know how (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Many team members are engrossed in their role and fail to see perspectives and needs across that delineation (Povenmire-Kirk et al., 2015). Participation and capacity development must include "parity by all participants, shared decision making, shared expertise, shared responsibility, and shared accountability" (deFur, 2012, p. 64.). Opportunities to build capacity do not exist in many educational settings (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Preparing teams to view the TPP through a person-centered focus through preplanning is critical in

developing the capacity of teams (Test & Grossi, 2011).

Collective capacity. This project seeks to provide technical assistance to districts within the local, rural ESU. According to Kohler and Gothberg's (2016) "Extending Research to Practice: Model for State Capacity Building" flowchart, student-focused planning initiatives should be provided through technical assistance. According to Mapp and Kuttner (2013) collective learning environments exist when a group or a network focuses on a concept. Building collective capacity within teams helps develop the knowledge, skills and abilities of all individuals to develop the plan (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). They further stressed the importance of developing initiatives at the local, school level. Mapp and Kuttner reported that the following benefits result from building collective capacity:

- Create cultures that foster sharing of information.
- Development of projects to support and sustain capacity among teams to encourage growth for youth.
- Honor and value team members.

Barriers to capacity development. Collective capacity building may be difficult to implement within school systems because each member of the TPP team believes they fulfill a specific role (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). When participants in the current research were interviewed they clearly identified the roles of all participants. As a result, it appears that each TPP team group has previously set roles. The challenge will be to defeat resistance to change. Two barriers exist in developing collective capacity within

this project.

Communication barriers. Communication limitations can significantly impede the effectiveness and development of team capacity. According to Skaff et al. (2016), parents reported limitations in having adequate information regarding planning processes. Concerns also exist when promises are made and not followed through. deFur (2012) reported that communication should be proactive in student and family centered teams. Families must feel open to sharing their true opinions of their child's progress and current status.

Follow through must be completed to gain the support of team members. SETs and Ps shared that ARs follow through on promised activities was a significant concern. SET and SEA participants shared that many Ps do not trust others on the team. For this reason, Ps and GHSes limit the information they share or voice to the team. Leiter (2014) offered that students may not participate because they do not feel their communication is valued. One student felt like the adults were always talking at him instead of with him. This was also shared by several participants in the current research study. Parents also do not feel that lines of communication are always open to school staff or agencies. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) recommended that schools acknowledge the value families offer to increase involvement. Information sharing must take place frequently and openly to build team capacity (deFur, 2012). Committed teams and systems can help increase communication and participation.

Lack of participation. Family and school partnerships are critical in developing

meaning educational programs and plans for youth in transition (Turnbull et al., 2018). The U.S. Department of Education identified that a dual capacity model must exist to increase participation and information sharing of team members (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Professionals must welcome and encourage participation from all team members.

Physical participation barriers exist in both physical and mental attendance. According to current research findings, the only member of the team that is commonly absent is ARs. Several participants acknowledged that the rural nature of the local ESU makes it very difficult to attend all meetings. Some representatives face a four-hour trip to attend meetings. SEA 1 shared that they often receive calls last minute to let them know ARs are unable to make it. According to P 3, it would be ideal to have them attend, but the distance and location her son's school makes it very difficult.

Concerns are not isolated to the research setting, but to other research sites as well. Taylor, Morgan and Callow-Heusser (2016) identified that 53% of teachers surveyed were satisfied with AR participation in TPP meetings. Conversely, 32% of SETs invited agencies to meetings (Taylor et al., 2016). A serious disconnect could be impeding team member collective capacity.

Attendance is not the only factor that affects team member participation. Many participants in the current study shared that SEA, GET, P, and GHS team members often do not play an active role. When examining student participation in an IEP meeting, Leiter (2014) reported that only five of 52 youth took leadership of their meetings and shared their visions and goals. Student and parent participation through sharing of

thoughts is a critical factor in family-centered approaches (deFur, 2012). Pleet-Odle et al. (2016) identified that getting team member buy in is critical in gaining participation. Assessment results and preplanning contributions are important to gaining family buy in and support (Pleet-Odle et al., 2016). Increasing contact and building relationships is important in building collective capacity (Cavendish, Connor, & Rediker, 2017). Preplanning tools provide the opportunity for team members to identify their perceptions about the student's goals, strengths, limitations, and progress.

Transition Meeting Preplanning Tools

The transition process is overwhelming, and White and Rae (2016) reported that families felt apprehensive when they did not understand the process. Almost all of the participants in the current research study had little or no training regarding the TPP. GET, P and GHS participants shared that they follow along because they do not understand the process at times. A strategic plan is critical when developing goals, identifying steps to achieve them, and addressing changes that may arise (Flannery & Hellemn, 2015). Having visual preplanning tools can help families and team members feel more at ease and comfortable in the process. According to White and Rae, visual methods help increase the flow of ideas and thoughts. The process of creating a visual tool helps "illustrates to them that they have been heard" and increases the feelings of collaboration and empowerment (White & Rae, 2016, p. 46).

Historical Planning Tools

Person-centered planning has been a method used within the TPP since the early

1990's (Taylor & Taylor, 2013). The approach offered one of the first visual planning frameworks for individuals with disabilities. According to Corrigan (2014), person-centered planning includes a visual documentation planning method to allow all team members to connect to the process. Connecting to the process helped create capacity through the connection of team members and community supports (Wehman, 2011).

Duffy and Sanderson (2004) identified that professionals should not intrude in the planning process but facilitate it. Facilitation should guide teams to person-centered approaches. Person-centered planning offered a paradigm shift from just meeting *de minimus* to focusing on students' dreams, interests and goals. An examination of natural supports available to the individual takes away the focus on paid services and supports to increase the level of meaning (Taylor & Taylor, 2013). Students remained a central base throughout the planning process with facilitators in a minimal role (Corrigan, 2014).

Person-centered planning offered a visual planning framework with students as the central focus. Teams moved from a focus of providing minimal services meeting policy requirements to a method focusing on gifts and capacities within the individual (Blessing, 2003). Outcomes in early person-centered planning approaches were difficult to measure because the variables could never be isolated to identify if person-centered planning independently impacted the process and outcomes (Holburn, 2002). Related research has identified that person-centered planning approaches may increase communication and involvement of some team members (Kaehne & Beyer, 2014). Person-centered planning approaches were based on the fidelity of team implementation.

Treatment fidelity made the processes difficult to monitor and measure (Taylor & Taylor, 2013). Plans may be developed, but concern in the follow through has arisen through research (Taylor & Taylor, 2013). Despite the challenges, many benefits arose.

Early person-centered approaches arose because TPPs did not focus on true student-centered approaches, and plans were viewed as protocols or forms (Taylor & Taylor, 2013). Students in the TPP processes were often measured on the standards of the norm and not on ability and needs (Blessing, 2003). Much of the research surrounding person-centered planning consisted of small scale qualitative studies. The selection of the study methods matched the personal nature of the process and examined it from a personal perspective. Students reported increased feelings of understanding and independence when participating in planning meetings (Taylor & Taylor, 2013). A shift occurred that moved the planning process away from overinvolved parents and professionals and made the student the central focus (2013).

Research outside the original intended population arose within the research of Hayes (2004). Hayes examined the use of a visual planning approach for youth diagnosed within the Learning Disability Category. Adults involved in this process identified the process as positive regarding increasing the planning process (Hayes, 2004). Hayes identified that a person-centered, visual planning approach could be implemented across diagnosis categories.

Current Transition Preplanning Tools

Preplanning methods similar to person-centered planning have recently been

implemented to increase student and family participation in the TPP (Wehman, 2011). Teams have begun to implement strategies to guide TPPs and support team members. Many of the preplanning tools use visual, graphic organizers to help team members prepare their thoughts. Historical research in special education has supported the use of graphic organizers as an effective intervention and teaching strategy which increase conceptual understanding of concepts for students (Anderson, Yilmaz, & Washburn-Moses, 2004). Pham (2013) acknowledged that some tools may be timeconsuming and that every effort must be made to make them more efficient, streamlined and relevant.

Royer (2017) reported that preplanning tools have had a direct effect on TPP process knowledge, participation time of students, and levels of meeting satisfaction. Preplanning tools may be beneficial to all TPP teams who lack knowledge and understanding of the TPP process. Teachers have received professional development to enhance their knowledge and skills in facilitating TPP meetings, but Flannery and Hellemn (2015) offered that a significant lack of knowledge still exists. Hands-on experiential support helps to decrease the time required to spend on learning and increases time spent on planning. Support has been provided through several visual, student-centered preplanning tools which intend to increase knowledge and information, participation and TPP quality.

Types of Planning Tools

Visual imagery. Visual, graphic methods have been used in several TPP preplanning tools. Visual formats help to develop and organize ideas as the team is

processing them (White & Rae, 2016). They aid in planning and help prompt ideas and directions for teams to discuss.

