Improving Transitional Services for First Generation Students with Learning
Disabilities: A Two-Edged Sword

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Authorization to Submit Dissertation

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover how state regional disability directors in the northwestern United States are creating successful transitional plans for students who have a learning disability and are the first in their families to attend postsecondary institutions. The targeted participants for the research study was 182 special education directors from a state in the Pacific Northwest's Department of Education's (SDE) six educational regions. Four themes were discovered concerning the responses given by the participants that related to relevant literature and to the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) 2.0 Taxonomy (2016), as well as to the ideas of John Rawls concerning cost and fairness. Themes included: student focused planning, student development, family engagement, and financial considerations.

Several implications can be inferred concerning individual stakeholders in this case study. These implications are important because a presentation of implications of the work helps those same affected stakeholders improve their knowledge base and professional practice (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Spooner, Algozzine, Karvonen, & Lo, 2011). Included are implications for special education directors, students with learning disabilities, parents of students with learning disabilities—particularly those who have not gone to college—school districts, and other agencies that assist in providing student support. These implications provide a new resource for all the stakeholders for support and services which will better assist students with learning disabilities to complete a successful transition into a life after high school—including one focusing on achieving a postsecondary education.

Keywords: transition, first generation, learning disabilities, special education directors

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I want to thank the many individuals who have supported and assisted me and helped me grow through the completion of this study. I would like to thank my wife and my parents for encouraging me throughout this sojourn as well as celebrating with me the publication of my article, passage of my proposal and other successes along the way. I would also like to thank Dr. Marcie Galbreath, a recent University of Idaho College of Education graduate, for working with me to identify ways I could improve my study.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my family who have given me the strength and encouragement to persevere and continue forward throughout this process. This study is dedicated to the struggles that my wife went through to secure disability services in her graduate studies which enable others after her to receive similar supports and services. Lastly, and most importantly, this study is dedicated to my birth mom, Judy, a 3rd grade teacher for over 40 years, who passed away on October 23, 2017; prior to me completing this journey.

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List of Abbreviations

504   Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

ADA   Americans with Disabilities Act

BIC   Best Interest of the Child

FGS   First Generation Student

FAPE   Free and Appropriate Public Education

IDEA   Indviduals with Disabilities Education Act

IEP   Individual Educational Plan

LD   Learning Disability

LRE   Least Restrictive Environment

RTI   Response to Intervention

SPED   Special Education

Voc Ed   Vocational Education

VR   Vocational Rehabilitation

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Context

Research has examined the experiences of those students in higher education who have learning disabilities (Demetriou, Meece, Eaker-Rich, & Powell, 2017; Grigal, Hart, & Weir, 2012; Lipscomb et. al., & ... Mathematica Policy Research, 2017; Longwell-Grice, Adsitt, Mullins, & Serrata, 2016; McCartney, 2017; Newman & Madaus, 2015). However, a gap in the research exists on the experiences of those individuals who are both the first in their family to attend college and who also have a learning disability.

Past studies both within the field of education as well as the field of law, examine the empowerment of first generation students with learning disabilities through the theoretical framework of individuals, such as John Rawls (professor at Harvard) and Martha Nussbaum. Additionally, an absence is present in the literature concerning the collective examination of both the education and legal fields with respect to improving educational policy for first generation students with disabilities (Burleson, 2011; Harnacke, 2013). This study sought to combine these research needs by addressing the apertures in both the education and legal fields to help create more effective educational policies that can better meet the needs of students who are first generation and have a learning disability.

Research Problem

The literature suggests a recent increase in the number of first generation students going on to postsecondary education. Katervich and Aruguete (2017), cite that in 2008 more than 4.5 million first generation students enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the United States, or approximately 21% of students enrolled in higher education (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Katervich & Aruguete 2017; Pryor, Hurtado, DeAngelo, Blake, & Tran, 2010).

At the same time, as the number of students in postsecondary education rises, it has become evident that abnormally high levels of first generation students leave before completing their educational objectives. Both the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) in 2000 and the National Longitudinal Transition Study in 2012 have developed longitudinal studies on the topic of first generation students. Forty-three percent of first generation students enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the United States leave college without obtaining a degree (Holt, White, & Terrell, 2017; Petty, 2014). A recent study of First Generation College Students enrolled in 4-year colleges and universities found that after 4 years, 75.3% of FGCS failed to earn a degree (Demetriou, Meece, Eaker-Rich, & Powell, 2017).

Among these first-generation students are learners with disabilities who face additional challenges (Lipscomb, Haimson, Burghardt, Johnson, & Thurlow, 2017). Cobb, Lipscomb, and Wolgemuth (2013) state, "despite the efforts of policymakers and practitioners, a gap in post-high school outcomes remains between students with disabilities and other students" (p. 1). Students are often provided with reasonable and necessary accommodations for their disability through high school, yet these are not sufficient to provide them with the level of support to succeed at the postsecondary level (Burghardt, Haimson, & Lipscomb, 2017). Several factors contribute to the disconnect between disability accommodations at the secondary and postsecondary levels (McCartney, 2017; Orr & Hamming, 2009). Orr and Hammig (2009) identified factors that contribute to the diminished success of students with disabilities at the postsecondary level compared to their peers. They note inadequate academic preparation, lack of transitional support, inconsistent, fragmented service provision, and lack of faculty understanding of accommodations for students with

disabilities. Today, postsecondary schools are required to provide disability accommodations in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (Grigal et al., 2012). Additionally, postsecondary schools must ensure their extracurricular activities are open to students with disabilities (Grigal et al., 2012). However, under another federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), students with disabilities at the postsecondary level are only permitted to receive accommodations until they are 22 years old (Grigal et al., 2012). After age 22, the student no longer has the added IDEA protections and is afforded only the ADA protections.

It is important to understand the differences between the various laws aimed at protecting students with disabilities as they relate to disconnects between support at the high school and postsecondary levels. IDEA is focused on providing free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to students with disabilities with an emphasis on student success (Gormley, Hughes, Block, & Lendman, 2005; Statfeld, 2011). Whereas Section 504 and the ADA are civil rights mandates attempting to ensure equal opportunity and access while preventing discrimination. Students who are eligible for services under IDEA are not automatically eligible for services under Section 504 or the ADA in college and university settings. In most cases, postsecondary disability service providers interpret Section 504 and the ADA guidelines to mean a specific diagnosis with an established functional limitation in a major life activity is required. To further complicate matters, many states use different terms at the secondary level that may not be familiar to postsecondary institutions. Once eligibility for special education is established, states or school districts may not require a label, or they may allow the option of not specifying a disability category. Thus, students with disabilities transition from a secondary setting, where the school has the burden of identifying and

providing appropriate services, to a postsecondary setting where the person with a disability must identify themselves and provide a reason for specific accommodations (Lizotte, 2016).

At the postsecondary education level, it is the student who must now assume the responsibility to advocate for his or her own accommodations. Students with disabilities must be able to link their accommodations to classes or they will lose accommodations they had at the secondary level. Yet students with disabilities can find themselves unprepared to express their needs and to make choices based on these needs. Often students will not identify themselves as disabled out of fear of being stigmatized—even when such identification is in their best interest (Attwood, 2006; Lizotte, 2016). The decision to not pursue accommodations may, moreover, be against the wishes of parents or guardians who are now powerless to act on their behalf since, in the eyes of the law, postsecondary students are viewed as consenting adults with the ability to make decision for themselves (Newman & Madaus, 2015; Stodden, Whelley, Chang, & Harding, 2001).

Research Question

The primary question that guided the research study is: How do special education directors describe services and interventions (i.e., student-focused planning, student development, support services, and family involvement) used within their district to assist first generation college students with disabilities in their transition from secondary to postsecondary education?

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to describe how state special education directors in the northwestern United States are coordinating and directing successful

transitional plans for students who have a learning disability and are the first in their families attending postsecondary institutions.

Definition of Terms

First Generation College Students (FGCS) – students whose parents have not graduated from a four-year college or university (Katrevich & Aruguete, 2017).

Individual with Disabilities – a student who has a diagnosed physical or mental impairment that substantially limits his or her ability to participate in the educational experiences and opportunities offered by the grantee institution (Statfeld, 2011).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – Federal law mandating free and appropriate public education for all students, including transition planning (Statfeld, 2011).

Member Checking – The act of taking information back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy or credibility of the account (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017).

Reasonable Accommodation – environmental changes to meet the access needs of an individual in accordance with the ADA (Statfeld, 2011).

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act – Federal law guaranteeing students with disabilities reasonable accommodations in higher education, except accommodations constituting an undue burden to the institution (Statfeld, 2011).

Thematic Analysis – Summary and analysis of qualitative data through the use of extended phrases and/or sentences rather than shorter codes (Saldana, 2016).

Transitional Plan– A transitional plan describes a course of study and related strategies and activities based on the student's strengths, interests and preferences, to assist the student in attaining postsecondary goals related to training, education, employment and/or independent living. The transition plan must be included in the IEP (Statfeld, 2011).

Universal Design for Learning – The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) defines UDL as a "framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn" (2017, n.p.).

Vocational Rehabilitation – Services provided by state vocational rehabilitation agencies that prepare and enable individuals to find and maintain jobs (Statfeld, 2011).

Methods

Research Design

Yin (2014) describes a case study as an "empirical inquiry that investigates a conemporary phenomenon (the 'case') within its real-life context" (p.14). Meriam and Tisdell (2016) explain that these case studies "share with other forms of qualitative research [in] the search for meaning and understanding" (p.37). Here, the use of a qualitative design was appropriate, as the focus was on understanding the experiences of special education directors in facilitating the support and accommodation of first generation students with learning disabilities as they transition from secondary into postsecondary settings. A qualitative design made it possible to determine themes from special education directors' experiences that have the greatest positive impact on making this transition a successful process.

Population

Creswell (2011) explains, "a population is a group of individuals who have the same characteristic" (p. 142). The targeted participants for the research study were 182 special education directors from a state in the Pacific Northwest's Department of Education's (SDE) six educational regions. In keeping with the underlying aim of the study, the location of the participants were limited to the northwestern United States. Once the population was established, I studied a subgroup that represents a purposeful sampling of the larger

population (Patton, 2015). The objective was to have at least two participants from each of the six geographic regions in the selected state identified from the larger participant pool of 182 mentioned above. Since the study involved a group of at least 12 special education administrative directors who have similar knowledge and practices involving special education matters in the state, the sample number of participants is appropriate to carry out this type of study (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).   It also allowed the researcher to manage the study time-frame. All participants were assigned a pseudonym to maintain anonymity.

Data Collection

Interviews represented the main source of data for the study. These interviews consisted of 10 full questions rather than simply words or phrases as reminders of topics to cover. Each question was developed by the researcher and addressed the study questions. The mode of these interviews was by phone. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. With the permission of the participant, the interview was recorded using a digital audio recorder. Each audio recording was then transcribed within a reasonable time following the interview. The participants reviewed the transcriptions to ensure there were no errors. The data collection process included securing informed consent from each participant initially by phone prior to the interview and then in writing after the conclusion of the interview, in accordance with the standards of the National Commission for the Protection of Human Rights and the Internal Review Board.

Data Analysis

In this study I began the procedure Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) refer to as "developing a provisional 'start list' of codes prior to fieldwork…which comes from the conceptual framework, list of research questions…and key variables that the researcher brings

to the study" (p. 81). Here, I focused on the three areas of the taxonomy (student participation, student support, and family engagement) and an additional area of financial considerations which addressed the theoretical framework and ideas of Rawls (2001). I developed and modified these codes through two major stages referred to as first and second cycle coding. The first cycle involved adding codes to chunks of data and then a second cycle involved working with coding the codes themselves (Miles et al., 2014).

In organizing the data, I created computer files for the interview questions, then transcribed responses and the audio recordings. From these files, I organized responses into new files based on questions asked, where all responses to a given question were listed. These files were organized so that I could then print and manually hand code the data. To help substantiate what I discovered from manually coding the data, I used the data analysis software NVivo. I attended a webinar on using NVivo and used Brazeley and Jackson (2013) text on using NVivo to guide me through the process.

Assumptions

One underlying assumption was that, since the state in which the proposed study was conducted uses similar instructional educational plans, it is assumed the Instructional Educational Plan (IEP) used by districts throughout were similar in structure and included a transitional plan component required by federal law. It also assumed that all participants may benefit from participation in this study and were not harmed in any way through their involvement.

Limitations

There were limitations expected in conducting this study. First, was timing—the study was started late spring just before the end of the schoolyear. This time of year, many of the

participants were in the process of winding down the academic year. Second, spring is a time of a year in which many annual individualized educational plans are conducted. Both perceived limitations may have impacted the number of individuals willing to participate in this study. Another predicted limitation related to the study's focus on special education directors in the northwestern part of the United States. As a result, this study's findings will not be characterized as applicable to similar findings, which may be reached in comparable studies in other parts of the United States. The study is not predicted to be comprehensive in its findings regarding all first generation students with disabilities attending all postsecondary institutions.

Summary

This chapter introduced the study giving an explanation of the problem, brief research methodology, and assumptions. The following chapters include a review of the literature, detailed description of the research design including data collection and analysis, study results, and discussion based on those results. The final chapter also includes implications of the study and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review was to develop an understanding of a topic, review previous research and analysis, and identify questions that remain unanswered regarding transition to postsecondary educational settings for first generation students with disabilities (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The literature reviewed included looking at both peer reviewed educational articles (using ERIC [Educational Resources Information Center] as well as EBSCO's Academic Premier) and legal articles identified through Lexis Nexis Academic. The literature review identified how the study adds to the conversation in the literature by addressing unanswered gaps in knowledge.

This literature review is divided into five sections that discuss the following relevant topics: (a) historical background, (b) federal law, (c) Kohler's taxonomy, (d) the Capabilities Approach to accommodations, and (e) empowerment of first generation students with a learning disability. The first section involves a historical background concerning first generation students and students with disabilities (specifically, students with learning disabilities). The second section examines the federal legislative acts IDEA, ADA, and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, including the ways these acts have played a role in creating accommodations between the secondary and the postsecondary levels. The third section presents Kohler's taxonomy—and, how it can be used to strengthen the internal transitional planning and summary of performance that IDEA requires to help students with disabilities prepare for their plans after graduating high school. Transitional plans include attending and working toward their personal objectives at the postsecondary level. The fourth section scrutinizes theoretical perspectives prior to and after Nussbaum's (2006) capability approach toward improving the quantity and the quality of support and services for those first

generation college students with a learning disability. The literature review concludes with a

discussion of why the study matters, the importance of the study, and an examination of gaps

in the current scholarly understanding of how to improve the quality of transitional services at

the secondary level to better prepare first generation students with disabilities transitioning

into postsecondary education. Creswell (2011) notes that a literature map helps show how a

proposed study adds to the existing literature (see Figure 2.1).
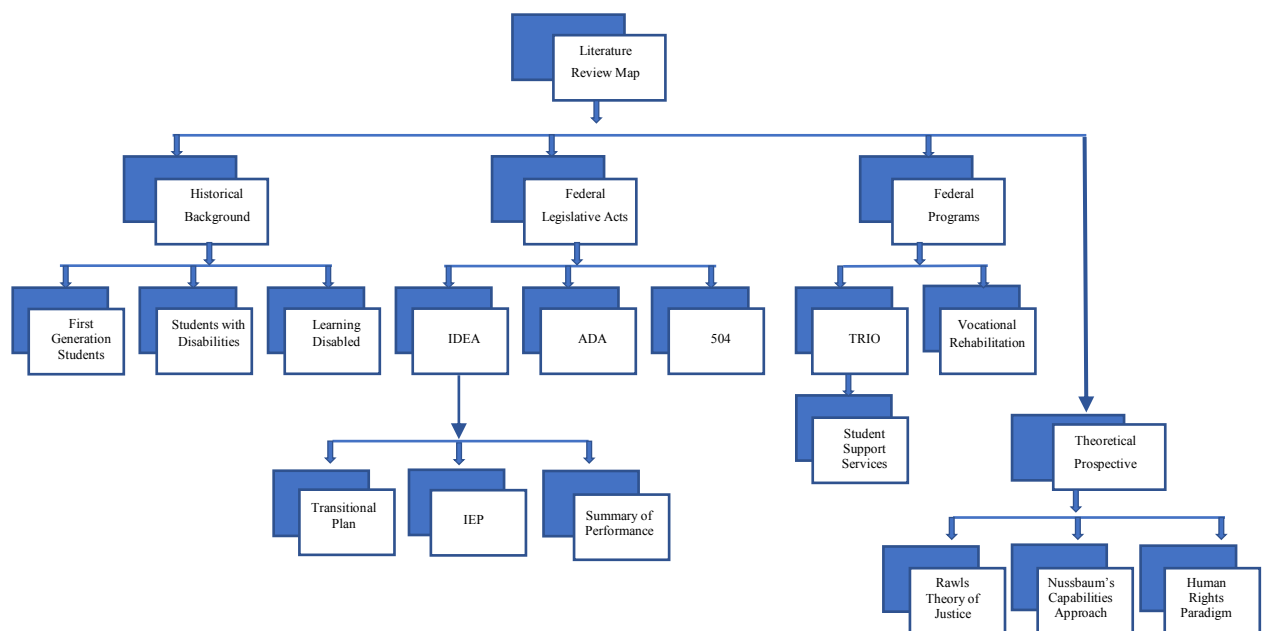
Figure 2.1 Literature Map.

Historical Background

First Generation Student

Evidence of a recent significant increase in the number of first generation students pursuing postsecondary education exists in the literature. "The Higher Education Research Institute defines a First-Generation College Student as any student from a family in which both parents have no prior education beyond high school" (Demtriou et al., 2017, p. 20). In 2008, over four million first generation students were enrolled at postsecondary institutions in the United States (Petty, 2014). Yet, despite the rising number of first generation students attending postsecondary educational institutions, exceptionally high levels of them are leaving before completing their educational objectives. NCES recently conducted a longitudinal study from 1992 through 2000. The study found 43% of first generation students enrolled in postsecondary institutions left college without obtaining a degree in the United States (Chen, 2005; Petty, 2014). According to Petty (2014), first generation students are almost four times more likely to leave postsecondary education before graduating compared to their peers. At the selected university, first generation students are 20% less likely to graduate than their classmates (Henscheid, 2015). Lombardi, Murray, and Gerdes (2012) assert past studies have shown "first-generation students are less academically prepared than continuing-generation students for postsecondary education" (p. 811). As a result, Simmons (2011) posits "compared to their more privileged peers with similar academic qualifications…first generation and other vulnerable students are less like to attend college" (p. 205) and when they do attend, as pointed above, struggle to complete that objective.

Students with Disabilities

Among these first generation students are those with disabilities who are presented with additional challenges. The number of students with disabilities entering a postsecondary program of study has been on the rise with less than 3% in 1978 (Reinschmiedt, Sprong, Buono, Dallas, & Upton, 2013) to around 11% of current postsecondary students indicating at least one type of disability (Newman & Madaus, 2015). Lipscomb and Hamison (2012) add "overall, 76 percent of youth with an IEP think that they will obtain postsecondary education—technical or trade school, two-year or four-year college, or an advanced degree" (p. 102).

Yet, despite the increase in the number of students with some form of disability, particularly those with learning disabilities, Stein (2007) posits, "historically, persons with disabilities have been among the most politically marginalized, economically impoverished, and least visible members of society" (p. 121). One big factor Newman and Madaus (2014) found in their study was that where 98% of the students who received accommodation at the secondary level only 24% of these students would receive any accommodations as they continued into higher education. A factor in students receiving services and support at both the secondary and postsecondary is the level of family involvement. Lipscomb and Hamison, (2012) explain "among youth in special education specifically, parental involvement in education at home is a predictor of postsecondary enrollment in career and technical education programs as well as in two-year and four-year colleges" (p. 197).

Students who are first in their families to attend postsecondary education are, therefore, at even greater risk than other students with disabilities because they do not have their families involved in securing the types of services and supports they need to be

successful in higher education. This is particularly true for those students whose parents never pursued higher education. These were "the findings from 3 qualitative research studies related to first generation college student [which] show[ed] themes of strains in family relationships and lack of practical familial support" (Longwell-Grice, Adsitt, Mullins, & Serrata, 2016, p. 34). A recent article reports "many [first generation college students] tend to work longer hours at their jobs, are less likely to live on campus, and are more likely to have parents who would struggle complete financial aid forms" (*The Challenge of the First Generation Student*, 2015, p. 1).

Without family involvement, students often are put in an unfamiliar position of having to self-advocate for the same type of services and support provided to them at the secondary level. By offering this support, Lightner, Kipps-Vaughan, Schulte, and Trice (2012) found, in their study, that these students would then be more likely than not, to disclose their disability when they went onto higher education.

Learning Disabilities

While first generation students with disabilities posses a myriad of types of disability, the highest incidence type is a learning disability. McGregor et al. (2016) explain:

the term learning disabled denotes '...a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span' (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1990, p. 3).

McGregor et al., (2016) add that students with a learning disability (LD) are the largest cohort of students with disabilities at both the secondary and postsecondary levels. A

similar finding was reached by a NCES 2016 study, which found while the levels of various disability groups pursuing a postsecondary education differ, the most common type of disability reported by postsecondary students in the United States was a learning disability (NCES 2016-144, 2016, p. 94).

Despite being the largest group, Gregg (2007) found adolescent and adult populations with learning disabilities continue to be underserved and underprepared for postsecondary education. Doren, Murray, and Gau (2014) discuss past research which shows populations with learning disabilities drop out of high school two to three times more than their peers and have the second highest dropout rate from high school; second only to those students with emotional disturbances (Doren et al., 2014; National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2013; US Department of Education, 2012). This population also enrolls in college and postsecondary training at one-tenth the rate of the general population (Stodden & Chang, 2002; Wagner et al., 2005; Young & Browning, 2005).

Federal Legislation Concerning Students with Disabilities

Research has demonstrated review of educational law can assist toward better understanding the "shifting political climate impacting education" (Gardiner & Canfield-Davis, 2008, p. 144). Recent federal legislation, such as IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act) of 2004 and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002, have prompted renewed efforts to increase the full participation—the inclusion of—students with disabilities in school communities (Rojewski, Lee, & Gregg, 2015). IDEA was the first national education law applying to all public schools in the United States (Statfeld, 2011). Originally passed in 1975 as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, the legislation has been reauthorized multiple times, and, in 1990, the title of the law changed to the current title: Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The foundation of the law is based on the idea that any student with a disability between the ages of 3 and 21 (or prior to high school graduation) must be provided with a free, appropriate, public education (FAPE), regardless of the nature and severity of the disability (Hallahan & Kaufman, 2006; Madaus & Shaw, 2006; Statfeld, 2011).

It is difficult to determine which postsecondary students have disabilities. The provisions mandated by IDEA to support and provide services for students with disabilities in K-12 public education do not continue at the postsecondary level. After the individual graduates from high school and enrolls in college, the student no longer has the added protections afforded under IDEA, only those available under the ADA at the postsecondary level. The ADA is not a flawed or inadequate act in terms of protection afforded those with disabilities. In fact, it was initially "hailed as a 'Declaration of Independence' for the tens of millions of Americans who have physical or mental disabilities" (Hubbard, 2004, p. 997). This view was shared by most people since, to many, the act was "arguably the most important and far-reaching civil rights legislation of the last twenty-five years, that passed by a large majority in both houses of Congress" (Ball, 2009, pp. 600-601). The congressional intent of the ADA is to provide a legal framework for enforcing guidelines concerning acts of discrimination against individuals with disabilities, as well as to be inclusive of individuals with disabilities (Pendo, 2003; Statfeld, 2011).

The problem is not with the ADA itself but with the loss of the provisions that are set forth in IDEA at the postsecondary level. These include the absence of federal financial assistance, less procedural safeguard, less opportunities for due process, and fewer guidelines for evaluation and placement.

It is important to understand the differences between the various laws aimed at protecting students with disabilities as they relate to the disconnect between the high school and the postsecondary levels. IDEA is focused on providing FAPE to students with disabilities with an emphasis on student success (Gormley et al., 2005; Statfeld, 2011), whereas Section 504 and the ADA are civil rights mandates attempting to ensure equal opportunity and access and to prevent discrimination. Students, however, who are eligible for services under IDEA are not automatically eligible for services under Section 504 and the ADA in college and university settings. In most cases, postsecondary disability service providers interpret Section 504 and the ADA guidelines to mean that a specific diagnosis with an established functional limitation in a major life activity is required. To complicate matters, many states use different terms at the secondary level that may not be familiar to postsecondary institutions. Furthermore, once eligibility for special education is established, states or school districts may not require a label, or they may allow the option of not specifying a disability category.

Thus, students with disabilities transition from a secondary setting, where the school has the burden of identifying and providing appropriate services, to a postsecondary setting, where the student has the burden of self-identifying as a person with a disability, requesting accommodations, and providing reasons. For the student, this can be arduous. They must disclose their disability and request accommodations and support all in accordance with their institution's timeline (Newman, Madaus, & Javitz, 2016).

Yet students with disabilities may find themselves unprepared to express their needs and to make choices based on these needs. Research studies have noted that "A postsecondary student…may be reluctant to self-disclose because they do not want to be seen as different

from other students (Attwood, 2006)" (Lizotte, 2016, p. 23-34). Their decision to not pursue accommodations may also be against the wishes of their parents or guardians who are now powerless to act on their behalf since, in the eyes of the law, students are viewed as consenting adults with the ability to make decision for themselves (Stodden et al., 2001; Wagner, Newman, & Javitz, 2014).

Under Sections II and III of the ADA, higher educational programs must make available any reasonable support that will give an individual with disabilities the same access to the educational opportunities and services that are already accessible to their peers who are not disabled (Stodden, 2001; Statfeld, 2011). However, even when students do receive support, it is often not enough to eliminate all the challenges an indvidual with a disability experiences in transitioning from a secondary to a postsecondary educational setting (Stodden, 2001; Statfeld, 2011). Orr and Hammig (2009) write that these challenges can include: lack of preparation for postsecondary education, an absence of transitional support, and a deficiency in faculty knowledge about appropriate accommodations.

The literature also highlights issues related to the way in which schools make financial aid determinations for a student with a disability. Bagnato (2004) found that for many students with disabilities, taking what a normal student considered a part-time course load amounts to a fulltime course load due to the extra time needed to complete course assignments, getting to and from class, and taking care of themselves. This example, along with many others, highlights the need for additional support and a greater awareness of interpreting support needs for those students transitioning from a secondary to a postsecondary setting with the aim of providing a successful transition (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2007).

The literature calls for a greater effort in finding ways to use available secondary information to address student access to postsecondary education—not denying services because a student is unable to afford private evaluation. Gregg (2007) points out that "many professionals continue to over-rely on past directives that divert thinking and resources away from unique solutions for change" (p. 219). Reliance on past directives can change by reevaluating and strengthening the existing transitional plan created within IDEA to facilitate and support the transition of students from secondary to postsecondary educational settings. IDEA's provisions requiring transition statements in the IEP are found at §300.320(b). However, Rumrill et al. (2017) point out that "despite the requirement for transition planning, post-school adult outcomes for individuals with learning disabilities…have fallen short in comparison to individuals who do not have disabilities" (p.124). Rumrill et al. (2017) adds that "many individuals with learning disabilities are unaware of the changes in their rights and responsibilities when making the transition from secondary to postsecondary settings" (p. 125).

There is much room for improving and strengthening the transitional plan part of the development of an Individualized Educational Plan.

> The transition plan is created by the student, the student's family or guardian, the teachers who work with the student, any service provider with whom the student works (e.g., speech therapist, occupational therapist), school administrators, and ideally a vocational rehabilitation counselor. (Lizotte, 2016, p. 17)

The plan should include appropriate measurable goals, including the possibility of continuing into postsecondary education. Transition plans must consist of a detailed design of services and courses the student will need to prepare his/her for life after high school with the

possibility of continuing in his/her studies into higher education. In §300.43, IDEA defines these transitional services to include a coordinated set of activities designed within a results-oriented process focused on improving the child's academic and functional achievement to facilitate the transition. In creating the plan per §300.321(b), it is an IDEA requirement that an invitation is made to the student with the disability to be part of the creation of the plan since the purpose will be to consider the postsecondary goals for that child and transition services needed to assist the child in reaching these goals. The final part of a transition plan involves a Summary of Performance (SOP), which, according to §300.305(e)(3), involves providing a summary of a child's performance, including recommendations on how to assist in meeting postsecondary goals. However, regulations are vague on the summary's required components. As a result, there exists a wide range of responses, from a few short sentences to a more comprehensive document (Cobb, Lipscomb, Wolgemuth, Schulte, & National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2013; Madaus & Shaw, 2006). Today, the SOP template created and ratified by the national transition assessment summit is considered the best practices format.

  While other directions, such as employment and vocational training, should also be contemplated, this does not mean any transitional plan should not consider postsecondary education as a viable path for any person regardless of their disability type since one of the main congressional intentions in the passage of IDEA is to help these students "lead productive and independent adult lives to the maximum extent possible" (20 U.S.C. 1400(c)(5)(A)(ii)). Belch (2004) adds a student's interest in attending postsecondary education needs to be formalized in a transitional plan. This document should include steps to help him/her achieve postsecondary objectives.

Transitional Conceptual Framework

Initially, Peters and Heron (1993) laid the foundation for a framework for evidenced based practices that were: "…(a) well-established in theory, (b) empirically supported through internal and external measures of validity, (c) evident in existing literature; (d) associated with meaningful outcomes, and (e) socially valid" (Kohler, Gotherber, and Coyle, 2017, p. 171). From this foundation, Kohler (1996) has presented a taxonomy of a transitional planning framework (see Figure 2.2) that can guide and improve the type of transitional planning that occurs for students with disabilities who seek a postsecondary education. This taxonomy would later be revised by NTACT (Kohler, Gothberg, Fowler, & Coyle, 2016) to include "concrete practices—identified from effective programs and the research literature—for implementing transition-focused education" (Kohler et al., 2017, p. 1730). Kohler's taxonomy is divided into five separate programming practices: student focused planning, student development, interagency collaboration, family involvement, and program structure (Kohler et al., 2017, p. 173). First, student focused planning involves IEP development, student participation, and planning strategies. Second, student development consists of life skills instructions, career and vocational curricula, structured work experience, assessment, and support services. Third, the interagency collaboration consists of creating a collaborative framework and service directory. Fourth, the program structure consists of creating a program philosophy, policy, and evaluation as well strategic planning, resource allocation, and human resource development. Fifth, the family involvement piece includes family training and empowerment. The most recently revised taxonomy, also known as Kohler's taxonomy 2.0, (Kohler et al., 2016) provides a wonderful resource that can be used to improve transitional plans to better prepare students who seek to transition from secondary to postsecondary

education. The literature highlights studies showing family involvement is critical to the retention of first generation students with disabilities (Lombardi, Murray, & Gerdes, 2012). Other research has demonstrated how participation helps students better know their rights and responsibilities, which, in turn, can better assist them in securing appropriate academic adjustments at the postsecondary level (Beale, 2005). Further, Belch (2004) has identified key elements critical for student success in postsecondary education: a sense of belonging, involvement, and self-determination, all of which should be part of any transition plan for first generation students with learning disabilities. Although, the framework is fluid in that it can be used in a variety of ways by different stakeholders, "…. the structure and the intentionality require stakeholders to reflect on their strengths and challenges, to identify what is working and what isn't and what changes need to be made to ensure success for students with disabilities" (Kohler et al., 2017, pp. 180-181).
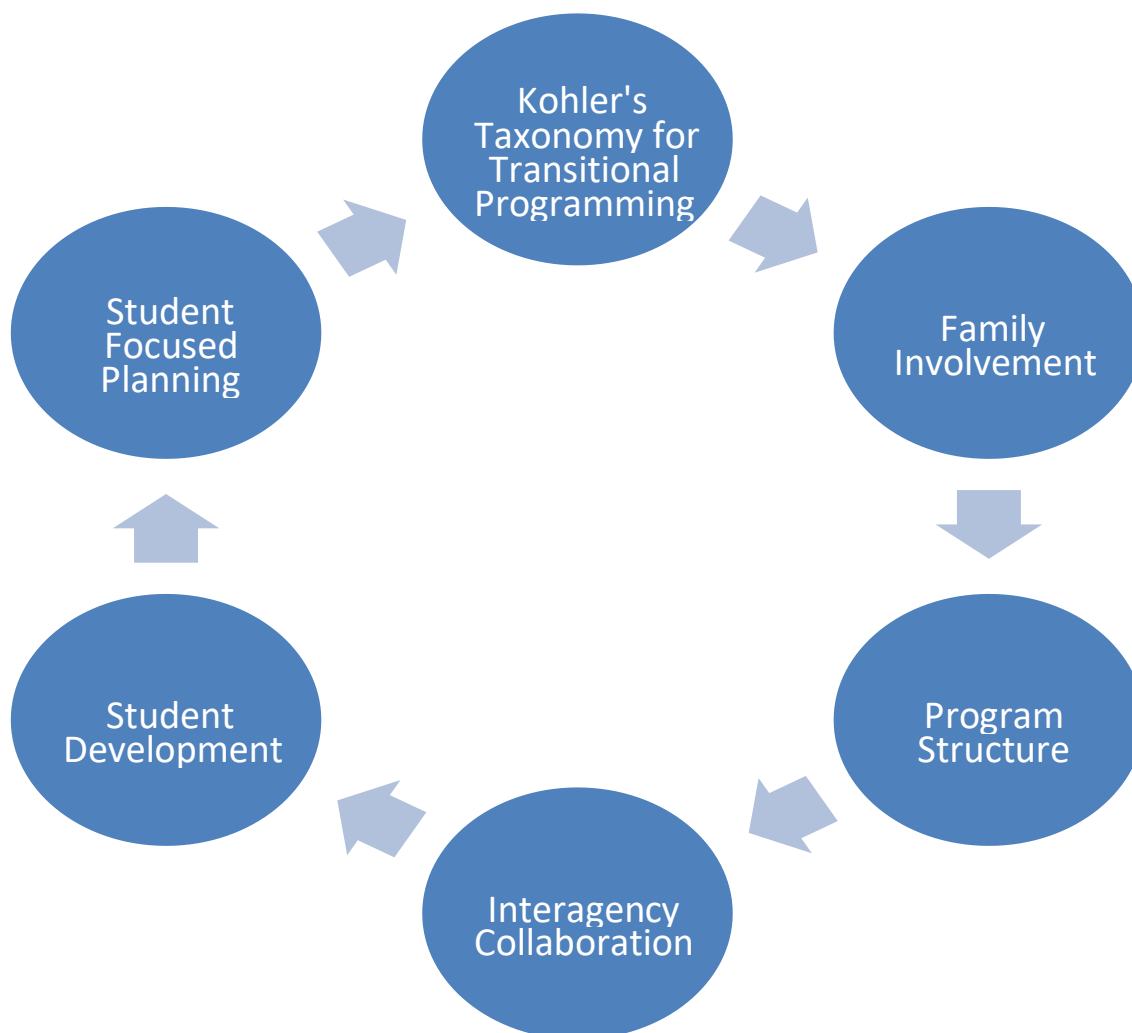
Figure 2.2 Success of first generation students with disabilities transitioning to postsecondary educational settings.

