An Examination of the Perception of Special Education Teachers in the Mississippi Delta Toward Their Transition Competencies

Vickie Elaine Curry

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE PERCEPTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA TOWARD THEIR TRANSITION COMPENTENCIES

by

Vickie Elaine Curry

Abstract of a Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate School of The University of Southern Mississippi in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2012
ABSTRACT

AN EXAMINATION OF THE PERCEPTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA TOWARD THEIR TRANSITION COMPETENCIES

by

Vickie Elaine Curry

May 2012

Transition from high school to post-school activities is recognized as a serious challenge for students with disabilities (Shandra & Hogan, 2008; Wehman, 2006). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2006) outlines the development of the IEP and transition plan as an essential task. However, the preponderance of secondary special educators lacks self-assurance in the ability to address students’ transition desires (Prater, Sileo, & Black, 2000). Little is known about how special education teachers proffer transition services to students with disabilities and the scope to which teachers are equipped and pleased with the services they provide. This quantitative descriptive study explored perceptions special education teachers have of their training and ability to apply this training in conducting transition activities. A sample of 191 elementary, middle, and high school teachers in rural and urban settings participated. Data analyzed from a six-category, 46-item survey for three research questions examining the self-efficacy of special education teachers toward their transition competencies and capability to develop and deliver transition services, revealed respondents were somewhat prepared to plan and deliver transition services; somewhat unsatisfied with training received in instructional planning, assessment, and collaboration, and somewhat satisfied in their training for curriculum and instruction, transition planning, and additional competencies; they

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implemented activities associated with transition planning *sometimes*. Statistically significant relationships were found between the perceptions of teacher transitioning preparedness and the level of training satisfaction; between the perceptions of teacher transitioning preparedness and the frequency of performing transition activities; and between the perceptions of teacher training satisfaction and the frequency of performing transition activities. The perceptions of respondents’ capabilities mirror findings of other studies and reveal that when confidence in the ability to perform a transition task is lacking, the task is either not completed or completed with less effectiveness. Findings imply the continuous need for attention to the transitioning training of special educators through teacher training, alternate route, and local school district programs. Concluded is that training in how the teacher can develop a positive stance on the ability to perform effectively may be just as important as training in the what, how, and when to deliver transition activities.
AN EXAMINATION OF THE PERCEPTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA TOWARD THEIR TRANSITION COMPETENCIES

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate School of The University of Southern Mississippi in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2012
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter, Andrea, and my son, Aaron. After years of academic success, Andrea sustained a traumatic brain injury as a result of an automobile accident. This accident stole her dream of becoming a medical doctor. She has now experienced both ends of the special education spectrum (from a gifted student to disabled). God has blessed her tremendously.

Born with a disability, Aaron has faced many physical challenges. Miraculously, he has overcome some of the mountains in his life and we look forward to his continued progress. Through this journey, they have been my motivation and inspiration. When they thought I was not feeling well or irritated, they would say to me, “Mama, it’s going to be alright” or “Mama, you can do it; God is helping you.” I love you and know that you still have a future.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All honor, glory, and praise to God for the completion of this research project. I know without a doubt, this would not have been possible without God.

I am heartily grateful to my chief advisor, Dr. Rose Jones, who was profusely supportive and offered invaluable assistance, support, and guidance. I am also appreciative of my committee members, Dr. J. T. Johnson, Dr. Elizabeth Hillman, Dr. Hani Morgan, Dr. David Daves, and Dr. Mary Beth Evans, for their time and expertise. I am grateful to the Special Education Teachers of the Mississippi Delta who so willingly volunteered to participate in this research project. They provided invaluable information to this study and without them the research would not have been possible.

I am indebted to my mom and sisters for their love and support through the duration of my studies. Many thanks also to my church family for their encouragement and prayers. I certainly want to express my love and gratitude to my dearly loved family for their understanding and endless love during this long journey. I am particularly indebted to my husband, André, and children (Andrea, André II, Adaiah, and Aaron) who turned a blind eye to the dereliction of duty that occurred in our family over the past few years. Finally, thanks to all my invaluable network of supporters: readers, colleagues, friends, and family who assisted, advised, and supported my efforts over the years.

“To God be the glory for all He has done!”
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Programs for children with disabilities in public schools developed slowly in the United States. However, special education programming in the U. S. first appeared in the early nineteenth century with the establishment of the American Asylum for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb in Hartford, Connecticut in 1817 (Alexander & Alexander, 2008). Schools for the mentally retarded and blind students were established by 1832. After World War II, efforts of advocates of children with disabilities forming organizations such as the American Association on Mental Deficiency of 1947 (Shapiro, 1999), led to the appearance of public school classes for the blind and other disabilities (Alexander & Alexander, 2008).

Energized by the success of the Civil Rights Movement with the mandate of Brown v. Board of Education (Pardini, 2002) and unrelenting work of child advocates such as the Rose F. Kennedy family that later established the RFK Center for Research in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (Associated Press, 2005), increased numbers of parents of children with disabilities began to demand access to public schooling. The results of grass root organizations and the ensuing parental demands for public school access resulted in the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) of 1975 which began protection of the rights of all disabled children and federal funding for the education of all disabled individuals (Parrish & Chambers, 1996). In the next 10 years Public Law 94-142 had gone through two revisions and the nation saw attributes to successfully train parents and public awareness of the abilities of the disabled as well as stronger education programs and settings. In 1990, the law was
incorporated as a new law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (IDEA, 2006).