HAWK highway. Visual imagery was a central component in the HAWK Highway (Quann et al., 2014). The HAWK Highway offered a visual imagery approach through a whole school implementation method (Quann et al., 2014). Coaching was paired with visual imagery to help students progress down the highway to transition success. A script was developed from the visual process to help students participate and develop a student-focused plan. Involvement of families in this process was critical in developing team capacity.

Person centered planning. Person-centered transition reviews are a method used by TPP teams to create a student-centered focused IEP. Person-centered planning approaches offer a visual planning method to help all team members identify needs of youth unique to their situation. Compared to traditional TPP meetings, Corrigan (2014) reported increased satisfaction with the process. Kaehne and Beyer (2014) believe that person centered planning approaches increase opportunities and ideas for students. Corrigan examined the perspectives of team members regarding positive quality and attitudes. When engaging in the process 89% of individuals noted meetings were positive and did not hold any negative opinions or attitudes. Those that were negative in nature appeared to shift to the positive, student focused side (Corrigan, 2014). A focus on positive outcomes was a theme identified from participations.

Life and career assessment matrix. Using visual, graphic planning tools that

focus on elements of transition have proven to be effective at increasing the quality of TPPs. Designed as an informal person-centered approach, the Life and Career Assessment Matrix, LCAM, gathers information on elements of student's needs (Tilson, 2016). The LCAM helps to create a picture of a student's current strengths so that teams can identify supports needed. Knowing supports prior to meetings helps teams develop plans that lead to positive outcomes.

Video recordings. Visual planning methods have also been used through video methods successfully. The Self Directed IEP Model uses video modeling to teach students how to implement student, centered approaches (Woods et al., 2017). A workbook with activities and a script to support participation is offered to students. Woods et al. (2017) monitored the visual, student-centered program to identify the continuing effects of the method.

Assessment and gap analysis tools. Assessments and gap analysis tools are a visual format used to plan for transition meetings. Rehfeldt et al. (2012) utilized the Transition Planning Inventory as a structured preplanning tool. This planning method impacted the number of transition goals written, developed course of study discussions and increased parent involvement. The Triangulation and Gap Analysis tool, TGAP, created by Gothberg et al. (2015) incorporates findings from transition assessments into a gap analysis visual structure. Combing interests, skills and abilities this model builds a story of the student's current level of progress in relation to needs. The final step allows teams to set goals and transition tasks to close the gap (Gothberg et al., 2015). Overall,

Rehfeldt et al. reported findings that demonstrated that preplanning for the TPP significantly impacted student-focused planning.

Potential Benefits Arising from Planning Tools

Preparation and knowledge of student and team. The current research project identified that preplanning methods are not being used for all TPP team members within the local ESU. GET 1 identified that she comes into meetings without any preparation or information. This is also the case for the ARs within the study. Limited preparation or knowledge regarding the student exists. No preplanning steps were identified within the current research but concerns regarding participation were shared. SET participants also shared concerns regarding the level of understanding of other team members which impacted their participation. Implementing preplanning tools could positively impact the level of preparation and knowledge of team members.

Corrigan (2014) examined attitudes resulting from the use of a person-centered approach. All team members reported that the use of a visual planning tool helped to turn negative attitudes into positive, helped develop the big picture of the student and helped team members see how they were all interconnected. (Corrigan, 2014). Rehfeldt et al. (2012) reported that parents using the preplanning methods demonstrated greater understanding regarding their role. Tilson (2016) viewed the LCAM as a method that can provide background for all TPP members through a highlighted, visual format. This method helps to increase collaboration as "our interconnectedness should allow for more shared knowledge, resources, and better outcomes" (Tilson, 2016, p. 267).

Increased participation. A concern expressed by participants was a lack of student participation as a result of adults talking too much. Student participation is an important element of Kohler et al.'s (2016) transition taxonomy. Visual, preplanning formats can assist in involving members like GETs, Ps, and GHSes. White and Rae (2016) reported that a person-centered approach helps parents and young people feel like partners in the process. This is not always the case in meetings but planning tools can impact team member participation levels.

Student participation. An examination of participation conducted by Martin et al. (2006) identified that SETs spoke 51% of the time, Ps spoke 15% and GHSes spoke 3%. Woods et al. (2017) reported research indicating students will always talk less in meetings that are teacher-centered instead of student-centered. Increased person-centered planning approaches provide the opportunity to focus on the student and increase team member participation (Kaehne & Beyer, 2014). Gil (2007) offered that students must be central to their planning or they will never conceptualize how to participate in their lives.

Royer (2017) set out to identify if the use of a visual, student-centered planning method affected participation of students. According to Royer, students using the My IEP planning program talked an average of 36.78% of the time compared to a comparison group which spoke 2.15% of the time. Woods et al. (2017) followed a student through the implementation process for a two-year period. In the first year, the student only spoke 336 words in her IEP meeting. During the second-year meeting, Julia's participation increased to 2282 words demonstrating a significant growth in confidence

(Woods et al., 2017). Her participation grew significantly from 14% to 37% at the end of the study period.

Team participation. Increases in student participation did not reduce the amount of time parents or general education teachers spoke (Woods et al., 2017). Instead, it reduced the amount of time SETs spoke (2017). SETs spoke an average of 24% less in meetings that used this visual, student-centered process. Parents included in the preplanning activities within Rehfeldt et al. (2012) identified that their talk time increased regarding needs, strengths, and interests. In addition, student-led IEP meetings occurred in 92% of the meetings within Royer's (2017) test group. Student and team preplanning allowed the SET to reduce the degree she was leading meetings and fulfill her role as the facilitator of ideas and goals (Woods et al., 2017).

The visual, preplanning approach of person centered planning increased overall TPP meeting attendance (Kaehne & Beyer, 2014). A person-centered approach also increased the diversity of the team. Agency representatives, or Connexiion advisors (as stated in the research), increased attendance by 82% when participating in this planning method.

Approaches used within the HAWK Highway offered unexpected participation benefits to TPP team participation (Quann et al., 2014). Attitudes towards inclusion and student needs shifted because the planning methods were more openly visible (2014). The average attendance increased when preplanning with person-centered planning methods with an average of eight attendees at meetings (Kaehne & Beyer, 2014). Parents

and agency connections were noted as significant areas of growth for attendance. Visions and goals were shared which increased the support and capacity of all TPP team members.

Process satisfaction. Royer (2017) measured IEP meeting satisfaction as a result of visual, student-centered approaches. Parents completing the preplanning process viewed the planning as more effective. They were more likely to feel that the goals would be met, to agree with team decisions, and were satisfied with outcomes (Rehfeldt et al., 2012). Post-IEP meeting satisfaction scores for the group that used the My IEP graphic organizer program prior to meetings increased in both parents and students. This was also the case for faculty and staff within the study group (Royer, 2017).

TPP quality. Quality TPPs exist when strategic goal-oriented steps are taken to communicate student needs and wants to team members (Flannery & Hellemn, 2015). Kaehne & Beyer (2014) reported that traditional TPP meetings focused on work experiences. The meetings where preplanning was implemented included discussion on more diverse topics (Kaehne & Beyer, 2014). Visual planning formats have also helped focus student needs by identifying gaps in the processes (Gothberg et al., 2015). The number and quality of transition related goals generated from preplanning Transition Planning Inventory methods increased significantly (Rehfeldt et al., 2012). Increases in the quality of goals was noted by Kaehne and Beyer (2014) with many being identified as concrete and detailed.

Students also remembered more of their meeting when using the My IEP method

thus increasing the quality of the planning (Woods et al., 2017). The development of meaningful goals was completed, and student desires were shared. When using visual, student-centered approaches, students began to increase in their ability to ask for accommodations and increased follow through of IEP/TPP goals and activities (Quann et al., 2014). Increased empowerment in the IEP process was something that parents shared as an area of satisfaction.

Project Description

This project will consist of a supplemental preplanning tool that will use both visual imagery, digital information, and gap analysis to guide transition preplanning processes. The tool will be available through a digital format. In addition, an electronic, prerecorded guide will be available for each section for instruction on completion. This will allow for ease of implementation and a higher degree of buy in.

This project is respectful of the resources that SETs, SEAs, ARs and Ps noted as limitations within the research. A large percentage of team members identified that they need more time and money/resources. This project was created to require limited time from SETs/facilitators and team members. It is not meant to infringe upon the time of team members and includes a recorded explanation regarding the use and completion of tool sections. This should reduce the implementation responsibility of the team facilitators.

This project will be created with three components: (a) A digital, printable tool to help TPP team members prepare for the TPP meeting, (b) a digital, recorded description

on how to complete each section of the guide for explanation to team members, and (c) an assessment component to help teams evaluate the benefit of this project. Concrete examples and directions will be offered to guide the implementation of this tool.

Necessary Resources and Supports

All projects require aligned resources and supports to lead to successful implementation. Resources needed within this project include materials, people and time. The main materials have been created as part of this project. However, some may require reproduction for use. This should require limited expense by any party using the tool. In addition, internet access is an optional resource that team members may choose.