Providing a more detailed transitional plan is critical for students to receive the same or similar level of services at the postsecondary level. Studies found students who received more transitional planning were more likely to disclose their disability earlier in college and were more likely to have higher college grade point averages (Newman et al., 2016). The impact transitional services can have is seen through a comparison of the first and second National Longitudinal Transition Studies (NLTS2) that were conducted by the US Department of Education. Trainor, Morningstar, and Murray (2016) stated fewer students

with disabilities were dropping out and postsecondary education enrollment doubled in the time between the two studies. Newman and Madaus (2015) found those students who self-disclosed their disability earlier in their postsecondary experiences also reported receiving more transitional planning services at the secondary level than students who self-disclosed later.

Federal External Support and Assistance

Transitional plans are created to support the transitions of students with disabilities from secondary to postsecondary education. In addition to these internal transitional plans, several governmental programs have been created to encourage more first generation high school students with disabilities to pursue postsecondary education. For first generation students with a learning disability to be successful in their higher educational objectives, there needs to be a new way toward determining the level of support and accommodations for those with disabilities.

The TRIO program is a program implemented by the federal government to better assist at-risk students. TRIO is not an acronym, but instead refers to the original three US federal programs (Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Service) joined as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty, which focused on social and cultural barriers to education in America (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2014). Upward Bound, which had been created under the Education Opportunity Act of 1964, and Talent Search, a product of the original Higher Education Act of 1965, were joined with Student Support Services to form TRIO, a label used in the first reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1968 (Zhang, 2009).

Today, although the TRIO name for these federal programs remains, nine programs are part of the nation's commitment to fulfill the dream of education for all Americans regardless of race, ethnic background, or economic circumstances (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The creation of the TRIO Student Support Services program allowed various students (including first generation college students and students with disabilities as defined in the ADA) to benefit from the services and support of this program (Engle & Tinto, 2008). According to Zhang (2007), college students considered first generation must meet one of the following requirements:

(a) the student's parents must not have received a baccalaureate degree; (b) prior to the age of 18, regularly resided with or received support from only one parent who didn't receive his/her baccalaureate degree; or (c) an individual who, prior to the age of 18, did not regularly reside with or receive support from a natural or adoptive parent due to being in foster care or being homeless. (p. 49)

Engle and Tinto (2008) explain the Student Support Services program, within the larger TRIO umbrella of programs, provides a wide range of services supporting students making the transition from secondary to postsecondary education. These services include academic tutoring, advice in course selection, and assistance in securing various forms of financial aid. The programs also provide assistive services such as mentoring programs, temporary housing during breaks for students who are homeless or in foster care, and exposure to cultural events and academic programs not usually available.

The U.S. Department of Education noted in its 50th Anniversary TRIO Federal Programs Fact Sheet that over the TRIO Fiscal Year 2013, Student Support Services had received 1,027 awards for a total of $274,739,441 in funding, servicing, and supporting

197,663 students. They also stated that, nationally, the 2013 program had the largest number of awards and money and the second largest number of students supported and serviced in its history. In 1997, the Pell Institute (Engle & Tinto, 2008) found Student Support Services had made significant improvements in the retention, credits earned, and GPA of its participating students. The study examined a total of 5,800 students at 47 postsecondary institutions over a course of a 3-year period contrasted with a comparison group of 2,900 students matching the demographic and educational profiles of the participants in the program (Engle & Tinto, 2008). The study found 12% of the participants were more likely to be retained the second year, and 23% of the students were more likely to be retained the third year. Participants earned on average 6% more credits in the first year and 4% more in the next two years. The GPA of the participants was 7% higher the first year, 5% higher the second year, and 4% higher over years on a cumulative level. In all cases, the participants showed improvement in all areas assessed by the study (Engle & Tinto, 2008).

Vocational Rehabilitation

Simmons (2011) highlights the need for professional guidance regarding first generation students with learning disabilities as they transition between secondary and postsecondary settings. He noted "compared to their more privileged peers with similar academic qualifications, low-income, minority, first-generatiuon and other vulnerable students are less likely to attend college" (Simmons, 2011, p. 208). Yet, despite the importance professional guidance plays in providing the supports and services for students transitioning from high school to college, "nationwide there are approximately 460 students for every school counselor. In larger school districts, this ratio can raise to more than 700 students per counselor" (Simmons, 2011, p. 208). Simmons adds, "the average school

counselor nationwide spends thirty-eight minutes per year on each student for college

advising" (Simmons, 2011, p. 242). Consequently, Rumrill et al. (2017) share:

> only 17 percent of students with learning disabilities who enroll in postsecondary
>
> education receive classroom accommodations and/or other supports from their college
>
> or universities and they are nearly four times less likely to complete their
>
> postsecondary degree programs than are non-disabled students. (p.124)

Another study by McGregor et al. (2016) revealed students with learning disabilites "sensed

bias and obstacles to success, and...were less satsified with their university experience than

other students" (p. 100).

These postsecondary challenges are further compounded for those students who are

also the first in their families to go to college since they often attend schools where there is a

limited number of counselors which are assigned to a large number of students. (McCartney,

2017). One way school districts have tried to remedy this deficiency has been their

involvement and participation with vocational rehabilitation (VR). According to Rumrill et al.

(2017), VR is not limited to students with certain types of disabilities:

> any individual with a disability [including those with learning disabilities] who can
>
> benefit from these services and who requires assistance to prepare for, enter, engage
>
> in, or retain gainful employment is eligibile to participate in the VR program [as well
>
> those students who objective includes completing a postsecondary educaiton]. (p. 125)

Gilmore and Bose (2005) explained "the vocational rehabilation system exists to provide

assistance to individuals with disabilities seeking employment" (p. 34). One of the findings

arising out of this study was the importance the participants placed on VR in helping students

make a successful transition into life after high school. Often this focus has been connected with the student's interest to continue on and complete a postsecondary education.

Grigal et al. (2011) explain how the focus on planning with "appropriate measurable postschool goals based on age-appropriate transition assessments [has helped to cultivate a] results-oriented approach [which] emphasizes the importance of connecting transition planning activites to employment and postsecondary education" (p. 4). Another study discovered those who participated in VR programs were more likely to be employed and have better opportunities available to them after they completed their high school education when compared to those students who did not participate in VR programs (Newman & Javitz, 2016; Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2015).

The importance of VR also is evident in terms of its role in transitional planning. In September 2015, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) divulged "the most frequently identified transition planning contacts were made on behalf of students with disabilities to VR agencies (38 %) followed by colleges (24 %)" (p. 2). Another reason VR programs influence the number of students with disabilities going onto higher education from high school, according to Gilmore and Bose (2005), is "vocational rehabilitation agencies spend a large amount of money on postsecondary education services" (p. 39). Honeycutt, Bardos, and McLeod (2015) add that these resources enable interventions to take place "while the youth is still in school by attending Individual educational plan meetings and facilitating entry into job training programs" (p. 230). Research has demonstrated the need for VR opportunities in that "work does not just fulfill the financial aspect of one's life, [but] … is a positive emotional motivator as well" (Akabas & Gates, 200, as cited in Chen et al., 2016, p. 188).

Other studies concur about the importance and value of work to promote life quality

for those individuals with disabilities. According to Austin and Lee (2014), for instance, this

finding about work and "competitive employment has been found to elevate both the quality

of life (Luecking, Gumpman, Saecker & Chihak, 2006; Jahoda et al., 2008, as cited in Austin

& Chun-Lung, 2014) and the psychological well-being of individuals with intellectual

disabilities" (p.16). In addition, another study found that "VR service variables [had been]

associated with positive employment outcomes for other disability groups" (Austin & Chun-

Lung, 2014, p.12).

Additional programs have been introduced to improve the supports and services that

make a postsecondary education attainable for vulnerable students, including those who are

first generation students with learning disabilities. One of these known as the Pathways to

College Act, introduced by Senator Richard Durbin, sought to offer grant funding to improve

the level of counseling support, according to Simmons (2011) by:

> (1) professional development for high school counselors related to postsecondary
>
> advising; (2) one-on-one counselor-student meetings and the development of a
>
> postsecondary plan for each student; (3) information for students and parents on the
>
> college application process, financial aid and preparing for college; and (4) a school-
>
> wide plan to enhance the college-going culture within schools. (p. 237)

Another program, Coaching Our Adolescents to College Heights Act (COACH), was created

to better "coach" students about both the admissions as well as financial aid process

associated with higher education (Simmons, 2011).

All these programs addressed, through familial and extra-familial networks, what

Simmons refers to as "social capital deficit" that vulnerable students have when it comes to

"accessing information to navigate the complex admissions and financial aid processes" (Simmons, 2011, p. 208). Simmons (2011) illustrates the importance of social capital in a hypothetical scenario involving two students; how with proper support and services the student without direct social capital can be supported with external social capital which will put that student in the same position as the other student going into higher education. Simmons (2011) states in this example:

> Student A has negative social capital characterized by limited higher education emphasis and knowledge within their home and limited access to college information via immediate family relationships. On the other hand, Student B, although having familial Social Capital Deficits (SCD's) with respect to higher education comparable to Student A, also has positive social capital characterized by extra-familial ties with school counselors, teachers, college access programs, students and mentors who emphasize higher education attainment and provide a mechanism through which student B can acquire valuable college information. (p. 226)

He explains, that with this external support, "Student B's positive social capital derived from extra-familial networks can offset other SCD's" (Simmons, 2011, p. 226). Programs such as VR have the potential to put Student B in the same position Student A is in had that student had the familial network to gain support from as they transition from secondary to postsecondary education.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014

Den Houter (2017) notes "the transition from high school to postsecondary education or the workforce is a critical time for all youth, and state VR agencies can make this transition a more successful one for transition-age youth with disabilities by improving their services"

(p. 49). Houter explains a basis for the need for improvement in that "nationally, only 8% of all potentially eligible youth apply for VR services…[and] the 8% of individuals who apply for VR services, only 56% of individuals actually receive services and support" (p. 26).

Within the last decade there has been a renewed emphasis and focus on providing meaningful employment opportunities for those with disabilities. This emphasis can be traced back to 2008, when the (ADAAA) American with Disabilities Amendments Act, was signed into law by George W. Bush. These amendments to the Americans with Disability Act "reaffirmed Congress's intent that the ADA broadly protect Americans with disabilities" (Barkoff & Read, 2017, p. 2). This interpretation enabled the protections to cover "all types of segregation… [including] help[ing] people with disabilities get competitive integrated employment (also referred to as "CIE", meaning a job in the workplace that pays at least the minimum wage)" (Barkoff et al., 2017, p. 3).

This broader interpretation of the ADA would eventually lead to reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 by president Obama (Whitehouse and Counts, 2017, p. 23). Campbell and Love (2016) explain this act "offers a lens through which to imagine the future of coordination between federal, state and local entities in developing a region's workforce" (p. 13). This act, according to Bransberger (2015), included two major components: WIOA Adult and Disclocated Work programs and WIOA Youth programs. The latter of these two programs Bransberger explains, "serves low-income, in-school youth ages 14-21 and out-of-school youth ages 16-24, preparing them for employment and/or postsecondary education through academic and occupational learning" (p. 1). Dewitt (2015) posited this would be accomplished by "expand[ing] the use of career pathways…. [which would] work

collaboratively to support student and employer needs, be career-focused and not limited to one occupation…linked to current and emerging local or regional economic opportunities [and] include multiple opportunities for students" (p. 12).

What made the WIOA youth programs unique, compared to other work programs, was that these programs would "ultimately prove more access to postsecondary credentials than occurs with workforce and postsecondary systems working independently" (Bransberger, 2015, p. 3). Bransberger (2015) explained, this act led to "legislation instituting state-level coordination among education, economic development and workforce agencies, to align education and training to the employment needs indicated by business and data" (p. 7). This, in turn, has led to:

> policies and programs [in the selected state], in which training and postsecondary programs are to be designed for selected industries or occupations important to the state or local economy, as compared to more generic applications of training and educational resources. (p. 7)

The implementation of this act strengthens the role vocational rehabilitation programs play in the prospects of students with learning disabilities completing a postsecondary education—including those students who are also first generation.

Today, however, there remains some concern about the role this act will play in the future. Barkoff and Read (2017) point out that "…despite identifying job creation as a top priority, the Trump administration's early positions on health care, the role of regulations, federal hiring, and civil rights enforcement leave uncertain the future of efforts to increase employment of people with disabilities" (p. 4). As a result, Barkoff and Read add, "...it remains to be seen whether President Trump's promise to focus on job creation will reach

people with disabilities, or whether his policies on issues like health care and civil rights enforcement will leave them even further behind" (p. 5).

Toward a Theoretical Perspective

Research has shown both better transitional plans created in conjunction with Kohler's Transitional Planning Taxonomy and external support through governmental programs, such as TRIO, can be instrumental in helping first generation students who have disabilities. Transitional plans and external support help students make successful transitions from secondary and postsecondary education by retaining them and then renewing the same supports they received at the secondary level. However, a basis for rationalizing such a level of support is still needed.

One challenge is with the medical model, which interprets a person's disability as an obstacle that prevents participation in mainstream culture. Under the medical model, people with disabilities seem unable to perform certain functions because of medical conditions that limit what they can do, in comparison with a person without such a disability (Stein, 2007). In the past, the medical model was used as a way of excluding those with disabilities from participating in a wide range of social opportunities including continuing into higher education upon completion of school at the secondary level (Stein, 2007).

In contrast, the social model maintains that it is the environment society creates and the attitudes maintained towards people with an impairment that most influence the limitations placed on those with disabilities. Under the social model, Stein (2007) explains, it is then these social limitations and not the medical limitations that determine how a person may function or not in a particular manner. In the same way that societies have used gender, race, or religion as defining one group as more able than another, so have many societies also

viewed those individuals with disabilities as less able to function than those without disabilities. For there to be fairness and equality for all, there must be an equal level of opportunity for those to participate in society regardless of any limitation such as disability, gender, or race. Even when it is not economically feasible to create this environment, it should be the objective of society to come as close as reasonably possible to attaining this objective.

Rawls' Approach

Despite the progress made in mandates for schools to provide greater access and support for study at the postsecondary level, both faculty and staff have pushed back. One of the most common attacks regarding compliance with the ADA is that the cost in providing accommodations and support represents a greater burden than a benefit both to the disabled as well as to the community at large (St. John's J.L. Comm., 1995). And, along these lines, it has been this premise that if such a support is too costly, then it should be foregone (Burleson, 2011). Additionally, the average added educational costs for a student with a disability is $5,918 per student (Christie, 2002). This translates to "approximately 1.9 times the amount required to educate the typical student in regular education who has no special needs" (Christie, 2002, p. 651).

Society glorifies the economic marketplace, but marketplace analysis has its limits as applied to law. While economic arguments are a factor for consideration, they cannot be the only factor that dictates which supports and accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities. There needs to be a wider range of considerations taken into account in making such determinations and a way that places ADA within a separate framework from marketplace morality (St. John's J.L. Comm., 1995). While no legislation can be written to

eliminate personal biases, society can assume the responsibility to end institutionalized

discrimination against those with disabilities in the same manner it has for racial, ethnic,

religious, and gender bias (Burleson, 2011).

John Rawls, a Political Science professor at Harvard, created an approach that looked

to help individuals reexamine the value of such support and services differently than the cost-

and-benefit type of analysis. However, to understand how the Rawlsian Approach applies to

Special Education in this way, it is first important to take a step back and look at how the

Rawlsian approach came about and how it relates to education and to those whom Rawls

refers to as the least advantaged.

To begin, one must explore the two prevailing theories governing the way individuals

agree to certain obligations in return for what Rawls calls a well-ordered society. Hartley

(2009) explains that the first approach is *contractarianism*, based on the writings of Thomas

Hobbes, which views the making of a social contract as an act to only be done when such an

agreement is in an individual's own best interests. Under such a system, individuals bargain

with each other, based on their own talents and skills, toward a level that is most beneficial to

their own interests. Those who are viewed as having fewer talents and skills to offer are then

regarded as having less or no bargaining power at all and are left under-represented or shut

out of such an agreement.

In contrast to contractarianism, Hartley (2009) adds that the second approach of

contractualism comes from the writings of Emmanuel Kant. Instead of using self-perspective,

this approach uses a view that all individuals are equal regardless of their talents or skills or

lack thereof. Kant's approach includes a social contract that is not based on one's own self-

interest but on those which best promote interests "to serve as the basis of mutual recognition

and accommodation" (Scanlon, 1998, p. 194). According to Hartley (2009), the Rawlsian approach then arose to view cooperation between individuals based not on advantages to the individual or the group but by principles of justice that oversee and ensure a well-ordered society where everyone benefits.

The Rawlsian approach is built around two fundamental principles of justice:

1. each person has a right to the same basic liberties as anyone else; and

2. regardless of any social or economic inequality, the same opportunities should be available to everyone. (Rawls, 2001)

In a well-ordered society where cooperation is built into the basic social structures, such as universities and schools, then the primary goods, which include rights, liberties, power, and opportunities, will be guaranteed to all through these principles (Lovett, 2011).

1st Principle
- Each person has a right to same basic liberties as anyone else

2nd Principle
- regardless of any social and economic inequalities that the same opportunities should be available to everyone
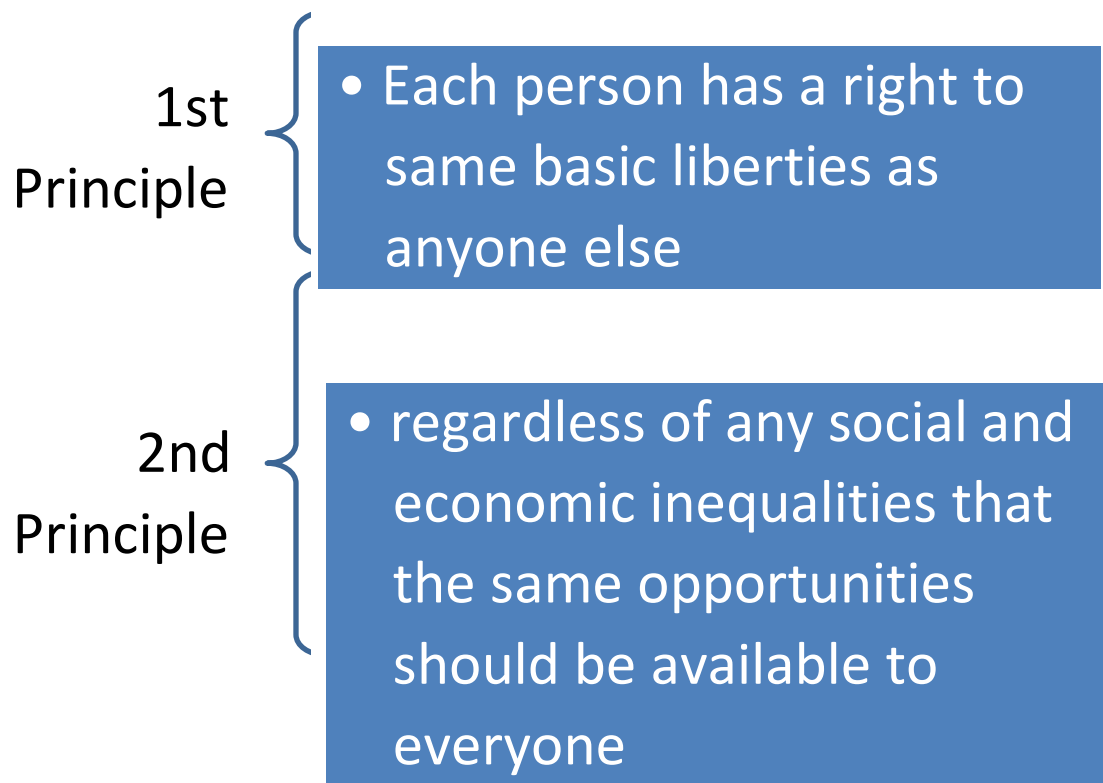
Figure 2.3. Two Principles of Rawls' Theory Justice and Fairness

Although Rawls does not present an identifiable theory of education, his statements about what is right do suggest a Rawlsian approach to education. Primary goods, according to Rawls, are not to be distributed "according to their own return as estimated in productive trained abilities [as under a *contractarian* approach], but according to their worth in enriching the personal and social life of citizens, including the less favored or disadvantaged" (Ben-Porath, 2012, p. 35).

If education is indeed a primary good, then its social benefit should not be evaluated by cost but by accessibility for all students including the least advantaged. According to Rawls, the least advantaged are those with the fewest primary goods (St. John's L. Rev.). If people are put back into their original position of not knowing their place in society behind a veil of ignorance, then, according to Rawls, they will select a distribution of goods that is fair and just and not just that which is the greatest good for the greatest number (Lovett, 2011). Lovett (2011) illustrates this Rawlsian approach with a story of a cattle rancher who asks the older of his two sons to divide his cattle into two groups from which the younger will choose first his share. In this scenario, without knowing which share his brother will choose it makes the most sense to distribute things fairly (Lovett, 2011). If applied to education and providing adequate support for those with special needs, then it is assumed that most or all will choose what is most equitable regardless of other self-driven factors such as cost and use of resources.

According to Rawls (2001), the original position of the individual as well as the basic structure of society remain vital. Lovett (2011) illustrates this with another story of two individuals within society who are defined by their work ethic, one who is a hard worker and the other who is lazy. The general view is that the hard worker will become the more

successful one. Yet, hard work is often defined by society's structure. If one person is a serf or a slave and the other is a noble or slave owner, no matter how hard the first one works that individual will not become viewed as more successful than the other by society. If society, however, views both individuals on equal footing, then they both can be viewed as successful. In a similar manner, if society is structured in a way that both disabled and non-disabled students are viewed in a similar manner, then they both can become equally successful.

ADA provisions align closely with these same ideas. The legal provisions are set forth in an objective way that is not preferential toward those without disabilities compared to those with disabilities. These guidelines provide safeguards in a way that affords all individuals, both those who are disabled as well as those who are not disabled but could potentially become disabled in the future, the assurance that steps will be taken by society to meet their needs. Rawls' ideas offer an alternative to cost benefit versus burden analysis, and they provide a strong argument for retaining them despite their cost.

An example of retention despite cost can be seen with historical racial integration. While racial integration in the 1960's may have been costlier than to remain segregated, no one would argue that since segregation was more cost efficient and used fewer resources that segregation should therefore be maintained. Along these same lines, it seems logical that no one should suggest that support should be denied to those with disabilities because it would be more cost efficient and use fewer resources if such provision was not added. In both cases the need for social justice must override any cost analysis.

With the Rawlsian approach, it no longer makes sense for services to be the sole responsibility of one office or department. All individuals who play a role in ensuring that the

experiences of those with disabilities are seamless and equal to those of non-disabled students must adopt an open and supportive position (Huger, 2011).

Those on the front lines of postsecondary education must be given the support and the training to meet the individual needs of all their students in the same way that classroom educators are trained to meet the needs of their students in the trenches of the K-12 arena. Recently, evidence has shown that "many faculty members shy away from working with students with disabilities because they feel ill-equipped to teach these students" (Orr & Hammig, 2009, p. 182). Faculty hesitation demonstrates the need for professional development opportunities that train and assist them in ways to better meet the needs of those with disabilities. Such training must also include components that address the way faculty may view students with disabilities (Lombardi & Murray, 2010). Proper training is important as encouragement can greatly impact the educational success of students with disabilities (Grigal et al., 2011).

A major cause for disconnect between faculty and students with disabilities is tied to the curriculum used in the courses they teach (Stodden et al., 2001). The concept of Universal Design (UD), which began as a framework in the architectural field, has expanded and is used in creating a curriculum and climate accessible to a wide variety of learners (Orr & Hammig, 2009). While UD is designed to be a grand panacea to replace the individual accommodations of all those with varying types of disabilities, its principles are created in a way to supplement and reinforce the already existing supports in place for each persons' own separate individual accommodation supports (Carroll, Petroff, & Blumberg, 2009; Lombardi & Murray, 2011).

While UD remains the overall goal of instruction, Grigal et al. (2012), explains for those with disabilities, three types of postsecondary educational program models have

emerged to assist students with disabilities. The first type, the mixed model, is a program in which disabled students take classes open to all students as well as classes restricted to those students with disabilities. The second type consists of a program in which students only attend classes with other students with disabilities. The third type is a program in which disabled students only attend classes open to all students. Regardless of which instruction is used, the goal is to increase the level of support faculty provide students with disabilities to be comparable to the level of instruction delivered contemporaneously to non-disabled students.

Parents, like faculty, have an important role in successfully implementing the Rawlsian approach to improving the level of inclusion in transition for students with disabilities into higher education. Research shows the way parents and guardians view their child's abilities have a major impact on what their child can achieve (Doren et al., 2012). Although parents are generally viewed as strong advocates for their child's ability to achieve in higher education (Davies & Beamish, 2009), research has shown parents of students with disabilities have lower expectations for their child going on to pursue a postsecondary education than parents of non-disabled students (Doren et al., 2012). The results are surprising, given the research showing that those who complete postsecondary objectives live longer, healthier lives, and report higher level of happiness (Thoma et al, 2011).

The larger community shares skepticism of these benefits. Many individuals in the field of education have raised concerns over the cost of specific supports and services for individuals with disabilities (Madaus, 2011; Popiel, 1995). However, Burleson (2011) points out that while economic arguments have a useful place in society, market analysis cannot be relied upon as the only indicator of what and how civil rights should be protected. Measures must be applied to protect people with disabilities beyond a weighing of economic efficiency.

Past research has shown "students are not aptly motivated and cannot succeed to achieving their potentials in environments where a lack of safety, intolerance, or hate exists" (Nieto & Bode, 2008, cited in Canfield-Davis, Gardiner, & Loki, 2009, p. 206).

Limitations in Rawls's Theory of Justice

Many individuals have criticized the Rawlsian approach toward justice and equality. According to Ball (2000), Rawls' theory fails by ignoring issues of conversion while trying to convince readers that goods and resources reflect justness since different individuals have dissimilar abilities to convert goods and resources into freedoms. As a result, Eurich (2012) explains what a person can do with goods and resources should be the focus rather than how many goods they have.

Freeman (2006) also echoes past concerns by pointing out that the Rawlsian approach neglects the greater amount of resources physically disabled individuals require for functioning compared to nondisabled people. The imbalanced distribution of resources is illustrated by the hypothetical of the wealthy person in a wheelchair. In his book review of Martha Nussbaum's *Frontier of Justice,* Lamey (2007) explains that, in this hypothetical:

> this person's problem is not a financial one, but a lack of access to public spaces. Even if she hired porters to carry her in and out of stores and libraries, her situation is not addressed. There is a basic sense of dignity and self-respect that comes with being able to move around on one's own. Even for a disabled millionaire, that will only be possible when public buildings are wheelchair accessible. To fully grasp what the handicapped need, we must look beyond purely economic measures of well-being and consider the actual capabilities people can exercise in their daily lives. (pp. 376-377)

Capabilities Approach

An alternative approach to the Rawlsian approach is an approach focused on the fundamental capabilities essential to one's quality of life. The fundamental capabilities approach evolved from the economic theory of Amartya Sen who proposed that a person's quality of life be determined by their capability set or the opportunities they must choose among desirable doings and beings. Therefore, a person's quality of life reflects not only what that individual achieves or becomes, but also that person's freedom to lead different types of lives, to choose among desirable doings, beings, or functioning (Hubbard, 2004).

One drawback with Sen's Capability Approach is that it did not distinguish what the essential capabilities were. Martha Nussbaum's Capability Approach, however, did establish a list of 10 essential human functional capabilities (see Figure 2.4) one must possess (Stein, 2007). It is the recognition, according to Ball (2000), that society has an obligation to assist individuals with these basic capabilities that provide the moral support and justification for the rights and benefits that disabled individuals currently enjoy in our society. Freeman (2006) enumerates the complete list of Nussbaum's central capabilities as:

1. living a normal life span;

2. bodily health;

3. bodily integrity;

4. being able to use the senses, the imagination, and thought, and being able to have pleasurable experiences;

5. experiencing normal human emotions, including longing, grief, anger, etc., and having emotional attachments to others;

6. development of one's capacities for practical reason, including the capacity of critical reflection upon one's goals or plan of life;

7. capabilities for affiliation;

8. living with other species;

9. play, including the ability to enjoy recreational activities;

10. control over one's environment. (p. 388)

Figure 2.4 Ten Capabilities Identified in Martha Nussbaum's Capability Approach

A key aspect to the capabilities approach, is the issue of choice in choosing to initiate or not initiate certain capabilities (Ball, 2000). The focus is not in producing people who function in certain ways, but instead, in conceptually creating individuals capable of functioning in these ways. The choice itself is left to the individual. Freeman (2006) adds that for this reason, the capabilities for functioning are of primary concern, and not the direct functioning itself. People ought to have the freedom to function as they choose. The central goal of the capabilities approach, then, according to Stein (2007), is to provide individuals with the means through which to develop themselves. Freeman (2006) points out that Nussbaum's capabilities approach says that society has a duty to provide to the individual

with some disability central capabilities as far as possible. Terzi (2007) ties this directly to education by explaining how the capabilities approach provides a platform for educational equality in that it provides a basis for which students with disabilities should have educational opportunities and resources to achieve effective levels of functioning.

Nussbaum's (2006) Capabilities Approach has been shown to have limitations. Nussbaum's scheme, for instance, Stein (2007) explains, fails to recognize the full dignity of those functioning below her 10 central capabilities. As currently comprised, Nussbaum's capabilities approach excludes certain intellectually disabled individuals and treats others as unequal participants by measuring abilities downward from a standard of species typicality.

Capabilities advocates, Freeman (2006) explains, criticize primary goods approaches on grounds that equal resources do not lead to equal capabilities for functioning. But, equal basic rights and liberties do not then realize equal capabilities either.

Disability Human Rights Paradigm

The disability human rights paradigm emphasizes the equal dignity of all persons and acknowledges their autonomy in directing their own development (Stein, 2007). The disability human rights paradigm seeks to encourage the talents of all children because their human dignity is equal to that of children without intellectual disabilities—not because they can rise to an expected functional level. The disability human rights framework likewise rejects Nussbaum's position that some people cannot live a fully human life or that those lives cannot be worthy of human dignity.

<div align="center">

Importance of Work

</div>

Rumrill et al. (2017) state that, according to a 2014 study by the National Center for Educational Statistics, "2.4 million American public-school students have learning

disabilities—a number representing roughly five percent of the total public-school enrollment" (p. 124). Rumrill et al. (2017) added that including both children and adults, "approximately 4.6 million Americans or 1.7 percent of the population, have been identified with learning disabilities" (p. 124). Rumrill et al. (2017) explain:

> as these students with learning disabilities leave secondary education, about 67 percent enroll in some type of postsecondary education…[but] only 17 percent of students with learning disabilities who enroll in postsecondary education receive classroom accommodations and/or other supports from their colleges or universities, and they are nearly four times less likely to complete their postsecondary degree programs than are students without disabilities. (p. 124)

While current laws mandate that a transitional plan be included in a student's IEP there remains a noticeable gap in those students achieving their goals in comparison to students achieving goals who are withut an IEP (Rumrill et al., 2017) In a recent study, Newman et al. (2016) found "approximately two-thirds of the students in the…study had transition plans that specified needed postsecondary accommodations and supports" (p. 510).

