



Transition Planning for Secondary Students with Disabilities

By Robert W. Flexer, Thomas J. Simmons, Pamela Luft, Robert M. Baer

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

Preface

For each individual student, with a disability or not, school is a transitional experience. Each year of high school forms a foundation for the next, culminating in graduation. Another transitional experience is offered up to students the day after high school—be it work or further education. From a transition perspective, high school should be enjoyed for what it is. Nonetheless, beyond the meaning of the everyday learning and living, all students, on varying timetables and with individual urgency, take on a future orientation during the high school years. Looming in the background is the question: What am I going to do after high school? High school programs and transition activities are steppingstones to the future. Their importance directly relates to the degree to which they constitute learning and experiences that reflect movement toward or clarity about the student's transition goals after high school.

For students to have an investment in their education, meaningful participation in the "right" programs is essential. If students cannot say to themselves, "I'm going somewhere, and this is the way or path to my goals," disengagement is inevitable. Access to the full range of high school programs and individualized and varied work-based learning is essential. Again the student must be able to "walk through the door" and be free to participate in the programs of their choice that relate to their goals. This process needs to deal with any adjustments, adaptations, or auxiliary aids and services necessary for the student to perform within the program or work setting. Access is necessary to realize the benefits of participation in regular education, vocational education, and school-to-work programs. *Transition Planning for Secondary Students with Disabilities* describes the varied transition needs of students and the myriad options and career paths potentially available. Section I: Transition Foundations

Section I provides the broad background required to understand the complex developmental and educational process that takes place from early adolescence through young adulthood. In Chapter 1 (History and Transition Legislation), the evolution of transition law and policy is traced within a framework of the maturing disability rights movement and transition initiatives. The requirements and the need for transition services are no longer debatable. A clear direction for individualized services within an interdisciplinary and coordinated system emerges from the vast literature and comprehensive legislation on transition practices.

The models and best practices, which have been developed over the roughly 50 years of the modern era, are described in Chapter 2 (Transition Models and Best Practices). Models are described that delineate the major components of transition, are related to the essential elements, and then are fleshed out in a description of "best practices" that have emerged from the literature. A theoretical base of career development is provided in Chapter 3 (Career Development: Theories for Transition Planning) so that the individual developmental and educational needs of students are understood.

Planning is central to transition and enables the needs and preferences of students to be the beginning point of the transition process. A career development framework enables the transition team to view the student as evolving and maturing. Career development is a general approach for fitting the students' transition goals within high school programs and preparation options.

The roles of both school and postschool professionals functioning within a team process are explored and

outlined in Chapter 4 (Transition Collaborators). Major responsibilities and contributions to the transition process are described for both disability professionals and generic educators and service providers. Coordinated activities among diverse programs and discipline approaches are needed to meet transition needs across the diverse populations of special education students. In Chapter 5 (Multicultural Competence in Transition Planning Processes) the changing composition of the special education student is described from a multicultural viewpoint. In order to engage the student and family in the transition process, the transition team needs to understand the value base, beliefs, and structures of students and families in their natural environments. Section II: Career and Transition Services

Section II moves from the foundations of transition addressed in Section I to its programmatic implementation. The five chapters in this section provide the application of career theory to career and vocational education and curriculum development, and the implementation of these programs through valid assessment and effective instruction. Assessment practices are used to monitor and evaluate these programs to ensure success, and instruction and the use of technology guarantees access to these programs as well as a full range of optimizing life and career opportunities.

Chapter 6 (Career and Vocational Education) summarizes the concepts and principles of career education and their integration with vocational education as the student begins the final steps of the high school segment of preparation for a career. It describes several examples of career and vocational programs used in schools to prepare students with disabilities for adult living. Chapter 7 (Transition Assessment and Postschool Outcomes) describes basic assessment practices and processes which are at the heart of special education eligibility as well as appropriate program selection and ongoing monitoring which ensures optimal learning and skill acquisition for the student.

Chapter 8 (Curriculum Development and Transition) provides background in curriculum development across a range of content area choices. The IEP team and teachers must make choices that implement career and vocational preparation, in conjunction with other content and skill areas that prepare the student for his or her individually chosen transition outcomes. When these choices are integrated and assembled across the student's profile of educational and transition strengths and needs, they become a curriculum.

Chapter 9 (Instructional Strategies) describes the instructional strategies that are used to provide the student with the knowledge and skills in career and vocational education and across his or her full educational curriculum. Assessment practices are used to ensure that these strategies and classroom management practices are effective in promoting student learning and development, and that they lead to the achievement of desired transition outcomes.

Chapter 10 (The Role of Technology in Transition Planning) describes several of the technologies available that allow students to access the full range of curricular and postschool options that lead to a quality adult life. It provides team members with the processes needed for investigating and making decisions about technology and assistive devices that will lead to long-term satisfaction and use. Section III: Transition Planning

Section III moves from a discussion of programs in rehabilitation and special, general, and vocational education to a discussion of how these programs can be integrated into transition planning and program development for youth with disabilities. These four chapters can be viewed as a technical manual that describes how to weave policy, best practices, and myriad programs and services into transition activities that promote student self-determination, effective transition planning, service coordination, and family involvement.

Chapter 11 (Participatory Decision-Making: Innovative Practices That Increase Student Self-Determination)

provides an overview of self-determination and related curriculum. It presents an in-depth look at how students move from passive spectators to involved decision-makers and a step-by-step process for supporting students in this process. It discusses one self-determination curriculum in detail so that the reader can become familiar with how these instruments work, and it provides an overview of other self-determination instruments.