Materials. The materials needed within this project have been created by me. Two components have been developed and include visual/graphic printable materials and a digital, online assessible verbal usage guides. A bound/printed copy will be made available to all SETs within the local research area. In addition, a teacher and team member tool are available for easy access through a Live Binder link. Use outside the current research area will require SETs/meeting facilitators to print visual/graphic material packets to give to each TPP team member. Minimal material resources are necessary to use the curriculum. This project was developed to reduce materials and access costs. The tool will be offered and available for free to increase the usage and benefit of the tool. Printing costs would be the only costs incurred by local schools.

People. All SETs within the local ESU will receive a bound copy of the program materials as well as the link to the digital, printable copy. This project could reach a

potential of 36 teachers. However, volunteers will be sought to participate in this project. It is assumed that a minimum of five teachers will volunteer to participate in using this tool.

SETs will then determine a team they wish to invite to participate in the project. SETs will then engage the local team consisting of the following people: SEA, GET, AR, P, GHS and SGC. The most important resource is participation from TPP Team members. I will remain a human resource to anyone using the tool to explain the process or answer questions. Explanations regarding use of the tool will be pre-recorded and available on You Tube. Links to the videos will be made available on each corresponding page of the preplanning tool.

Time. I mplementation of this project will require SETs time to plan and disseminate visual preplanning tools. Because time was noted as a resource that TPP team members do not currently have, the project was planned to reduce the time requirement placed on the SETs as the team facilitator. The project was developed with a digital guide that explains the visual component use to team members to reduce the need for SET to spend time explaining the components. The videos will be available on You Tube. Each video and visual preplanning packet was created to require a minimal time commitment from TPP team members.

Barriers to Implementation

Fullan (2010) identified that several barriers to implementation may exist from external factors. Barriers may exist regarding characteristics of change, local

characteristics and external factors. Identifying these factors and creating a plan to overcome them will help increase the success of the project. Several barriers may exist in the implementation of this supplemental transition preplanning tool. Concerns relating to characteristics of change and local characteristics may hinder the process. Solutions must be planned in advance to ensure barriers relating to characteristics of change and local elements are reduced.

Characteristics of change. Teachers may connect to the purpose of a project, but they may not understand the detail of why or how implementation will have a positive impact (Fullan, 2010. The purpose of this project may seem clear to me, but it is important to acknowledge teachers may not clearly see the purpose. Monitoring participants for false clarity will be important as the solution is completed (Fullan, 2010).

Clarity. SETs identified that participation from all team members is limited. However, they may not be able to see how the project will address issues of participation and strengthening the TPP. Concerns relating to time may override the importance of the project. To overcome issues relating to clarity, previously set solutions will be put into place. This barrier will be addressed through the use of a brief webinar. The webinar will consist of three parts: (a) A brief description of how the project arose, (b) a brief overview of the positive results of previous visual, student centered tools will, and (c) and explanation of how attention to time and ease of implementation was put into the project.

Complexity. This project is created for a diverse audience. Each member may have different skills sets, and the project may be considered complex to some

participants. The largest complexity barrier may be offering the material to team members who are not literate. According to Fullan (2010) complexity poses a large challenge, but it can yield results. Barriers must be addressed within this area to make the project accessible to all team members. To address barriers related to complexity, key elements were put into place. Solutions included: (a) An explanation video will be recorded for each element of the tool. Videos will provide solutions to any team members that may not be able to read. Participants will be able to view videos as many times as necessary, (b) Videos will consist of modeling to complete each section, and (c) Teachers will be able to access me with any questions they may have through telephone and e-mail.

Local characteristics. Local change barriers may exist regarding social elements (Fullan, 2010). The local ESU currently provides supports and project services to local districts. Barriers relating to district or school acceptance are not likely to occur. However, barriers relating to teacher roles may be a significant concern due to the resource of time required.

Teacher roles. Teachers were identified as facilitators of the TPP meetings. As such, they naturally assume the role as the project facilitator within their school. They may be reluctant to support the project implementations. According to Fullan (2010), people become reluctant to trying new things. Because I maintain a relationship with many SETs within the local ESU, it is possible that I may not experience this to the degree expected (Fullan, 2010). Planning to overcome this challenge will take place in

two steps. They are as follows: (a) I plan to create a flyer that will market the project as a free program to increase their local TPP and (b) I only plan to include those teachers that volunteer.

Implementation

A continued implementation plan will be the focus of this project. TPP meetings are held one time per year until graduation. The materials are intended to be a long-term project that is continued each year through transition. This project will be implemented in a five-tier process as follows:

1. A webinar link and flyer will be sent to teachers to explain what the project is and to solicit volunteers for implementation.
2. A bound/printed copy of the preplanning tool will be delivered to all teachers in the local ESU. Coaching and Mentoring will be provided to teachers who volunteered. A Live Binder link will also be included for those that would like to access the tool electronically.
3. A recorded webinar will be offered to SETs within the local ESU. The webinar will cover the project purpose, goals, and usage. It will be no longer than 20 minutes in length to be respectful of SET's time. All materials and links will be e-mailed to SETs across the local ESU.
4. SETs will disseminate the materials to respectful TPP team members. A timeline for implementation was included within the project to help guide the process. In addition, e-mails to team members can be copied and sent quickly.

A written and digital explanation of how to complete the components was made.

5. Team members will bring completed tools to the TPP meeting as a resource and visual support to help them participate in the process. A video was made to offer ideas for implementation within meetings.

Project Evaluation Plan

Evaluation Type

Two evaluation plans will monitor the effectiveness of this project. It is important to know immediate impacts at the local level, but it is also essential to know if the project directly impacts the research problem. Monitoring postsecondary outcomes takes time. Data are only collected one year after graduation. For this reason, interim outcomes may need to be measured before the primary outcomes can be measured (Mertens & Wilson, 2012).

Impact evaluation. With the overarching problem of this research study focusing on postsecondary outcomes, it is important to perform the evaluation over time. A primary, impact evaluation will provide information regarding the success of the project related to the problem identified in the literature (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). The project will be monitored over time to determine if the preplanning tool impacts the postsecondary outcomes over time. Postsecondary outcomes are only measured one year after students graduate. Data will be monitored at least one year after implementation for seniors. These data will come from the state department's postsecondary outcome report.

This evaluation will be a long-term evaluation that seeks to monitor the postsecondary outcomes over time.

Goals. The goal of the impact evaluation is to monitor the differences between the state and local, rural ESU postsecondary outcomes. If the project is effective, then IEP planning and development should increase the postsecondary outcomes of individuals as they graduate from high school. Over time, the difference between state and local, rural ESU numbers should decrease.

Key stakeholders. The primary evaluation seeks to provide data to those at the state Department of Education, administration of the local, rural ESU, school governing boards, and administrators within local, rural ESUs. Information to all team members should also be provided to gain continued buy in for the project (Fullan, 2010).

Outcome evaluation. In addition, this project focuses on short term outcomes and seeks to change the participation levels of team members, satisfaction with the TPP process, and quality of TPP development. Understanding what is happening on a broad level is essential (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). With a focus on short-term results, an outcome-based evaluation will be completed for each TPP team (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). Justification for the two evaluation types can be identified by examining the goals and outcomes desired from each component.

Goals. Short term results are monitored through outcome evaluations (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). This project is set to run from 1 month prior to the TPP meeting to the end of the TPP meeting. Measurement of outcomes will take place at the end of each

meeting. Evaluations will focus on identifying if goals have been met. The goals of this project are to increase team member participation, satisfaction levels of TPP team members regarding the process, and quality of TPP planning. Outcomes will be measured by the following tools:

Participation levels: A pre and post survey will be administered to team members who have participated. A pre-survey will be sent with the preplanning tool materials to all participants. A post survey will be administered at the end of TPP meetings after using the visual, preplanning tool. It will be based on the Kohler and Gothberg (2016) *Assessment of Student Involvement in Transition Planning* survey to measure student involvement. In addition, a version will be made to monitor the level of input from all team members on the same components. This survey was completed as a grant project from the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Grant No. #H326E14004; therefore, permission to reproduce in whole or part is granted. Adjustments will be made as necessary to measure the project goals. The survey will be created using Google Surveys to increase the likelihood of completion.

Questions will monitor participation related to goal development, student limitations, student strengths, student interests, course of study, and past or current academic performance. Overall participation and involvement of students will also be included. The survey will be Google based to allow team members to complete it prior to leaving the meeting. Google based forms can immediately enter information into a spreadsheet for easy data evaluation

Satisfaction of TPP team member participation: A researcher created survey will contain no more than five questions regarding satisfaction levels in regard to the TPP. The survey will be Google based to allow team members to complete the survey prior to leaving the meeting. Google based forms can immediately enter information into a spreadsheet for easy data evaluation. This survey will not be monitored in a pre and post method. Data will be used on satisfaction levels of meetings using the preplanning tool.