Additional difficulties exist for those students who both have a learning disability and are first generation college students. One study presented findings pointing to a population of students with learning disabilities who also are the first in their families to go to college. This study discovered only 23% of the parent of a child with a learning disability (or parent's spouse) had a four-year college degree or higher (IES, 2017, p. viii). Conversely, this meant 77% of students with specific learning disabilities were potentially the first in their families to go to college. Another relevant finding was that a lower percent of parents (67%) expecting their child would obtain a postsecondary education compared to the percentage of the child of

those parents (79%) who expected they would go on to completing a postsecondary education (IES, 2017, p. xxxii). This represented a 7% lower expectancy by the parents than of their child, in the child's goal to complete higher education, which supports the need for an increased level of family engagement.

A gap exists in the research when identifying the number of these students who both have a learning disability and are first in their families going to college—also evident in data gathered from this study.

This study is of practical significance to the target audience of my research: special education directors in the northwestern United States. It has relevant information about steps within a transition plan for students with learning disabilities that may help students make successful conversions into postsecondary studies. The study adds to the understanding of individuals at the secondary as well as postsecondary levels concerning ways to improve transitional services and supports.

The study is also of theoretical significance. It generated knowledge that has the potential for helping other colleges and universities improve the experiences of their first generation students with learning disabilities to become successful upon graduation in their own professional fields. This study addressed gaps in the literature concerning the successful transition and retention of postsecondary students with disabilities.

Summary

This literature review explored (a) the historical background of first generation students with learning disabilities, (b) federal legislative acts related to the support and services of these students as they transition from secondary to postsecondary education; (c) the federal TRIO Student Support Services program; and (d) theoretical perspectives offered

to improve the support and services to this specific population of students. This study complemented the current academic climate around ways that the existing transition planning for students improves the likelihood of their successful completion of postsecondary education. Chapter Three presents the methodology for this critical case study. Descriptions included reasoning for the chosen research design, selection of participants, sampling strategies, data collection methods, and data analysis used in the interpretation of collected data.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Study Context

The goal of the current study was to explore the perspectives of special education directors from multiple regions regarding supports provided to first generation students with leanring disabilities. This research contributes to the improvement of ways to help first generation students with learning disabilities succeed as they transition from secondary to postsecondary education. The study described the experiences of 12 special education directors within the six regions of the northwestern state where the study took place. The participants shared perspectives on efforts to provide the support and services these students carry into their new respective postsecondary settings. The study also identified the challenges these students face and how special educators have supported these students to address their unique challenges.

The target audience of this research study was special education administrators in a state in the northwestern United States. The study adds to the understanding of both individuals at the secondary and postsecondary levels concerning ways to improve student population transition into college. The understanding gained may help colleges and universities improve the experiences of their respective first generation students with disabilities, helping them not only to attend but to graduate and become successful in their professional fields.

Research Design

The qualitative case study investigated the following research question: How do special education directors describe services and interventions (i.e., student focused planning, student development, support services, and family involvement) used within their district to

assist first generation college students with disabilities in their transition from secondary to postsecondary education? The research question directed all phases of the study.

In the case study, the design focus was qualitative. It aimed to understand the meaning of human action using nonnumeric data in the form of words and phrases from interviews versus numeric data from a survey or questionnaire (Schwandt, 2015).

The case study method was selected for this study. This qualitative research method best matched my research design for the study. According to Yin (2012), "case studies are pertinent when your research addresses either a descriptive question—'What is happening or has happened?'—or an explanatory question—'How or why something happened?'" (p. 5). In this study, the focus was on what is happening or has happened in terms of providing support and assistance to secondary students who are first generation students with learning disabilities as they transition into postsecondary educational settings.

Yin (2012) identifies a few preliminary steps necessary to take when designing case studies. The first step he identifies is to define the case that will be studied. A case, according to Yin (2012), "is generally a bounded entity (a person, organization, event, or other social phenomenon)" (p. 6). In this study, the bounded entity was the special education directors in the selected state. What made this study unique was that while there have been studies concerning transitional services for those with learning disabilities and those who are first generation students, there have been few transitional services studies that have explored the challenges faced by students who are both the first in their families to go to college and who have learning disabilities.

The second step Yin (2014) identifies is to determine whether a single or multiple case study will be used. Stake (1995) distinguishes the purposes of these two types thusly: a single

case study can be instrumental for examining a theoretical question or problem, whereas a

multiple case study examines studies collectively to theorize about a larger number of cases.

Because this study focused solely on the role of special education directors in the Northwest,

and not on special educators of any other state or region, the single case study strategy was

used. Additionally, Yin (2014) identifies "five single case rationales—that is having a critical,

unusual, common, revelatory or longitudinal case" (p. 51). Of these rationales, the one that

best supports a justification for a single case study is the common case in which the goal is

"to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation…because of the lessons

it might provide about the social processes related to some theoretical interest" (Yin, 2014, p.

52). This rationale is appropriate since this study involved looking at describing how special

education directors are using the ideas included in Kohler's taxonomy to support and assist

first generation students with learning disabilities in their transition from secondary to

postsecondary education.

The third step Yin (2012) identifies is determining which type of theory will be used

in "developing research questions, selecting cases, refining the case study design or defining

the relevant data to be collected" (p. 9). The three major types of case study are exploratory,

explanatory, and descriptive designs (Yin, 2012). Hancock and Algozzine (2017) distinguish

these three types. Exploratory studies are used "to define research questions of a subsequent

study or to determine the feasibility of research procedures" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017, p.

39). Exploratory studies are often pilot studies for the researcher to explore ideas prior to

arriving at their research question and, in some cases, will lead to completely different

formats for future research that are not case study based or that may be quantitative.

Explanatory studies, in contrast, "seek to establish a cause and effect relationship" (Hancock

& Algozzine, 2017, p. 39). These studies often look at how events may or may not impact specific results. Descriptive studies "are used to illustrate or explain key features of a phenomenon within its context" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017, p. 39). Yin (2012) explains that these studies "can offer rich and revealing into the social world of a particular case" (p. 49).

Of these three, the descriptive case strategy was the most appropriate for this study. The goal of this study was to describe how special education directors are using the ideas included in Kohler's taxonomy to support and assist first generation students with learning disabilities in their transition from secondary to postsecondary educational settings. Since there has been little research about the support and services provided for first generation students with learning disabilities, this further validated the descriptive case strategy as the appropriate one to be used in this study.

Population

In the qualitative case study, the targeted participants were special education directors at the secondary level within the six geographic regions identified by the State Department of Education in the Northwest. The selection of participants initially involved a list created by the State Department of Education of 182 special education directors in six geographic regions. The focus of this study was the role that special education directors play in providing support and services for students with learning disabilities who seek to continue to complete a higher education.

Each targeted special education director initially was emailed and recruited as a participant in the study. The population of the participants was limited to only special education directors in the Northwest because the underlying aim of the study was to better

assist special education directors in this region. These participants were selected from a list of 18 special education directors from region #1, 22 special education directors from region #2, 61 special education directors from region #3, 30 special education directors from region #4, 19 special education directors from region #5, and 32 special education directors from region #6, for a total of 182 special education directors from the six regions in the selected state.

Sample

Once the population was established, I studied a subgroup for generalizing about the target population (Creswell, 2011). Merriam (1998) notes that, unlike in other types of qualitative research, two levels of sampling are usually necessary in qualitative case studies. First, the recognition of a specific case as a bounded system, and then a second, purposeful selection of "whom to interview, what to observe, and which documents to analyze" (Merriam, 1998, p. 66).

The first phase of collecting data involved collecting demographic information concerning the participants. From the initial 182 participants who were both emailed and telephoned to request their participation in this study, 170 participants did not participate either by declining the offer to participate, declining to respond to email or to phone message, or by being listed as special education director for more than listed district.

Of the 12 special education directors who provided demographic characteristics, 67% (n=8) were male and 33% (n=4) were female. For race/ethnicity/nationality ten (n=10) were Caucasian White American, one (n=1) was Mixed Race, and one (n=1) was Japanese. One participant (n=1) had a personal disability.

There were representatives from each of the six geographic regions identified by the State Office of Education. There were three representatives (n=3) from the Northern region;

two (n=2) from the Central region; two (n=2) from the South-Central region; one (n=1) from the South Eastern region; and four (n=4) from the South Western part of the state. Participants included representatives from both large school districts as well as small districts. The largest district consisted of 15,000 regular population students and 1,500 students with disabilities and the smallest district consisted of 85 students with seven or eight students with disabilities.

The participants ranged from ages of around 35 to 60 and above. One (n=1) were the number of the participants from the 35-39, two (n=2) were 40-44, four (n=4) were 45-49, three (n=3) were 55-59, and two (n=2) were 60 and above. The participants also ranged from the number of years that they had served as special education directors from 0 to 19 years. Six participants (n=6) had served for fewer than five years, two (n=2) had served from 6-14 years, and three (n=3) had served for more than 15 years as special education directors. The participants also ranged in terms of the highest level of education they had completed ranging from a Master of Arts degree up to a Doctoral Degree. Five (n=5) had completed up to a Master of Arts, four (n=4) had completed a Master of Arts degree plus some certification, and three (n=3) had completed a doctoral level degree.

Demographic Summary Table

Table 3.1

Demographic Summary Table

	Participant (Pseudonym)	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Disability and Type	Geographic Region	Age Group	Years as Special Ed Director	Highest Level of Education
1	Cindy	Female	Caucasian	None	Northern/ Region 2	45-49	1	MA + Certification
2	Connie	Female	Caucasian	None	South Western/ Region 2	55-59	5	PhD/ EdD
3	Dave	Male	Japanese	None	South Western/ Region 3	60 and above	2	MA
4	Elaine	Female	Caucasian	None	Northwest Idaho/ Region 2	40-44	15	MA
5	Jill	Female	Caucasian	None	South Western/ Region 1	45-49	9	PhD/ EdD
6	John	Male	Caucasian	None	South Central/ Region 3	40-44	8	MA
7	Jeremy	Male	Caucasian	Hearing Impaired	South Western/ Region 3	45-49	2.5	MA
8	Matt	Male	Caucasian	None	South Eastern/ Region 6	35-39	3	MA
9	Paula	Female	Caucasian	None	South Central/ Region 4	60 and above	18	PhD/ EdD
10	Sally	Female	Caucasian	None	South Western/ Region 3	55-59	19	MA + Certification
11	Samantha	Female	Caucasian	None	Northern/ Region 2	45-49	4	MA + Certification
12	Sue	Female	Caucasian	None	South Central/ Region 4	55-59	3	MA + Certification

Once at least one participant from each region indicated a willingness to participate, an informed consent form was emailed to the interviewee for review. Before each interview was initiated, each participant was required to orally consent to the audio recording of the interview. Since the study involved a group of 12 special education administrative directors

who behave, think, and talk in a similar manner involving special education matters in the Northwest, this sample of 12 participants was an appropriate number to carry out this type of study (Guest et al., 2006).

Prior to addressing substantive questions, each participant was asked to describe themselves in terms of their gender, ethnicity, nationality, and race. Participants were also asked how long they have served as a special education director and their district's experiences with first generation students with disabilities. During the research process, the initial intent was for participants to be de-selected if their district has had no experience working with first generation students with disabilities. However, since most participants were unsure of their number of students who were first generation, this was not used as a criterion for deselection. Instead, there was a finding for future identification of students who were first in their families to go to college.

Data Collection

The research was conducted in connection with the protocol approved by the selected university's Institutional Review Board. Evidence collected was guided by Yin's (2012) list of the six mostly commonly used sources for case studies: interviews, archival records, documentation, physical artifacts, direct observation, and participant observation. In this study, I focused on interviews and documentation. The method of collecting primary data was through semi-structured interviews.

The first source of evidence I collected was data from interviews. Yin (2014) has described interviews as being "one of the most important sources of case study evidence" (p. 110). Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) note that interviews "provide an opportunity for structured in-depth conversations with diverse social actors and help researchers to get a sense of these

actors' reported experiences and differing perspectives on the phenomenon of interest" (p. 54). The collection process involved conducting 12 interviews, including at least one interview of a special education director in each of the six geographic regions of the Northwest, as identified by the state's Department of Education. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. Interview time was flexible; however, the intent was to allow the proper time to gather sufficient data without interviews becoming redundant or tiring for interviewees. With the permission of the participant, the interview was recorded using a digital audio recorder. Each audio recording was then transcribed within a reasonable time following the interview for best review and coding of the collected data. As the data was collected and reviewed, it was organized for easy retrieval.

Prior to constructing the interview questions, I spent time increasing my knowledge and understanding about the research topic. The first step was researching more about conducting case study research. The second step was further researching the subject matter itself. Based on this information, I revised interview questions grouped into the following six subcategories:

1. greetings andexplanation;

2. demographic information;

3. participants' experiences prior to attending the University of [name];

4. participants' retention at the University of [name];

5. the participants' future plans; and

6. closure and final remarks of the interview.

Once the revised list of questions was created, it was emailed to the primary investigator for review. Before asking substantive questions, I first took time to start with a more relaxed

informal greeting and explain that the goal was to discuss rather than to question the participant's experiences with first generation students. However, one thing learned from the demographic questionnaire was how widespread the unavailability of this data was – not only to researchers but to participants. In my pilot study, a senior researcher, who usually has no difficulty attaining data commented on how challenging gaining this type of data was for her research. Similarly, the participant, Jeremy commented when asked about his own district's first generation population "that [it was] really tricky to get information back on" that. He added that, I would likely "find that around the state. Everyone has had difficulty getting numbers back." Another participant Paula commented that her district "tried to calculate this and the best we could do was come up with our initial eligibility over the last 5 years. And, there are 40 and 50 initial eligibility." She added that "no student on IEPs have gone onto college. We live in a farming community and they just get right to work." Another participant, Samantha, simply replied that "she didn't know because [her district] doesn't keep that information." Sue also was not sure if such records were collected by her district and Sally similarly said she didn't know because she does not have that information. Some of the participants indicated that they would be better able to answer on how many students aspire to go on to higher and have a disability than who are the first in their families to go to college.

According to Muchison (2010), "the first few minutes frequently sets the tone for the rest of the interview" (p. 108). Therefore, I wanted to establish a comfortable environment for the interviewee to offer honest and expansive answers. Following the opening of the interview, the remaining questions were open-ended and included asking the interviewee two separate hypothetical questions. At the end of the interview, I made sure to provide the

participant a chance to present unasked questions or questions they had specifically for me. The following is an example of the interview protocol:

I :   Introduction

    1. Greetings:

(This exchange of questions and words like "Hi" is a bit more formal than would occur between close friends.)

Hi, (interviewee). How are you?

How is your year going?

    2. Giving the Case Study Explanation

(This begins here in recognizing that I and the interviewee are going to "talk".)

I am glad you could talk to me today. Well, as I expressed in my email, I am interested in understanding your experiences as a special education administrative director and your experiences in directing your district's effort toward creating transitional support and services for first generation Idaho students who have a learning disability.

II.   Main Interview

- How long have you served as special education director for your district?

- Please describe your experiences working with first generation students with disabilities as special education director for your district/region.

- How does your district help first generation students with disabilities to ease the transition from secondary to postsecondary education?

- In accordance with plan §300.321(b), it is a requirement of IDEA that students be invited to participate in the creation of their own IEP development and, per Belch

(2004), that their interests be included in the transition plan. Please describe how your district utilizes student focused planning for first generation students with disabilities.

- How does your district use interventions focused on family involvement to promote student development that may assist first generation students with disabilities in their transition from secondary to postsecondary level education?

- If funding were no issue for your district, what service/intervention would you provide more frequently due to the successes you have observed students experience when provided with the service/intervention?

[Research which districts have a TRIO program. Ask the special education directors of those districts the following:]

- Are you aware of your district's TRIO program? If so, what is your involvement with it? Are you seeing any connection between TRIO and serving those with disabilities?

III: Closure

3. Is there anything that I haven't asked you about or are there any questions you'd like to ask me?

Prior to the collection of any data, I took measures to ensure all data was collected in an ethical manner (see Table 3.1). This included securing informed consent from each participant initially by phone prior to the interview and then in writing after the conclusion of the interview in accordance with the National Commission for the Protection of Human Rights and the Internal Review Board of the selected university's standards. Finally, all participants were assigned a pseudonym and all their responses was kept confidential so that none of their responses were traced back to them as a participant.

Three follow-up questions were emailed to each participant. In addition, each participant was contacted – to alert them to emailing of these questions, either by phone conversation or by recorded phone message. These questions were asked to each of the participants. The first question asked the participants to rank the four major themes of the study. The second question asked participant to speak to the implications of the various shareholders (individuals or institutions) that are impacted by the study. The third question asked each participant to describe which of the several suggested future recommended studies would be the most helpful in continuing the discussion of this study. The follow-up questions are as follows:

Question 1:

There are four themes resulting from this study. These themes included: student focused planning, student development, family engagement, and financial considerations. Could you rank these themes in terms of your perceived importance in the process of improving transitional services and supports for those with learning disabilities who seek to go on to a postsecondary education?

Question 2:

How would describe this type of study, and any future studies, impact on special education directors, students with learning disabilities, parents of students with learning disabilities, and school districts?

Question 3:

Which of the following follow-up studies would you describe as being the most helpful toward continuing the conversation on transitional services and supports for students with learning disabilities who seek to go onto a postsecondary education?

- More research is needed to identify first generation students at the secondary level. While this study had planned to focus on first generation students, this goal had to be modified toward support and services for students with the potential of achieving a postsecondary education because there simply was a lack of verifiable data on which students were the first in their families to go college at each of the districts where participants served as special education director.

- More research is also needed to explore ways to increase the awareness and understanding of the TRIO program at the secondary level and to identify ways that better link supports that students receive from agencies, such as VR, at the secondary level with similar student supports provided at the postsecondary level by TRIO organizations, student support services, and Upward Bound.

- Additional research could be conducted to expand how technology, such as the use of digital portfolios, could be used to provide support and services for students with learning disabilities with the goal of enabling more students to be better prepared to consider postsecondary education as a viable option of transition after high school.

- Another area of potential future study could be conducted on researching directors of support agencies, such as VR and to gain their perspectives on how they view their role in providing transitional support and services to students with learning disabilities.

- A separate set of standards, specific for first generation students with disabilities, should be developed. While the guidelines presented by NTACT (2016) are helpful toward guiding these students with disabilities to transition into a postsecondary education, they do not capture some of the challenges a person who is the first in their

family to attend college would likely encounter. Therefore, like the standards developed by the Think College program which are specific to students with intellectual disabilities, there ought to be a set of standards specific to first generation students.

- Further research could also be helpful in identifying how a district's size, geographic location, and status as urban, suburban, or rural impacts both the quantity and the quality of supports and services provided to students with learning disabilities— particularly those who are first generation.

- Further research could describe the support and assistance provided varies for students of different racial or ethnic background who are first generation students with learning disabilities. Included in this study could be an effort to see how misdiagnosing students with disabilities based solely on their ethnic or racial background impacts their ability to successfully transition into a postsecondary education after high school (Phippen, 2015).

Table 3.2

Data Collection Summary

Data Source	Method	Intent	Schedule
Initial Email Recruitment	Semi-Structured	Confirm participant's willingness to participate in study.	Confirmation of interest to participate by phone prior to conducting each interview.
Primary Interview	Semi-structured	Identify themes toward providing an improved effort to recruit, retain, and ultimately help first generation students succeed in graduating from the University of [name].	Interviews will be scheduled at a time most convenient to the participant and will be conducted via phone or by Skype.
Notes from Interviews	Audio recording of interview will be transcribed and then confirmed for accuracy with participant upon completion of transcription.	To accurately record the responses of each participant.	Recordings during and transcriptions and confirmations of transcriptions for accuracy as soon as possible after each interview to increase the accuracy of the confirmation of each transcript.
Summaries	Compile and analyze data	Views of how the University of [name] can better assist first generation students attend and complete their degree objectives at the University of [name].	Upon the conclusion of all interviews, data will then be compiled and analyzed for common themes based on the responses given.

Documentation

A second source of data collection involved gathering documentation at the local and state levels concerning special education directors' support and assistance for first generation students with learning disabilities in their respective districts in the selected state. Yin (2014) has identified three ways that documentation can be used to increase the validity and reliability of evidence from other sources. These include being: "(1) helpful in verifying the correct spellings and titles or names of people and organizations that might have been mentioned in an interview; (2) useful to provide specific details to corroborate information from other sources; and (3) supportive of making new inferences from the documents that will lead to further inquiries into other sources of data" (Yin, 2014, p. 107).

Documentation was gathered to support the findings of the interviews. This involved the creation of documentation by journaling while completing the interviews for this study. This also involved the collection of supportive documentation including contacts for other individuals and organizations who are involved in providing transitional services to students with disabilities. This included speaking to and gathering documentation from the Think College Foundation. Additional documentation was gathered from the NTACT website toward providing additional information which supports the conceptual framework used in this study. Also, documentation was gathered at the state level from selected Department of Education and the federal United States Department of Education concerning transitional services for students with disabilities as well as for students who are the first in their families to go to college.

Data Analysis

I began my analysis by completing a thorough process of transcribing data from the 12 interviews generated from the interview schedule of questions. I first transcribed the interviews verbatim. Next, I read over each of the transcribed interviews editing and made any necessary corrections to the transcripts. After I completed and checked the transcription, I sent the transcripts to the participants for review and verification. During this process, they were given an opportunity to review, edit, redact, amend, or correct their responses. Any changes were automatically included in their transcripts as their original response. Finally, my last step was to remove any identifiable data, such as names of participants, institutions, and case-specific examples, that would otherwise allow for easy identification of the participant.

Coding Process

Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) explain that "codes are labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study" (p. 71). With a wide variety of different coding methods, Saldana (2016) suggests breaking these types of coding methods into two cycles. The first cycle methods are those which create "codes that are initially assigned to the data chunks" (Saldana, 2016, p. 73). Whereas, the second cycle codes are those methods that "generally work with the resulting First Cycle code themselves" (Saldana, 2016, p. 73). Again, determining which of these methods in each of these cycles are selected is largely dependent on the type of study being conducted, whether it be case study, grounded theory, narrative, or another type of method.

However, regardless of the type of study being conducted, the first type of coding that should occur during the first cycle coding should be provisional coding. This type of coding, according to Miles et al. (2014), involves "begin[ning] with a 'start list' of researcher-

generated codes, based on what preparatory investigation suggests might appear in the data before they are collected and analyzed" (p. 77). This list,

> is generated from such preparatory investigative matters as: literature reviews related to the study, the study's conceptual framework and research questions, previous research findings, pilot study fieldwork, the researcher's previous knowledge and experiences (experiential data) and researcher-formulated hypotheses or hunches (p. 168).

I created codes around three of the five areas of the conceptual framework which concerned the focus of my study. This provisional coding also included coding around the theoretical framework of John Rawls concerning looking at cost and financial considerations when supporting and assisting students with disabilities.

Another type of coding I used was attribute coding, which "logs essential information about the data and demographic characteristics of the participant for future management and reference" (Saldana, 2016, p. 82). This was completed by having each of the participants in this study answer a set of preliminary questions that focused on information concerning the attributes of the participant and their school district.

I also used a wide range of other first cycle coding methods. One of these coding methods was descriptive coding which "summarizes in a word or short phrase-most often a noun-the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data" (Saldana, 2016, p. 102). Using this coding method, I worked to link the text to a descriptive code that represented the gist of the data in relation to the focus of my study. Another coding method I used was magnitude coding which "include basic statistical information such as frequencies or percentages" (Saldana, 2016, p. 86). Using magnitude coding offered "a way of transforming or

'quantitizing' qualitative data" (Saldana, 2016, p. 86) by keeping track of the number of times a code was mentioned by the participants.

Second cycle pattern coding, according to Saldana (2016), "is a way of grouping those summaries into smaller number of categories, themes or concepts" (p. 236). In other words, according to Miles et. al. (2014), these, "[pattern codes] pull together a lot of material from a first cycle coding into more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis" (p. 86). Using pattern codes, I was able to group codes collectively together around the themes generated from this study.

To help substantiate what I discovered from manually coding the data, I also used the data analysis software NVivo. NVivo is software used to support mixed methods and qualitative research. It was designed to help the researcher work more efficiently; organizing, storing, and retrieving data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). To facilitate this additional level of analysis, these files were also organized into an NVivo file where all transcriptions were uploaded. Therefere by uploading these files it was possible to both manually and electronically code the participants' responses. I used the computer program NVivo to aid thematic analysis by attaching each of these themes to nodes that were used to mine the transcripts for words and phrases that connected with the themes.

Coding Definitions Table

Table 3.3

Official Code Definitions

Priori Codes	Definitions
Historical Background	First Generation students, students with disabilities, learning disabled
Federal Legislative Acts	IDEA, ADA, 504
IEP Development	Transition plan, summary of performance
Student Focused Planning	Student focused planning, student family engagement, interagency collaboration, program structure
TRIO	Student Support Services, Upward Bound
Theoretical Perspectives	Cost, Advocacy, Educational Policy, Capabilities Approach
Emergent Codes	Definitions
Vocational Rehab	Summer VR experience, access, reliance, college visits
Financial Support	Work, Scholarships, Aid
Parental Inclusion	Parent nights, participation, informational meetings, surveys and feedback, IEP meetings, outside organizational support through things such as Vocational Rehab
Career and Counseling	Move-on binder, digital portfolio
Age ad Grade of Initial Transition	Ranging from Pre-K to 9th grade commencement for transition
Organizational Support	Disability Action Center, Magic Valley Transition Team, College GPS, Strive
Technology	Notetaking and dictating, IPADs and Laptops, digital portfolios, power point presentations by students
Rural vs. urban challenges	Agrarian and farming focus compared with academic urban focus; large districts with more funding and resources

Finally, I integrated these themes and responses into the text of my report by connecting the stories of each participant (who was assigned a pseudonym) back to an identified theme found through the analysis. I used the new feature of creating graphics of these display themes that is available in the most recent update of NVivo.

Fetterman (2010) has pointed out that "database software programs enable the [researcher] to play a multitude of what-if games, to test variety of hypothesis with the push

of a button" (p. 74). Similarly, I used the online training and the textbook on NVivo to assist in using the software to select the best themes for coding the data that also offered the best way to highlight the stories of the participants in their respective roles as special education directors in the Northwest serving first generation students with learning disabilities seeking postsecondary educational studies.

The coding process provided the opportunity to confirm and triangulate the findings I made from analyzing the data as well as identifying possible aspects that may be overlooked by not using the assistance of data analysis software. One of the primary dangers Bazeley and Jackson (2013) identify with reliability hinges on the "researcher's expertise in using the software" (p. 6)—particularly, a reliance on the more complex functions as the sole basis of their findings. Since I used this software to support rather than replace hand coding and used only its basic functions, I avoided this potentially faulty reliance.

<div align="center">

Validity

</div>

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) point out that "since both the criteria and terminology for discussing and assessing the rigor in qualitative research are in flux (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lichtman, 2013) [their suggested path was] …to discuss trustworthiness and rigor in interpretive qualitative research with reference to the traditional terminology of validity and reliability" (p. 337). The sections below explain how this study addresses internal validity or credibility, reliability or consistency along with dependability and external validity or transferability.

Internal Validity or Credibility

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that determining internal validity or credibility involves looking at what "are people's constructions of reality—how they understand the world" (p.243). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain that while "qualitative researchers can

never capture an objective 'truth' or 'reality' there are a number of strategies that you as a qualitative researcher can use to increase the credibility of your findings" (p. 244).

One of the strategies suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), known as triangulation, can involve "using multiples sources of data [including] …interview data collected from people with different perspective or follow up interviews with the same people" (p. 245). The current evidences triangulation in several ways. First, data was collected from different perspectives in terms of selecting participants from all six of the regions of special education directors across the selected state. In addition, representatives were chosen from both small and large school districts in the state. Second, each of the initial participants was contacted for a follow-up interview to provide additional information based on additional topics concerning the findings and results of the study. While there are more ways to triangulate data, these ways supported the credibility or internal validity of the study. Patton (2015) points out that "triangulation in whatever form, increases credibility and quality by countering the concern (or accusation) that a study's findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source or a single investigator's blinders" (p. 674).

A second strategy, identified by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), to substantiate the credibility of a study is through "member checks, also called respondent validation [where] you solicit feedback from some of the people that you interviewed" (p. 246). This strategy helps to ensure that the research is not misinterpreting the meaning of what each participant says (Maxwell, 2013). This was achieved with this study's findings by sharing the transcripts of interviews with each participant to confirm and clarify that my transcription of the meeting was an accurate depiction of exactly what they said during the interview.

A third strategy, identified by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), involves having an "adequate engagement in data collection" (p. 246). Using this technique involves determining how many people should be interviewed or included in the study. In this study the target goal for the number of people to be interviewed at least 10 participants with a minimum of one participant for each of the six regional districts for special education directors created by the selected state's Department of Education. Additionally, the goal was to have representatives of all different district sizes, both large and small, to reflect a sample representative of the entire state. In this study there were 13 participants, from both small and large districts with at least one representative from each of these six districts helped demonstrate an adequate engagement in data collection.

A fourth strategy called "peer examination or peer review" involves having "a colleague familiar with the research or one new to the topic [review the study] to scan some of the raw data and assess whether the findings are plausible, based on the data" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 250). Peer examination or peer review was accomplished by having another doctoral student look at my study and to confirm the plausibility of the findings reached.

Reliability or Consistency and Dependability

The next major focus concerns the reliability or the consistency and dependability of the study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) point out "the question is not [only] whether the findings will be found again [and are reliable] but whether the results are consistent and dependable" (p. 250). Here, in addition to triangulation and to peer review or member checking, this chapter on methodology demonstrates a clear path on how the results from this study were reached. Additionally, this study also incorporated what Lavarakas (2008) refers to as "intercoder agreement" by using NVivo software. Bazeley & Jackson (2013) exaplain

how the use of the qualitative software program NVivo can aid the investigator in analyzing the data.

As qualitative research involves more flexibility than quantitative research, it was important to ensure the dependability of reaching the same results. Therefore, I documented the process that others will need to follow to ascertain the same level of dependability in their respective findings. I accomplished this by using the same questions and conducting each interview with the goal of completing each within approximately 45 minutes.

Toward the goal of confirmability, an effort was made to ensure the time and type of questions presented were consistent with each participant. The questions selected in the interviews were written with the subject area in mind and then refined using feedback from experts in the field through a pilot study.

External Validity or Transferability

External validity or transferability, according to Miriam and Tisdell (2016) "is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations" (p. 253). In other words, they explain, "the ability to generalize other settings or people is ensured through a prior condition such as assumptions of equivalency between the sample and population from which it was drawn, control of sample size, random sampling, and so on" (p. 253).

One strategy identified by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) toward transferability involves the use of "rich, thick descriptions" in which "a description of the setting and participants of the study, as well as a detailed description of the findings with adequate evidence presented in the form of quotes from participants interviews" (p. 257) are evident. Here, we see in both the

description of the participants as well as in the findings of the study there exist extensive use of the participants voice rather than the voice of the investigator.

An additional strategy identified by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) involves the use of "maximum variation" (p. 257). Patton (2015) adds that this is important "(1) to document diversity; and (2) to identify important common patterns that are common across the diversity (cut through the noise of variation) on dimension s of interest" (p. 267). This was addressed by ensuring the external certainty of the study's participants was selected from an official listing by the selected state's Department of Education of the Special Education directors in the five geographic regions (1-5). This goal of having at least one representative from each of the regions, as well as a balanced representation of participants.

Another strategy, identified by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) involves "typicality or modal category sampling [where] one describes how typical the program, event or individual is compared with others in the same class, so that users can make comparisons with their own situations" (pp. 257-258). In this study, each of the participants serve in a similar role as special education director in the selected state, and represent districts throughout the state, which enable any current or future special education director to take the findings and results of this study and apply them, making comparisons to their own situations.

Researcher Background

There has been considerable research both in the field of education as well as in law toward the goal of empowering those individuals with disabilities through improved support and assistance to achieve their own personal objectives regardless of their disability. My academic as well as professional experience in both these fields provide me with the ability to view these topics from both angles.

Biases

When researchers conduct research about which they are passionate, that passion can spill over into the analysis and writing, and it may seem like they are advocates. And while we may be advocates, we need to acknowledge that, showing we are honest about this possible bias. In this study, because I have a family member who is a first generation student with a disability and I may identify as a person with a disability, this is a passion of mine, and I need to acknowledge this. Therefore, I provided, at the end of my findings, a section in which I provide additional information based on both individual and family member experiences relating to be a first generation student, a student with disabilities, and specifically a student with a learning disability (Freeman, 2014).

Limitations

Further, the limitations of a study can be viewed as those things that the researcher has no control over (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). Limitations occur, for example, when all factors cannot be controlled as a part of study design, or when the optimal number of observations simply cannot be made because of problems involving ethics or feasibility.

