

THE TRANSITION TEAM...WHOOPS WE FORGOT THE TEACHER!

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Abstract

The role of the secondary teacher is of key importance in facilitating the overall success of school to work transition programs for handicapped students. The teacher must therefore be knowledgeable in not only academic areas but must also be knowledgeable and able to communicate with all members of the transition team. However, it seems that the teacher has often been uninformed as to transition concepts, practices and language. The purpose of this paper is to present an overview of the OSERS funded, Transition Specialist training program which Indiana University has initiated to address this oversight.

There is no doubt that transition programs from school to work for handicapped students are significant in the successful attainment of adequate employment achievements.

Significant quantities of money, time, and effort have been devoted to the successfulness of school to work transition programs. In the 1983 Amendments to the Education of the Handicapped Act of 1973 (EHA P.L. 98-199), Congress sought to address directly the major educational and employment transition difficulties encountered by handicapped youth. Section 626 of P.L. 98-199, entitled "Secondary Education and Transition Services for Handicapped Youth," authorizes the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) to spend \$6.6 million annually in grants and contracts intended to strengthen and coordinate education, training, and related services, thereby assisting youth in the transition to postsecondary education, competitive employment, or adult services. Further, financial support for transition services has come from the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 which mandated the delivery of vocational assessment, support services, counseling, and transitional services for students who are identified as handicapped or disadvantaged.

However, even with the above noted mandates to provide transition services, it appears that the vast majority of secondary teachers remain unfamiliar with the specifics involved with the school to work transition process. Secondary teachers, for the most part, are unfamiliar with vocational rehabilitation programs, vocational evaluation and work adjustment, and the J.T.P.A. programs. This lack of understanding by the secondary teachers is of significant importance. The support of the secondary teacher is vital in facilitating the overall success of school to work transition programs.

The secondary teacher's knowledge and familiarity with transition concepts and practices is the major emphasis of a training program which Indiana University, Department of Special Education and the Center for Innovation in Teaching the Handicapped has developed. This Transition Specialist Program is sponsored by OSERS and completed its first year of training in August, 1987. The primary purpose of the Transition Specialist Program is to provide the academic background for secondary teachers who facilitate handicapped students' access to educational mainstreaming, vocational education training program, vocational rehabilitation, state employment agencies and private employment. The Transition Specialist Program provides the secondary teacher the skills to communicate,

interact and perhaps coordinate services between the school and the other transition team members. Removing barriers between school and the workplace and increasing interagency cooperation serving handicapped individuals has become a major priority of OSERS (Will, 1984; Ballentyre et al., 1985).

The training program creates a new position, a Transition Specialist. The Transition Specialists are trained to interface with secondary special education teachers, vocational education teachers, vocational rehabilitation personnel, sheltered workshop personnel, school-based vocational evaluators, employers, parents and other professionals who contribute to the transition team.

A total of forty-five Transition Specialists are scheduled to receive training over the three year grant period. Teachers completing the Transition Specialist program function in the dual roles of special educators and related services providers. The Transition Specialist program thus addresses the need for personnel mandated by the Education of the Handicapped Act of 1977 and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Act of 1984 especially in regard to training special educators and individuals to supply related and supporting services to handicapped youth in educational services (Morton and Cross, 1985).

Individuals targeted for this program are secondary teachers who have completed a baccalaureate degree and who are seeking further coursework at the master's and education specialist levels. The Transition Specialist program is flexible in that secondary teachers from various backgrounds including special education, regular education, vocational education, counseling, and school psychology are appropriate for the program. Depending upon previous coursework taken by the secondary teacher, the training program involves classes in current development in the field of special education; education and vocational assessment; behavioral management; consultation; analysis of local, state and national agencies and a practicum experience. Coursework taken in this program can also be applied towards completion of certification, a master's and/or an education specialist degree program currently offered through Indiana University, Special Education Department.

Individuals completing the Transition Specialist program should be able to demonstrate proficiency in the following competencies. The competencies were generated from a review of the literature by Larson (1978) and Polsgrove and Rieth (1980).

Transition Specialist Competencies

1. Identify and discuss major federal and state legislation regarding transitioning special needs students.
2. Describe various transition models and service delivery approaches.
3. Develop professional Individualized Transition Plans (ITP's) for secondary special needs students.
4. Implement, monitor, and evaluate an

Individualized Transition Plan with students in their classrooms.

5. Conduct an analysis of services in local, state, or national agencies.
6. Identify a variety of strategies which could be implemented to improve existing service delivery models.
7. Describe access procedures to and services offered by various agencies that are important linkages to school-based programs.
8. Develop and conduct an inservice symposium on the topic of transition.
9. Describe an appropriate vocational assessment process for special needs students.
10. Administer and interpret the results of at least five different instruments for assessing the vocational interests and training requirements of special needs students.
11. Employ appropriate research designs and measures for evaluating change programs for special needs students.
12. Conduct an ecological assessment of the academic, social-behavioral, and work-related requirements for special needs students including the use of observational instruments, rating scales, ecological surveys, interviewing protocols, standardized test scores, and job-analysis procedures.
13. Write an educational report based on ecological assessment information for special needs students.
14. Functionally analyze academic, social and work-related behaviors.
15. Identify and operationally define academic, social and work-related behaviors of special needs students.
16. Employ a variety of behavioral change strategies to improve the academic and behavioral functioning of special needs students in educational and employment settings.
17. Develop and implement strategies for generalization and maintenance of special needs students' academic, social, and work-related behaviors.
18. Display effective communication and interpersonal skills when working with consultees.
19. Develop and maintain effective collaborative relationships with consultees in formulating and implementing appropriate intervention plans for special needs students.
20. Evaluate the impact of intervention plans on the student's behavior.
21. Discuss and recommend appropriate job futures with students, parents, and other educational staff members.

Successfulness of the Transition Specialist training program will be based on the follow-up of the teachers. Reviews will be made as to the teacher's pre and post involvement with the Transition Specialist training program regarding transition programs in their perspective schools. The teachers will also be asked to provide a pre and post self evaluation pertaining to the program competencies.

By providing transition-specific academic training to the secondary teachers, the

transition team should be able to function more cooperatively and successfully than it has in the past.

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