Quality of IEP/TPP student-focused planning development: Quality of TPPs will be monitored in the non preplanning tool year and the preplanning tool year. Teachers will evaluate the TPPs using the local, ESUs current Transition IEP checklist and report results back. Reporting will be monitored to identify if the preplanning tool increased the quality of transition plans. This checklist was completed as a grant project from the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Grant No. #H326E14004; therefore, permission to reproduce in whole or part is granted (Kohler & Gothberg, 2016).

Stakeholders. Outcome evaluations typically affect those at the individual level. Individuals at the team level are the focus of this evaluation phase. Stakeholders impacted at this level will be the following seven identified groups: SETs, SEAs, GETs, ARs, Ps, GHSes, and secondary guidance counselors.

Project Implications

The current project was selected because of the potential to achieve the greatest degree of social change. This project not only has the potential to impact TPP within the

local, rural ESU, but it could bring social change on a much broader scale. Current and previous research identified that the concerns addressed at the local level are not significantly different than those shared by TPP team members across the nation. Concerns with a lack of team member participation, meaningful, quality planning, and process satisfaction exist in TPP teams (Flannery & Hellman, 2015; Royer, 2017; Woods et al., 2017). According to Kaehne and Beyer (2014), Quann et al. (2014), and Gothberg et al. (2015) pre-planning tools could impact all TPP teams and increase meaningful planning.

Local Level

Change within the local ESU could impact 21 schools and their TPP teams. Volunteers at the local level will be sought to implement the preplanning tool in collaboration with TPP team members. Implementation should be relatively simple and involve limited cash outlay. This should increase participation and will not exclude any of the schools within the local, rural ESU. Distance, accessibility, and time should not be a significant concern. The goal of this project is to affect social change at the local level by impacting team member participation, satisfaction with the TPP process, and the quality of IEP development. The creation of student-focused transition plans will affect the educational impact and create a more meaningful TPPs. Long term outcomes could impact the postsecondary outcomes for the local area.

Broad Level

Potential for change at the broader level exist. If the project is proven on the local

level, support for use on a broader level could be built. The project is limited in resource commitment and will be accessible online. Essentially, anyone who wishes to implement this project would be free to do so. The impact at the broader level stands to support social change on a much larger scale. This project could be used across the country in multiple settings.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

A unique view into the TPP team members' perspectives was offered within this project. I found challenges associated within the area of student-focused planning. The nature of the project and the structure of the interviews offered depth and breadth, which allowed for comparisons and analysis to identify TPP strengths and concerns. Two strengths of this study included the methodology selected and the time commitment of personal interviews. This allowed for the development of a project that met the local, rural ESU TPP stakeholders' needs.

Using a qualitative methodology proved to be beneficial in identifying the perspectives of transition planning team members regarding the TPP. Few scholars have examined all required team member perceptions. Researchers have examined parent and student perceptions regarding the TPP process. Although a deep examination of one or two groups does provide more individualized information, it is not possible to analyze differences amongst the members. The interviews offered in this project allowed for a clear picture and comparison of team member perspectives. I was able to examine challenges within the process and arrive at a potential solution. The project was based on perspectives from team members.

The use of personal interviews was also a strength. This process was time consuming and involved organization and preparation. However, the personal

conversations that took place allowed the participants to feel safe and comfortable sharing their perspectives. As a result, I was able to examine elements of the process more deeply. Probing questions allowed for honest concerns to arise. Quantitative methodology would not have allowed me to examine answers in detail and discover critical TPP information. Participants shared concerns and strengths of the process, which could not have been discovered through other methods.

Limitations

Qualitative research may yield limitations for researchers that arise from a natural part of the process (Yin, 2004). Although the qualitative approach used in this study offered information for the field of transition, the methodology also offered three limitations. Limitations were related to the approach, sampling of participants, and sample size, which may have impacted the results.

The qualitative, case study approach used in this study may have hindered the access to participants. Interviews required the participants to spend time away from their personal lives to share and review their data. As a result, several individuals were not willing to engage in the interview process. Their perspectives may have provided increased information to guide the project. Three participant groups required a two- or three-tiered process of invitation to participate to meet saturation. Over five potential participants completed the screening survey and checked that they would not participate in an interview or they discontinued the process completely. A descriptive survey may have increased the participation.

Sampling of participants is often a concern, which limits the generalizability of qualitative, case studies (Yin, 2004). A qualitative, case study often includes purposeful sampling methods to select participants who match the needs of the research questions and desired data. For this reason, participants are unique to the setting of the study. It is difficult for others to generalize the findings to their location because of the uniqueness of the participant sample (Yin, 2004). In addition, it may be difficult to replicate the study. The exact same sample may be difficult for others to obtain.

Only three participants from each TPP member group were interviewed. The setting for the study was the largest ESU within the state. The limited sample may not have offered a full view of the perceptions of TPP team members across the rural ESU. Data may be obtained with an increase in the number of participants. Generalization of this study may be difficult because of the small sample size of each type of TPP team member. According to Yin (2014), case study research makes it difficult for generalization of research. Broad generalization may also not be possible given the setting of the study. Consumers of the research must examine each element to determine if it may apply to their location. It is not possible to predict the success of this project on a larger scale.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The project spanned a longer period of time than originally planned due to struggles with the gathering of participants. One of the reasons for the necessary time extension was the ability to gather participants willing to complete the phone interview.

It is not known whether it was considered an inconvenience for certain participants, but it did take time out of their lives to participate. Two recommendations for alternative approaches may help to overcome this limitation of the study.

Several GETs completed the Survey Monkey screening survey and noted that they were willing to participate in the interview. However, when contacted to schedule the interviews, they did not return the calls. Also, two individuals who completed the screening survey noted they were not willing to complete a personal interview.

Interviews were also a struggle in gaining the participation of HS-SWDs. To gain a stronger perspective and gather the full number of participants, it may be necessary to offer a participation incentive. Offering a gift card drawing or gift card prize for participation may help participants justify the time that they spent participating in this process. Offering alternative digital response formats may have also increased participation.

In addition, many participants were willing to complete the Survey Monkey screening survey who were not willing to complete personal interviews. If this research was completed as a descriptive, quantitative approach, a broader sample of participants may have been gathered. Their willingness to access and complete the survey may indicate they preferred a faster, noncontact approach. This may have been a concern with graduated HS-SWDs, as their generation communicates primarily through technology. This is becoming more common in society, and many potential participants may have been uncomfortable using a more nonpersonal approach.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

Performing the role of scholar and researcher helped me to grow professionally in ways I never could have imagined. This process was a humbling experience, which forced me to look at myself and my skills from a different perspective. In addition, I learned patience, perseverance, and consistency. I had to overcome several personal and professional challenges to get to this point. In reflection, I grew in areas related to scholarship, project development, and leadership and change.

Scholarship

This process has helped develop my personal capacity to an extent not imaginable. Fullan (2010), reported that individual capacity is enhanced by experiences supporting human capital. My educational experience with Walden University has offered me a rigorous and focused program from which to develop increased capital. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) identified professional capital as a balance among the human, social, and decisional elements of the people in education. My Walden University education has taught me to be a scholar who strives to use knowledge and ability to help create and effective, student-centered educational program.

One of the greatest areas of personal growth is the way I process and question research. According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), change cannot take place if a person does not begin the journey and employ risks. I was prepared through a rigorous program to think like a scholar and evaluate all tasks with the concept of change in mind. This view throughout my educational process has helped to develop my mantra of

offering youth *the dignity of risk*. Fulfilling this personal pledge required me to read and research to find methods that would take students above and beyond. I have taken the opportunity to read research to find new strategies and program supports for the students I serve. However, the research process helped me learn to synthesize research with a vision for change.

Evaluating research was a paradigm shift, which began within coursework offered by Walden University's professors. The assigned lessons required me to think more deeply and examine concepts from different perspectives. Although the amount of reading appeared to be overwhelming at times, it helped me to practice examining research from a scholarly perspective. I began to view all research through a different lens, and my eyes were opened to examining articles for bias and inconsistencies.

Moving on to the prospectus and proposal phases helped me to implement the preparation phase of my scholarly growth. Over 100 research articles were read and examined for facts and information. The process of reading the articles helped me in my current position as I learned about new programs and strategies that could be implemented with youth. I began to formulate ideas and projects, which were evidence-based and would impact social change. I have implemented many projects that I would not have been able to effectively develop if I had not developed as a scholar.

I took all assignments seriously and tried to link them to my current positions. Every action I began to take was implemented with high standards and professionalism. My personal capital profile began to include specialized knowledge and expertise,

standards of practice, autonomous decision making, and solutions to problems (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). The growth offered through scholastic development impacted my professional endeavors and allowed me to impact social change at the local setting.

Project Development

A paradigm shift occurred at a time when I was experiencing Phase 3 of Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) stages of teacher growth. I had been working in an educational capacity for about 10 years, and I was managing changes and sensing tensions from a need for change. Making a difference and helping drive social change was important to me. As I moved through my educational process and was introduced to project development, I found my niche.