A possible study limitation was tied to the working definition of first generation, since it excluded students whose parents attended community college but never went to a four-year college. This eliminated potential participants. Lastly, the qualitative case study involved only first generation students attending the selected university and, therefore, the findings cannot be regarded as either conclusive or comprehensive in understanding the experiences of other first generation students at other postsecondary institutions. Another area of possible limitation was directly tied to the methodology. While the qualitative study applied a case

study lens and included in-depth interviews, it did not involve the use of field notes and observations, both of which are commonly found in case studies.

While my research talked about steps taken toward providing transitional services that students receive in preparation for study at the postsecondary level, it did not focus on the services provided at the secondary level. Additionally, while there is a sundry of unique challenges for students who are both first generation and do not have a disability and students who are both not first generation but do have a disability, neither of the challenges these groups face individually were examined in this study.

Another limitation was that this study focused solely on those individuals who serve as special education directors at the district level. This study did not include perspective of other individuals at the district level such as teachers, school psychologists, school counselors or other site or district administrators. Also, the study did not include those who serve at the state level or those who serve in disability services at various postsecondary institutions—including TRIO representatives. Additionally, this study did not focus on either perspective of students with learning disabilities or on their parents or guardian. Also, the participants were all from the same state, so the findings may not be comparable to those special education directors in other states or regions. Lastly, these findings can only be generalized to the participants (state regional disability directors) who participated in this study.

Pilot Study

I completed a pilot study to test out the interview protocol of questions that I planned to use to collect my data from 12 participating special education administrators in the northwestern United States. To be able to quickly test this instrument, I conducted the pilot study using members of my committee as well as my fellow doctoral student colleagues as

my participants. Thus, the focus was tied to the reliability and validity of the instrument and did not involve any coding or transcribing as might be called for in a more formal pilot study.

The first part of the pilot study was to inquire about feedback from a member of my doctoral committee as well as with the Special Education Coordinator for Special Services at the selected university. The second part of my pilot study focused on interviewing two researchers from the Think College Foundation. While the Think College foundation is focused on assisting students with intellectual disabilities rather than learning disabilities, there is a similar focus on the supports and services for all students with disabilities who seek to go onto complete a postsecondary education.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover how state regional disability directors in the northwestern United States have created successful transitional plans for students who have a learning disability and are the first in their families to go onto college; achieve their goal of attending and completing a postsecondary education. The study addressed the primary research question: How do special education directors describe services and interventions used within their district to assist students who are first generation students as well students with a learning disability transition from secondary to postsecondary education?

To answer this question the study looked to the conceptual framework created by NTACT. The framework focuses on improving transitional plans for students with disabilities. According to Statfeld (2011), "a transitional plan describes a course of study and related strategies and activities based on the student's strengths, interests and preferences, to assist the student in attaining postsecondary goals related to training, education, employment and/or independent living" (p. 2). This framework, called the Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0 "provides concrete practices—identified from effective programs and the research literature—for implementing transition-focused education" (Kohler et al., 2016, p. 2) to assist those with disabilities better prepare for transitioning from secondary into a postsecondary educational setting. The study focused on three of the five primary practice areas described by NTACT (Kohler, Gothberg, Fowler, & Coyle, 2016) – these were: (a) student-focused planning, (b) student development and (c) family engagement. Additionally, the study used the theoretical framework of John Rawls to examine how financial

considerations impacted the district's goals of providing services and interventions to these student in their transition from their secondary to postsecondary settings.

The population of my study consisted of 12 participants who at the time of data collection were serving as special education directors for school districts in a northwestern state. I chose these individuals due to their role overseeing the services and interventions school districts provide for students with learning disabilities who have the goal of successfully completing a postsecondary education. Included those students who are both first generation students as well as are students with learning disabilities. A list of all the special education directors in six different geographic regions in the selected state was used to create the sample of participants who took part in this study. The list, created by the state's Department of Education, included both phone numbers and email for each of the special education directors. These names were listed and grouped into the six separate geographic regions identified by the state's Department of Education. Every person on the list was emailed and offered an opportunity to participate in the study. Twelve individuals volunteered to participate. Ten of these 12 individuals were interviewed by phone; two individuals responded by answering the questions in writing and then emailing back their responses. There was at least one representative for each of the six different geographic regions.

In addition to interviewing participants, various data was collected to address the generalizability, transferability, reliability and validity of the findings in this study. One action taken was member checking. According to Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016) member checking, also known as respondent validation or participant validation, involves "the method of returning an interview or analyzed data to a participant" (p. 1802). All the

participants were emailed a transcribed copy of their interview for their review to ensure the transcriptions reflected an accurate description of their responses.

Peer review was also used for the study's validation and reliability. According to (Spillett, 2003), "In peer [review], researchers meet with one or more impartial colleagues to critically review the implementation and evolution of their research methods" (p. 36). The researcher is assisted by giving additional perspectives on their work to ensure their study has taken the necessary steps to accurately report on the findings from the data collected. I completed peer review by getting feedback from another doctoral student in my cohort. I worked previously with her on the completion and publication of a report for research on first generation students at the same university selected for my study. A report was completed in connection with the graduate course on advanced qualitative research we completed together. Having worked with her previously allowed for us to work closely together giving each other feedback on our own individual research toward the completion of our own respective dissertations.

Themes Emerging from the Qualitative Research

Building on the analysis of the core concepts related to literature, several themes were identified from the responses given by question group. There are three sets of aims in thematic analysis: "(1) examining commonality; (2) examining differences; and (3) examining relationships" (Harding, 2013, p. 5).

From the 12 participant interviews, four themes arose (see Figure 4.1) designating how special education directors describe services and interventions used within their districts to assist students, including first generation students, to transition from secondary to postsecondary education. These included:

1. student focused planning;

2. student development;

3. family engagement; and

4. financial considerations

Table 4.1 depicts code frequency for the following question: How do special education directors describe student focused planning services used within their district to assist first generation college students with disabilities in their transition from secondary to postsecondary education?

Table 4.1

Focused Planning Codes

Codes	Connie	Cindy	Dave	Elaine	Jill	John	Jeremy	Matt	Paula	Sally	Samantha	Sue
Planning Strategies	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	2	1	1	2
Student Participation	1	1	1	1	2	1	4	1	1	1	2	-
IEP	-	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	-	-	2	-

Table 4.2 depicts code frequency for the following question: How do special education directors describe student development services used within their district to assist first generation college students with disabilities in their transition from secondary to postsecondary education?

Table 4.2

Student Development Codes

Codes	Connie	Cindy	Dave	Elaine	Jill	John	Jeremy	Matt	Paula	Sally	Samantha	Sue
Assessment	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	2	1
Academic Skills	-	-	-	-	2	2	1	2	2	-	2	-
Life Skills	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Employment and Occupational Skills	2	-	-	-	2	1	1	-	1	-	1	2
Student Supports	-	3	2	-	1	-	2	-	1	-	-	-
Vocational Rehabilitation	-	1	-	1	1	1	4	1	3	5	1	1
TRIO	2	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	1
Instructional Context	1	-	1	2	-	-	2	3	-	-	-	-

Table 4.3 depicts code frequency for the following question: How do special education directors describe family engagement services used within their district to assist first generation college students with disabilities in their transition from secondary to postsecondary education?

Table 4.3

Family Engagement Codes

Codes	Connie	Cindy	Dave	Elaine	Jill	John	Jeremy	Matt	Paula	Sally	Samantha	Sue
Family Preparation	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	1
Family Involvement	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	2	2
Family Empowerment	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-

Table 4.4 depicts code frequency for the following question: How do special education directors describe financial considerations regarding their first generation college students with disabilities in their transition from secondary to postsecondary education?

Table 4.4

Financial Consideration Codes

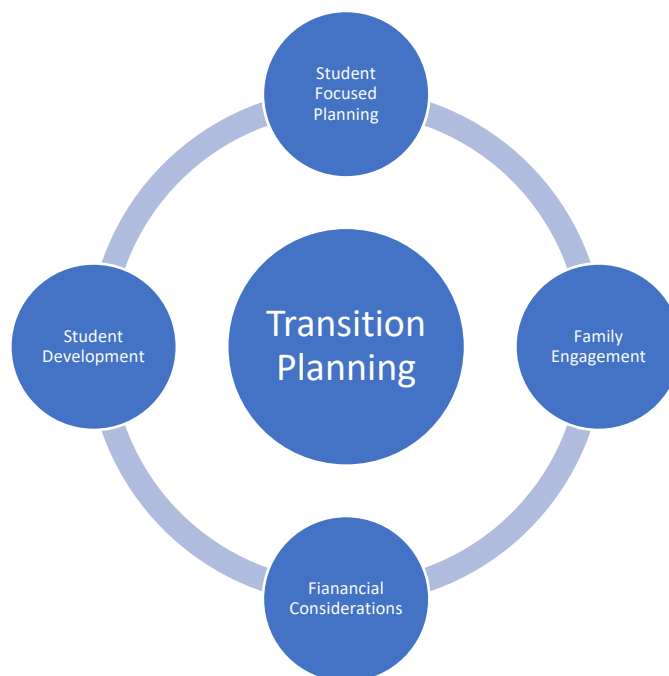| Codes	Connie	Cindy	Dave	Elaine	Jill	John	Jeremy	Matt	Paula	Sally	Samantha	Sue
Cost for Services and Support Considerations	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	-	1	1	1	1
Financial Assistance for Postsecondary Education	-	2	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1

Figure 4.1 Transition Planning

The first theme concerned creating transition plans focused around the interests of the students with the goal of preparing the students for a life beyond high school, including the possibility of completing a postsecondary education. There were three main codes around this theme: (a) IEP development, (b) planning strategies, and (c) student participation. The second major theme focused around student development. The six codes of the second theme included: (a) assessment, (b) academic skills, (c) life skills, (d) occupational skills, (e) student supports, and (f) instructional context. The third major theme from the study concerned family engagement, which included three codes: (a) family involvement, (b) family empowerment, and (c) family preparation. The fourth theme focused around financial considerations and addressed codes that would be expanded in terms of services and support if funding was not an issue. It also incorporated ways to help make completing a postsecondary education a financially attainable goal. The responses given to this theme reflect limitations based on

factors such as the size and geographic location of the district and its ability to provide specific services.

Student Focused Planning

The first theme that emerged from this study concerned the level of direct involvement of the student in the transition process. This theme described the importance of planning centered around the student and student participation in the process. The three codes in student focused planning included: IEP development, planning strategies, and student participation.

IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) Development. The first important key to planning supports and services around the specific needs of an individual concerns the development of a well-constructed IEP centered around the needs that are unique to that student. This involves, according to NTACT, ensuring "the student interests and preferences are documented" (Kohler, Gothberg, Fowler, and Coyle, 2016, p. 4). Several participants indicated how these interests and preferences are identified. Connie reported that, in her district, students participate in interest inventories, including the AIR inventory as well as an opportunity inventory. In addition, students are also asked to complete a learning skills profile and respond to what they hope to be doing five years from now. Other participants shared that a major force behind the development involved the direct involvement of the student in the development of their own individualized education plan (IEP). Dave, for instance, shared in his district, it was "important for the student to be present and actively involved in making some of the decisions as well as understanding why [the members of the IEP meeting] are doing what [they] are doing" to help that student strengthen their self-determination skills

going forward. Another participant, Matt, shared that, in his district, this occasionally may mean:

> you must sit with those students in advance and just say, 'hey, listen, I want to hear what you think about this: ask them [thing such as] …what are your aspirations in life?' And then, have them think about those so when they do come to their meeting you can say 'OK, I asked you some questions earlier, now what you do think you need to do to get to this point?'

Matt added that often:

> they need somebody to help peek their interests. So, you need to give them the bread crumbs and hopefully they pick up the pieces and put two and two together and take ownership of their goals without realizing they are taking ownership.

Samantha echoed this same line of inquiry in terms of "trying to get at what does this student think they excel at, what do they think they need help with, what do they think about the world of work and what they might like to do?" However, she also indicated that this inquiry also includes eliciting their feedback on "what type of living arrangements they want to have after they graduate and whether they want to live at home or have an apartment?"

Cindy, added that, in her district, "even if the student actually attends the meeting or not their district still will go over it with [that student] … and begin to look at what possibilities of things they want to do" and then going over with that student what their "different options are for schools and…what [that student] needs to get done." Elaine, shared that planning of what they need to get done often involves "the choices of classes and activities to participate" that help move the student in the direction they plan to go, which includes pursuing a postsecondary education, after they graduate from high school.

Jill, shared that she believes this development "begins with the state recognizing that transition drives the IEP" and transition pieces of an IEP should not be left blank and not completed until the student reaches high school but instead should begin the first day the IEP is created for that student. She explains, "the preschools are not going to have a transition but [the members of an IEP in preschool] are thinking about it." She added this means:

> you begin with the end in mind with every student start working with. That means [those who are part of the IEP development, whether be teachers, parents, psychologists, counselors or administrators] are thinking about this preschooler when they are 17 or 18 years old and moving out of the district.

While another participant, John, did not share the same idea of starting at preschool he did share that, in his district, they "start the kids early in 7th grade…looking at the 4-year plan and… [have them] involved in their high school 4-year plan in middle school." Jeremy and Sandy echoed the idea of starting the process as soon as they are at the secondary level or are in 7th grade in their districts respectively. Jeremey also added that another big force behind the IEP development at his district was working to ensure the students' goals "all relate back to their transition—whether it be Math or Language Arts goals, they relate back to what their plan is for after school." This supports the suggestion by NTACT that the "educational program corresponds to specific goals" (Kohler et al., 2016, p. 4).

Planning strategies. The first important key to successful planning was determining whether the student was the first person in their family to go college. This impacted the strategic plan for that student, ensuring the necessary support and services were in position for them to complete a postsecondary education. A difficulty in achieving this focus, however, was that all the participants indicated an inability to identify their first-generation student

population since records were not kept and there was no system for tracking that information. Connie, shared this can be increasingly challenging since, often, "many families are still in a grieving process and trying to find out what having a disability means for their family or child." John, shared this is even more important when the student comes from a low-income family. He explained:

> If a child comes from a family that has no background in education and them, themselves, struggle with a disability, they might have the constitution to work hard and be someone that is compliant and comes ready to learn every day and may not have the materials and things but is mentally prepared …. But, it makes it a little tougher obviously if they don't have the background or expectations coming from the home.

Another factor, besides a student's first generation status, includes ensuring that any planning begins as early as possible for the individual. NTACT Taxonomy for Transition Planning (2016) states that any transition-focused planning for the student "begin no later than age 14" (p. 4). This factor also impacts student development in terms of the academic skill objective, noting that by the 9th grade students can understand what constitutes college-ready curriculum. Additionally, as will be described later, the data supports the NTACT Taxonomy that states when the family receives this information before the student turns 14, their engagement and empowerment increase, and they can assist their child to plan for a successful transition to a life beyond high school. These factors were supported by the responses of participants; all of whom mentioned they would begin discussing transitions for their student before they are 14 and in 9th grade. Some mentioned discussions of such a transition begins much earlier—even as early as pre-kindergarten. Sally shared, "transition planning begins at

the high school level in which seven areas of transitional planning are addressed." Connie, however, shared, "[her] district starts earlier than high school (age 13) with the career counselor teaching an 8th grade class discussing pre-vocational goals, career goals, and life choices. By age 14, these students begin to start to participate in job shadowing." Another participant, Dave, suggested they "encourage participation somewhere around 4th and 5th grade", while Jill suggested such transition begins even earlier. She stated, "You begin with the end in mind with every student you start working with." She explained this means, "transition does not just happen from secondary to postsecondary, but that it actually starts happening at the beginning of the student's school experience in pre-kindergarten." She added:

> That means we are thinking about this preschooler when they are 17 and 18 years old and moving out of the district and assessing if all these goals and all these skills they have been working on have all been for that one goal of them having a successful transition—and that is academia, that is social and that is emotional.

Jeremy indicated an interest in starting this process as early as possible, and he said that if costs were not an issue, then "[he] would add three or four people who would start as early as 6th grade by working with families on developing student goals for life after high school". This includes, according to NTACT (2016), ensuring that the planning process is student centered using things such as Making Action Plans (MAPS). Samantha, shared that, during planning, her district's transition coordinator tries to get at "what does the student think they are good at, what do they think they need help with, what do they think about the world of work and what they might like to do after they graduate?" She added they also, "ask about

what type of living arrangements they want to have after they graduate, such as living at home or having an apartment."

Student participation. There are several ways in which participant comments aligned with Kohler's taxonomy and its linking of certain aspects of student participation with an increase in student focused planning. The importance of student participation is evident in past research which has shown students with disabilities "are significantly less likely to attend the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting for transition planning, and when they do attend they are not actively involved in the development of their transition plan "(Shogren & Plotner, 2012, as cited in Lizotte, 2016, p. 17).

All the participants mention an effort by their transition planning teams to include students and family members. One participant, Cindy, talked about how their planning decisions are driven by students and their families. She mentioned that in her district they "really start to look at what are the possibilities of things they want to do by laying out the different option and they will need to get done for each option." She added, "students, themselves, are pretty involved even with their scores and assessments." This was echoed by Elaine, who said, "Students are involved in IEP planning and transition planning, choosing of classes and activities to participate."

Samantha commented that, if the student is confident enough, the student help run their own IEP meeting. This involves asking the students questions, which engage the student in the process. These include questions which are:

> trying to get what does this student think they are good at, what do they think they
>
> need help with, what do they think about the world of work and what they might like
>
> to do…[and] what type of living arrangements they want to have after they graduate…

[and whether] they want to live at home, have an apartment.

Matt commented about similar inquiries to students at his district and added that the primary purpose of this inquiry is "trying to teach [the students] to take ownership of their learning and trying to change the culture in which the school operates in".

Another goal identified for student focused planning was for the student to "evaluate their participation in the planning process and meeting" (*NTACT, Taxonomy for Transition*, 2016, p. 4). This was evident in the comments shared by Samantha regarding student participation in IEP meetings in her district. She commented that teachers in her district asked the students questions, such as, "What accommodations do you feel that you need and may not be provided?". Those on the IEP team were asked, "Do you feel these are appropriate still?". Matt, echoed the use of this type of evaluation. He shared,

one of the most amazing things his district finds when working their students in getting them involved is by sitting with those students and listening to what they have to say when asked things such as what they want to be when they grow up and what their aspirations in life.

Samantha noted that:

for some kids, it's just really encouraging for them to be there, and the special education teachers know which student is really going to struggle just to show up, so they do a lot of encouragement and explanation of what that meeting is about and how they want to hear their side of things. Also, prior to that meeting, [their] district will try to work with that individual to help that student identify what they are good at, what do they think they need help with, what do they think about the world of work and what they might like to do.

Student Development

The second major theme in the interviews centered around student development. This theme focused around six separate codes:

- Assessment,

- Academic skills,

- Life Skills,

- Employment and Occupational Skills,

- Student Supports, and

- Instructional Context.

Assessment. One of the suggestions to guide assessment by NTACT (2016) is for "career interest and aptitude assessments to be used to inform curricular and instructional decisions" (p. 5). Connie mentioned this as being an important part of student development when she shared that students at her district "are given the AIR inventory and Opportunity inventory and take a learning skills profile and are asked about what they want to do in five years." She added this assessment was also given to the parents to see "what they foresaw as possibilities for their children." Another suggestion involved using formative assessment data to drive academic instruction. John commented on how requiring students to take the SAT, ACT, or COMPASS has helped drive the curriculum and get both the students and the families more focused around the possibility of pursuing a postsecondary education. Jeremy described how his district used the results of a variety of transition assessments to provide indicators on students' skill sets and interest levels. He explained, "Their goals all relate back to their transition—whether it be their Math or Language Arts goals, they related back to what their plan is for after high school."

Another suggestion was the "use of alternate or non-formative assessments" (*NTACT, Taxonomy for Transition*, 2016, p. 5). Portfolios were suggested by two participants as a form of assessment that reinforces student development in terms of instructional context by recognizing and celebrating student accomplishments. Paula said her district has students develop a "Move-on Binder" through the guidelines laid out on the selected state's Training Clearing House website to assist schools in helping their students prepare for their lives after high school.

Jeremy talked about moving toward having students create a digital portfolio through a grant-based partnership with John Hopkins University. He believes this is important because people do not carry a three-ring binder around anymore. He adds that using a digital portfolio "really puts his district's students in a position to show how they really can be a quality student or a quality worker with their disability."

Life skills. Participants commented on developing students' self-determination skills by doing things such as setting goals, problem solving, decision making and learning, and practicing advocating for themselves.

Students…often transition to postsecondary education with very little knowledge of their own disability and what supports and assistance are needed. Such students also struggle to advocate for their needs. The inability to self-advocate, in part, results in alack of appropriate services for individuals [with disabilities] …at the postsecondary level (Getzel, 2008, as cited in Lizotte, 2016, p. 24).

Cindy shared that at her district staff tried to help students advocate for themselves after moving on from the secondary level. This was echoed by Dave when he spoke with a mom about her question concerning whether her son should attend the meeting. He told her

that it is only her son's life, so he thought it would be important for him to be there to make some decisions as well as to understand why the planning team was doing what they were. He added it would also help her son learn some self-determination skills, which will be critical once he leaves high school. Jill mentioned having made this goal of self-determination part of her district's state plan in NTACT.

Paula, however, shared the need for a life skills curriculum for all students with disabilities—including those with learning disabilities. She explained that, while some of her district's students with more severe disabilities need a life skills program, her district has found such a program has, in fact, become just as important--and probably more applicable— to students with learning disabilities. Kids with more serious disabilities, she explained, are going to have caretakers and will not have to be fully functional (even though the goal is to get them to be as close to fully functional as possible). She added that, while all kids with disabilities benefit from these skills, it was her students with learning disabilities who were really grasping the concepts and were the ones who were most likely to put these ideas into practice. She said that you think these skills would have been learned in their Language Arts classes, but somehow skills such as how to address an envelope, fill out an application, write a letter of interest in a job, use coupons, or read a menu have passed by them. These skills, therefore, are important to both students with severe disabilities and students with learning disabilities.

Employment and occupational skills. Another code identified as important to student development is employment and occupational skills. One of the NTACT (2016) suggestions is to develop occupation-specific skills provided in authentic settings such as onsite structured work experiences.

Paula shared that in her district, they work with a regional transition team, which has students select the area of work, then they arrange for that student to job shadow that type of work in an onsite setting for two to three hours. The students meet back together at the end of the day for pizza, and each student shares what they learned from their experience with other students and teachers.

Aiding the development of students' employment and occupational skills, John explained, supports a successful transition from secondary education to life beyond high school, including the possibility for completing postsecondary education. He stated:

> No kid knows necessarily what they want to do, whether they are first generation or fifth generation. A lot of kids are leaving high school not knowing what they want to do. Some kids figure that out in four years of college and some kids take a year or two off.

He added it was his "personal belief that if you are working, you will find a direction you want to go in or a direction you don't want to go in if you get tired of washing dishes or something like that." So, to John, promoting these types of skills supports a more successful transition for students beyond high school—including attending and completing postsecondary education. He added while the focus can be on completing a postsecondary education he would like to see more vocational tech classes, "like a kid welding, a small engine repair, or photography" or skill courses that would allow them to be "ski instructors or nurses" that way "when they went to school it would be more meaningful."

Jill, shared that one of the key struggles is helping parents and families understand completing a postsecondary education is critical for their child to secure any meaningful job upon graduating from high school. She stated that in her district's location in the selected state

there was "the mentality about education not being important" and it was very important in the "teaching of the parents that it is not like that anymore [and that] you have to have a diploma to get any sort of job these days." Paula also echoed this struggle stating that in her district they have "activities to encourage [the students] to go to college…but, unfortunately, the world of work and the need to earn money to support themselves or to support the families they are living with" takes precedent over the need to earn a college degree. She says in her area of the state the "need to get on the dairies and on the farms" comes before the need to complete a postsecondary objective.

Jeremey, shared that his district's move toward having students creating a digital portfolio about their strengths and weaknesses rather than a traditional portfolio is to better prepare them for the future jobs of tomorrow. He explained:

The reason that I'm very specific about it being digital is people don't carry a three-ring binder around anymore. Kids going in for job interviews if they are carrying a digital portfolio [then] that shows all of their skills that they have developed on their own that just demonstrates that I'm proficient at, I can do, I am quality at this...Whether it's a college interview or a job interview really puts them in a position to showcase what they know and it really puts them in a position to show how they really can be a quality student or a quality worker even with their disability and I just feel like that's somewhere we want to go.

Student supports. A key part of student development concerned student supports used to assist students in transitioning from secondary education. One of the goals identified by NTACT (2016) was for schools to provide information on postsecondary supports. Cindy's comments aligned with this suggestion. She shared that her district had "parent nights

especially with the financial aid and [helped in getting the students'] admission papers in order." She added, "one thing that is unique about [her] district was that anyone who graduates from [her] district qualifies for a scholarship."

Jill shared she currently sits "on the Northern Council for transition which is the only one in the state." She explained that "various organizations formed a transition council [with the purpose of] building better bridges and connections for [their district's students with special needs] when they are transitioning into postsecondary education in terms of two areas." The first area would be building a program for their students with intellectual disabilities to look at earning an associate degree. She added that "then they have [their] students who move into traditional postsecondary areas and…actually have more difficulties." She stated these were students with specific learning disabilities, mental health issues, mental health diagnoses, ADHD, and Autism." She explained that, "though they are very high functioning, they are falling through the cracks because they do not know how to self-advocate their voice." Some of the support she said her district would provide included "set[ting] up [students] with release [time] they want to do a tour [of a postsecondary institution]." This included arranging a meeting with "a counselor with disability services [from the institution]" as well.

Sue also commented on the importance of college tours. She explained her district felt "these [tours] are very important because [they] get those kids on campus and they get a little familiarity in that and they also visit with the office on disabilities at the campus, so they know where to get services."

Another type of specific transitional support program, the XYZ Transition team, was identified by Paula. This transition group included "representatives of the school districts, [the

state office of] health and welfare [and from] …Juvenile Justice. This program would work with a college [in the state] to put on what the college called College GPS." The goal of this program would be to "provide information and guidance to students on how to navigate [their] way to college, and then, once there, how to navigate the available disability services available to them because they have disabilities."

Vocational rehabilitation. All participants reported that Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) was instrumental in helping students transition onward from secondary education. Jeremy shared that his district "partners very closely with VR and [his district] has tons of summer placement and work experiences." He explained that his district has gone from "zero spots for students in VR in 2015 to well over 30 spots in 2017." He added his district's VR program "also has a summer program housed at the BSU campus and [a city where his district is] …sending students with learning disabilities to do a brief week or week and a half long college experience."

Sally, shared how her district's VR program worked with "the higher-level students, [whereas another program], called Community Partners, worked with the lower-level students who are intellectually challenged." She added, based on her current experience in [the selected state] and her experience in Oregon, she has noticed, "the parents hooked into VR are more likely to look at continued postsecondary education, whereas kids who are intellectually disabled who are hooked into a regional program to learn a trade are less likely to go onto a postsecondary education."

Jill, shared that her district was currently contracting with another support agency, Upward Leadership and Education, to provide the same experience VR provides. She

explained the plan involved piloting the program with nine students and "outlining the strengths and limitations and exposing [these students] to some different jobs."

While all participants shared VR's importance as a source of support, some smaller rural districts commented about how its presence was limited or nonexistent. John, for instance, shared that his district "could get [VR] in theory, but they don't come up here [to this part of the state]." Paula, shared her concern about the way in which VR access was limited for more rural parts of the state. She shared how she had become:

frustrated that last several years that the smaller districts around here who didn't have some special contract with VR did not get any counseling services at all. But if you bought into that…if the district spent money and bought into it then they would show up and be much more engaged.

She added that because of this she "would much rather have people working with kids then waiting for the possibility of VR to show up." These comments indicate that within the selected state of this study, commitment by the agency VR to the rural or suburban locations varies greatly compared to the more urban settings.

TRIO. While there was a strong presence of VR in assisting students at the secondary level transition into a life beyond high school, which included completing a postsecondary education, the participants indicated a minimal involvement by TRIO in that process. Only one participant, Jeremy – who represented the largest district in this study, indicated the presence of a TRIO program. He shared that "over the years [he] would guess some of the students with learning disabilities… that hasn't been the focus." Conversely, Matt, who represented the smallest district in this study, shared that he "never heard of the TRIO program and [his district] not been involved to [his] knowledge." He added how he thought:

one of the challenges [his district] has being a real small rural school district is that you get OK on a lot of things but never get great at one thing. Lots of time you don't know about something because you don't spend all your time in that field.

However, all participants demonstrated an interest in learning more about TRIO with the prospect of getting their districts linked to services it might offer. One participant, Connie, stated she "would like to know more about TRIO as it applies for students with disabilities" and asked, "where could [she] find out more information" about TRIO? Cindy, shared how she "would love to learn more about college coordinators for TRIO… [and she thought] …it would get others going through." Jill also shared that while her district did not "have a TRIO program…she would love to learn more about it."

Instructional content. The next code identified for student-focused planning centers around instructional context. NTACT (2016) suggests instruction should embed Universal Design for Learning. Connie supported this concept when she mentioned "Universal Design for Learning was a concept that [she] has worked on for several years and is starting to make a reality" at her district.

Another suggestion (rigorous and relevant instruction) was reflected in some of the participants responses. One participant, Dave, shared that while his district does not "deliver the 'Cadillac' model…they [do] try to provide more than the minimum." Jeremy, spoke toward making instruction both rigorous and relevant in terms of how his district used technology with their students. He stated how in his district they "do not have laptops just sitting around in every classroom [but that they instead] have them assigned out per student." He explained that in his district this means, "the student gets that laptop in August and its theirs throughout the end of the year. In Middle School and High School its Windows

oriented and the Elementary it is an IPAD environment." He added that it is designed this way, "so by the time the kid moves all the way through [the district's] system [the students] will be fully capable in either one of those."

Matt, also echoed the need to maintain rigor, noting that the previous year saw the first student with a learning disability graduate from their high school. He shared how his district "did not lower the expectations but, in fact, tried to keep the expectations high and the student was still capable of taking AP [Advanced Placement] courses." He explained that while the student "struggled and had a hard time [his district] …still maintained those high expectations of this individual to prepare for the real world." He added this rigor was relevant since "often the real world doesn't adjust to the expectations of this student like they received in school, Elaine, also mentioned the impact technology had on instruction, particularly in a much smaller district where funding for particular services might not be as readily available. She explained since:

> this is a rural area [she] is not going to be able to hire someone to dictate or take notes. So, if I could get more technology, where the student can carry a personal device around then they dictate into it to do their papers or record the teacher's lecture to refer to, [then] that 's fantastic.

She added this use of technology, where students can dictate to a computer or have a voice read the screen, has been remarkable for her district's kids with learning disabilities who want to access college. In her words, since "most of my district's population is going to be learning disabled," this is an area she would like to further expand if funding was not a limitation.

Participants shared what they perceived to be strengths to both large districts as well as to smaller districts. Matt noted, in his smaller rural district where there are 20 kids in

kindergarten through 6th grade with 1 teacher, the setting "really forces the teacher to deliver the instruction to the kid where they are actually at." He added this type of instruction allows the teacher "to keep the students intellectually engaged and keep pushing them with high expectations." Jeremy, however, shared what he believed to be the strengths of a larger district. he acknowledged, because of his district's size, his role was "pretty operational and didn't't include a lot of direct hands-on with students," it did enable him to hire several consulting teachers who could help him micromanage, and it provided an increased specialization and focus, ensuring that instruction of the students meets their needs.

Family Engagement

The third major theme derived from the interviews centered around family engagement. This theme focused on three separate codes:

- family preparation,

- family involvement, and

- family empowerment.

Family preparation. The first code addressed the need for districts to better prepare not only the student for their transition into postsecondary education but also the family. This is of concern when the parents do not see the importance of obtaining a postsecondary education. One of the suggestions was to better prepare families by helping them set higher expectations for their kids. Jill described this challenge when she shared how her district had "a huge population in [the] Northern [part of the state] that have the mentality about education not being important…" It is very much like this in the South, where she grew up in the Appalachian and Blue Ridge Mountains, and where people only went up to 8th grade. Parents in this area question the value of high school when you still can get a job without it. She

added this is where they had to teach the parents it is not like that anymore and you must get a diploma to get any sort of job these days. Paula also shared her district's challenge in this area. She said for students in her district, "unfortunately, the world of work and the need to earn money to support themselves or to support the families they are living with" overshadows the desire to pursue a postsecondary education. She added how, for her students, the priority is to "get on the dairies and to get on the farms." She explained that she thought:

> parents would be supportive of having their kids fulfill their desire to go to college, but the reality is the money is not there. And, so that's why it's always going to work first and then pursue that dream later, but a lot of time that dream doesn't get pursued.

> As noted under *Planning Strategies* above, John pointed out the way poverty and first generation status compound the student's challenges. Background and family expectations can create a struggle for the student. Similarly, Jeremy, who worked for the largest district represented in this study, shared how the impact of family poverty on high expectations was universal regardless of the size of the district or the number of students it serves. Despite its size, his district was poor in terms of demographics, and its richest elementary school had a 44% poverty rate. He linked his district's poverty to the lack of families with college graduates.