Chapter 12 (Transition Planning) provides an overview of policy related to transition planning and discusses some common myths in regard to transition planning. It then moves the reader through the process of developing a transition planning process, preplanning for the IEP meeting, conducting that meeting, and evaluating progress. Chapter 12 also provides a case study that demonstrates this process and answers questions that parents frequently ask. (A glossary of terms commonly used in transition planning can be found in Appendix D at the back of the book.)

Chapter 13 (Coordinating Transition Services) talks about transition service coordination from both an individual and systemic perspective. It examines state-of-the-art case management and service coordination models and discusses some of the barriers to applying these in a highly-bureaucratic and fragmented transition system. Chapter 13 then looks a

From the Back Cover

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Preface

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Chapter 14 (Family Involvement) discusses the role of the family in transition and provides an overview of best practices. It looks at practices that are conducive to family involvement and examines families'

transition concerns and barriers to family involvement. This chapter includes a number of case studies drawn from the authors' experience that illustrate some of these principles and concepts. It concludes with a discussion of interventions and strategies that can facilitate family involvement.

Section IV: Postschool and Community Environments

Section IV concretizes the issues of employment, postsecondary education, recreation and leisure, and independent living. These four domains of postsecondary experience have been discussed at length in the prior sections regarding the execution of planning and the formulation of future goals, educational preparation, collaborative enterprises, and joint programmatic efforts. In keeping with the design of this book, the authors of this section explore programs and services that generally exist in postschool settings. In Chapter 15 (Transition to Employment) the authors discuss various issues around work, sheltered work, and the need for good planning and training in real-life situations. Chapter 16 (Postsecondary Programs and Career Paths) provides a wealth of knowledge about issues surrounding admissions, participation, and the need for understanding one's own needs when entering these demanding environments. Chapter 17 (Recreation and Leisure in the Community) provides a view of recreation services and their role in independence. This chapter discusses roles and responsibilities along with various perspectives on how recreation and leisure programs operate.

Finally, Chapter 18 (My Home: Developing Skills and Supports for Adult Living) provides information regarding the history and issues related to living on your own. Like Chapter 1, the final chapter details a policy history, but, in this instance, more specifically to the independent living and self-advocacy movements. The need for partnership and empowerment are consistent themes for creating supports and services that maximize independence and community integration. Issues discussed in Chapter 18 include transition to independence, supported living, and personal assistance programs. The chapter concludes with a discussion of independent living skills.

This section is filled with information that will expand understanding of transition issues after students leave school and explore issues that most educators do not think about. The authors feel that these future environments have a very important role, and they often require a special effort by transition teams. Communication and interaction among team members in future environments enhance the goal-setting process and help students "keep their eye on the ball."

To the Reader

The purpose of *Transition Planning for Secondary Students with Disabilities* is to provide a comprehensive yet practical text for advanced students at the undergraduate level and students at the graduate level from the diverse fields that contribute to the transition process. School-based teachers from regular, vocational, and special education and other professionals, including psychologists, related services professionals, and guidance counselors, also would benefit from reading this text—especially if they are in the process of establishing or improving interdisciplinary and collaborative transition services. Families and a variety of postschool service providers (e.g., rehabilitation counselor and case managers) would also benefit from the broad framework and specific examples that illustrate the varied educational, career, and personal issues that arise in students' transition to postschool life.

This book, like the transition process, was developed through a team approach. The four authors have over 100 years of combined experience in transition in a variety of settings, working with varied populations of students with disabilities. Recognizing our limitations, we went to yet other individuals for specific chapters because of the contributing authors' unique qualifications. As you might guess, we found it very hard to synchronize our schedules and had many disagreements about the organization and content of this book.

However, in the process, we learned a great deal about each other and eventually settled on a framework that guided the text's organization. On the whole, we believe that the book and chapters weave the conceptual framework that is necessary to understand what comprises quality transition services—education and services that support students in the transition process as they pursue their life's dream.

The reader's understanding of transition is built on a structure comprised of four *essential elements*. Every recommended practice can be analyzed through this framework. The reader is continuously brought back to the four basic questions raised by the *essential elements*.

1. Is there meaningful student involvement?
2. Are student goals directed toward postschool outcomes shared by the student and their family and team?
3. Are all team members working in a coordinated fashion in relation to the students' goals?
4. Are the education and transition services promoting movement toward the students' accomplishing their goals?

The application of the *essential elements* provides a test of transition services both for individual students and across all school and postschool services. Transition is treated in a generalized way by cross-categorical, practical, and real transition examples.

Acknowledgments

For 20 years, the Center for Innovation in Transition and Employment at Kent State University has had as its mission supporting the efforts of people with disabilities in realizing quality in their lives. In developing programs to prepare transition professionals and to reach out to schools and communities, innumerable individuals have had an impact on our programs. We hope that they gained insight and useful skills for supporting students. The first author, there from the start, will be indebted forever to his three friends, coauthors, and colleagues for all they have taught him. All the authors thank all of the students with disabilities who contributed so much to us personally and professionally. Likewise, all the Kent State University students and professionals trained in transition at the Center, families of students with disabilities, and Center collaborators who have contributed to our efforts need to be acknowledged for the important lessons they have taught us. All of these individuals with whom we have interacted provided the "data" and stories upon which this book is based. These relationships brought much joy and will endure into the future. Our profession is about caring, commitment, and trust. The authors hope that this book will serve you, the reader, in the same way that all our associations have enhanced us as people. We would like to thank our spouses, Carol, Debbie, Drew, and Judy, whose love and appreciation of us provided much of the "staying power" on this journey. We would like to thank Sherrie Blalock, especially, who kept us organized and provided timely assistance in all phases of preparation of this book.

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Robert Flexer

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Stephanie Armstrong:

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