I became connected to the project development process, and I have used my knowledge to write grants and continuing projects within my current position. The project created within one course was rewritten as a grant, accepted, and run as a successful project. Being able to experience how one idea could impact social change was an engaging experience. My hope is to take the project created within this study and implement it to lead to positive social change.

Leadership and Change

Intelligent accountability was identified by Fullan (2010) as an element of leadership and change. Capacity building has been identified by Fullan as a component when implementing social change. I have spent the last 5 years developing my own

personal capacity and creating a platform for future change.

One area I have used my growth in scholarship is to drive transition capacity building within the local, rural ESU's TPP. Kohler's (1996) and Kohler et al.'s (2016) taxonomy for transition programming 2.0 focuses on building transition capacity amongst stakeholders. Focusing on a moral purpose, I have been able to increase standards and expectations for students (Fullan, 2010). Fullan (2010) reported that a moral purpose can help close educational gaps which exist. Decisions I make are based on evidence and promising practices within the transition field, in addition to the gathering of stakeholder perspectives. Without the ability to develop as a researcher, I would not have been able to implement successful capacity building initiatives.

Creating a culture of trust and collaboration is something I have excelled at. One element in Kohler's (1996) taxonomy for transition programming is interagency collaboration. Using my knowledge, education, and skills to bring people and teams together has been an area of growth within the last few years. Having the knowledge to voice concerns and lead change has helped me to develop teachers and community members in the area of transition. Not only do I implement actions with a moral purpose, but I seek to ensure morality is present in all actions and strategies I introduce.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

Postsecondary outcomes for consecutive years indicated a concern regarding the access to supports for employment and postsecondary environments (BSR, 2014, 2015, 2016). Target indicators within the local rural ESU significantly lag behind the outcomes

presented by the state. In this study, I sought to examine the perceptions of all team members regarding the TPP. Few scholars have examined the perceptions of all required TPP team members. This approach was implemented to establish reflections on strengths, challenges, and identification of roles leading to supports, enhancements, and processes to increase positive postsecondary outcomes. I identified anunderstanding of roles within the TPP. All TPP team members agreed on team member roles. Challenges were identified to outnumber the strengths within the TPP. Identification of challenges may lead to projects and actions enhancing the postsecondary outcomes within the local ESU.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Implications

Researchers engage in qualitative, intrinsic case studies to explain a process or event. The focus of this research project was to explore the TPP in a Midwest, rural ESU. A clear view of the TPP within this region can be used to identify why the postsecondary outcomes within the local ESU differ from the state-wide postsecondary outcomes. Findings from this study may lead to projects that help to close this gap.

The conceptual framework of Kohler's (1996) taxonomy for transition programming formed this study. Challenges can be organized following the components of the taxonomy to guide positive social change within each area. The following areas were identified to hold challenges by the TPP team members: family involvement, student-focused planning, interagency collaboration, and program structure.

Applications

The development of projects and activities to address the challenges could impact the postsecondary outcomes. Addressing the challenging areas may help to identify why the current local, ESU outcomes are lagging behind the state numbers and not meeting indicators. Focusing on areas of support may provide positive applications for future efforts.

Directions for Future Research

Throughout the analysis of the research, many questions entered my mind. I began to question why comments were made or how I could identify more information about the facts. Several possible directions for future research were uncovered in the research evaluation.

A recent revision of the taxonomy for transition programming 2.0 was completed by Kohler et al. (2016). Additions and enhancements were made to not only the initial model, but also roles of TPP team members. Examining the perspectives of TPP team members in comparison to the newer, enhanced taxonomy may provide a deeper evaluation of the needs of TPP teams.

As the research progressed, it became apparent that perspectives of team members regarding the TPP varied based on the qualifying disability category of the student. Several participants referenced that the role of administrators varied when the meeting was supporting a student with behavioral concerns compared to a student diagnosed with a learning disability. In addition, the strengths and challenges were identified differently

among the diagnosis criteria of the student. For this reason, I recommend further research into the perspectives of the transition planning team members with a focus on identifying disability categories.

Participants identified a lack of preparedness as a challenge in the IEP process. This was not exclusive to any group. Concerns with the transition planning preparedness of parents, agencies, students, and general education teachers were noted in the process. Further research into the methods for preparing parents, agencies, and general education teachers may help in analyzing the gaps existing in the process.

The importance of school counselors was consistent across the participants' comments. Counselors were not included in this study because they are not required team members of the IEP process. While counselors were not identified as required team members, Kohler et al. (2016) identified them as critical members of the interagency component. Identifying the perspectives of counselors' value in the process may help to increase their professional capacity within TPP teams.

The level of family involvement and follow through in the TPP was identified as a challenge by several participants. Due to the limited number of parent participants in this study, it is not possible to discreetly discern the reasons behind limited participation. Further studies may be necessary to examine this concern on a deeper level with a larger cross section of participants.

Policy and transition philosophy concerns continued to be a common theme concerning challenges in the TPP. The focus on academic requirements should be

examined further to identify if policy shifts may be necessary. Participants often stated that the focus on academic requirements made it impossible to have time to spend on preparing youth for their futures. Looking into the time spent on transition planning may offer insight into general planning concerns.

Conclusion

Postsecondary outcomes for students within the local, rural ESU lag behind their peers across the state (BSR, 2014, 2015, 2016). To examine this problem, a qualitative, case study methodology was used to perform research into this concern. This study sought to examine the perceptions of all team members regarding the TPP. Interviews were conducted with 16 individuals across the six TPP team member categories. A two-phase coding process identified strengths, challenges, and roles of TPP team members. Findings indicated that challenges outweighed the strengths of the current process and could be evaluated based on Kohler's (1996) Taxonomy for Transition Planning framework to identify why the local problem may exist. Rich data were obtained offering insight into concerns amongst the TPP team members, which led to the development of a visual, student-focused project to increase capacity amongst the team members. This project could impact social change on a local and broad level while affecting team member participation, satisfaction with the TPP process and quality of transition plan development.

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Appendix A: The Project

Supplemental Transition Preplanning Tool Index

Teacher Materials

- Basic introduction and instructional link
- Timeline for implementation
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  - 2-week e-mail message
  - 1-day prior e-mail message

Preplanning Tool

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- Step 1: Student Strengths and Abilities
- Step 2: Support Team Members
- Step 2: Current Community-Integrated Activities
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- Post-Assessment Participation Survey
- Satisfaction Survey
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Supplemental Transition Preplanning Tool

Research has shown that including all team members in the preplanning process is critical to increase team member participation, quality of meetings, and satisfaction of team members. This tool has been created as a supplemental tool for team preplanning while valuing your time as an educator.

Please visit https://youtu.be/FJNSRe7jLOs to hear the overview explanation of this supplemental preplanning tool.

Both visual and verbal elements exist to ease implementation. Your role is to act as the facilitator of the process.

It is known that secondary special education teacher's time is very limited. The project was created to provide a preplanning tool that will require a limited time commitment. In addition, this product is free of charge to reproduce and use for educational purposes.

Implementation is simple and an implementation time-line is included in the following steps:

Timeline for Implementation

One month prior to the meeting

1) Listen to the supplemental preplanning tool description and directions at: https://youtu.be/FJNSRe7jLOs

2) Sit with the student to identify the team members who will be invited to the transition planning meeting. They may include:
   - ✓ Student
   - ✓ Secondary General Education Teachers
   - ✓ District Administrators or Special Education Administrators
   - ✓ Secondary Guidance Counselors
   - ✓ Agency Representatives
   - ✓ Parents

3) Contact each team member by e-mail and share the following supplemental preplanning tool verbal explanation and the Live Binder address. They are available at : https://youtu.be/oNybhNietL4

4) Make a copy of all tool pages. They can be found at the livebinder address: http://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=2318841&backurl=/shelf/my#anchor One set will be used per team member.

5) Send the supplemental preplanning tool to transition planning team members. Include the pre-meeting survey. Or, offer them the Livebinder link to print the materials.

Two weeks prior to the meeting

1) Send the included follow up e-mail message to team members to remind them to complete their document

One day prior to the meeting

1) Send the included follow up e-mail message on page to team members to remind them to complete their document and bring it to the meeting.

At the end of the meeting

1) Have team members complete the post-survey.

Meeting day

1) Using the tool is important to successful implementation. Watch the video to identify methods that you may use to incorporate the tool into your meeting. The video is available at: https://youtu.be/ninRsUA7Y7Q

One-month prior e-mail message

Thank you for being part of _____'s IEP transition planning process. Your input is valuable in identifying goals, supports, and activities that will help _____ transition to adult life successfully.

The attached preplanning tool and survey will help make valuable use of your time during the meeting and keep a student-centered focus. Please follow the You Tube directions added to each page and complete the tool. Focusing on the key points will help keep your answers brief and focus meeting conversation.

For a complete explantion of how this preplanning tool will be used, please go to the following: https://youtu.be/oNybhNietL4 .