Another code of family preparation concerns preparing the parent to better understand the needs associated with their child's disability. NTACT (2016) suggests there be family learning and preparation provided for the transition-related planning process. Connie claimed this process begins by getting the parents to better understand their child's needs. Because, as she noted, many families are still experiencing grief over their child's disability. Connie stated that "it is a process to make families understand that their child has rights to a differentiated

curriculum and accommodations." Sue shared how, for her district, hosting a transition fair was a great way to "get parents more involved." They hold these fairs annually and invite "representatives from the colleges and from whatever service that student may need to get ready for postsecondary education." John added that preparing the family to support the student away from school "because it makes it a little tougher obviously if they don't have the background or expectations at home."

Family involvement. An additional code under the theme of family engagement was family involvement. One of the suggestions for family involvement by NTACT (2016) is for families to participate in the entire transition planning program, including student assessment and decision making. Past research has shown the importance of the involvement of the family particularly in the Hispanic culture (Chen, Blankenship, Austin, Cantu, & Kotbungkair, 2016; Graf et al. 2007; Peppas, 2006). In Cindy's district, she shared that this included having "parent nights during which they help the parents with things such as financial aid applications as well as other college admission papers." Matt added that, in addition to informing the parent at these types of meetings, the district was also hoping to provide the parent what they can do at home now with that student. Connie said in her district, parents are being "given the same inventories and are interviewed about what they foresee as possibilities for their children." Dave explained, since his district was a Title I district, they were "required to have family outreach and to make parents aware of the process." He added this included having Title I informational meetings and a math night. His district also sends reports, including progress reports, because they want parents to stay informed about their children. John also mentioned the importance of getting the word out to keep parents involved. His district used school newsletters in addition to back-to-school night meetings.

Sally added a key aspect to increasing parental involvement was "calling the parents first, prior to the meeting, and asking them when they wanted to come in, and then scheduling them." She stated this is important because it allows both the parent and the teacher to avoid scheduling conflicts.

An additional suggestion of family involvement by NTACT (2016) is for families to participate in program policy development. In Jill's district, family evaluation is a big part of program development and improvement. Two years ago, her district did a parent survey, and they continually ask for feedback. She added her district takes what the parents say very seriously "because they know their children best and working as a team with parents is extremely important."

Family empowerment. A third code associated with family engagement concerns family empowerment. John shared that since districts such as his are using federal money, parents have a legal right to be involved. Matt also spoke about how such empowerment is often tied to the type of culture that exists at the school. He explained it comes down to whether you have established a culture of low expectations or high expectations, where everyone can do their work and going to college and contributing to society. "If the latter is the culture you created at the school," he explained, "then people will do whatever is necessary to help those kids be successful." Another way NTACT (2016) suggests families are empowered is by assisting them with helping their child apply for and complete the necessary paperwork to enroll in college. Cindy's district worked with both the student and families to help them register and prepare any necessary paperwork so, by the end of graduating from high school, they are "all done and ready to go." Elaine shared how in her district, they work with Vocational Rehabilitation to ensure their students relate to a college

counselor as well as the representative for the college's student support services. Jill echoed this, noting her district not only signed up their students for campus tours, but would make sure the tour included a face-to-face meeting between the student and the student's family and a counselor with disability services.

Financial Considerations

The fourth major theme derived from the interviews focused on financial considerations--i.e., cost factors that affect support resources for students in transition from secondary to postsecondary education. These considerations also include the issue of affording a postsecondary education. This theme encompassed four codes: cost, geography, external funding, and district size.

Cost for services and support considerations. The first code discussed by the participants concerned what they would like to do if funding was not a limitation. Connie shared that in her district she would expand the number of "opportunities to work in the community …and learn about working as well as increasing the number of opportunities for students to visit college [and] to interview professors." Cindy, shared, "the biggest thing [for students in her district was] having access to help, whether it be before, after, or during school with either teachers or paraprofessionals." In her school setting, if cost was not an issue, then she would increase the number of staff available to assist students whenever they needed help since she believed this is "probably the biggest thing they need support with and has had a positive effect."

Elaine, commented that if she had extra funds to expand her district's services, she would focus on increasing her technology budget—and specifically to include technology which assists students in dictating and notetaking. She explained that,

because they are a rural district, [she] was not able to hire qualified individuals to

dictate or take notes for students, so giving them a portable personal device they could

dictate into for papers or with which they could record the teacher's lecture was

something that [she] thought would make the biggest difference for her students.

John, suggested how if funding was not an issue, he would probably widen the scope to

include vocational technology and offer such experiences as a kid welding a small engine, or

photography.

Jill, shared that in her district she would use additional funding to build a very

intentional special education program driven by transition as well as to hire a person who

would carry this out. Such a program would be built around the concept that, although

preschoolers do not transition into life beyond high school, everyone still thinks about these

preschool students "when they are 17 and 18 years [old] and move out of the district." Here

the line of thinking involves asking whether all the goals and skills they have been working

on are aligned with the one primary goal of a successful transition for these students not only

academically but socially and emotionally as well. Paula talked about the challenge of

providing the same services as a larger urban district with a bigger budget. Her idea to address

the issue of budgetary limitations would be to pool her resources along with the resources of

other small rural districts close by in the form of a collective co-op for transition resources

accessible to all the contributing districts.

If money was not an issue, Sally would hire a transition coach, so her students could

have an opportunity for a multitude of experiences before they get to the 12th grade. She

added the current transition from middle school to high school was not strong enough to keep

kids in school because no agency gets involved unless a child is severely disabled, and if they

are too rigorously involved, they provide nothing for the parents. There is nothing in between. Samantha also stated that with additional funding, she would like to focus on making her district's current transition coordinator a full-time position from its current 0.6 part-time status.

Sue stated that she would also like to have a coordinator for her district's students but that the person would act more as a mentor in terms of helping them through the steps, including: getting into school, making sure they register for the correct courses, finding housing, getting around, and, at least through the first several weeks, feeling comfortable on campus. This would include helping arrange homework help once they are at the college. Jeremy said he would hire additional staff so they could start the transition of student planning for students as early as 6th grade. Additionally, he said he would work to expand the digital portfolio program.

Financial assistance for a postsecondary education. Responses given by participants concerning cost were influenced by the district's proximity to a large population center. The size of the student population at the district was also a factor. However, representatives from all districts, even the largest, mentioned poverty or low income were factors in helping prepare both students and their families to envision the pursuit and successful completion of a postsecondary education.

Scholarships were mentioned by some of the participants as a to help their students fund a postsecondary education. Cindy mentioned, "one thing unique about [her] district was that anyone who graduates from their school district qualifies for a scholarship." This included making sure this information was shared at parent nights to family members as well as taking time to guarantee the necessary forms are completed by the student to "get them set

up for scholarships." Elaine said her students also received scholarships to attend and complete a postsecondary education from the revenue created by the Native American tribe the district served. The importance of involvement and assistance was emphasized in a sad story shared by Samantha, who stated that she heard a story of one student who had not properly accepted a scholarship award and, as a result, lost it.

Follow-Up Questions

Participants were emailed three follow-up questions upon the notice of the delivery of their Starbucks gift cards for their wilingness to contribute and particpate in this study. Follow-up questions reflected the themes, implications, and the future recommendations based on the results from this study's initial questions. The first question asked the participants to rank the main themes in terms of their importantce in the process of improving transitional services and supports for those with learning disabilities who seek to go on to a postsecondary education. The second question followed with asking the participants to describe the impact of this type of study, and any future studies, on special education directors, students with learning disabilities, parents of students with learning disabilities, school districts and post secondary instiutitons. The third question concluded by eliciting feedback from the participants on what they believed would be the most helpful type of suggested follow-up study toward continuing the conversation on transitional services and supports for students with learning disabilities who seek to go onto a postsecondary education.

Each participant who was emailed these questions was also notified by phone explaining the follow-up questions as well as the gift cards distributed via email to each participant to make sure both were received and neither was accidentally placed in the

recipient's junk mail folder by mistake. In a few cases it was discovered the gift cards given out to the participants were placed inadverntly in these folders. Once identified, assurances were given to these participants that either the gift card would be redistributed or a new gift card would be purchased and sent to them in recognition of their willingness to participate in the study. No new gift cards, however, were presented for the follow-up questions. It is unknown whether or not offering additional cards would have motived more participants to complete the follow-up questions.

Only a few participants responded: these included Matt, Jeremy, John, Elaine and Jill. Two other participants, Dave and Paula, no longer served in their previous positions and had the follow-up questions instead emailed to their respective new emails.

The results of the first follow-up question showed some variation on how the participants ranked the importance of each of the four main themes identified in the data from this study. Jill and Jeremy ranked the importance of these (most importance to least important) as (1) student focused planning; (2) family engagement, (3) student development, and (4) financial considerations. Matt, in contrast, ranked the same themes as (1) student development, (2) family engagement, (3) student focused planning, and (4) financial considerations. John, another participant, offered an additional sequence of importance of these themes with the following: (1) student focused planning; (2) financial considerations; (3) student development; and (4) family engagement. Finally, Elaine listed these themes in yet another variation with (1) Financial considerations; (2) Family engagement; (3) student focused planning; and (4) student development.

Regarding the results of the second question there were also variations in the responses given. Elaine and John responded that they were not sure how to answer this

question. Jill responded that this study, and any future studies, will provide an awareness and foundation of the key areas that need to be addressed and implemented so districts can develop and implement successful transition programs. Matt responded that he truly believes every educator, family member, college, etc. have the best interest of all students in mind. He identified the problem as differing ideas among statkeholders on how that may look. Matt believes evidence is needed which shows what works best for students with disabilities. He stated, "that is very difficult because each students' disability is often unique". Matt also stated his believe that studies "offer a limited view" and for various disabilities no studies are available. He described how those in his position are often pioneers who must persevere "to do whatever is best for each student" without retribution because the new approach failed. Jeremy responded that studies such as this provide information/data that directors, school districts, parents and students can use to help plan. Having a solid plan and then working the plan is the key to success. He stated, "it is imperative that as school systems we continue to study our current systems and use the information gained from those studies to improve modify and in some cases revamp the systems altogether. Thanks for the opportunity to be involved."

There was also variation in what each participant thought would be helpful future study toward continuing the conversation on transitional services and supports for students with learning disabilities who seek to go onto a postsecondary education. Elaine and Jill both thought the most useful follow up study would explore ways to increase the awareness and understanding of the TRIO program at the secondary level and to identify ways which better link supports that students receive from agencies, such as VR, at the secondary level with similar student supports provided at the postsecondary level by TRIO organizations, student

support services, and Upward Bound. Elaine, Jill and Matt all thought what would be most useful would be a study that focuses on identifying how a district's size, geographic location, and status as urban, suburban, or rural impacts both the quantity and the quality of supports and services provided to students with learning disabilities—particularly those who are first generation. Jill also stated another useful study would be one that is conducted on researching directors of support agencies, such as VR and to gain their perspectives on how they view their role in providing transitional support and services to students with learning disabilities. Jeremy did not respond to the third question and John said he would need to see the results of the study to properly select which type of study would be the most useful in furthering the discussion.

Unique Contributions of the Study

While there have been past studies concerning students, who are first in their families to go to college and studies concerning students with learning disabilities, there has been little research analyzing the supports and services school districts are providing to students who are both first in their families to go to college and have learning disabilities. While NTACT provides an excellent starting point to create areas of focus for transition planning for students with disabilities, it does not take into consideration some areas of heightened need for students who are first in their families to go college. Family engagement is important to all students with disabilities whose plan after high school is to complete a postsecondary education. The importance of this engagement becomes critical for those who are first in their families to go to college since their families do not possess the experience of going to college which my impact guiding their child in making this transition.

One unique study finding was that smaller rural districts were not able to provide the same type of services as a larger urban district due to financial considerations limiting the type of resources available to assist that district. This highlights an area where the state or federal government can work toward ensuring each student, regardless of where they attend school, will have the same type of resources to successfully complete a postsecondary education. Findings suggest smaller districts can try collectively pooling their reserves to offer similar types of resources a larger more urban district might be able to offer.

Summary

The purpose of the present study was to investigate transition and support provided by a northwestern state's regional special education directors to students who are both the first in their families to go to college and who have a learning disability. Although each of the 12 participants represented different districts in terms of geographic region and size of student population, their experiences could be described in four major themes. These four major themes were: (a) student focused planning, (b) student development, (c) family engagement, and (d) budgetary limitations. Chapter Five describes the implications of this study, results related to special education directors, students with learning disabilities—particularly those who are first in their families to go to college, and families of these students with learning disabilities.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this case study was to discover how state regional disability directors in the northwestern United States are creating successful transition plans for students who have a learning disability and are the first in their families to attend postsecondary institutions. This exploration focused on state regional disability directors to understand how they provided support and services to students with learning disabilities who aspired to go onto college and may not have the family support toward achieving that objective. This inquiry was based on a conceptual framework involving NTACT's Taxonomy for Transition Planning 2.0 (2016). Past research has shown "the impact of transition focused education is greatly enhanced when service systems and programs connect and support the implementation and application of such learning" (NTACT, 2016, p. 2).

Study results were supported by various forms of documentation. One such document was the report prepared by (IES) Institute of Educational Sciences: (NCEE) National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance. The NCEE,

> conducts unbiased large-scale evaluations of education programs and practices supported by federal funds; provides research-based technical assistance to educators and policymakers; and supports the synthesis and the widespread dissemination of the results of research and evaluation throughout the United States (IES, 2017, p. i).

This organization published a report entitled, "Preparing for life after high school: The characteristics and experience of youth in special education", in which it presented comparisons across disability groups based on the findings from the 2012 National Longitudinal Study. The National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS), completed in 2012, "describes the backgrounds of [nearly 13,000] secondary school youth and their functional

abilities, activities in school and with friends, academic supports received from schools and parents, and preparation for life after high school" (IES, 2017, p. i). Past research by Lizotte (2016) has demonstrated "The National Longitudinal Study-2 (NLTS2), a U.S. Department of Education longitudinal study about the secondary and postsecondary experiences of students from all 12 federal disability categories" (p. 22) has been informative and offers insights into challenges students face with disabilities in transitioning into higher education.

One finding from this study particularly relevant to supports and services for prospective first generation students with specific learning disabilities was that only 23% of the parent of this child (or parent's spouse) had a four-year college degree or higher (IES, 2017, p. viii). Conversely, this meant that 77% of students with specific learning disabilities were potentially the first in their families to go to college. Another relevant finding was that there was a lower percent of parents (67%) expecting their child would obtain a postsecondary education compared to the percentage of the child of those parents (79%) who expected that they would go on to completing a postsecondary education (IES, 2017, p. xxxii).

Additional information was gathered from the (NCES) National Center for Educational Statistics from various recent reports they have published. The NCES, according to the US Department of Education, is:

> the primary federal entity for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data related to education in the United States… It fulfills a congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report full and complete statistics on the condition of education in the

United States; conduct and publish reports and specialized analyses of the meaning

and significance of such statistics; assist state and local education agencies in

improving their statistical systems… (NCES 2016-144, 2016, p. ii).

A recent report entitled, The Condition of Education 2016, examined:

43 key indicators on important topics and trends in U.S. education. These indicators

focus on population characteristics, such as educational attainment and economic

outcomes; participation in education at all levels; and several contextual aspects of

education, including international comparisons, at both the elementary and secondary

education level and the postsecondary education level (NCES. 2016, p.iii).

Findings included, "the number of children and youth ages 3-21 receiving special education

services was 6.5 million, or about 13 percent of all public-school students...[and] among

students receiving special education services, 35 percent had specific learning disabilities"

(NCES 2016-144, 2016, p. 96). This meant that, according to the study, "in school year 2013-

14, a higher percentage of children and youth ages 3-21 received special education services

under IDEA for specific learning disabilities than for any other type of disability" (NCES

2016-144, 2016, p. 96). Yet, despite these supports and services, "the U.S. Department of

Education, National Center for Education Statistics [found that] in the United States, students

without disabilities graduate [from high school] at a rate of 84.8 percent, compared to 63.1

percent of students with disabilities, a gap of more than 21 percent points" (Kohler, Gothberg,

and Coyle, 2017, p. 170).

This study also explored the impact of financial considerations concerning the

districts' ability to provide academic as well as financial support to enable students with

learning disabilities to pursue and complete a postsecondary education. Specifically, this

study sought to answer the question: How do special education directors describe services and interventions used within their district to assist first generation college students with disabilities in their transition from secondary to postsecondary education? This chapter discusses a summary of results, implications, and recommendations for future research and conclusions.

Summary of Results

Four themes were discovered concerning the responses given by the participants that related to relevant literature and to the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) 2.0 Taxonomy (2016), as well as to the ideas of John Rawls (2001) concerning cost and fairness. These themes also were like the past research by Orr and Hamming (2009) identifying the lack of transition support and understanding of how instructional staff can help those with disabilities who pursue a postsecondary education. Themes included: student focused planning, student development, family engagement, and financial considerations. These themes are discussed in the same order as they were presented in Chapter Four. When possible, the themes are also discussed in relation to articles cited in the literature review to show connections between the findings and existing research.
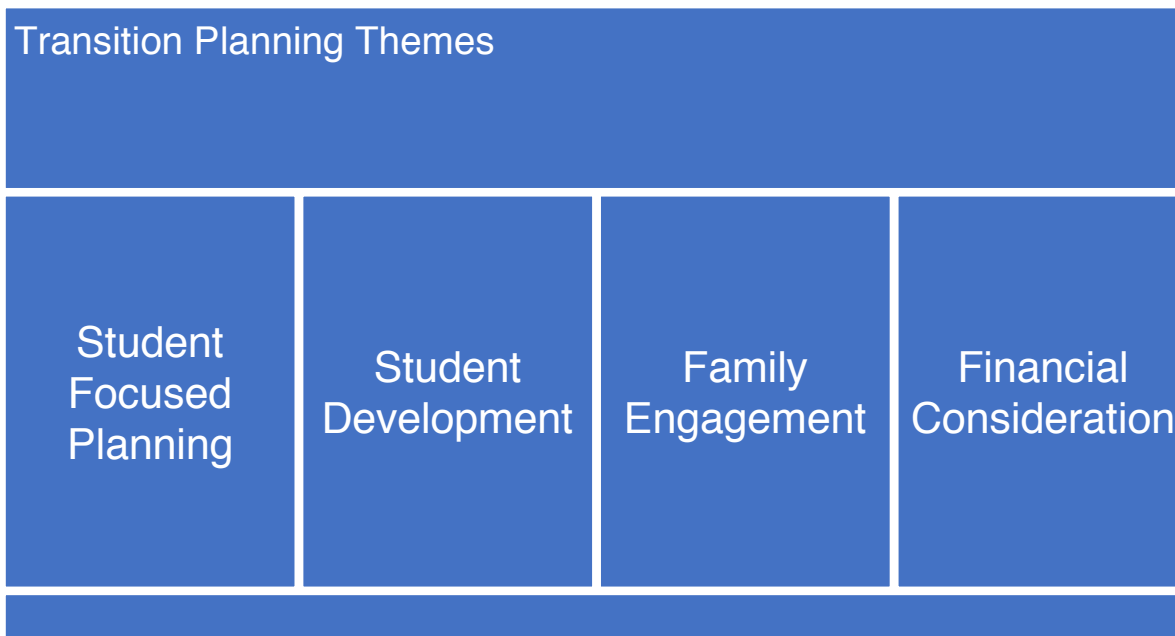
Figure 5.1 Transition Planning Themes

Student Focused Planning

Literature and the NTACT 2.0 Taxonomy (2016) discuss the need for increasing the level of student involvement in their own planning for a successful transition into a life beyond high school—including the possibility of pursuing a postsecondary education. The focus here is on "the 'big picture' details of what needs to happen for a student to be prepared for transition from school to postsecondary settings" (Kohler et al., 2017, p. 174).

IEP development. A key in planning strategies exists with the actual creation and construction of an individualized educational plan for each student (Finn & Kohler, 2010). Planning and focus on designing a plan that is responsive to both the student's academic and transitional goals should begin early and not be initiated when the student reaches high school. It should begin much earlier when they start junior high school or even as early as preschool. As one of the participants, Jill, pointed out, any goal written into the IEP should

> begin with the end in mind with every student start working with. That means [those

who are part of the IEP development, whether be teachers, parents, psychologists,

counselors or administrators] are thinking about this preschooler when they are 17 or

18 years old and moving out of the district.

This means that IEP goals become triangulated goals in that every goal written into the plan

should "be related to transition [and] if annual goals do not clearly support postsecondary

success, their value to the IEP must be questioned" (Peterson, Burden, Sedaghat, Gothberg,

Kohler, & Coyle, 2013, p. 56).

Planning strategies. Another pretext to any transition planning for prospective

students with learning disabilities to prepare a path which includes the possibility of

completing a postsecondary education needs to begin with assessing whether these

individuals are the first in their families to go to college. Past research (Hadley, 2007; Tucker,

2014;) has shown that first generation students with a disability face additional concerns when

attending college, presenting challenges beyond those encountered by an individual because

of their learning disability. Therefore, it is extremely important students at school districts be

identified in this manner. This study found very limited information in the districts involved

concerning identification of students as first generation.

Another factor, associated with focusing the planning around the student, was to

ensure the student be involved in the planning process as early as possible—including as early

as the first time the student attends school in preschool. Past research of students with

disabilities has demonstrated that "educators should make sure that their students… are made

aware of postsecondary opportunities as early as possible and include this goal in the

student's IEP" (Lizotte, 2016, p. 19).

NTACT (2016) reinforces this finding in its call for the transition planning process to

start no later than the age of 14. It makes no sense students be counseled in their junior year (11th grade) on what constitutes a college-ready curriculum because by then, whatever work they have done in school will already predetermine whether they have developed the necessary academic skills which are prerequisite for a postsecondary education. All participants mentioned their districts were already beginning this process well before the student's freshman year in high school. Two of the participants, both of whom are members of the only NTACT transition team in the state, indicated a desire to start a transition as early as possible. One participant, Jeremy, said if cost were not an issue, he would hire three or four more people to start the process as early as the 6th grade. Jill, another participant, even suggested that transition start when the students start their experience in pre-kindergarten.

Additionally, NTACT (2016) suggests this type of transitional planning should also be coupled with family support. While the participants were not easily able to identify their population of first generation students, they all mentioned how important parents can be to a transition plan that leaves open the possibility of pursuing a postsecondary education. This will be discussed in greater detail under the theme of family engagement.

Student participation. Another way NTACT (2016) suggests increasing student involvement is by improving the ways in which students participate in their own transition out of high school. This includes ensuring the "planning team includes student and family members and [that] self-determination is facilitated within this process" (*Taxonomy for Transition*, 2016, p. 4). Previous research (Belch, 2004) focused on the importance of student participation. Belch (2004) found that student involvement and self-determination played a key role in the educational success for students with disabilities.

One participant, Cindy, commented how, when laying out options for the student, "the

students themselves are pretty involved in the process." Other participants mentioned additional acts of involvement, including not only attending but also actively participating in their students' IEP meetings by helping lead the meetings with introductions, as well as by delivering PowerPoint presentations and sharing both traditional and digital portfolios. This also included evaluating their IEP goals and objectives. Paula, shared this included assessing their IEP goals and commenting on whether these goals were still appropriate. All participants discussed ways to afford students more ownership in their own transition process. The need for student engagement in their transition process was supported by past research showing that while 50% of students found support and services at the postsecondary level helpful, only 24% of these students received these accommodations, in part because they did not know how to disclose their disability and advocate for help (Newman et al., 2011; Newman & Madaus, 2015; Newman, Madaus, & Javitz, 2016).

Student Development

The second major theme concerned actions taken, such as assessment, instruction, and support, to develop the appropriate skills students need to transition to a life beyond secondary education. To promote these skills, ensuring support for them through the assistance of programs and agencies as well as through the delivery of instruction was suggested. Kohler et al. (2017) explained that "this taxonomy area can be described as what should happen on a day-to-day basis for a student with disabilities in high school" (p. 174).

Assessment. NTACT (2016) suggests assessment as one way to better develop the skills students need to have the possibility to successfully transition into a life beyond high school with a possibility of postsecondary study. This includes taking actions which ensures "career interest and aptitude assessments are [being] used to inform curricular and

instructional decisions" (*Taxonomy for Transition*, 2016, p. 5). Connie, shared evidence of this practice. Part of her district's assessment includes measuring student aspiration by asking what the student wants to be doing five years after graduating from high school. Another suggestion made by both Paula and Jeremy was the use of alternate assessment in the form of both non-digital and digital portfolios, which also reflect the skills the students will need both in the workforce as well as in college.

Life skills. Another code impacting student development was the types of non-academic life, social, and emotional skills students with disabilities need to make a successful transition beyond high school—including transition into postsecondary education. While the participants' comments did not mention the necessity for the student to develop social or emotional skills, there was considerable feedback given on the need for students to develop life skills. One of the ways toward attaining these life skills, discussed by NTACT (2016), was in "self-determination skills development, which included things such as goal setting, decision-making, problem solving, and self-advocacy" (p. 5). Despite the stated important of skills of self-determination and self advocacy data has sown there is still need for improvement of these skills for students. Newman and Madaus (2015), for instance, point out that "data from the National Longitudinal Study—2 reports that only 35% of the students with disabilities who attended any type of postsecondary school self-disclosed the disability to the institution" (p. 208). These findings were supported by comments by participants in the current study. Paula shared how life skills were not just something those with more serious disabilities benefited from. She shared, on the contrary, "students who seemed to benefit the most from learning these skills were those with learning disabilities". These skills included, according to Paula, "how to address an envelope, write a letter of interest in a job, how to use

coupons, or how to read a menu." Although she did not identify these students as being first generation, past research has shown that many students who are the first in their families to graduate may not possess these skills, thus causing them to be less prepared and therefore, less successful in a possible transition into postsecondary education (Tucker, 2014).

Occupational skills. Another skill set identified by NTACT (2016) as being important to student development concerned job and career skills. While there was not much emphasis by the participants on student employment, there were comments that supported the need to develop occupational skills. Many participants spoke about job shadowing opportunities for students. One participant, John, mentioned how, "even though this study's focus was postsecondary education, he felt there should still be some emphasis on providing students with skills they will need to perform specific types of work".

Student supports. An area that NTACT (2016) has previously identified with student development concerns the type of supports used to help students with disabilities in their transition to a life after high school. One way to do this, according to NTACT (2016), is through "information given on postsecondary education supports" (p. 6). Several of the participants shared the importance of supports, such as college tours and financial aid, as important in providing transitional support to students with disabilities. All participants talked about the role external agencies play in providing this support. One of the key codes of support they all spoke about was the role of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) in assisting the district to provide student supports. However, while there was considerable dialogue by the participants concerning the importance of VR in the transition process, there was minimal, if any, acknowledgment of how TRIO was having a similar impact on the services and support that students received at the secondary level.

Instructional context. Another code that was discussed by participants was the circumstances for which instruction was delivered to support students. NTACT (2016) suggests instruction be both "rigorous and relevant to the student" (p. 6). Participants identified technology as one way to fulfill this suggestion. Jeremy also discussed how technology was changing the way in which instruction was being delivered. He shared, for instance, how assigning laptops for students to use both in and out of the classroom has made it possible to move to a digital format for all textbooks and work submitted.

Family Engagement

The data collected in the current study support NTACT's (2016) finding about the importance of family engagement. The codes associated with family engagement included family preparation, family involvement, and family empowerment. This area, Kohler et al. (2017) explains, is designed to "increase the ability of family members to work effectively with educators and other service providers and vice-versa…. anchored by the fact that families have first-hand and critical knowledge of what works and what doesn't for their student" (Kohler et al., 2017, p. 175).

Family preparation. The first code participants discussed was family preparation; noting the importance of preparing families for the prospect of their child attending college by providing information to the parents about the benefits a college education assuring them they can assist their child in successful completion of a postsecondary education. This was important since many of the students came from families where there was a greater emphasis on work first--and only after work, a possibility for college. Past research demonstrated preparing parents to support their child in their pursuit of completing a postsecondary education has had a meaningful impact on their child's ability to complete higher education

(Doren et al., 2012). In this study, participants described helping parents see the value of a good college because it can lead to meaningful career occupations.

Family involvement. Participants shared ways they sought to include parents and family members in helping assist students in their transition for a life beyond high school— including completing a postsecondary education. Past research has shown how family involvement played a role in helping those students who were the first in their families to go to college (Chartand, 1992; Lombardi, Murray, & Gerdes, 2012). In this study, participants shared how hosting parent nights, circulating school news correspondence, and meeting face-to-face with the parents routinely helped involve parents and other family members beyond the annual IEP meeting. These efforts also helped provide valuable support to their students— particularly those parents with limited or no education and those families who were low-income.

Family empowerment. Another key to increasing family engagement in the transition process of students beyond high school was empowering parents with the ability to play active roles in helping their child make a successful transition. One of the ways suggested was for districts to help families ensure their child completed the necessary paperwork to attend and complete college. Also, they reinforced the need to make sure schools were working with both the student and their families--and that they started this process of providing information before the age of 14. As mentioned in the student participation section, participants indicated a desire to start this process before the age of 14 and as early as when the student first goes to school in prekindergarten. Simmons (2011) suggests things, such as:

discussions between parents and children about school events and encouragement

from parents to prepare for [college entrance exams as well as seeking out] assistance

from the school to a student in preparing college applications [and] to learn about
financial aid opportunities (p. 230).

Financial Considerations

The fourth code identified as important to the transition process by the participants
involved financial considerations concerning the cost for services and support. This includes
the cost of securing the financial means for the student to attend and complete a
postsecondary education. These codes were examined in relation to the theoretical
perspectives of John Rawls' (2001) Theory of Justice.

Cost for services and support considerations. The first code concerned supports and
services that districts would seek to expand if cost was not a limitation. Burleson (2011) has
shown the need to move beyond simple cost-market analysis when looking to identify ways
which better support those with learning disabilities—particularly those who are also first
generation students. Code identified for expansion include providing additional
paraprofessional staff, increasing areas for instructional intervention, and hiring additional
staff to start the transition process earlier. The most common code for expansion was to hire
an individual or individuals (depending on the size of the district) to oversee the student
transition process.

Factors that significantly influenced the types of services offered and provided to
students for any given district were its size and proximity to a large population center. Those
participants from districts which were larger and closer to a population center were able to
provide more students with supports, such as VR. Paula, even suggested creating a
cooperative of services so smaller districts would have the same access to resources as the
larger districts. On the other hand, the study found that smaller districts were in a better

position to provide specialized services and support to each student since their caseload was much smaller than those serviced and supported by larger districts.

Financial assistance for a postsecondary education. Another code that participants identified as important for students to pursue and complete a postsecondary education was in securing the necessary funding. This reflects past research by Bagnato (2004) identifying difficulties in securing assistance for those with disabilities. In this study, two participants indicated their district was able to provide scholarships to all their students for postsecondary education. The other participants noted they offered opportunities for both the student and the parent to secure financial assistance to complete the objective. For many of the districts, this did not just mean identifying possible sources of financial assistance, but also assisting the students in filling out and completing any necessary paperwork associated with funding as well as meeting with and building connections with the higher education institutions' financial assistance representatives. This would help ensure the students would not lose such assistance and forfeit the opportunity to complete their goal of higher education because of a lack of funding.

<div align="center">

Think College Standards

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The results of this study not only echoed many of the ideas presented by NTACT (2016) but also reflected many of the standards established by the Think College for transition planning for students with disabilities. While the Think College program's focus is on intellectual disabilities and on dual enrollment, many of the quality indicators which the program identifies are universal for all students with disabilities who seek to complete a postsecondary education, including those with learning disabilities. This study's findings aligned with several of the standards identified with the Think College program. This

alignment helps support the validity and reliability of these findings. The Think College areas that paralleled these findings included:

1. academic access,

2. career development,

3. self-determination,

4. alignment with college systems and supports,

5. coordination and collaboration,

6. sustainability, and

7. ongoing evaluation.

In the code of academic access, this study's mention of the use and importance of technology in the context of instruction was like the Think College suggestion to address "instruction in the use of technology" (Grigal et al., 2012, p. 1). This included participants sharing specific instances of their students using technology, such as PowerPoint, to make presentations during their IEP meetings. One participant discussed how all applications of instructions had been converted to a paperless digital format.

In terms of Think College's second standard concerning career development, this study also echoed the ideas of promoting a "person-centered planning to identify career goals" (Grigal et al., 2012, p. 2) in the participants' comments shared concerning NTACT's emphasis on student focused planning. The fourth standard of self-determination also was present in the comments made by participants in this study. Paula's statement about having students assess their interests at their IEP meeting reflected the similar objective for self-determination advanced by the Think College foundation.

The fifth Think College standard--that of alignment of college systems and practice--

was advanced by participant comments mentioning that the student's curriculum was driven largely by the focus interests of the student. This echoed the Think College objective of using "person-centered planning in the development of a student's course of study" (Grigal et al., 2012, p. 3). The sixth standard, of coordination and collaboration, was also reflected in the comments shared by participants in this study, several of whom shared they had taken steps to make sure their students developed connections with the admissions, financial aid, and student support service representatives at the college they sought to attend. This reflects the similar Think College goal of creating "connections and relationships with key college/university departments" (Grigal et al., 2012, p. 3). The seventh standard, of sustainability, was supported by the participants sharing ways their districts ensure cost was not a limitation for their students attending a higher education institution and completing a postsecondary education. This supported the Think College recommendation that diverse sources of funding be pursued to assist students in attending and completing college.

Limitations

There were some limitations that arose in conducting this study. One of these limitations was timing--it was toward the end of the school year when participants were recruited for this study. During this time of year, many of the participants were in the process of winding down the academic year. Also, the study took place at the end of a year in which many annual individualized educational plans were being conducted. Both factors may have impacted the number of individuals who indicated a willingness to participate in this study. Another limitation exists in the study's focus on the findings of special education directors in the northwestern part of the United States. As a result, this study's findings cannot be characterized as applicable to similar findings which may be reached in comparable studies in

other parts of the United States. The study was not either comprehensive or conclusive in its findings regarding all first generation students with disabilities attending all postsecondary institutions.

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

There are several implications which can be inferred concerning individual stakeholders in this case study. These implications are important because a presentation of implications of the work helps those same affected stakeholders improve their knowledge base and professional practice (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Spooner, Algozzine, Karvonen, & Lo, 2011). These include implications for special education directors, students with learning disabilities, parents of students with learning disabilities—particularly those who have gone to college—school districts, and other agencies that assist in providing student support. These implications provide a new resource for all the stakeholders for support and services which will better assist students with learning disabilities to complete a successful transition into a life after high school—including one focusing on achieving a postsecondary education.

Implications for Special Education Directors

The first group of individuals who may be impacted by this study's findings are special education directors throughout the selected state. This study allows for special education directors to see what their counterparts are doing concerning support and services for transition planning for students with learning disabilities who seek to pursue a postsecondary education—those students who are the first in their families to go to college. This provides disability directors with the opportunity to see how other individuals in the same position have addressed this goal. One of the reasons participants gave for their desire to

participate was to learn and gain ideas of how other special education directors were working toward improving the support and services they offered for students with learning disabilities who sought to go onto to complete objectives in higher education. The collective ideas presented by participants in the study will also enable their peers to see different approaches taken based on the regional as well as urban or rural needs of the district in assisting their students. Past research has shown that "administrators at every level [including special education directors] must engage in social justice leadership. Doing so serves as an underpinning for their work in schools and universities, all of which serve diverse populations…" (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002, as cited in Canfield-Davis, Gardiner, & Loki, 2009, p. 206).

Implications for Students with Learning Disabilities

The second group that will benefit from this study are students with disabilities since support and services that have been found to be effective are more likely to be adopted by other districts that do not currently offer those services. As effective supports and services increase throughout the state, the number of students with learning disabilities who are both prepared and able to pursue a postsecondary education will more than likely increase. Once a flow of ideas is provided to special education directors they will be able to act in implementing these ideas to help increase both the quantity and quality of services provided to students with learning disabilities who seek to go onto to postsecondary studies.

Implications for Parents of Students with Learning Disabilities

Families, and specifically parents, are a third population for which there will be implications based on this study. By identifying how specific districts are both involving and empowering family members to be part of the transition process of the student with the

learning disability, there will more than likely be a stronger level of support and assistance by family members taking part in the process. This is particularly true concerning the prospect of transitioning into postsecondary education with students whose parents did not go to college. Helping to increase the level of parental inclusion will bring family members into the process to provide the level of support already experienced by other students who are not first generation or who do not have a learning disability. The ideas presented in this study will allow for special education directors to expand the ways they reach out to parents of students with disabilities and in ways which help explain to parents who never have been to a college or university, the advantages of completing higher education.

Implications for School Districts

The results of this study also have implications for school districts throughout the selected state as they work toward improving and expanding the type of support and services provided to their students with learning disabilities that make going onto college after high school a realistic and attainable goal. The data obtained from this study suggest that by increasing the level of student and parental inclusion into the transition process, more students with learning disabilities may develop and maintain the necessary skill sets needed to make a successful transition possible. This study identifies factors which will assist special education directors as they work to ensure that their respective school district is providing the type of support and services necessary for students with learning disabilities to see attending and completing college as an attainable goal. This includes helping districts maximize their resources in a way to ensure they are supporting and assisting students with learning disabilities go onto college. Also, it provides a basis for looking beyond the mere cost analysis of the services to students and looking at how they can best assist in a way which all

their students can go onto a college or university and successfully complete and achieve their own personal goals in higher education.

Implications for State and Federal Agencies that support Adults with Disabilities

Another major impact of this study will be the ability to identify ways students with disabilities can gain the skills that they need to be successful and become more self-sufficient and employed upon graduating from high school. This is important as Rumrill et al. (2017) state since "the detrimental consequences of unemployment are especially problematic for people with learning disabilities given their low rate of labor force participation and their limited success in postsecondary education" (Rumrill et al., as cited in Wehman, 2013, p.124).

Implications for Special Educators and Support Staff

Lastly, but not least, I believe this study can be beneficial to those who spend their days directly impacting the type of support and services a student with a learning disability needs to make a successful transition from high school onto their individual pursuit for completing a degree in higher education. While the interviews are based on the perspective of those who serve in administrative positions, the findings propose a need to provide and implement support and services for students early on, even as early as preschool, providing a strong validation for not waiting on planning for a student's transitional plan until they reach high school. Too often there are those who would argue this can be deferred until high school, however, I believe the findings of this study provide a strong basis for such a dialog and planning to begin long before this point in time.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research study identified several areas for additional research which would assist special education directors to provide support and services for students with learning disabilities, helping those students to think about postsecondary education as a realistic and attainable goal—particularly those who are first in their families to go to college.

- More research is needed to identify first generation students at the secondary level. While this study had planned to focus on first generation students, this goal had to be modified toward support and services for students with the potential of achieving a postsecondary education because there simply was a lack of verifiable data on which students were the first in their families to go college at each of the districts where participants served as special education director.

- More research is also needed to explore ways to increase the awareness and understanding of the TRIO program at the secondary level and to identify ways that better link supports that students receive from agencies, such as VR, at the secondary level with similar student supports provided at the postsecondary level by TRIO organizations, student support services, and Upward Bound.

- Additional research could be conducted to expand how technology, such as the use of digital portfolios, could be used to provide support and services for students with learning disabilities with the goal of enabling more students to be better prepared to consider postsecondary education as a viable option of transition after high school.

- Another area of potential future study could be conducted on researching directors of support agencies, such as VR and to gain their perspectives on how they view their role in providing transitional support and services to students with learning

disabilities.

- A separate set of standards, specific for first generation students with disabilities, should be developed. While the guidelines presented by NTACT (2016) are helpful toward guiding these students with disabilities to transition into a postsecondary education, they do not capture some of the challenges a person who is the first in their family to attend college would likely encounter. Therefore, like the standards developed by the Think College program which are specific to students with intellectual disabilities, there ought to be a set of standards specific to first generation students.

- Further research could also be helpful in identifying how a district's size, geographic location, and status as urban, suburban, or rural impacts both the quantity and the quality of supports and services provided to students with learning disabilities— particularly those who are first generation.

- Further research could describe the support and assistance provided varies for students of different racial or ethnic background who are first generation students with learning disabilities. Included in this study could be an effort to see how misdiagnosing students with disabilities based solely on their ethnic or racial background impacts their ability to successfully transition into a postsecondary education after high school (Phippen, 2015).

Plans for Continuation of Study

There are several possibilities which exist to continue forward the discussion of how to better address the needs of students who face unique challenges as both having a learning disability and as being first in their family to go on to pursue a degree in higher education.

These include activities such as publishing an article, writing a manual of best practices or writing and submitting a grant proposal to put into practice some of the ideas mentioned in this study. Based on references used to create this study, there is a basis to create either an article for academic peer reviewed article or to create law review article. If I was to create an article based on this topic, I believe I would want to write an article for the Brigham Young Law School's Educational Law publication https://digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/elj/. Or, if I was to target a non-legal audience, I believe I would want to submit an article to AHEAD (Association of High Education and Disability) publication Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability (JPED) https://www.ahead.org/professional-resources/publications/jped. In terms of creating a manual I would focus on those who are special education directors in terms of best practices. Lastly, for a grant, I might select a program such as ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) and write a proposal to put into practice some of these principal at a given site location.

Conclusion

Information concerning both students who are the first in their families to go to college and the types of supports available, such as TRIO, to assist this group remain areas where additional research will be necessary to ensure that a larger number of students are able to pursue and successfully complete their own personal aspirations for a postsecondary education. This information would be beneficial since past research by Engle and Tinto (2008) has shown how TRIO assisted by providing such support and services as academic tutoring, advice in course selection, and assistance in securing various forms of financial aid.

This study's findings help to further the ongoing academic discussion to identify and describe ways which various school districts are currently providing support and services

toward making the goal of completing higher education a more attainable goal for those with learning disabilities, and, those who are the first in their families to achieve this objective. The study's results have identified how particular districts have taken steps toward structuring programs with this end goal in mind. Although the participants represented districts in different geographic locations and with different settings (urban, suburban, or rural), the responses given were related in terms of the areas they believed have had the biggest impact on the transition process for students with learning disabilities—particularly those who are also the first in their families to go on to college. The comments shared toward describing the support and services used by the districts of each of the participating special education directors centered around four themes: student focused planning, student development, family engagement, and financial considerations.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT

for a Research Study entitled
"A Two-Edged Sword: Improving Transitional Services
for First Generation Students with Learning Disabilities"

You are invited to participate in a research study to share your experience as a special education director in working with providing services and support for students who are both first generation students and those with learning disabilities. The University of Idaho Intuitional Review Board has approved this project. The protocol for the above-named research project has been certified as exempt under category 2 at 45 CFR 46.10 (b)(2). Dr. Sydney Freeman has been designated as the Principal Investigator leading and monitoring this project. Assisting will be a team of graduate students, all CITI certified with their certificate numbers on file, from the University of Idaho Doctoral Program. You were selected as a possible participant because you are identified as a special education director in one of the six regions identified by the Idaho Department of Education.

What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to participate in taped interviews asking about your experiences as a special education director in working with providing services and support for students who are both first generation students and those with learning disabilities. This use of an audio device is for the use of transcribing your responses. Your total time commitment will be approximately 40 minutes.

Are there any risks or discomforts? There are no perceived risks associated with participating in this study. To minimize any risks, we will not collect any specific or identifying information (such as SSN or name) during the interview and all information will be maintained confidentially. Audio tape from the interview will be destroyed after transcription. You will be assigned (or you can give me one!) a pseudonym and your responses will not have any identifying information.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? Although there are no personal benefits, you can expect to make a general contribution to the effort to help understand how special education directors can better support and assist students who are both first in their families to go to college and those with learning disabilities support and assist these students as they transition from secondary to postsecondary educational settings.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relationship with the University of Idaho.

Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain *confidential*. Information obtained through your participation may be used for the purposes of doctoral study, possible publications, and presentations.

If you have questions about this study, *please ask them now or* contact Dr. Sydney Freeman Jr. by phone at 208-885-1011 or by email at sfreemanjr@uidaho.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Idaho's Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone 208-885-6162 or e-mail at irb@uidaho.edu or jlwalker@uidaho.edu.

■ **HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.**

Please chose one answer below:

I willing to be interviewed both by audio or video tape

■ **I am willing to be interviewed by video tape only.**

■ **I am willing to be interviewed by audio tape only**

■ **I am unwilling to be audio or video taped.**

_____   _____
Participant's signature   Date   Investigator obtaining consent Date

_____   _____
Printed Name   Printed Name

                                   _____
                                   Co-Investigator   Date

                                   _____
                                    Printed Name

APPENDIX B: IRB OUTCOME LETTER

Title:	A Two-Edged Sword: Improving Transitional Services for Students with Learning Disabilities
Project:	17-113
Certified:	Certified as exempt under category 2 at 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Idaho, I am pleased to inform you that the protocol for the research project A Two-Edged Sword: Improving Transitional Services for Students with Learning Disabilities has been certified as exempt under the category and reference number listed above.

This certification is valid only for the study protocol as it was submitted. Studies certified as Exempt are not subject to continuing review and this certification does not expire. However, if changes are made to the study protocol, you must submit the changes through VERAS for review before implementing the changes. Amendments may include but are not limited to, changes in study population, study personnel, study instruments, consent documents, recruitment materials, sites of research, etc. If you have any additional questions, please contact me through the VERAS messaging system by clicking the 'Reply' button.

As Principal Investigator, you are responsible for ensuring compliance with all applicable FERPA regulations, University of Idaho policies, state and federal regulations. Every effort should be made to ensure that the project is conducted in a manner consistent with the three fundamental principles identified in the Belmont Report: respect for persons; beneficence; and justice. The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring that all study personnel have completed the online human subjects training requirement.

You are required to timely notify the IRB if any unanticipated or adverse events occur during the study, if you experience and increased risk to the participants, or if you have participants withdraw or register complaints about the study.

To enrich education through diversity, the University of Idaho is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Age: Gender: Male   Female   Other

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Associates Degree   Bachelor's Degree   Master's Degree   Doctoral Degree

Are you the first person in your immediate family to earn a college degree?

Please describe your racial/ethnic identity as well as your nationality.

Do you identify as being an individual with a disability? If comfortable, please describe your

disability. Do you have a learning disability? If not, then what type of disability do you have?

In what part of the state is your school district located?

If it is possible for you to obtain the actual data within your district, please continue with the last three questions.

In the past 5 years, how many first-generation students has your district encountered?

In the past 5 years, how many students has your district encountered who have a disability?

In the past 5 years, how many students has your district encountered who are both first-generation students who aspire to higher education and also have a learning disability?

I: Introduction

   4. Greetings:

(This exchange of questions and words like "Hi" is a bit more formal than would occur

between close friends.)

Hi, (interviewee). How are you?

How is your year going?

   5. Giving the Case Study Explanation

(This begins here in recognizing that I and the interviewee are going to "talk".)

I am really glad you could talk to me today. Well, as I expressed in my email, I am interested

in understanding your experiences as a special education administrative director and your

experiences in directing your district's effort toward creating transitional support and services

for first generation Idaho students who have a learning disability.

III.   Main Interview

   • How long have you served as special education director for your district?

   • Please describe your experiences working with first generation students with

      disabilities as special education director for your district/region.

   • How does your district provide assistance to first generation students with disabilities

      to ease the transition from secondary to postsecondary education?

- In accordance with plan §300.321(b), it is a requirement of IDEA that students be invited to participate in the creation of their own IEP development and, per Belch (2004), that their interests be included in the transition plan. Please describe how your district utilizes student focused planning for first generation students with disabilities.

- How does your district use interventions focused on family involvement to promote student development that may assist first generation students with disabilities in their transition from secondary to postsecondary level education?

- If funding were no issue for your district, what service/intervention would you provide more frequently due to the successes you have observed students experience when provided with the service/intervention?

[Research which districts have a TRIO program. Ask the special education directors of those districts the following:]

- Are you aware of your district's TRIO program? If so, what is your involvement with it? Are you seeing any connection between TRIO and serving those with disabilities?

III: Closure

6. Is there anything that I haven't asked you about or are there any questions you'd like to ask me?

APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

My name is George Tomlinson and I am a Doctoral Student in the College of Education at the University of Idaho. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study to share your experience as a special education director providing services and support for students who are both first generation students and those with learning disabilities.

The University of Idaho Intuitional Review Board has approved this project. The protocol for the research project has been certified as exempt under category 2 at 45 CFR 46.10 (b)(2). Dr. Sydney Freeman has been designated as the Principal Investigator leading and monitoring this project. Assisting will be a team of graduate students, all CITI certified with their certificate numbers on file, from the University of Idaho Doctoral Program.

As a participant, you will be asked to share perspectives on the aforementioned. Questions will be asked in a phone interview format. The interview should range between 30-40 minutes. There is no expected risk to this study. The information you share with me will be completely confidential. You will be assigned (or you can give me one!) a pseudonym and your responses will not have any identifying information. Your responses will only be shared amongst myself and my major professor Dr. Sydney Freeman, and with three other members of my doctoral committee. They will be combined with responses from other participants.

If you would like to participate in this research study, please reply to this email at toml2271@vandals.uidaho or call me at 585-369-6673 or 208-874-7988.

APPENDIX E: THINK COLLEGE STANDARDS

THINK COLLEGE STANDARDS, QUALITY INDICATORS, AND BENCHMARKS FOR INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION

Think College at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston has developed Standards, Quality Indicators, and Benchmarks for Inclusive Higher Education. Institutes of higher education can use these standards to create, expand, or enhance high quality, inclusive postsecondary education to support positive outcomes for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID). Additionally, these standards can be used to as a framework to conduct and expand research on issues related to supporting students with ID in higher education. They are aligned with the definition of a comprehensive postsecondary and transition program for students with intellectual disabilities and reflect institutional and instructional practices that support a Universal Design for Learning framework as outlined in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008.

STANDARD 1: ACADEMIC ACCESS

To facilitate quality academic access for students with intellectual disabilities, the comprehensive postsecondary education program should:

Quality Indicator 1.1: Provide access to a wide array of college course types that are attended by students without disabilities, including:

> 1.1A: Enrollment in non-credit-bearing, non-degree courses (such as continuing education courses) attended by students without disabilities.

> 1.1B: Auditing or participating in college courses attended by students without disabilities for which the student does not receive academic credit.

> 1.1C: Enrollment in credit-bearing courses offered by the institution attended by students without disabilities, when aligned with the student's postsecondary plans.

1.1D: Access to existing courses rather than separate courses designed only for students with intellectual disabilities. 1.1E: College course access that is not limited to a pre-determined list.

> 1.1F: Participation in courses that relate to their personal, academic, and career goals as established through person- centered planning.

1.1 G: Collection of objective evaluation data on college course participation.

Quality Indicator 1.2: Address issues that may impact college course participation, including:

1.1 A: College policies regarding placement tests, ability-to-benefit testing and prerequisites that negatively impact college course participation access.

1.2B: Access to and instruction in the use of needed public or personal transportation, such as public buses, taxis, para- transit, ride-sharing with other students, and other naturally occurring transportation options.

1.2C: Access to college disability services for accommodations typically provided by that office. 1.2D: Access to and instruction in the use of needed technology.

1.2E: Access to educational coaches who receive ongoing training and supervision. 1.2F: Access to peer support such as mentors, tutors, and campus ambassadors.

1.2G: Faculty training on universal design for learning principles.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Provide students with the skills to access ongoing adult learning opportunities, including:

1.2A: Knowledge of the adult learning opportunities available in their community, such as college courses, community education, etc.

1.3B: Knowledge of resources available to assist them to access or fund adult learning opportunities in their community.

STANDARD 2: CAREER DEVELOPMENT

To facilitate career development leading to competitive employment for students with intellectual disabilities, the comprehensive postsecondary education program should:

Quality Indicator 2.1: Provide students with the supports and experiences necessary to seek and sustain competitive employment, including:

2.1A: The provision of person-centered planning to identify career goals.

2.1B: Access to job coaches and developers who receive ongoing training and supervision.

2.1C: Participation in time-limited internships or work-based training in settings with people without disabilities.

2.1D: Opportunity to participate in academically focused service learning experiences.

2.1E: Participation in paid work experiences related to personal choice and career goals, such as paid internships, work- study, service learning, or other paid work on or off campus.

2.1F: Connection with community rehabilitation and other adult service providers to sustain employment. 2.1G: Collection of objective evaluation data on student employment.

STANDARD 3: CAMPUS MEMBERSHIP:

To facilitate campus membership for students with intellectual disabilities, the comprehensive postsecondary education program should:

Quality Indicator 3.1: Provide access to and support for participation in existing social organizations, facilities, and technology, including:

    3.1A: Campus programs, such as clubs and organizations, community service, religious life, student government, Greek system, co-curricular experiences, service learning, study abroad, student sports and entertainment events, recreational facilities and programs, etc.

    3.1B: Residence life facilities and activities, including, when desired, the off-campus housing office. 3.1C: Technology for social communication, including email, texting, cell phone, Facebook, Twitter, Skype. 3.1D: Social activities facilitated by students without disabilities, who serve as natural supports.

STANDARD 4: SELF-DETERMINATION

To facilitate the development of self-determination in students with intellectual disabilities, the comprehensive postsecondary education program should:

Quality Indicator 4.1: Ensure student involvement in and control of the establishment of personal goals that:

    4.1A: Reflect student interests and desires as indicated by person-centered planning.

    4.1B: Are reviewed regularly and modified as needed to reflect changes in student interests and preferences. 4.1C: Address accommodation and technology needs.

    4.1D: Lead to outcomes desired by the student.

    4.I E: Reflect family input when desired by the student.

Quality Indicator 4.2: Ensure the development and promotion of the self-determination skills of students with intellectual disabilities as evidenced by students:

    4.2A: Monitoring their own progress toward their personal goals.

    4.2B: Directing their choice of courses, activities, and employment experiences.

4.2C: Being involved in course registration, accommodation requests, and payment of tuition.

4.2D: Being involved in all aspects of employment, such as creating a resume, setting up job interviews, making follow-up phone calls, negotiating job changes, etc.

4.2 E: Interacting directly with faculty and employers including the articulation of needed accommodations. 4.2F: Managing personal schedules that include courses, employment, and social activities.

Quality Indicator 4.3: Have a stated process for family involvement that reflects:

4.3 A: Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for parents and students.

4.3B: A process for the provision of information to parents on resources, effective advocacy, and transition planning. 4.3C: Student control over how parents are involved with their experience.

4.3D: Adherence to the guidelines set forth by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

STANDARD 5: ALIGNMENT WITH COLLEGE SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES

To facilitate alignment with college systems and practices for students with intellectual disabilities, the comprehensive postsecondary education program should:

Quality Indicator 5.1: As required in the HEOA, identify outcomes or offer an educational credential (e.g., degree or certificate) established by the institution for students enrolled in the program, including assurance that:

5.1A: Outcomes established by the program for achievement of an educational credential are measurable. 5.1B: Program outcomes are publicly available (e.g., brochure, website, program application).

5.1C: Courses and internships are related to achieving and maintaining gainful employment.

5.I D: Outcomes/credentials established by the program also address engagement in college community life, service opportunities, etc.

Quality Indicator 5.2: Provide access to academic advising that:

5.2 A: Uses person-centered planning in the development of a student's course of study (curriculum structure).

5.2B: Reflects the institution's policy for determining whether a student enrolled in the program is making satisfactory academic progress.

5.2 C: Is aligned with the educational credential established by the institution for students enrolled in the program.

Quality Indicator 5.3: Provide access to college campus resources, including:

5.3 A: Admissions,

registration, and

orientation. 5.3B:

College

identification

cards.

5.3C: Health and counseling centers, athletic center, information technology, career services, dining services, Greek system, clubs, student organizations, student government, etc.

5.3D: Co-curricular activities including practicum and learning communities.

5.3E: Support for participating in existing on- and off-campus university-owned or university-affiliated housing. 5.3F: Orientation, training, and resources for parents of incoming students.

5.3 G: Campus shuttle buses to different campuses and the community.

Quality Indicator 5.4: Collaborate with faculty and staff, including:

5.4 A: Accessing existing professional development initiatives on campus (e.g., workshops on Universal Design for Learning principles).

5.4 B: Offering expertise of the program staff and students to faculty, other college personnel, and students through trainings, course presentations, etc.

Quality Indicator 5.5: Adhere to the college's schedules, policies and procedures, public relations, and communications as evidenced by:

5.5 A: Review of the college's code of conduct with students.

5.5B: Participation of students in courses and/or social events during afternoons, evenings, and weekends. 5.5C: Participation of students in graduation exercises and experiences.

5.5D: Observation of college vacations and holidays, not local education agencies (if dual enrollment) or that of outside agencies.

5.5E: Recognition of students with intellectual disabilities as a representative population in the IHE's diversity plan.

5.5F: The presence of students with ID on campus reflects the college's commitment to diversity and has a presence in college communications, strategic plan, mission statement, president's messages, and system reviews.

STANDARD 6: COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

To facilitate collaboration and coordination, the comprehensive postsecondary education program should:

Quality Indicator 6.1: Establish connections and relationships with key college/university departments, as evidenced by:

6.1A: Students with ID effectively using campus resources, such as disability services, financial aid services, course registration, academic advising, health services, and career services.

6.1B: Program staff effectively using college infrastructure, such as IT support, maintenance, etc.

6.1C: Program staff being aware of the governance and administrative structures of the college or university that may impact the program.

6.1D: Program staff participating in faculty/staff governance or committees as part of their contribution to the college.

Quality Indicator 6.2: Have a designated person to coordinate program-specific services of the comprehensive postsecondary education program, including:

6.2A: Scheduling and implementing interagency team meetings.

6.2B: Conducting person-centered planning and ensuring that the results of those meetings are infused into the students' daily activities.

6.2C: Ensuring that data collection and program

evaluation activities occur. 6.2D: Providing

outreach to families.

6.2E: Providing training and supervision for educational coaches, job coaches, and job developers.

STANDARD 7: SUSTAINABILITY

To facilitate sustainability, the comprehensive postsecondary education program should:

Quality Indicator 7.1: Use diverse sources of funding, including:

7.1A: Maintaining a relationship to the campus financial aid office. 7.1B: Ensuring that eligible students and families apply for financial aid.

7.1C: Providing information to students on sources of funds for tuition and other costs, such as National Service grants, work-study, use of Medicaid waiver funds, vocational rehabilitation, etc.

7.1D: Using state funds, IDEA funds, developmental services agency funds, family funds, private funds, and federal grant funds to provide core funding for the program.

Quality Indicator 7.2: Have a planning and advisory team which:

      7.2 A: Includes representatives from the college, including administrators (deans, provosts, department chair), disability services, and faculty, as well as disability-specific agencies, relevant community agencies, local business leaders, workforce development providers, families, and students.

      7.2B: Supports collaboration between the college and the program and with outside entities.

      7.2C: Addresses program policies and practices (costs, access, partnerships) and student outcomes (data review) to ensure sustainability.

      7.2D: Communicates regularly.

STANDARD 8: ONGOING EVALUATION

To facilitate quality postsecondary education services for students with intellectual disabilities, the comprehensive postsecondary program should:

Quality Indicator 8.1: Conduct evaluation of services and outcomes on a regular basis, including:

      8.1A: Collection of data from key stakeholders, such as students with and without disabilities, parents, faculty, disability services, and other college staff.

      8.1B: Collection of student satisfaction data.

      8.1C: Collection of student exit data.

      8.1D: Collection of student follow-up data.

      8.1E: Review of all data compiled by the advisory team and other stakeholders. 8.1F: Implementation of program changes as a result of data review

APPENDIX F: KOHLER'S TAXONOMY FOR TRANSITION 2.0

Student-Focused Planning
- IEP Development
- Planning Strategies
- Student Participation

Family Engagement
- Family Involvement
- Family Empowerment
- Family Preparation

Student Development
- Assessment
- Academic Skills
- Life, Social, and Emotional Skills
- Employment and Occupational Skills
- Student Supports
- Instructional Context

Program Structures
- Program Characteristics
- Program Evaluation
- Strategic Planning
- Policies and Procedures
- Resource Development and Allocation
- School Climate

Interagency Collaboration
- Collaborative Framework
- Collaborative Service Delivery

Figure G.1 Taxonomy for transition programming 2.0

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Student Focused Planning

IEP Development
Cindy
They are invited to all the IEP meetings whether they attend or not is another story...if they don't attend we still go over it with them. We really start looking at what possibilities of things of what they want to do. The career guidance of it we start laying out here are the different options for schools and here is what we need to get done...they are pretty involved even with their scores and assessments...we show the support they have...we also try to help them advocate for themseves like here are your services and here is your accommodation and part of [their] job is to speak up

Connie
Students participate in interest inventories as part of middle school. They are given the AIR inventory and oppotunity theory. They also take a learnng skills profile and are asked about whatth they want to do in 5 years.

Dave
I have one daughter wh has celebral palsy so when she was about in the 5th or 6th grade we invited her to the IEP meetings because we thought it was her life and she should have some say into it so that's what I do with the current parents. In fact, that happened to me on Thursday and we had an IEP meeting and mom said well should my son come? And I said it's only his life so I think it would be important for him to be there to make some of the decisions as well as understand why we are doing what we are doing and that will help him learn some self determination skills which will be critical once he leaves high school.

Jill
I think the state would recognize that transition drives the IEP. The preschools are not going to have a transition but we are thinking about it...you begin with the end in mind with every student you start working with. That means we are think about this preschooler when they are 17 or 18 years old and moving out of this district. Have all of these goals and all these skills they have been working on, has it all been for that one goal of them having a successful transition...and that is academia, that is social and that is emotional.

John
So, we start the kids early in 7th grade [by] having kids looking at the 4-year plan and they are actually involved in thier high school 4-year plan in middle school.

Jeremy

So, one of the thigs we work on just all around is those 4 year plans for students and involving parents in the selection of courses that guide the kids toward what their step is after high school. Specifically, with students with disabilities that gets even more narrowly focused because we are talking about an IEP and part of the IEP team—really the whole secondary IEP—should be driven by the transition plan---and most cases it is and that's what they are focused on. SO their goals all relate back to their transition—whether it be their Math or Language Arts goals they relate back to what their plan is for after high school. That fully incorporates family is the parents are involved in those IEP meetings and we start having those meetings as early as 8th grade and they become in the freshman-sophomore years then move forward from there.

Matt

One of the amazing things we find when working with our students in getting them involved is that you ask them questions they often say I don't know, I never thought of that or I don't care so we are trying to teach [them] to take ownership of their learning and trying to change the culture in which the school operates in. So, sometimes you have to sit with those students in advance and just say hey listen I want you [to] think about this: ask them what do [they] want to be when [they] grow up, what do [they] want to go to school [for], when do they want to go to school, and what are [their] aspirations in life. Have them think about these so whey do come to their meeting you can say OK I asked you some questions earlier now what do you think you need to get to that point...You know you just got to pull them along because sometimes students with disabilites as well as students without disabilities have no idea but they need somebody to help peek their intereste. So, you need to give them the bread crumbs and hopefully they pick up the pieces and put 2 and 2 togetherand take ownership of their goals without realizing they are taking ownership.

Sandy

Starting at the high school level they start developing a professional/personal development plan in 7th grade where they address the 7 areas of transitional planning...They develop and review the plan every year at the annual IEP and the students are invited both on paper and personally to come to those meetings and parents and voc rehab are invited as well.

Samantha

For some kids it's just really encouraging them to be there and the special education teachers know which student is really going to struggle just to show up so they do a lot of encouragement and explanation of what the meeting is about and how we want to hear their side of things. Prior to those meetings, they often work with that student—the transition coordinator does especially to understand that student's interests that's part of the transition assessment that we are required to do. So, they are trying to get at what does this student think they are good at, what do they think they need help with, what do they think about the world of work and what they might like to do. They ask about what type of living arrangements they

want to have after they graduate? Do they want to live at home, have an apartment? So, those questions are asked prior to the meeting and then it's written into the IEP so we capture the student's interests and we get their input prior to that meeting.

Planning Strategies
Connie
Overall I would say that many students don't see college as an option or choice at first but after a few years start to think of it as an option to consider. Many students are first identified as having a disability when they work with me or were identified in other school prior to working with me. Many families are still in a grieving process and trying to find out what having a disability means for their family or child. It is a process to make families understand that their children have rights to a differentiated curriculum and accommodations. Secondary IEP's provide pre vocational goals starting at age 13 and we start discussing careers and life choices. Students participate in Dept of Labor CIS program. They have guest speakers and start job shadow jobs in the school at age 14. The career counselor teachers an 8th grade class and provides information to students and families.

John
Every kid is different and that is what special education is all about and why that's important is because there doesn't seem to be rhyme or reason if a child comes from a family that has no background in education and they themselves struggle with a disability they might have the constitution to work hard and be someone that is compliant and comes ready to learn every day and may not have the materials and things but is mentally prepared and they are happy to have someone giving them attention and trying to please so there is that kind of kid and you need to leave your mind open to those type of kids.

Sally
Starting at the high school level they start developing a professional/personal development plan in 7th grade where they address the 7 areas of transitional planning; 7th grade where I was in Oregon and 9th grade here. They develop and review that plan every year at the annual IEP and the students are invited both on paper and personally to come to these meetings and parents and voc rehab are invited as well.

Dave
In fact that happened to me on Thursday and we had an IEP meeting and Mom said well should my son come? And I said it's only his life so I think it would be important for him to be there to make some of the decisions as well as understand why we are doing what we are doing and that will help him learn some self-determination skills which will be critical once he leaves high school. So, he came and so we encourage participation somewhere around 4th and 5th grade.

Jill

I think the state would recognize that transition drives the IEP. The preschools are not going to have a transition but we are thinking about it… you begin with the end in mind with every student you start working with. That means we are thinking about this preschooler when they are 17 and 18 years old and moving out of the district. Have all of these goals and all these skills they have been working on, has it all been for that one goal of them having a successful transition… and that is academia, that is social and that is emotional. In the younger years, its really looking at sort of behavior the umbrella of executive functioning that is academia, that is social and that is emotional.