For additional copies of the preplanning tool, you may access it at the following LiveBinder address: https://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=2318841&backurl=/shelf/my#anchor .

Again, thank you for your time and willingness to be a part of this preplanning process. Your input is valuable to the entire team.

Two-week prior e-mail message

Thank you for being part of _____'s IEP transition planning process. Your input is valuable in identifying goals, supports, and activities that will help _____ transition to adult life successfully.

Two weeks ago, I sent a preplanning tool and survey for you to complete. This will help prepare all team members to participate in the IEP transition planning process. I realize your time is valuable and appreciate your input. I just wanted to send a reminder to complete the tool.

If you have misplaced the tool, additional copies may be accessed at the following LiveBinder address: http://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=2318841&backurl=/shelf/my#anchor .

Again, thank you for your time and willingness to be a part of this preplanning process. Your input is valuable to the entire team. I look forward to working with you in two weeks.

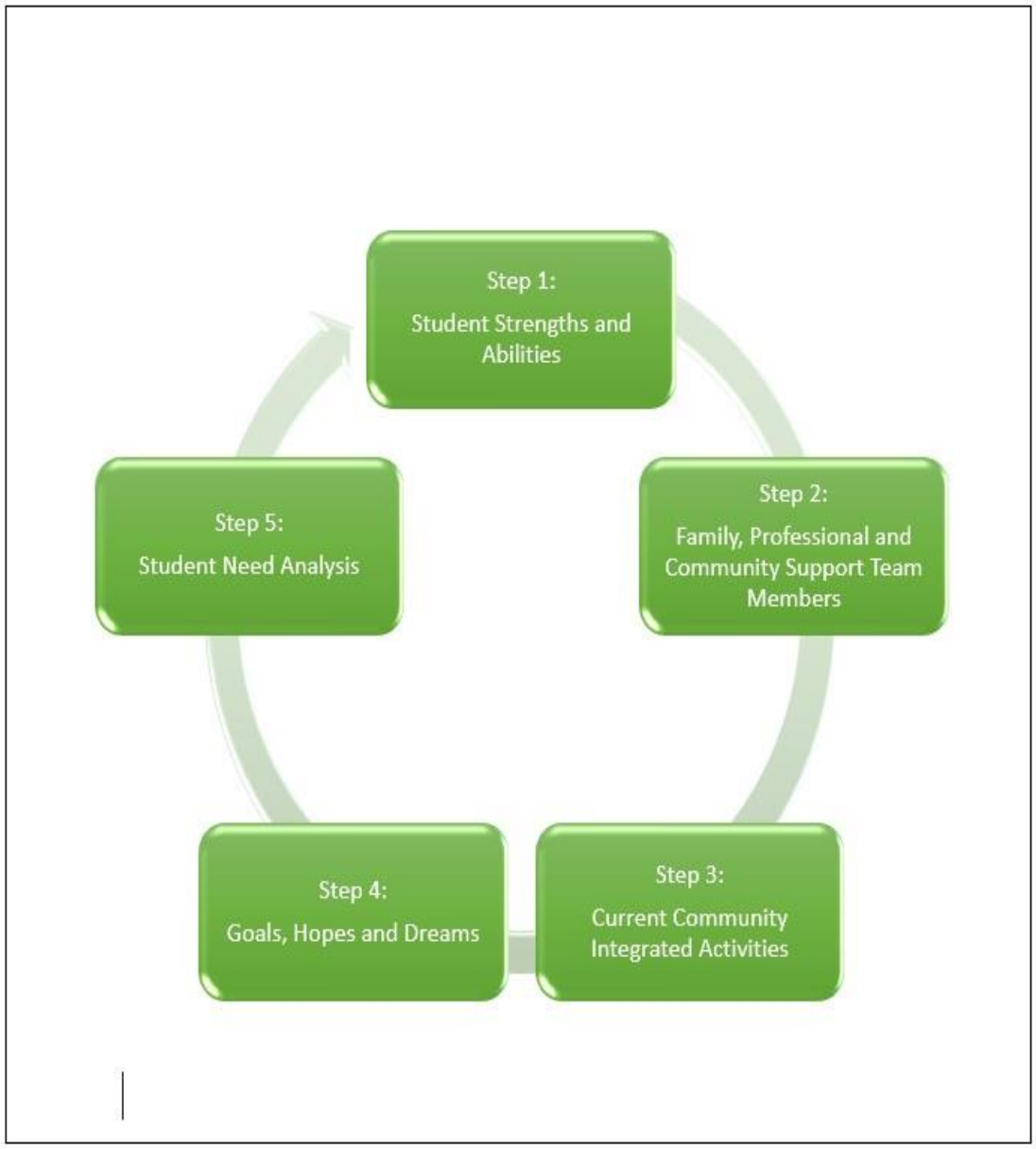
One day prior message

Just a friendly reminder that _____’s IEP transition planning meeting will be held tomorrow. Please remember to bring your completed preplanning tool and survey. This tool will help keep the meeting focused and make best use of your time.

If you have misplaced it, additional copies can be printed at the following LiveBinder address: https://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=2318841&backurl=/shelf/my#anchor .

Again, thank you for your time and willingness to be a part of this preplanning process. I look forward to teaming with you tomorrow!

Student-Focused Planning Overview



Directions on how to use the tool

Directions are available in written form on this page. You also have the option to listen to directions on each page. You will be guided through the completion of the tool.

Step 1: Student Strengths and Abilities

Online Directions: https://youtu.be/1B3t2RB8wDU

Written Directions: Examine student strengths and abilities in four key areas. Write as many or as few as you can think of. Just fill out the sections that you know through your connection with the student.

- Write up to three strengths and abilities for the student's academic areas.
- Write up to three strengths and abilities for the student's academic areas.
- Write up to three strengths and abililites regarding the student's personality.
- Write up to three strengths and abilities regarding student's interests.

Step 2: Student Support Team Members

Online Directions: : https://youtu.be/qf1iyzGHhuA

Written Directions: Who supports the student? Who will support the student? Think about who will support the student in the following settings: Family, School, Community, and Health. Write as many or as few as you can think of. Just fill out the sections that you know through your connection with the student.

- Write as many family support members that you know will help the student as they transtion.
- Write as many school support members that you know will help the student as they transtion.
- Write as many community support members that you know will help the student as they transition.
- Write as many health support members that you know will help the student as they transition.

Step 3: Current Community-Integrated Activities

Online Directions: https://youtu.be/N0OgzFE2aro

Written Directions: What community facilities does the student use on a daily, weekly or yearly basis? Think about where the student might go in the community.

- What places might the student visit daily? Write as many as you can think of.
- What places might the student visit weekly? Write as many as you can think of.
- What places might the student visit yearly? Write as many as you can think of.

Step 4: Goals and Supports Needed

Online Directions: https://youtu.be/E5LBS1LiTSQ
Written Directions: Identify what you think the the student's goals are on the first part. Then, write supports that the student will need to reach those goals. If you don't know the student well enough to put a goal down, that is ok! You can fill in as much as you know.

- What are goals the student has for employment? What supports are needed to get there?
- What are goals the student has for education and training? What supports are needed to get there?
- What are goals the student has for independent living? What supports are needed to get there?
- What are goals the student has for community participation? What supports are needed to get there?

Step 5: Student Needs Analysis

Online Directions: https://youtu.be/lY32wUq5Czs

Written Directions: This is where you put it all together! You will use the information you gained from step 1-4 to complete the needs analysis. For the employment and living sections, follow the following steps:

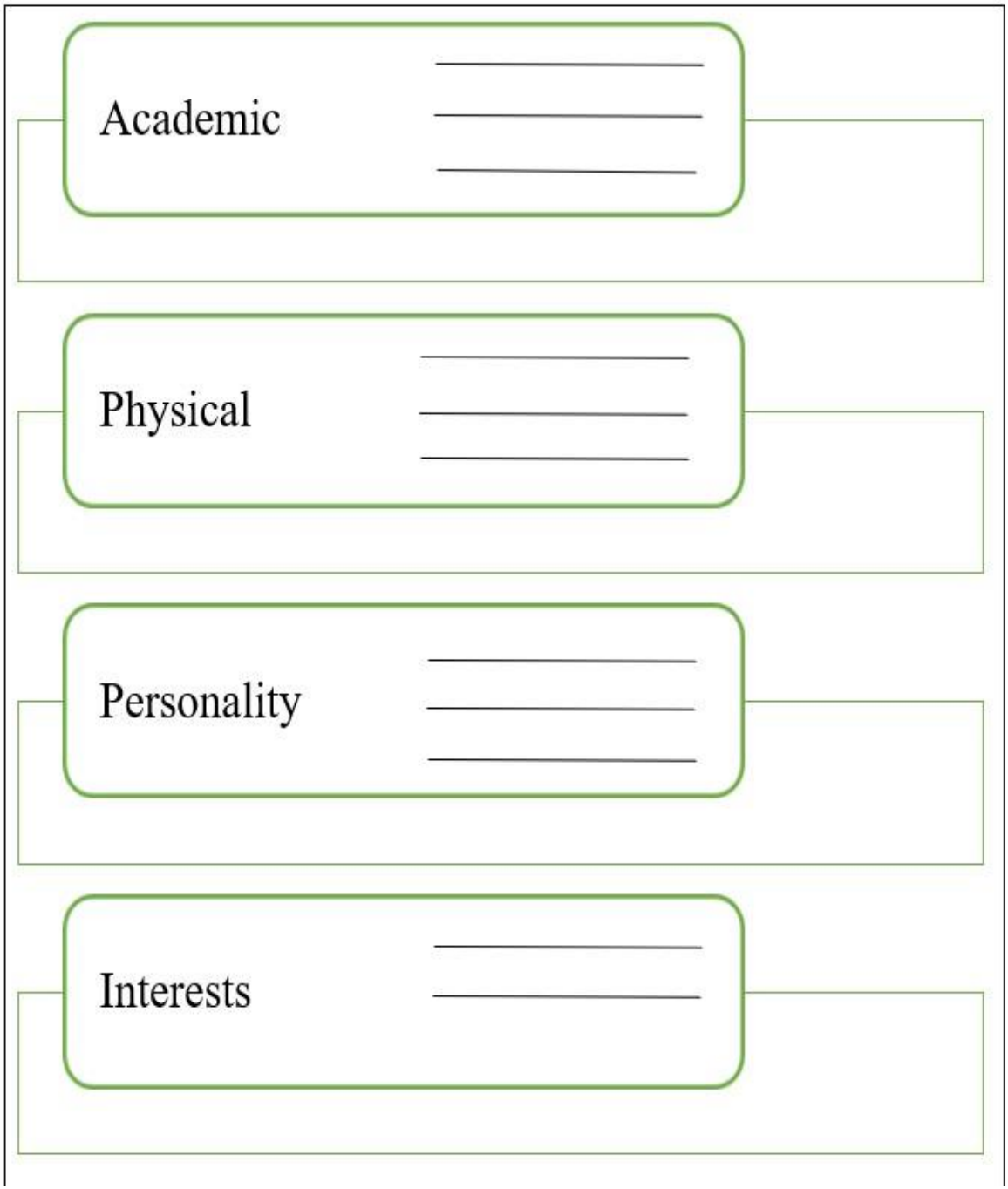
- Take the employment goal you identified in step 4 and place it on the top line for goals.
- On the next line, identify the training and supports needed to achieve the goal. This will also come from step 4.
- Then use the strengths, skills and abilities on step 1 and write them in the skills they have section. Think about skills they need still and write those down. Skills can be anything you think will help them be successful.

- Think about the skills you said they needed. Write tasks that you think they need to complete to gain skills. Tasks can be in the school setting, at home, or in the community.
- Finally, think about who can support the student to complete these tasks. Look at your step 2 and step 3 forms and identify who could support students. This may be anyone from their support system or a business or location in the community.

Congratulations! You have completed the supplemental transition preplanning tool. Bring this tool to the meeting to guide you while you participate!

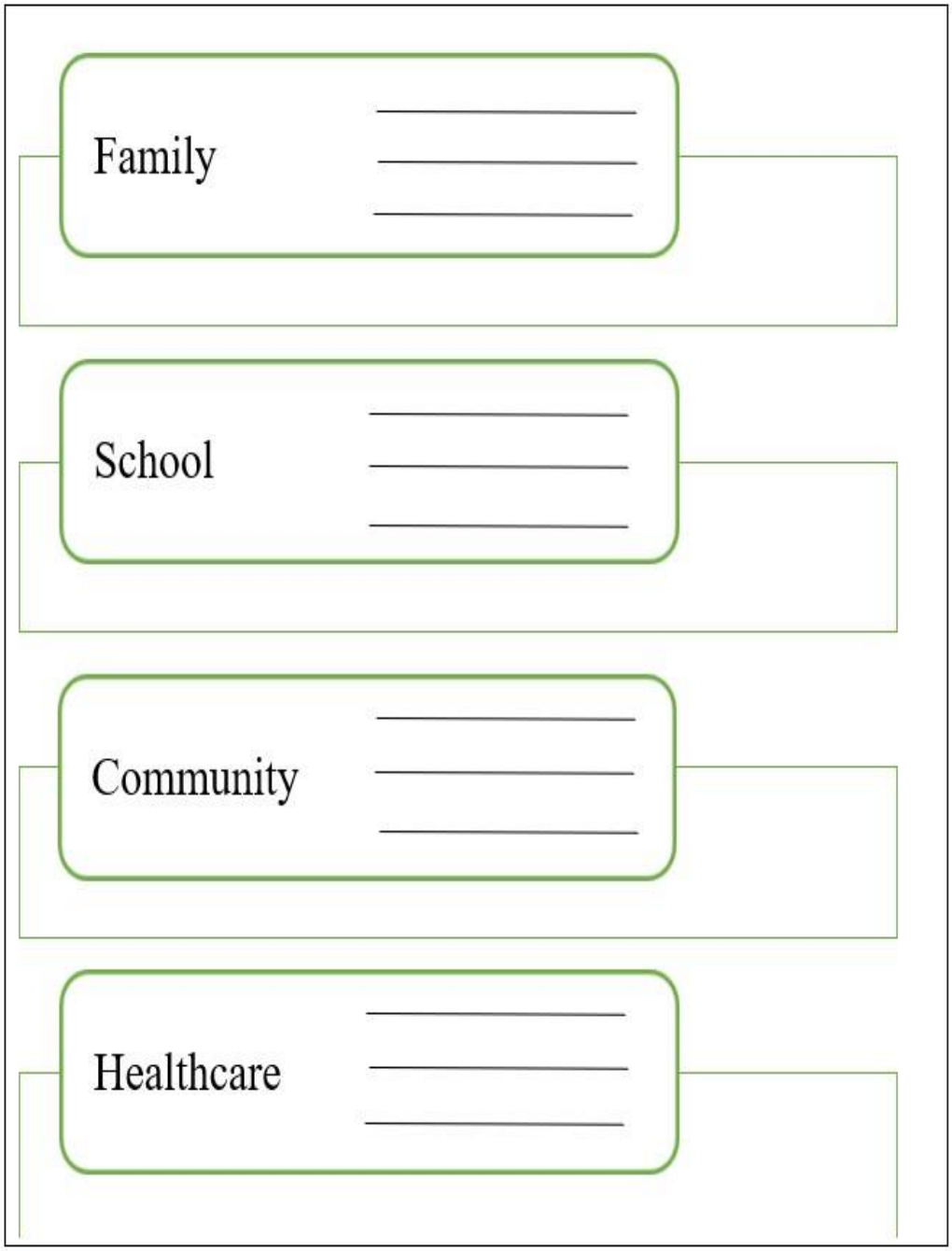
Step 1: Student Strengths and Abilities

Listen to directions at: https://youtu.be/1B3t2RB8wDU



Step 2: Support Team Members

Listen to directions at: https://youtu.be/qf1iyzGHhuA



Step 3: Current Community Integrated Activities

Listen to directions at: https://youtu.be/N0OgzFE2aro

1. Daily

2. Weekly

3. Yearly

Step 4: Goals and Supports

Listen to directions at: https://youtu.be/E5LBS1LiTSQ

Employment	**Education/Training**
Goal:	Goal:
Supports needed:	Supports needed:
Independent Living	**Community Participation**
Goal:	Goal:
Supports needed:	Supports needed:

Student Needs Analysis

Listen to directions at: https://youtu.be/lY32wUq5Czs

Employment Goal:		**Living Goal:**	
Education/Training Requirements:		**Support and Skill Requirements:**	
Skills They Have:	**Skills Needed:**	**Skills they Have:**	**Skills Needed:**
Tasks:		**Tasks:**	
Team Members Available:		**Team Members Available:**	

Pre-Participation Assessment

Team member participation

Please identify your level of participation in past IEP/Transition planning meetings
This survey is based on the Kohler & Gothberg (2016) NTACT Evaluation Tool Student-Focused Planning Tool 4.

1. **What area best describes you**
Check all that apply.

- [ ] Student
- [ ] Secondary Administrator
- [ ] Secondary Guidance Counselor
- [ ] Secondary General Education Teacher
- [ ] Agency Representative
- [ ] Parent
- [ ] Secondary Special Education Teacher

2. **I participated in helping set student goals**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	
No, I did not offer input	◯	◯	◯	I fully participated and shared my opinon

3. **I participated by sharing student strengths**
Mark only one oval.