Jeremy

They take a variety of transitional assessments to give them indicators of where their skill-sets lie and what their interest levels are to try to help them plan. Every kid puts together their 4-year plan with their IEP team to try to figure what their next steps will be after high school. They start that in their freshman-sophomore year and move forward from there.

So, one of the things we work on just all around is those 4 year plans for students and involving parents in the selection of courses that guide the kids toward what their step is after high school. That is a big part of what we do. Specifically, with students with disabilities that gets even more narrowly focused because we are talking about an IEP and part of the IEP team—really that whole secondary IEP—should be driven by transition plan—and most cases it is and that's what they are focused on. So, their goals all relate back to their transition—whether it be their Math or Language Arts goals they relate back to what their plan is for after high school. That fully incorporates family is the parents are involved in those IEP meetings and we start having these meeting as early as 8th grade and they become in the freshman-sophomore years and then move forward from there.

If costs were not an issue I would like to add a specific set of 3 or 4 people that would start as early as 6th grade working with families on developing really quality plans for what they want to go after they are done with high school and really narrowing the focus on that.

Samantha

For some kids it's just really encouraging them to be there and the special education teachers know which student is really going to struggle just to show up so they do a lot of encouragement and explanation of what the meeting is about and how we want to hear their side of things. Prior to those meetings, they often work with that student—the transition coordinator does especially to understand that student's interests that's part of the transition assessment that we are required to do. So they are trying to get what does this student think they are good at, what do they think they need help with, what do they think about the world of work and what they might like to do. They ask about what type of living arrangements they want to have after they graduate? Do they want to live at home, have an apartment? So, those questions are asked prior to the meeting and then it's written into the IEP so we capture the student's interests and we get their input prior to that meeting.

Student Participation
Cindy
They are invited to all the IEP meetings…whether they attend or not is another story…if they don't attend we still go over it with them. We really start look at what possibilities of thing of what they want to do. The career guidance of it we start laying out here are the different options are for schools and here is what we need to get done….they are pretty involved even with their scores and assessments…we show the support that they have…we also try to help them advocate for themselves like here are your services and here is your accommodation and part of your job is to speak up when they can't obviously.

Elaine
Students are involved with IEP planning and transition planning, choosing of classes and activities to participate.

Samantha
Prior to those meetings, they often work with that student—the transition coordinator does especially to understand that student's interests that's part of the transition assessment that we are required to do. So they are trying to get what does this student think they are good at, what do they think they need help with, what do they think about the world of work and what they might like to do. They ask about what type of living arrangements they want to have after they graduate? Do they want to live at home, have an apartment? So, those questions are asked prior to the meeting and then it's written into the IEP so we capture the student's interests and we get their input prior to that meeting.

Matt
One of the amazing things we find when working with our students in getting them involved is that you ask them questions they often say I don't know, I never thought of that or I don't care so we are trying to teach to take ownership of their learning and trying to change the culture in which the school operates in. So, sometimes you have to sit with those students in advance and just say hey listen I want you think about this: ask them what do you want to be when you grow up, what do you want to go to school when you go to school and what are your aspirations in life. Have them think about those so when they do come to their meeting you can say OK I asked you some questions earlier now what do you think you need to do to get that point…You know you just got to pull them along because sometimes students with disabilities as well as students without disabilities have no idea but they need somebody to help peek their interests. So, you need to give them the bread crumbs and hopefully they pick up the pieces and put 2 and 2 together and take ownership of their goals without realizing they are taking ownership.

Paula
We asked them a bunch of questions such as what accommodations do you feel that you need and may not be provided and the ones that are on the IEP do you feel these are appropriate

still? Are these being provided to you? And then again we use the moving on binder and there is a lot of reference to the moving on binder so they are able to share whatever they want to out of that moving on binder

Student Development

Assessment
Connie
Students participate in interest inventories as part of middle school. They are given the AIR inventory and opportunity inventory. They also take a learning skills profile and asked about what they want to do in 5 years. Parent are given the same inventories and interviewed about what they foresee as possibilities for their children

Elaine
Transition plan with vocab rehab and introduction to college with counselor, assistance with FASA and forms and getting in touch with student support services with the college they enrolled in. That's how we handle it in this little district. We are an hour a way from Lewiston and so I pull from their services down there.

There kind of three things. There is the development of the transition plan when the student was 15 or something like that and the parents are involved in that. The second part is the IEP they have their junior year kind of dictates what their senior projects and stuff will be. I even have my students with significant disabilities do a senior project as well. And one of things that is built into our senior project is the parent has to do checks and sign things as they go through their senior project. I try and have the senior project in some parts developed around what their transition goal is going to be. So, for instance, the senior I have this year was looking into going to college for interior design. Therefore, she went through voc rehab and job shadowed interior design over the summer. Her senior research paper was on interior design. I kind of try and tie them together so the student isn't doing two projects. So, one, we try to tie the senior project into it and as your doing that the parent has to sign off on things throughout that process. So, the third one, is that their senior year we have a transition meeting where we come together as a team which the student and the parents are involved in and say this is where he/she is headed…And I try to testing at the end of that year so parents are well aware…so, here are the resources you can use to move forward….and we keep in close contact with the parent….but, like I said, we got 1 kid. So, typically I talk to my student's parents anywhere from two to three times a month and more than that if the kid is having issues. We have that luxury. It's basically like having a little private school….Even though I do Pre School through 12th grade my case load is 24 kids. I do the junior and senior high school on my own and the parapros and teachers do the elementary. I have only 7 students so I have the time to contact the parents regularly.

John
A lot of times that goal isn't postsecondary education probably because I think Idaho is weak in that area except for maybe CWI…um, but I think the state has been helping with that as well by forcing them to take the SAT, the ACT or what used to be like the COMPASS test for placement for something like that. So, we start the kids early in 7th grade start having kids looking at the 4-year plan and they are actually involved in their high school 4-year plan in middle school.

Jeremy
Specifically, with students with disabilities that gets even more narrowly focused because we are talking about an IEP and part of the IEP team—really that whole secondary IEP—should be driven by transition plan—and most cases it is and that's what they are focused on. So, their goals all relate back to their transition—whether it be their Math or Language Arts goals they relate back to what their plan is for after high school.

Paula
Also, when I was on the state interagency council, which is focused on secondary transition, we developed the Moving-on binder. If you go to Idaho Training Clearinghouse which is idahoTC.com and then at the top you can go to topics and select secondary education and then resources it will show you the moving on binder and there a lots of students in the state at the high schools who are using the moving on binder. It's a tool to use.

Life Skills
Cindy
The career guidance of it we start laying out here are the different options are for schools and here is what we need to get done….they are pretty involved even with their scores and assessments…we show the support that they have…we also try to help them advocate for themselves like here are your services and here is your accommodation and part of your job is to speak up when they can't obviously.

Dave
I have one daughter who has celebral palsy so when she was about in the 5th or 6th grade we invited her to the IEP meetings because we thought it was her life and she should have same say into it so that's what I do with the current parents. In fact that happened to me on Thursday and we had an IEP meeting and Mom said well should my son come? And I said it's only his life so I think it would be important for him to be there to make some of the decisions as well as understand why we are doing what we are doing and that will help him learn some self-determination skills which will be critical once he leaves high school. So, he came and so we encourage participation somewhere around 4th and 5th grade.

Jill

The self-determination element. To address that piece of the process we are doing as a district moving into those and its actually in our state plan in NTACT that we are moving toward student directed IEPs. So, it's not just a district (although I have to tap my horn and say it did come from this district) but we are now looking at statewide.

Paula

We choose our curriculum to meet their particular needs. Some of our students with more severe disabilities need life skills type program. However, what I have found is that some of our students with learning disabilities need some of these life skill strategies… so, like they don't know how to address an envelope, how to fill out an application, how to write a letter of interest in a job, how to use coupons, how to read a menu… you think that they would have learned these skills in Language Arts but somehow it has passed by them. The life skills curriculum has become just as important to students with learning disabilities and probably more applicable to them than our kids more serious disabilities, because kids with more serious disabilities are going to have caretakers and they won't have to be fully functional (even though we want them to get as close to being as functional as they can). The kids with learning disabilities are really grasping this and they are the ones that are going to use it.

Employment and Occupational Skills

Paula

But a couple things we do is through the College of Southern Idaho and we have a really great connection with them. They put on…well, actually I used to be part of the secondary transition agency…we called it the Magic Valley Transition Team…it would include…I was the representative of the school districts, health and welfare was there, Juvenile Justice was there…we had different people from different agencies who were participating on that….that was the team that would work with college to put on what the college called College GPS. It's intention was how to navigate your way to college and then once you are there how to navigate the services that are available to you because you have disabilities. We also encourage and support our kids going to the Tools for Life conference that's every year. Our obligation on the Magic Valley transition team is to find people in the community who would let our students job shadow that job with 2 or 3 hours. That happens in the morning and then we all come back as a group for pizza and we process it by then having each student shares what some of their experiences are and it's really awesome.

John

…no kid knows necessarily what they want to do whether they are first generation or fifth generation…a lot of kids are leaving high school not knowing what they want to do…some kids figure that in 4 years of college and some kids take a year or 2 off…it's my personal belief if you are working you will find a direction you want to go in or a direction you don't want to go in if you get tired of washing dishes or something like that. So for me personally I

would like a more work and training program because I believe that would be more meaningful for the kids.

Jill
We have a huge population in Northern Idaho that have the mentality about education not being important. There is a book called the hillbilly something that someone recommended me. It's very much like this in South where I grew up in Appalachian and Blue Ridge Mountains where people I only went to Eighth grade and why do you have to go to high school you can still get a job. That teaching of the parents that it's not like that anymore you have to have a diploma to get any sort of job these days.

Jeremy
The other piece would be to add that digital portfolio. The reason that I'm very specific it about being digital is people don't carry a three-ring binder around anymore. Kids going in for job interviews if they are carrying a digital portfolio that shows all of their skills that they have developed on their own that just demonstrates that I'm proficient at, I can do, I am quality at this…. Whether it's a college interview or a job interview really puts them in a position to showcase what they know and it really puts them in a position to show how they really can be a quality student or a quality worker even with their disability and I just feel like that's somewhere we want to go.

Student Supports
Cindy
We have parent nights especially with the financial aid…we have tours to the career fairs that they attend, but the big thing is getting financial aid and getting their admission papers in order….We are small school so it happens for all of them. WE get them set up for scholarships.

Jill
Currently, I sit on the Northern Council for transition which is the only one in the state. Various organizations formed a council and it's a transition council for us looking at and building better bridges and connections for our students when they are transitioning into postsecondary education. In terms of two areas: The first area would be building a program for our students with intellectual disabilities so they could look at earning an Associate Degree in something and then we have our other students who move into the traditional postsecondary areas and they are actually having more difficulties and these are our students with specific learning disabilities, mental health issues, mental health diagnosis, ADHD, Autism who are actually very high functioning but they are falling through the cracks because they don't know how to self-advocate their voice so I am a part of that transition council as well. So transition is actually a very critical and important dynamic of what I do in this district.

Samantha
I know outside of special ed our school counselors are organizing informational nights, college fairs, you know let's all get together and learn about the FAFSA and fill out that form. I know they do that at most high schools. Counselors, across the state, are stepping up and doing that and our families are certainly made aware of those opportunities. Specifically, I have watched with one student who is deaf and my teacher for the hard of hearing has partnered with that kiddo and has traveled to the U of I where he's enrolled and they met with the student support services people and that teacher for the hard of hearing is guiding him through that helping him make those connections with the support people on campus and that student I think is a first generation student. He's not a learning disabled student.. they are working through some self-advocacy and of course he will be on a 504 plan when he goes to college and you often have to pursue that yourself and advocate for yourself, so they working to develop a list of accommodations that he needs. Making sure he understand he has equipment—his processors and how that might work with an interpreter and without an interpreter. I know that they've been working on the use of some specific technology with that student.

Sue
We don't take the parents on the college visits, but we feel these are very important because it gets those kids on campus and they get a little familiarity in that and they also visit with the office on disabilities at the campus so they know where to get services.

Paula
But a couple things we do is through the College of Southern Idaho and we have a really great connection with them. They put on…well, actually I used to be part of the secondary transition agency…we called it the Magic Valley Transition Team…it would include…I was the representative of the school districts, health and welfare was there, Juvenile Justice was there…we had different people from different agencies who were participating on that….that was the team that would work with college to put on what the college called College GPS. It's intention was how to navigate your way to college and then once you are there how to navigate the services that are available to you because you have disabilities. We also encourage and support our kids going to the Tools for Life conference that's every year. We also do the disability mentoring date which is in November which is affiliated with the College and the Magic Valley Transition Team and so what we do is a lot of preliminary work and communicating with the various school districts and finding out what each district wants to participate- junior or seniors or both. I prefer it just being with the juniors and seniors. The idea is that with those students who want to participate choose in advance what their interests are in their area of work. If girls wants to be a cosmetologist…I had one who wanted to be a cage fighter and another who wanted to be a gamer and develop games. Our obligation on the Magic Valley transition team is to find people in the community who would let our students job shadow that job with 2 or 3 hours. That happens in the morning and then we all come

back as a group for pizza and we process it by then having each student shares what some of their experiences are and it's really awesome.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Jeremy

Another thing we are doing I am tied in with the state NTACT transition team and another Special Education Director is on that team is well from near Moscow. As part of that team we are working very carefully with Vocational Rehabilitation. So, our district partners very closely with VR and we have tons of summer placement and work experiences…We have really tightened this partnership a lot over the course of the alot 2 and a half years. And this incorporates first generation students as well as others. We had zero in 2015 and we filled all the spots that VR gave us in 2016 and 2017 and that was well over 30 spots. VR also has a summer program housed at the BSU campus and Pocatello and we are sending students with learning disabilities to do a brief week or week and a half long college experience and that's through VR and we are doing a lot of that kind of thing. We have an MOU with VR. As I mentioned, we are pretty large school district and so there is a VR case manager that uses office space at our district. We have a memorandum with VR that they can use that space. So, they are actually housed in our district. But other than that, it's just a matter of each of our IEP teams contact that person and they are invited to the meeting with parent permission or adult student permission and then it just rolls from there.

Jill

We have a close relationship with our Voc Rehab counselor. We do great work with Vocational Rehab. Actually, last year the state representative for VR created a mock summer VR experience. We, as a district, are contracting out with an agency Upward Leadership and Education to provide the same experience that VR provides. It's a pilot project so we will see how it goes. We are taking nine students up we are going to leadership, sort of an initiation of outlining strengths and limitations and they will be exposed to some different type of jobs.

Sally

Voc Rehab takes higher level students and the lower level students that are intellectually challenged are assisted with a summer program and transition by a group called Community Partners. We schedule are IEP meeting by calling the parents first and asking them when they want to come and then scheduling them. Also, we have opportunities to come in and talk with the teacher they want to talk to. I have only been here a year I don't know of any parent who hasn't shown up to the IEP. We have parents that are very actively involved to the extent that sometimes we have to tell them to call after this time because she is on prep or call before or after school.

My experience here and where I was in Oregon is that the parents hooked into Vocational Rehab are more likely to look at continued postsecondary education whereas kids who are intellectually disabled who are hooked into a region program to learn a trade are less likely to go onto a postsecondary education.

John
Most of the time the kids hit their senior year they are done unless they need adoptive skills….and I would like to see more done on the college career ready transition for all students….We don't have Voc Rehab up here like I know it exists here….we could get it in theory but they don't come up here.
I want opportunities for kids to have meaningful experiences in a vocation…I know this questionnaire is about secondary education by college but I would probably widen that scope to include like Voc Tech….like a kid welding a small engine repair, or photography…so up here they could be ski instructors or nurses…there is the service industry….it would be more work focused so when they went to school it would be more meaningful

Paula
There is a lot of reliance in Voc Rehab to gear them into a postsecondary education direction. Other than just trying to set their schedules to include programs to get them ready for more of an agriculture academic focus other than there really isn't anything more. I was frustrated that last several years that the smaller districts around here who didn't have some special contract with Voc Rehab didn't get any counseling services at all. But if you bought into that…if the district spent money and bought into it then they would show up and be much more engaged. But, here where we are, we have someone whose really been helpful and were not part of that special contract. I don't how that came about. If the director before me did something ... maybe it's just how that VR has changed how they do things a little. But I have been very happy with their involvement.
Once you pay for all your staff and all your benefits there is no money to pay for anything. And I would much rather have people working with kids then waiting for the possibility of VR to show up.

TRIO
Connie
I would like to know more about TRIO as it applies for students with disabilities. Where can I find out more information?

Cindy
We don't call it the TRIO program but the students we had this year were involved with Upward Bound with DAC and parents. I would love to learn more about college coordinators for TRIO…that's a big one….I think it would get others going through.

Dave
We don't have a TRIO program. If we did have one we would focus on Student Support program because we could right away with kids.

Jeremy

We do actually have several students who participate in the TRIO program who are coming specifically right of Nampa High School and that has been going on for quite a while. I can't say they are students with learning disability but I think it's a little bit of both I guess. Over the years I would guess some of the students were with learning disabilities but that hasn't been the focus.

Jill

I will be honest with you, we don't have a TRIO program I have only known about at the postsecondary level. If there was a TRIO program at the secondary level I would love to learn about it because at this point I don't know and that's probably more in the realm of me working with the secondary counselors on that piece…That's an area of a counselor's piece but I would love to learn more about it.

Matt

To be honest I never heard of the TRIO program and we have no involvement to my knowledge so obviously I can't say that there is any connection. I think one of the challenges we have being a real small rural school district is that you get OK on a lot of things but never get great at any one thing. Lots of time you don't know about something because you don't spend all your time in that particular field.

Paula

In our area…. I don't know you call her a TRIO member... but that person who is in charge of the Student Support Services at the College of Southern Idaho she also participated on that Magic Valley transition team that was hugely important because we wanted to be able to include the college in our effort in secondary transition…. it was hugely important for her to be there and she was. Idaho Falls has a very active program and they have the same connections over there with their postsecondary.

Sue

I am familiar with it I just know how it works. I know the person who oversees that program she also does our college and career readiness. She is really fabulous. I have been out to a high school and I have noticed that there has been someone else there. I don't know if they are employed by the district or they are employed in serve a number of schools.

Instructional Context

Connie

It is a process to make families understand that their children have rights to a differentiated curriculum and accommodations. Universal Design for Learning is a concept that I have worked on for several years and am starting to make a reality.

Dave
In general, we deliver all that we are required by law. We don't deliver the "Cadillac" model but I try to provide more than the minimum.

Jeremy
We don't have laptops just sitting around in every classroom we have them assigned out per student. The student gets that laptop in August and its theirs throughout the end of the year. In Middle School and High School its Windows oriented at Elementary its IPAD environment. And so by the time the kid moves all the way through our system they will be fully capable in either one of those. And when we talk Special Education the IPAD environment is good for all students even students with significant disabilities. In those environments that are self-contained we use IPADs all the way through.

The other piece would be to add that digital portfolio. The reason that I'm very specific it about being digital is people don't carry a three-ring binder around anymore. Kids going in for job interviews if they are carrying a digital portfolio that shows all of their skills that they have developed on their own that just demonstrates that I'm proficient at, I can do, I am quality at this…. Whether it's a college interview or a job interview really puts them in a position to showcase what they know and it really puts them in a position to show how they really can be a quality student or a quality worker even with their disability and I just feel like that's somewhere we want to go.

Matt
One of the best things we do well is retain our teachers for a long period of time and that allows our kids to know their teachers in a more intimate type of environment. Another thing that is really interesting that really works well is we actually have a 1 room schoolhouse down the road with 20 kids K-6 with one teacher and the really interesting thing is that really forces the teacher to deliver the instruction to the kid where they are actually at. I think that's really an interesting concept because too often in these bigger schools is they get 30 kids in a certain grade in grade 1 7 or whatever it is and I think what ends up happening is they just assume that every kid is on the same level and they teach to the middle and then you have kids bored because they have no idea what's going on and kids bored because they are not challenged. I wish we could find a way to teach to the kid where they actually are with the goal of bringing up where they ought to be. Therefore, if funding wasn't an issue I would be finding more to teach to kids where they are at and teach to them one step ahead of them to keep them intellectually engaged and keep them pushed with high expectations.

Elaine
This is a rural area [she] is not going to be able to hire someone to dictate or take notes. So, if I could get more technology, where the student can carry a personal device around then they dictate into it to do their papers or record the teacher's lecture to refer back to, [then] that 's fantastic... the majority of my district's population is going to be learning disabled.

Family Engagement

Family Preparation

Jill

We have a huge population in Northern Idaho that have the mentality about education not being important. There is a book called the hillbilly something that someone recommended me. It's very much like this in South where I grew up in Appalachian and Blue Ridge Mountains where people I only went to Eighth grade and why do you have to go to high school you can still get a job. That teaching of the parents that it's not like that anymore you have to have a diploma to get any sort of job these days.

Paula

We do some activities to encourage them to go to college. We do have experiences, but unfortunately, the world of work and the need to earn money to support themselves or to support the families they are living with… they need to get on the dairies and to get on the farms…we have a large population of Hispanics here and their life is working in Agriculture or working in the dairies.

John

It's hard to know the backgrounds of the parents. So, I guess I am speculating a little bit. But families that come from poverty that really depends on the individual. Every kid is different and that is what special education is all about and why that's important is because there doesn't seem to be rhyme or reason if a child comes from a family that has no background in education and they themselves struggle with a disability they might have the constitution to work hard and be someone that is compliant and comes ready to learn every day and may not have the materials and things but is mentally prepared and they are happy to have someone giving them attention and trying to please so there is that kind of kid and you need to leave your mind open to those type of kids. But unfortunately, probably the demographic as a whole is difficult to work with because they are not prepared to be learners. So, it makes it a litter tougher obviously if they don't have the background or expectations coming from the home.

Sue

Personally, what I would do is sit down with families and students and although we have already mapped their transition plans out I would actually provide the resources to take them through the steps. Maybe take the student down to the college and help them register, maybe take the parents on the college tour, maybe help them find housing if that's what they need… really drill down and figure out what specific support that particular student is going to need to be successful because we don't always know and we assume what the variables are going to be and help them with those barriers.

Jeremy

Our district is a fairly poor school district in terms of our demographics. Our richest elementary school is 44% poverty so we have a lot of students whose families are not—there is a big bunch of students who families would be first generation to college just in our general population. So, one of the things we work on just all around is those 4 year plans for students and involving parents in the selection of courses that guide the kids toward what their step is after high school. That is a big part of what we do.

Connie
Many families are still in a grieving process and trying to find out what having a disability means for their family or child. It is a process to make families understand that their children have rights to a differentiated curriculum and accommodations

Family Involvement
Cindy
We have parent nights especially with the financial aid…we have tours to the career fairs that they attend, but the big thing is getting financial aid and getting their admission papers in order….We are small school so it happens for all of them. We get them set up for scholarships.

Matt
We do everything we can to involve the family and to educate them on what we are doing here at the school in terms of their child's disability and what we are doing to try to help that child with a disability and what they can do at home now with that student. I think it's largely about the culture that exists at the school. Have you established a culture of low expectations or high expectations where everyone is capable of doing their work and going to college and contributing to society. If the latter is the culture you created at that school then people will do whatever is necessary to help those kids be successful.

Connie
Parents listen to guest speakers from colleges and businesses as to the importance of education. Many families are still in a grieving process and trying to find out what having a disability means for their family or child. It is a process to make families understand that their children have rights to a differentiated curriculum and accommodations.

Dave
We are a targeted Title I school so we are required to have family outreach and to make parents aware of the process. So, we have Title I informational meetings, a Math night…whenever we have a student in Title we send progress reports (even though we are not required to), anybody that we are doing RTI with we want parents to know what the heck is going on with their kid.

John
Every kid is different and that is what special education is all about and why that's important is because there doesn't seem to be rhyme or reason if a child comes from a family that has no background in education and they themselves struggle with a disability they might have the constitution to work hard and be someone that is compliant and comes ready to learn every day and may not have the materials and things but is mentally prepared and they are happy to have someone giving them attention and trying to please so there is that kind of kid and you need to leave your mind open to those type of kids. But unfortunately, probably the demographic as a whole is difficult to work with because they are not prepared to be learners. So, it makes it a litter tougher obviously if they don't have the background or expectations coming from the home.

Starting at age 15, during that secondary IEP they are definitely invited and we want them involved. Mostly figuring out what they might have planned or what their family has ideas for that postsecondary plan.

...parents have a legal right to be involved with interventions especially if we are using federal money. So a lot of that is getting the word out…we do it as back-to-school nights we do that as school news letters with getting parents involved involved in the intervention plans…a lot of times the parents trust the school to do that because they don't know what they don't know…like they don't know what the curriculum might be or what the research says are the good interventions….It's mostly the IEP.

Jill
Families are very involved. Two years ago, I did a parent survey and our parents are extremely happy with their involvement, I don't know what percentages are but they are in agreement. We ask for their feedback all the time. We are open in meetings. We take what they have to say very critically and as important, because they know their son and daughter best and us working as a team is extremely important.

Sally
We schedule an IEP meeting by calling the parents first and asking them when they want to come and then scheduling them. Also, we have opportunities to come in and talk with the teacher they want to talk to. I have only been here a year I don't know of any parent who hasn't shown up to the IEP. We have parents that are very actively involved to the extent that sometimes we have to tell them to call after this time because she is on prep or call before or after school.

Samantha
I think the IEP meeting is our chance to have connection with the family and often the services are directly with the student. Counselors at the school level meet with lots of families and do those informational nights. Just talking on a sidebar this question is prompting me to

think about those kids that have needs of their level of stability. But, then maybe have a level of needs that relates to this first-generation concept and I think it's going to be a joint effort between your school counselors and your special education teachers. And we haven't done anything specifically for first generation kiddos but they might need something a little bit more specific.

I heard a sad story. I can't remember right now which case manager but it was about how a high school kiddo going onto college and the kiddo had qualified for I think it was the opportunity scholarship which is based on your finances and had OK grades. This person is not a first-generation student. In fact, the parent is just graduating from college. So, it may be that this high school senior would be maybe the second generation, I am not sure. But the kiddo didn't get on and accept the financial based scholarship and lost it. And the student comes from a pretty high poverty family low SES family. I thought that is so sad. So, there are those situations that there would have been someone that knew the deadlines and knew that was coming up, we could simply queue that kiddo and give them time in their day to make it happen. So, it's not hard to do it's just that we have to know that they are not doing it, and then we can step up and help them.

Sue

Typically during that IEP meeting the parent comes and there is a discussion about what to do, how to learn about schools and there is also support not just directly from the case manager at the secondary setting, but also we also have that college and career readiness position at our high school that actually get kids lined with college classes before they finish high school. We don't take the parents on the college visits, but we feel these are very important because it gets those kids on campus and they get a little familiarity in that and they also visit with the office on disabilities at the campus so they know where to get services.

Another really big piece is that we get VR involved and they meet with the family and they are really instrumental in transition for kids. To get parents more involved we also have a transition fair. What we do for that is once a year we have folks from the colleges and from whatever service that student may need to get ready for postsecondary participate. We also have local help come in including folks who supervise behavior services and we assist them in accessing these resources.

Family Empowerment

Matt

I think it's largely about the culture that exists at the school. Have you established a culture of low expectations or high expectations where everyone is capable of doing their work and going to college and contributing to society. If the latter is the culture you created at that school then people will do whatever is necessary to help those kids be successful.

Connie
It is a process to make families understand that their children have rights to a differentiated curriculum and accommodations.

Jill
We take what they have to say very critically and as important, because they know their son and daughter best and us working as a team is extremely important.

John
Well parents have a legal right to be involved with interventions especially if we are using federal money. So a lot of that is getting the word out…we do it as back-to-school nights we do that as school news letters with getting parents involved involved in the intervention plans…a lot of times the parents trust the school to do that because they don't know what they don't know…like they don't know what the curriculum might be or what the research says are the good interventions…

Cindy
Maybe take the student down to the college and help them register, maybe take the parents on the college tour, maybe help them find housing if that's what they need… really drill down and figure out what specific support that particular student is going to need to be successful because we don't always know and we assume what the variables are going to be and help them with those barriers. I would even get them a mentor to help them through those first weeks or length time that student would need to be successful. Maybe it's just difficult for that student to simply say this is the office of disability on that campus and go there when you need help.

Financial Considerations

Cost for Services and Support Considerations
Connie
More opportunities to work in the community for partial days to learn about working and visit colleges to interview professors.

Cindy
The biggest thing is having access to help, whether it before or after or during school help whether it be parapros or teachers…that's the probably the biggest thing they need support with and has had a positive effect.

Dave
We would increase the offerings…. right now we are targeted… we are a K-4 targeted and our primary focus is Reading, if money were no object we would make it K-8 and we would make the interventions for Math, Reading and Written language.

Elaine

…if I could I would want to increase my budget for technology. Because they can dictate into the computer or have voice back to them so that they are reading it…That has been huge for kids with learning disabilities that want to access college. So, I could continue access these resources I think those are the key….This is a rural area so I am not going to be able to hire someone to dictate or take notes. So, if I could get more technology where the student can carry a personal device around then they can dictate into it to do their papers or record the teacher's lecture to refer back to that's fantastic….And for little district's it's a lot of money to come up with one device…We have a lot of good grant writers here at the district so we are starting to get some of that in.

John

I want opportunities for kids to have meaningful experiences in a vocation…I know this questionnaire is about secondary education by college but I would probably widen that scope to include like Voc Tech….like a kid welding a small engine repair, or photography…so up here they could be ski instructors or nurses…there is the service industry….it would be more work focused so when they went to school it would be more meaningful…so if funding were not an issue for me there would be more technical programs in the state that worked on job skill because I think they are not getting paid and experience and they have a direction

Jeremy

If costs were not an issue I would like to add a specific set of 3 or 4 people that would start as early as 6th grade working with families on developing really quality plans for what they want to go after they are done with high school and really narrowing the focus on that. The other piece would be to add that digital portfolio. The reason that I'm very specific it about being digital is people don't carry a three-ring binder around anymore. Kids going in for job interviews if they are carrying a digital portfolio that shows all of their skills that they have developed on their own that just demonstrates that I'm proficient at, I can do, I am quality at this…. Whether it's a college interview or a job interview really puts them in a position to showcase what they know and it really puts them in a position to show how they really can be a quality student or a quality worker even with their disability and I just feel like that's somewhere we want to go.

Jill

I think there are a lot of areas. I think would be building a very intentional special education program that is actually driven by transition and there would also be very sufficient and intentional support. There would also be progression…. Right now in looking at this for me where I am sitting is building the 18-21 program in a rural district and what does that look like. In a larger city, they have Project Search. We bring in and build a smaller version of Project Search. I am look at everything as baby steps…We would have satellite programs and

a support network on campuses…I don't know its kind of a loaded question. For me it would be professional development. It would include hiring a person who would then carry this out. I think the state would recognize that transition drives the IEP. The preschools are not going to have a transition but we are thinking about it… you begin with the end in mind with every student you start working with. That means we are thinking about this preschooler when they are 17 and 18 years old and moving out of the district. Have all of these goals and all these skills they have been working on, has it all been for that one goal of them having a successful transition… and that is academia, that is social and that is emotional. In the younger years, its really looking at sort of behavior the umbrella of executive functioning that is academia, that is social and that is emotional.

Matt
...if funding wasn't an issue I would be finding more ways to teach to kids where they are at and teach to them one step ahead of them to keep them intellectually engaged and keep them pushed with high expectations.

Paula
It would be wonderful having a transition coordinator. It would be awesome to have…I would for this district to be able to be the host district for other smaller districts around us and develop I don't a kind of a Co-op for transitional services and even before (these are big dreams) you know before I retire I am going to start a charter school it's just going to be geared toward secondary transition and it's not only going to be for kids with disabilities but for kids without disabilities and if they weren't able to graduate and they are still under the age of 21 that they could come back and earn their GEDs and we could provide whatever supports they needed to do that. We could provide tutorial services, we could, for the kids with disabilities, provide all those links to the agencies that we needed to, we would have transportation to be able to go back-and-forth from here and the college. We would really take advantage of the resources around us including the college. But, unfortunately, our location is 45 miles away from the next major city location and so its cost prohibitive but there so many more things we could be doing. We could be linking with the Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind which is near our location, so we could be linking with them on a much greater basis and in secondary transition events instead of us all doing our own thing separately.

Sally
You know like with anything you always have somebody fall through the cracks. And I think in Special Education even in the years in Oregon and the years I have seen here. The transition from Middle to High School isn't strong enough to keep kids in school. And then the secondary transition needs to start early and we started at 7th grade over there we were not hooking the kids into…but there is not an agency to get involved unless the child is severely disabled that's going to get involved and if they are too severely involved they providing nothing for the parents. There is nothing in between…so if money wasn't an issue I would hire a transition coach so that these kids could have an opportunity to experience a lot of

things before they get to that 12th grade year and they decide to come back for another 2 or 3 years or do we go wherever we are going. We need some more intense…someone more available…once a month is not enough and sometimes not the right agency. Vocab is wonderful here but it is such a small population that meets its criteria.

Samantha

We would have our transition coordinator as a full-time position. It's been a part-time, a 0.6, and this year we put the coordinator transition position as a part-time and we put it with our 18-21-year old transition program and it just didn't work. They weren't available as much as we needed them to be to assist the students. I have proposed it and our superintendent is looking to see if we can do it.