5. **I participated in planning courses that students will need to take to reach their goals**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	
No, I did not offer input	◯	◯	◯	I fully participated and shared my opinon

4. **I participated by sharing skills or abilities that students may need to reach goals**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	
No, I did not offer input	◯	◯	◯	I fully participated and shared my opinon

	1	2	3	
No, I did not offer input	◯	◯	◯	I fully participated and shared my opinon

6. **I helped to identify tasks that were needed to reach goals**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	
No, I did not offer input	◯	◯	◯	I fully participated and shared my opinon

7. **I helped to identify support people to lead tasks and support students**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	
No, I did not offer input	◯	◯	◯	I fully participated and shared my opinon

Powered by
Google Forms

Post Participation Survey

Team member participation

Please identify your level of participation in past IEP/Transition planning meetings
This survey is based on the Kohler & Gothberg (2016) NTACT Evaluation Tool Student-Focused Planning Tool 4.

1. **What area best describes you**
Check all that apply.

- [ ] Student
- [ ] Secondary Administrator
- [ ] Secondary Guidance Counselor
- [ ] Secondary General Education Teacher
- [ ] Agency Representative
- [ ] Parent
- [ ] Secondary Special Education Teacher

2. **I participated in helping set student goals**
Mark only one oval.

5. **I participated in planning courses that students will need to take to reach their goals**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	
No, I did not offer input	◯	◯	◯	I fully participated and shared my opinon

3. **I participated by sharing student strengths**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	
No, I did not offer input	◯	◯	◯	I fully participated and shared my opinon

4. **I participated by sharing skills or abilities that students may need to reach goals**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	
No, I did not offer input	◯	◯	◯	I fully participated and shared my opinon

	1	2	3	
No, I did not offer input	◯	◯	◯	I fully participated and shared my opinon

6. **I helped to identify tasks that were needed to reach goals**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	
No, I did not offer input	◯	◯	◯	I fully participated and shared my opinon

7. **I helped to identify support people to lead tasks and support students**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	
No, I did not offer input	◯	◯	◯	I fully participated and shared my opinon

Meeting Satisfaction Survey

Transition Planning Meeting Satisfaction

Please answer the following questions about how satisfied you were with the Transition Planning Process included in this meeting.

1. What area best describes you
   Check all that apply.
   - [ ] Student
   - [ ] Secondary Administrator
   - [ ] Secondary Guidance Counselor
   - [ ] Secondary General Education Teacher
   - [ ] Agency Representative
   - [ ] Parent
   - [ ] Secondary Special Education Teacher
2. How satisfied were you with the level of preparation for the Transition Planning Meeting?
   Mark only one oval.

   Not Satisfied ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ Very satisfied
3. How satisfied were you with the amount of time you talked or participated? Mark only one oval.

   Not Satisfied ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ Very satisfied
4. How satisfied were you with the outcomes of the meeting?
   Mark only one oval.

   Not Satisfied ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ Very satisfied
5. How satisfied were you with the length of the meeting?
   Mark only one oval.

Not Satisfied ⬭ ⬭ ⬭ ⬭ Very satisfied

6. Overall, what grade would you give the meeting today?
Check all that apply.

- [ ] A
- [ ] B
- [ ] C
- [ ] D
- [ ]
- [ ]

Appendix B: Interview Questions for SET, GET, SEA, and AR

1) What experiences or training have you had specific to supporting HS-SWDs in the transition process?
2) What do you see as the primary needs and goals of HS-SWDs in your program or setting?
3) In what ways are you prepared to support HS-SWDs in the transition process?
4) What student training and development led to a successful transition from secondary settings into postsecondary options?

    Possible Prompts based on the Participant:

    a) What support options are provided to students in your setting?
    b) What are some strategies that your students/you can/did use to meaningfully participate in the transition planning process?
    c) What are some examples of goals your student/client(s) set in their transition process?
    d) In what way(s) do you see students/clients advocating for themselves? How have you, other professionals, or parents supported self-advocacy?
    e) How have you seen transition planning team members facilitate or support the transition process?

    f) What resources do you, as a professional, feel are helpful in navigating the transition process?

5) In your view, what are some challenges that students face in the transition process? How have they been resilient in the face of these challenges?

   Possible Prompts:

   a) What characteristics, attitudes, policy, programmatic, economic, or communication issues do students/clients face?

   b) What are some personal strategies you have seen students/clients use to help through challenging times? How did they deal with the stress and ambiguity?

   c) On a similar topic, what personal strategies did YOU as a professional use to work through these challenges?

   d) Given these challenges, what resources might be useful in reducing barriers to postsecondary transition success? For example, people who could be helpful, programs that might support the process, locally or on a broader level?

6) In your view, what kinds of skills and knowledge did/does your student/client's transition team have that supported/s the transition process?

   Possible Prompts:

   a) Who is typically involved in the transition process? What are their roles? What skills or knowledge did they bring to the process?

   b) What skills, knowledge, or services have been missing from your student/client's transition experience?

c) How could you be more involved in the transition process? How could cooperation be improved between agencies?

7) What have been your experiences with accommodations and services in postsecondary settings?

Possible Prompts:

a) What does effective and/or high-quality services mean in your setting? How is it measured?

b) What challenges have you found in providing consistent coverage?

c) What issues could be addressed through training or personnel development to provide requested accommodations?

Appendix C: Interview Questions for Parents

1) What experiences or training have you had specific to supporting your child in the transition process?
2) What do you see as the primary instructional transition needs and goals of your child?
3) In what ways are you not prepared to support your child in the transition process?
4) In your view, what are some strengths that your child had that led to a successful transition from secondary settings into postsecondary options?

    Possible Prompts based on the Participant:

    f) How does your child demonstrate that they feel he/she has options in the transition process?

    g) What are some strategies that your child and you used to participate in the transition planning process?

    h) What goals did your child set in the transition process?

    i) Please provide examples of how your child advocated for him/herself. How did you, other professionals, or parents support self-advocacy?

    e) How have you facilitated or supported the transition process?

    f) What resources do you feel were helpful in navigating the transition process?

5) In your view, what are some challenges that your child has faced in the

transition process? How was he/she been resilient in the face of these challenges?

Possible Prompts:

e) What characteristics, attitudes, policy, programmatic, economic, or communication access issues did your child face?

f) What are some personal strategies you saw your child use to help through challenging times? How did he/she deal with the stress and ambiguity?

g) On a similar topic, what personal strategies did you use to work through these challenges?

h) Given these challenges, what resources might be useful in reducing barriers to postsecondary transition success? Who could be helpful? Which programs might support the process, locally or on a broader level?

6) In your view, what skills and knowledge did/does your child's transition team have that supported/s the transition process?

Possible Prompts:

d) Who is typically involved in the transition process? What are their roles? What skills or knowledge did they bring to the process?

e) What skills, knowledge, or services were missing from your child's transition experience?

f) What plan is in place at the school when you identify skills or knowledge that are missing from your child? What have you done?

g) Who do you feel could be more involved in the transition process? How could cooperation be improved between agencies?

7) What have been your experiences with accommodations and services in postsecondary settings?

Possible Prompts:

d) What does effective and/or high-quality mean to you? How is it measured?

e) How consistently were effective and/or high quality services available to your child when they have requested them? What challenges have you found in providing consistent coverage?

f) What issues could be addressed through training or personnel development to provide requested accommodations?

Appendix D: Interview Questions for Graduated HS-SWDs

1) What experiences have you had in the transition planning process?
2) What were your primary needs and goals of transition in your school?
3) In what ways were you prepared to transition to adulthood?
4) In what ways were you not prepared to transition to adulthood?
5) In your view, what are some strengths that you had that led to a positive transition from secondary settings into postsecondary options?

    Possible Prompts based on the Participant:

    a) What are some strategies that you used to participate in the transition planning process?
    b) What goals did you establish in your transition process?
    c) In what way(s) do you see students advocating for themselves? How did you, other professionals, or parents support self-advocacy?

    e) How have you seen teachers, agencies and parents facilitate or support the transition process?

    f) What resources do you feel were helpful in navigating the transition process?

6) In your view, what are some challenges that you faced in the transition process? How were you resilient in the face of these challenges?

    Possible Prompts:

    a) What issues did you or other student's face?

b) What personal strategies did you use to help yourself through challenging times? How did you deal with the stress and ambiguity?

c) On a similar topic, what personal strategies did you use to work through stress and ambiguity?

7) Given these challenges, what resources might be useful in reducing barriers to postsecondary transition success? Who could be helpful? Which programs might support the process, locally or on a broader level?

8) In your view, what kinds of skills and knowledge did you have that supported the transition process?

Possible Prompts:

a) Who is typically involved in the transition process? What are their roles?

b) What skills, knowledge, or services did you need to have a positive transition experience?

c) What plan was in place at the school when you identified skills or knowledge that were missing? What did you do when you knew you didn't have the skills or knowledge?

d) Who do you feel could be more involved in the transition process?

9) What have been your experiences with accommodations and services in high school?

Possible Prompts:

g) What accommodations were helpful? How do you identify if an accommodation is working for you or is effective?

h) Were accommodations available when you requested them?

i) Are there any issues in institutional capacity to provide requested accommodations that could be addressed through training or personnel development?