Sue

Personally, what I would do is sit down with families and students and although we have already mapped their transition plans out I would actually provide the resources to take them through the steps. Maybe take the student down to the college and help them register, maybe take the parents on the college tour, maybe help them find housing if that's what they need… really drill down and figure out what specific support that particular student is going to need to be successful because we don't always know and we assume what the variables are going to be and help them with those barriers. I would even get them a mentor to help them through those first weeks or length time that student would need to be successful. Maybe it's just difficult for that student to simply say this is the office of disability on that campus and go there when you need help. If finances were not an issue I would provide a mentor for that student to get them into school, to make sure they get the correct courses, to help them around and least through the first several weeks feeling comfortable on campus, have homework help for them….I guess just set up a network of support.

Financial Assistance for a Postsecondary Education
Cindy

We have parent nights especially with the financial aid…we have tours to the career fairs that they attend, but the big thing is getting financial aid and getting their admission papers in order….We are small school so it happens for all of them. WE get them set up for scholarships.

Samantha

I heard a sad story. I can't remember right now which case manager but it was about how a high school kiddo going onto college and the kiddo had qualified for I think it was the opportunity scholarship which is based on your finances and had OK grades. This person is not a first generation student. In fact, the parent is just graduating from college. So, it may be that this high school senior would be maybe the second generation, I am not sure. But the kiddo didn't get on and accept the financial based scholarship and lost it. And the student comes from a pretty high poverty family low SES family. I thought that is so sad. So, there

are those situations that there would have been someone that knew the deadlines and knew that was coming up, we could simply queue that kiddo and give them time in their day to make it happen. So, it's not hard to do it's just that we have to know that they are not doing it, and then we can step up and help them.

APPENDIX H: CODING

Focused Planning

Planning Strategies

Connie – 1 reference coded, 2.17% coverage.

They also take a learning skills profile and asked about what they want to do in 5 years.

Cindy – 1 reference coded, 7.41% coverage.

We really start look at what possibilities of thing of what they want to do. The career guidance of it we start laying out here are the different options are for schools and here is what we need to get done….they are pretty involved even with their scores and assessments…

Jeremy – 1 reference coded, 1.88% coverage.

So, their goals all relate back to their transition—whether it be their Math or Language Arts goals they relate back to what their plan is for after high school.

John – 1 reference coded, 2.68% coverage.

So, we start the kids early in 7th grade start having kids looking at the 4-year plan and they are actually involved in their high school 4-year plan in middle school.

Matt – 1 reference coded, 5.95% coverage.

I think it's largely about the culture that exists at the school. Have you established a culture of low expectations or high expectations where everyone is capable of doing their work and going to college and contributing to society. If the latter is the culture you created at that school then people will do whatever is necessary to help those kids be successful.

Paula – 2 references coded, 16.02% coverage.

Reference 1: 7.96% coverage

We like do a MAPS (making action plans) process and so we like to go through the process with them. Our students at the high school, they do some research on their own after they have gone through the CIS career information system ..,. after they have spent some time on that and determined some careers they may be interested in, they put together a power point and they show the power point at their IEP meeting as we are having secondary discussion…so they don't lead the whole meeting but they play a big part in it by introducing everyone and they are demonstrating their desire by showing this powerpoint and just staying throughout meeting and we asked them a bunch of questions such as what accommodations do you feel that you need and may not be provided and the ones that are on the IEP do you feel these are appropriate still? Are these being provided to you? And then again we use the moving on binder and there is a lot of reference to the moving on binder so they are able to share whatever they want to out of that moving on binder

Reference 2: 8.06% coverage

They are part of the MAPS process which happens well before the IEP meetings. So they are part of the MAPS process and there are certain questions …and there is a certain process that you go through to develop an action plan. The student can invite friends and whoever is important to that student can be invited so, from the student's perspective, from the parent's perspective, from the siblings perspective, the best friend's perspective, the coach, whoever the student wants there can provide information that really helps …and

basically you are covering things like strengths, needs, um interests, preferences… those kind

of things…and that is a preliminary to getting that research done for the power point

presentation….It helps these kids think sequentially that there trying to understand that there

is process from getting from point A to point B and there many little steps in between that you

need to spend some time to explore and we can't just jump over and think that it's going to be

successful…so, that's the intent.

Sally – 1 reference coded, 5.81% coverage.

Starting at the high school level they start developing a professional/personal

development plan in 7th grade where they address the 7 areas of transitional planning; 7th

grade where I was in Oregon and 9th grade here. They develop and review that plan every

year at the annual IEP

Samantha – 1 reference coded, 8.19% coverage.

Prior to those meetings, they often work with that student—the transition coordinator

does especially to understand that student's interests that's part of the transition assessment

that we are required to do. So they are trying to get what does this student think they are good

at, what do they think they need help with, what do they think about the world of work and

what they might like to do. They ask about what type of living arrangements they want to

have after they graduate? Do they want to live at home, have an apartment? So, those

questions are asked prior to the meeting and then it's written into the IEP so we capture the

student's interests and we get their input prior to that meeting.

Sue – 2 references coded, 7.19% coverage.

Reference 1: 2.37% coverage

Then an interview will be conducted with the student to talk about what you really want to do and how can we help you get there.

Reference 2: 4.83% coverage

…there is also support not just directly from the case manager at the secondary setting, but also we also have that college and career readiness position at our high school that actually get kids lined with college classes before they finish high school

Student Participaiton

Connie – 1 reference coded, 3.37% coverage.

Students participate in interest inventories as part of middle school. They are given the AIR inventory and opportunity inventory.

Cindy – 1 reference coded, 3.69% coverage.

They are invited to all the IEP meetings…whether they attend or not is another story…if they don't attend we still go over it with them

Dave – 1 reference coded, 19.61% coverage.

I have one daughter who has celebral palsy so when she was about in the 5th or 6th grade we invited her to the IEP meetings because we thought it was her life and she should have same say into it so that's what I do with the current parents. In fact that happened to me on Thursday and we had an IEP meeting and Mom said well should my son come? And I said it's only his life so I think it would be important for him to be there to make some of the decisions as well as understand why we are doing what we are doing and that will help him

learn some self-determination skills which will be critical once he leaves high school. So, he came and so we encourage participation somewhere around 4th and 5th grade

Elaine – 1 reference coded, 3.87% coverage.

Students are involved with IEP planning and transition planning, choosing of classes and activities to participate

Jill – 2 references coded, 3.44% coverage.

Reference 1: 1.35% coverage

The way we are moving into anticipating that at the district we are doing student involvement/ directed IEPs

Reference 2: 2.09% coverage

To address that piece of the process we are doing as a district moving into those and its actually in our state plan in NTACT that we are moving toward student directed IEPs

John – 1 reference coded, 1.66% coverage.

Starting at age 15, during that secondary IEP they are definitely invited and we want them involved.

Jeremy – 4 references coded, 7.29% coverage.

Reference 1: 1.89% coverage

…each of our IEP teams contact that person and they are invited to the meeting with parent permission or adult student permission and then it just rolls from there

Reference 2: 0.72% coverage

…like our students are involved in their transition planning

Reference 3: 2.40% coverage

Every kid puts together their 4-year plan with their IEP team to try to figure what their next steps will be after high school. They start that in their freshman-sophomore year and move forward from there.

Reference 4: 2.28% coverage

So, one of the things we work on just all around is those 4 year plans for students and involving parents in the selection of courses that guide the kids toward what their step is after high school.

Matt – 1 references coded, 17.85% coverage.

One of the amazing things we find when working with our students in getting them involved is that you ask them questions they often say I don't know, I never thought of that or I don't care so we are trying to teach to take ownership of their learning and trying to change the culture in which the school operates in. So, sometimes you have to sit with those students in advance and just say hey listen I want you think about this: ask them what do you want to be when you grow up, what do you want to go to school when you go to school and what are your aspirations in life. Have them think about those so when they do come to their meeting you can say OK I asked you some questions earlier now what do you think you need to do to get that point…You know you just got to pull them along because sometimes students with disabilities as well as students without disabilities have no idea but they need somebody to help peek their interests. So, you need to give them the bread crumbs and hopefully they pick

up the pieces and put 2 and 2 together and take ownership of their goals without realizing they are taking ownership.

Paula – 1 reference coded, 0.50% coverage.

In regards to their meetings they all get their own invitation.

Sally – 1 reference coded, 3.92% coverage.

They develop and review that plan every year at the annual IEP and the students are invited both on paper and personally to come to these meetings and parents and voc rehab are invited as well.

Samantha – 2 references coded, 4.78% coverage.

Reference 1: 3.25% coverage

For some kids it's just really encouraging them to be there and the special education teachers know which student is really going to struggle just to show up so they do a lot of encouragement and explanation of what the meeting is about and how we want to hear their side of things

Reference 2: 1.53% coverage

We don't have a set policy that they have to be a student directed IEP. I know that some schools have gone that way. Though we haven't

IEP

Cindy – 1 reference coded, 2.59% coverage.

…whether they attend or not is another story…if they don't attend we still go over it with them.

Dave – 1 reference coded, 3.53% coverage.

it would be important for him to be there to make some of the decisions as well as understand why we are doing what we are doing

Elaine – 1 reference coded, 1.68% coverage.

…choosing of classes and activities to participate

Jill – 3 references coded, 5.81% coverage.

Reference 1: 0.81% coverage

I think the state would recognize that transition drives the IEP.

Reference 2: 1.85% coverage

The preschools are not going to have a transition but we are thinking about it… you begin with the end in mind with every student you start working with.

Reference 3: 3.14% coverage

That means we are thinking about this preschooler when they are 17 and 18 years old and moving out of the district. Have all of these goals and all these skills they have been working on, has it all been for that one goal of them having a successful transition…

John – 1 reference coded, 2.70% coverage.

So, we start the kids early in 7th grade start having kids looking at the 4-year plan and they are actually involved in their high school 4-year plan in middle school.

Jeremy – 1 reference coded, 5.06% coverage.

Specifically, with students with disabilities that gets even more narrowly focused because we are talking about an IEP and part of the IEP team—really that whole secondary

IEP—should be driven by transition plan—and most cases it is and that's what they are focused on. So, their goals all relate back to their transition—whether it be their Math or Language Arts goals they relate back to what their plan is for after high school

Matt – 2 references coded, 6.97% coverage.

Reference 1: 4.01% coverage

So, sometimes you have to sit with those students in advance and just say hey listen I want you think about this: ask them what do you want to be when you grow up, what do you want to go to school when you go to school and what are your aspirations in life.

Reference 2: 2.96% coverage

So, you need to give them the bread crumbs and hopefully they pick up the pieces and put 2 and 2 together and take ownership of their goals without realizing they are taking ownership.

Samantha – 2 references coded, 3.68% coverage.

Reference 1: 2.11% coverage

So they are trying to get what does this student think they are good at, what do they think they need help with, what do they think about the world of work and what they might like to do.

Reference 2: 1.57% coverage

They ask about what type of living arrangements they want to have after they graduate? Do they want to live at home, have an apartment?

Student Development

Assessment

Connie – 1 reference coded, 3.70% coverage.

They are given the AIR inventory and opportunity inventory. They also take a learning skills profile and asked about what they want to do in 5 years.

Jeremy – 1 reference coded, 1.91% coverage.

They take a variety of transitional assessments to give them indicators of where their skill-sets lie and what their interest levels are to try to help them plan.

Samantha – 2 references coded, 1.29% coverage.

Reference 1: 0.40% coverage

He did transitional assessments

Reference 2: 0.89% coverage

We know a current intellectual assessment with an IQ score is often helpful

Sue – 1 reference coded, 3.40% coverage.

We start when they are 15 or in 9th grade and they do transitional assessments through the four years what they can do independently and they may do a career inventory assessment.

Academic Skills

Jill – 2 references coded, 3.91% coverage.

Reference 1: 2.00% coverage

Have all of these goals and all these skills they have been working on, has it all been for that one goal of them having a successful transition… and that is academia

Reference 2: 1.91% coverage

In the younger years, its really looking at sort of behavior the umbrella of executive functioning that is academia, that is social and that is emotional.

John – 2 references coded, 6.99% coverage.

Reference 1: 3.95% coverage

But unfortunately, probably the demographic as a whole is difficult to work with because they are not prepared to be learners. So, it makes it a litter tougher obviously if they don't have the background or expectations coming from the home

Reference 2: 3.04% coverage

…our district has an RTI process and Child Find which tries to identify kids who struggle all the way up from Preschool to Grade 12 or even we have a transition program for an 18-21 year old.

Jeremy – 1 reference coded, 6.97% coverage.

We don't have laptops just sitting around in every classroom we have them assigned out per student. The student gets that laptop in August and its theirs throughout the end of the year. In Middle School and High School its Windows oriented at Elementary its IPAD environment. And so by the time the kid moves all the way through our system they will be fully capable in either one of those. And when we talk Special Education the IPAD environment is good for all students even students with significant disabilities. In those environments that are self-contained we use IPADs all the way through

Matt – 2 references coded, 12.74% coverage.

Reference 1: 8.13% coverage

So this last year is the first time we had a student who graduated with a learning disability. Bu the interesting thing is that we didn't lower the expectations but in fact tried to keep the expectations high and the student was still capable of taking AP courses. He struggled and had a hard time but still maintained those high expectations of this individual to prepare for the real world because often the real world doesn't adjust to the expectations of this student like they received in school.

Reference 2: 4.61% coverage

Another thing that is really interesting that really works well is we actually have a 1 room schoolhouse down the road with 20 kids K-6 with one teacher and the really interesting thing is that really forces the teacher to deliver the instruction to the kid where they are actually at.

Paula – 2 references coded, 1.22% coverage.

Reference 1: 0.45% coverage

We choose our curriculum to meet their particular needs.

Reference 2: 0.78% coverage

So, it's your curriculum choices that are just as important as some of the events you are putting on.

Samantha – 2 references coded, 2.76% coverage.

Reference 1: 2.17% coverage

I think their biggest influence is making sure kiddos know how to study for a test and how to take notes and how to stay organized…all those soft skills that kids need going into college.

Reference 2: 0.60% coverage

We know that reading, writing and math is helpful.

Life Skills

Cindy – 1 reference coded, 1.33% coverage.

we also try to help them advocate for themselves

Dave – 1 reference coded, 5.88% coverage.

In fact that happened to me on Thursday and we had an IEP meeting and Mom said well should my son come? And I said it's only his life so I think it would be important for him to be there to make some of the decisions

Jill – 1 reference coded, 1.93% coverage.

For me my first actual teaching job was as a self-contained life skills teacher and I worked with students with significant and intellectual disabilities

Paula – 2 references coded, 8.11% coverage.

Reference 1: 0.74% coverage

We also encourage and support our kids going to the Tools for Life conference that's every year

Reference 2: 7.37% coverage

Some of our students with more severe disabilities need life skills type program. However, what I have found is that some of our students with learning disabilities need some of these life skill strategies… so, like they don't know how to address an envelope, how to fill out an application, how to write a letter of interest in a job, how to use coupons, how to read a menu… you think that they would have learned these skills in Language Arts but somehow it has passed by them. The life skills curriculum has become just as important to students with learning disabilities and probably more applicable to them than our kids more serious disabilities, because kids with more serious disabilities are going to have caretakers and they won't have to be fully functional (even though we want them to get as close to being as functional as they can). The kids with learning disabilities are really grasping this and they are the ones that are going to use it.

Employment and Occupational Skills

Connie – 2 references coded, 8.13% coverage.

Reference 1: 6.02% coverage

Secondary IEP's provide pre vocational goals starting at age 13 and we start discussing careers and life choices. Students participate in Dept of Labor CIS program. They have guest speakers and start job shadow jobs in the school at age 14.

Reference 2: 2.11% coverage

More opportunities to work in the community for partial days to learn about working

Jill – 2 references coded, 3.32% coverage.

Reference 1: 1.16% coverage

And I was a vocational teacher in terms of work preparedness and community based instruction

Reference 2: 2.16% coverage

We are taking nine students up we are going to leadership, sort of an initiation of outlining strengths and limitations and they will be exposed to some different type of jobs. John – 1 reference coded, 19.29% coverage.

I want opportunities for kids to have meaningful experiences in a vocation…I know this questionnaire is about secondary education by college but I would probably widen that scope to include like Voc Tech….like a kid welding a small engine repair, or photography…so up here they could be ski instructors or nurses…there is the service industry….it would be more work focused so when they went to school it would be more meaningful…so if funding were not an issue for me there would be more technical programs in the state that worked on job skill because I think they are not getting paid and experience and they have a direction…no kid knows necessarily what they want to do whether they are first generation or fifth generation…a lot of kids are leaving high school not knowing what they want to do…some kids figure that in 4 years of college and some kids take a year or 2 off…it's my personal belief if you are working you will find a direction you want to go in or a direction you don't want to go in if you get tired of washing dishes or something like that. So for me personally I would like a more work and training program because I believe that would be more meaningful for the kids.

Paula – 1 reference coded, 2.56% coverage.

Our obligation on the Magic Valley transition team is to find people in the community who would let our students job shadow that job with 2 or 3 hours. That happens in the morning and then we all come back as a group for pizza and we process it by then having each student shares what some of their experiences are and it's really awesome

Samantha – 1 reference coded, 0.60% coverage.

He worked on getting students into job placements…

Sue – 2 references coded, 5.08% coverage.

Reference 1: 2.57% coverage

We work them on their transitional plan and help them identify what career they want and identify what are their postsecondary goals.

Reference 2: 2.50% coverage

I'm not hands-on at the high school where those kids are, but I know that we got a career readiness person who meets with all students

Student Supports

Cindy – 3 references coded, 16.18% coverage.

Reference 1: 4.55% coverage

One student has transitioned from the school for the blind…we helped register and complete her FAFSA all done and ready to go…she's met with the advisors down there

Reference 2: 5.58% coverage

…we show the support that they have…we also try to help them advocate for themselves like here are your services and here is your accommodation and part of your job is to speak up when they can't obviously.

Reference 3: 6.05% coverage

The biggest thing is having access to help, whether it before or after or during school help whether it be parapros or teachers…that's the probably the biggest thing they need support with and has had a positive effect.

Dave – 2 references coded, 5.84% coverage.

Reference 1: 2.21% coverage

Knowing the eligibility and the IEPs but also delivering directly services

Reference 2: 3.63% coverage

We don't have a TRIO program. If we did have one we would focus on Student Support program because we could right away with kids.

Jeremy – 2 references coded, 8.31% coverage.

Reference 1: 0.35% coverage

I do have consulting teachers

Reference 2: 7.96% coverage

The other piece would be to add that digital portfolio. The reason that I'm very specific it about being digital is people don't carry a three-ring binder around anymore. Kids going in for job interviews if they are carrying a digital portfolio that shows all of their skills that they have developed on their own that just demonstrates that I'm proficient at, I can do, I

am quality at this…. Whether it's a college interview or a job interview really puts them in a

position to showcase what they know and it really puts them in a position to show how they

really can be a quality student or a quality worker even with their disability and I just feel like

that's somewhere we want to go

Paula – 1 reference coded, 4.42% coverage.

I used to be part of the secondary transition agency…we called it the Magic Valley

Transition Team…it would include…I was the representative of the school districts, health

and welfare was there, Juvenile Justice was there…we had different people from different

agencies who were participating on that….that was the team that would work with college to

put on what the college called College GPS. It's intention was how to navigate your way to

college and then once you are there how to navigate the services that are available to you

because you have disabilities.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Cindy – 1 reference coded, 1.99% coverage.

the other one is still in transition and he will be working with Voc Rehab

Elaine – 1 reference coded, 1.09% coverage.

Transition plan with vocab rehab…

Jill – 1 reference coded, 4.00% coverage.

We have a close relationship with our Voc Rehab counselor. We do great work with

Vocational Rehab. Actually, last year the state representative for VR created a mock summer

VR experience. We, as a district, are contracting out with an agency Upward Leadership and

Education to provide the same experience that VR provides.

John – 1 reference coded, 1.78% coverage.

We don't have Voc Rehab up here like I know it exists here….we could get it in

theory but they don't come up here

Jeremy – 4 references coded, 10.18% coverage.

Reference 1: 4.04% coverage

Another thing we are doing I am tied in with the state NTACT transition team and

another Special Education Director is on that team is well from near Moscow. As part of that

team we are working very carefully with Vocational Rehabilitation. So, our district partners

very closely with VR and we have tons of summer placement and work experiences

Reference 2: 2.88% coverage

VR also has a summer program housed at the BSU campus and Pocatello and we are

sending students with learning disabilities to do a brief week or week and a half long college

experience and that's through VR and we are doing a lot of that kind of thing.

Reference 3: 2.90% coverage

We have an MOU with VR. As I mentioned, we are pretty large school district and so

there is a VR case manager that uses office space at our district. We have a memorandum

with VR that they can use that space. So, they are actually housed in our district.

Reference 4: 0.35% coverage

It's mostly a connection to VR

Matt – 1 reference coded, 0.47% coverage.

We try to work closely with VR

Paula – 3 references coded, 4.50% coverage.

Reference 1: 2.40% coverage

Another thing that we do is in the Fall when everybody else is having their back-to-school night we are inviting agencies…it's a transition fair…so, we are inviting Voc Rehab to be there, we got some of the agencies that we contract through with our school district to provide different support and services.

Reference 2: 0.72% coverage

There is a lot of reliance in Voc Rehab to gear them into a postsecondary education direction

Reference 3: 1.37% coverage

I was frustrated that last several years that the smaller districts around here who didn't have some special contract with Voc Rehab didn't get any counseling services at all.

Sally – 5 references coded, 18.67% coverage.

Reference 1: 5.91% coverage

Most of it is reliant upon our relation with Vocational Rehab. We contract with Voc Rehab and the representative comes out once a month to meet with kids of transition age that have disabilities. They work on specific things, including job shadowing and assisted training activities.

Reference 2: 3.92% coverage

They develop and review that plan every year at the annual IEP and the students are invited both on paper and personally to come to these meetings and parents and voc rehab are invited as well.

Reference 3: 0.79% coverage

Voc Rehab takes higher level students

Reference 4: 6.36% coverage

My experience here and where I was in Oregon is that the parents hooked into Vocational Rehab are more likely to look at continued postsecondary education whereas kids who are intellectually disabled who are hooked into a region program to learn a trade are less likely to go onto a postsecondary education.

Reference 5: 1.69% coverage

Vocab is wonderful here but it is such a small population that meets its criteria.

Samantha – 1 reference coded, 0.60% coverage.

He set up opportunities for work shadow for VR for students…

Sue – 1 reference coded, 2.62% coverage.

Another really big piece is that we get VR involved and they meet with the family and they are really instrumental in transition for kids.

TRIO

Connie – 2 references coded, 5.54% coverage.

Reference 1: 2.53% coverage

The career counselor teachers an 8th grade class and provides information to students and families

Reference 2: 3.01% coverage

I would like to know more about TRIO as it applies for students with disabilities. Where can I find out more information?

Cindy – 1 reference coded, 6.68% coverage.

We don't call it the TRIO program but the students we had this year were involved with Upward Bound with DAC and parents. I would love to learn more about college coordinators for TRIO…that's a big one….I think it would get others going through

Dave – 1 reference coded, 0.83% coverage.

We don't have a TRIO program.

Jill – 1 reference coded, 4.78% coverage.

I will be honest with you, we don't have a TRIO program I have only known about at the postsecondary level. If there was a TRIO program at the secondary level I would love to learn about it because at this point I don't know and that's probably more in the realm of me working with the secondary counselors on that piece…That's an area of a counselor's piece but I would love to learn more about it.

John – 1 reference coded, 0.57% coverage.

I am not familiar with that program…

Jeremy – 1 reference coded, 4.51% coverage.

We do actually have several students who participate in the TRIO program who are coming specifically right of Nampa High School and that has been going on for quite a while. I can't say they are students with learning disability but I think it's a little bit of both I guess. Over the years I would guess some of the students were with learning disabilities but that hasn't been the focus.

Matt – 1 reference coded, 2.30% coverage.

To be honest I never heard of the TRIO program and we have no involvement to my knowledge so obviously I can't say that there is any connection.

Paula – 1 reference coded, 2.43% coverage.

I don't know you call her a TRIO member... but that person who is in charge of the Student Support Services at the College of Southern Idaho she also participated on that Magic Valley transition team that was hugely important because we wanted to be able to include the college in our effort in secondary transition

Sue – 1 reference coded, 3.06% coverage.

I am familiar with it I just know how it works. I know the person who oversees that program she also does our college and career readiness. She is really fabulous.

Institutional Context

Connie – 1 reference coded, 2.89% coverage.

Universal Design for Learning is a concept that I have worked on for several years and am starting to make a reality.

Dave – 1 reference coded, 2.32% coverage.

We don't deliver the "Cadillac" model but I try to provide more than the minimum.

Jeremy – 2 references coded, 8.99% coverage.

Reference 1: 2.01% coverage

Our district is pretty large 1500 special needs students so my role as director is pretty large…is pretty operational so I don't do a lot of direct hands-on with students.

Reference 2: 6.98% coverage

We don't have laptops just sitting around in every classroom we have them assigned out per student. The student gets that laptop in August and its theirs throughout the end of the year. In Middle School and High School its Windows oriented at Elementary its IPAD environment. And so by the time the kid moves all the way through our system they will be fully capable in either one of those. And when we talk Special Education the IPAD environment is beneficial for all students even students with significant disabilities. In those environments that are self-contained we use IPADs all the way through.

Matt – 3 references coded, 8.74% coverage.

Reference 1: 2.71% coverage

…the interesting thing is that we didn't lower the expectations but in fact tried to keep the expectations high and the student was still capable of taking AP courses.

Reference 2: 3.87% coverage

He struggled and had a hard time but still maintained those high expectations of this individual to prepare for the real world because often the real world doesn't adjust to the expectations of this student like they received in school.

Reference 3: 2.16% coverage

…and the really interesting thing is that really forces the teacher to deliver the instruction to the kid where they are actually at.

Family Engagement

Family Preparation

Connie – 1 reference coded, 3.25% coverage.

It is a process to make families understand that their children have rights to a differentiated curriculum and accommodations.

Cindy – 1 reference coded, 5.38% coverage.

We have parent nights especially with the financial aid…we have tours to the career fairs that they attend, but the big thing is getting financial aid and getting their admission papers in order

Jill – 1 reference coded, 1.30% coverage.

We have a huge population in Northern Idaho that have the mentality about education not being important.

Jeremy – 1 reference coded, 3.36% coverage.

Our district is a fairly poor school district in terms of our demographics. Our richest elementary school is 44% poverty so we have a lot of students whose families are not—there is a big bunch of students who families would be first generation to college just in our general population.

Matt – 1 reference coded, 3.36% coverage.

…and to educate them on what we are doing here at the school in terms of their child's disability and what we are doing to try to help that child with a disability and what they can do at home now with that student.

Paula – 1 reference coded, 1.72% coverage.

They are part of the MAPS process which happens well before the IEP meetings. So they are part of the MAPS process and there are certain questions …and there is a certain process that you go through to develop an action plan.

Sue – 1 reference coded, 3.81% coverage.

Personally, what I would do is sit down with families and students and although we have already mapped their transition plans out I would actually provide the resources to take them through the steps

Family Involvement

Connie – 1 reference coded, 3.28% coverage.

Parent are given the same inventories and interviewed about what they foresee as possibilities for their children (MAP meeting)

Dave – 1 reference coded, 10.48% coverage.

We are a targeted Title I school so we are required to have family outreach and to make parents aware of the process. So, we have Title I informational meetings, a Math night…whenever we have a student in Title we send progress reports (even though we are not required to), anybody that we are doing RTI with we want parents to know what the heck is going on with their kid

Elaine – 1 reference coded, 0.66% coverage.

Supportive parents

Jill – 1 reference coded, 3.05% coverage.

Families are very involved. Two years ago, I did a parent survey and our parents are extremely happy with their involvement, I don't know what percentages are but they are in agreement. We ask for their feedback all the time. We are open in meetings.

John –

Jeremy – 2 references coded, 4.85% coverage.

Reference 1: 2.28% coverage

So, one of the things we work on just all around is those 4 year plans for students and involving parents in the selection of courses that guide the kids toward what their step is after high school.

Reference 2: 2.57% coverage

That fully incorporates family is the parents are involved in those IEP meetings and we start having these meeting as early as 8th grade and they become in the freshman-sophomore years and then move forward from there.

Matt – 1 reference coded, 0.73% coverage.

We do everything we can to involve the family

Paula – 1 reference coded, 0.95% coverage.

In regards to their meetings they all get their own invitation. The parents get theirs and the students get a separate one.

Sally –

Samantha – 2 references coded, 3.64% coverage.

Reference 1: 2.17% coverage

I know outside of special ed our school counselors are organizing informational nights, college fairs, you know let's all get together and learn about the FAFSA and fill out that form

Reference 2: 1.47% coverage

I think the IEP meeting is our chance to have connection with the family and often the services are directly with the student.

Sue – 2 references coded, 5.91% coverage.

Reference 1: 1.77% coverage

Typically during that IEP meeting the parent comes and there is a discussion about what to do

Reference 2: 4.14% coverage

To get parents more involved we also have a transition fair. What we do for that is once a year we have folks from the colleges and from whatever service that student may need to get ready for postsecondary participate.

Family Empowerment

Connie – 1 reference coded, 6.38% coverage.

Many families are still in a grieving process and trying to find out what having a disability means for their family or child. It is a process to make families understand that their children have rights to a differentiated curriculum and accommodations.

Jill – 1 reference coded, 1.93% coverage.

We take what they have to say very critically and as important, because they know their son and daughter best and us working as a team is extremely important.

Matt – 1 reference coded, 5.95% coverage.

I think it's largely about the culture that exists at the school. Have you established a culture of low expectations or high expectations where everyone is capable of doing their work and going to college and contributing to society. If the latter is the culture you created at that school then people will do whatever is necessary to help those kids be successful.

Financial Considerations

Cost for Services and Supports

Connie – 1 reference coded, 3.25% coverage.

More opportunities to work in the community for partial days to learn about working and visit colleges to interview professors.

Cindy – 1 reference coded, 6.05% coverage.

The biggest thing is having access to help, whether it before or after or during school help whether it be parapros or teachers…that's the probably the biggest thing they need support with and has had a positive effect.

Dave – 1 reference coded, 6.74% coverage.

We would increase the offerings…. right now we are targeted… we are a K-4 targeted and our primary focus is Reading, if money were no object we would make it K-8 and we would make the interventions for Math, Reading and Written language.

Jill – 1 reference coded, 2.56% coverage.

I think there are a lot of areas. I think would be building a very intentional special education program that is actually driven by transition and there would also be very sufficient and intentional support.

Jeremy – 1 reference coded, 3.14% coverage.

If costs were not an issue I would like to add a specific set of 3 or 4 people that would start as early as 6th grade working with families on developing really quality plans for what they want to go after they are done with high school and really narrowing the focus on that.

Paula – 1 reference coded, 1.75% coverage.

We could provide tutorial services, we could, for the kids with disabilities, provide all those links to the agencies that we needed to, we would have transportation to be able to go back-and-forth from here and the college.

Sally – 1 reference coded, 3.45% coverage.

if money wasn't an issue I would hire a transition coach so that these kids could have an opportunity to experience a lot of things before they get to that 12th grade year

Samantha – 1 reference coded, 3.84% coverage.

We would have our transition coordinator as a full-time position. It's been a part-time, a 0.6, and this year we put the coordinator transition position as a part-time and we put it with

our 18-21-year old transition program and it just didn't work. They weren't available as much as we needed them to be to assist the students.

Sue – 1 reference coded, 10.66% coverage.

I would even get them a mentor to help them through those first weeks or length time that student would need to be successful. Maybe it's just difficult for that student to simply say this is the office of disability on that campus and go there when you need help. If finances were not an issue I would provide a mentor for that student to get them into school, to make sure they get the correct courses, to help them around and least through the first several weeks feeling comfortable on campus, have homework help for them….I guess just set up a network of support.

Assistance for Postsecondary Education

Cindy – 2 references coded, 5.62% coverage.

Reference 1: 4.62% coverage

One thing that is unique about this district is that anyone who graduates from this school district qualifies for a scholarship. They are lined up with scholarships.

Reference 2: 1.00% coverage

WE get them set up for scholarships.

Jill – 1 reference coded, 4.13% coverage.

Right now in looking at this for me where I am sitting is building the 18-21 program in a rural district and what does that look like. In a larger city, they have Project Search. We

bring in and build a smaller version of Project Search. I am look at everything as baby

steps…We would have satellite programs and a support network on campuses

Paula – 1 reference coded, 2.03% coverage.

I think parents would be supportive of having their kids fulfill their desire to go to

college, but the reality is the money is not there. And so that's why it's always go to work first

and then pursue that dream later, but a lot of time that dream doesn't get pursued

Sue – 1 reference coded, 7.40% coverage.

Maybe take the student down to the college and help them register, maybe take the

parents on the college tour, maybe help them find housing if that's what they need… really

drill down and figure out what specific support that particular student is going to need to be

successful because we don't always know and we assume what the variables are going to be

and help them with those barriers.