IDEA was amended in 1997 to not only allow disabled students access to a free and appropriate education (FAPE), but to prepare them for employment and independent living. This preparedness is termed transition preparedness which involves the delivery of activities that will permit the student to engage in services at other educational levels and for real world living. A great deal of emphases on the amended IDEA resulted from several court cases prior to the amendment. Rulings of cases addressed issues related to placement, procedural due process, and evaluation (Alexander & Alexander, 2008). According to Alexander and Alexander (2008), new regulations of IDEA 1997 specifically stipulated procedures for “eligibility, evaluation, programming, private school placements, discipline, funding, attorney’s fees, dispute resolution, and procedural safeguards” (p. 492). School districts are guided through a set of comprehensive rules established through IDEA to provide a FAPE to school age children with disabilities. These rules have implications for teacher certification, classroom structure, services to students, and discipline.

The mandates of IDEA imply the need for fully prepared special educators. These mandates coupled with the increased number of eligible special education students to be served in public schools suggest that fully certified teachers are needed to effectively deliver the required services. However, according to Boe, Cook, and Sunderland (2008), the special education teacher pool used to fill the required labor force is exhausted, and now there is a lack of fully certified special education teachers. As a
result of the shortage of fully certified special educators, alternate routes to certification have been devised to fill the void (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

The fully certified special education teacher is expected to structure the classroom to meet the needs of individual students. The special educator is able to develop and teach programs of study and distribute assignments based on each student’s ability. Services to students with disabilities increased with the 1990 IDEA amendment and were further clarified in the 1997 amendment. In addition to specifically designed instruction to meet the student’s needs in accordance with the disability, such related services as speech pathology, physical and occupational therapy, and psychological services may also be required. Although related services would be performed by specialists in the respective field, the school has an obligation to assure that the child has meaningful access to education (Alexander & Alexander, 2008). Key to meeting this obligation is the preparedness of the special educator to maintain appropriate documentation of the educational experience.

Special education teachers are not only concerned with students’ academic growth but also their behavioral development. As more students with disabilities were mainstreamed in regular education classes, it became apparent that regulations for disciplining students because of behavioral and other disabilities were needed. Alexander and Alexander (2008) cited several court cases that resulted in decisions that regulated actions related to such disciplinary measures as suspension, expulsion, and alternative placement. IDEA (2006) maintains that a disabled student who is expelled has the right to be provided an education; therefore, stipulates that educational services must be continued when a student is expelled.
Historical Perspectives

The focus of this research study is teacher preparation, teacher self-actualization, and perceptions of transition competencies. These three components are discussed in connection to findings in the research literature. Additionally, reference to the site of this study is also made for some of the components.

College Preparation Programs for SPED Teachers

Traditional college preparation programs for special educators are designed to enable teachers to become fully certified for teaching in public and other school settings. These programs offer an array of courses and field-based experiences designed for diagnostic, instructional, and corrective services appropriate for addressing the needs of children with different types of disabilities. The programs are generally recognized by professional accrediting bodies and state agencies. Carlson, Brauen, Klein, Schroll, and Willig (2002) found that special educators who rated their personnel training as very good or exceptional spent more time in the field student teaching which resulted in better quality teaching. Teacher preparation programs that were rigorous, well managed, and permitted interaction with culturally and linguistically diverse students appeared to be supportive in showing teachers as experiencing greater success in delivering the essential services to students with disabilities.

However, some researchers have observed that traditional routes of preparing special education teachers have been fruitless in meeting the demand for new teachers (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2001). The development of the alternate route program for teaching has filled this critical need (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB], 2001). An examination of the Office of Special Education Program (2001)
reports, however, shows a higher rate of special education teachers not certified in their field of study as compared to general educators.

During the 1997-1998 school year over 32,000 special educators were not fully certified for the positions in which they were serving. In the 1999-2000 school year approximately 10% of all special education teachers’ positions were not staffed with fully certified special educators (Office of Special Education Programs, 2001). During the 2003-2004 school year, 53,000 special education teachers who did not meet requirements for full certification were responsible for the instruction of over 800,000 students with disabilities (Rosenberg, Sindelar, Connelly, & Keller, 2004).

The statistics for special education teachers in Mississippi revealed that during 2003, there were 6,230 elementary and 5,125 secondary students in self-contained special education classrooms. For all regular and special education classes in the state, there were approximately 278 non-certified teachers. As there was a need to fill teaching vacancies in 2008, the state issued 2,500 emergency certificates for hard to fill positions including special education and mathematics (Associated Press, 2008). The data for 2008 and 2009 revealed that 93.80% of 23,146 core teachers in Mississippi was classified as highly qualified (fully certified in the subject taught) and 4.50% had emergency or provisional certification. Additionally, for the total 135,714 courses taught, 93.5% was taught by highly qualified teachers as opposed to 6.5% of them not taught by highly qualified teachers (MARS, 2008/2009).

A review of demographic data for special education students in Mississippi showed that for school year 2007-2008, 57,151 (11.58%) students were enrolled in special education (MS Special Education District Data Profile, 2009). For special
education elementary level students, an average of 96.9% of them was promoted.

Similarly, an average of 94.77% special education students at the secondary level was promoted (Promotions and Non-Promotions Report, 2009). Based on the first month of enrollment for the same report year, 189 (0.50% of total enrollment) elementary students in special education classes and 405 secondary level students dropped out of school (Dropouts by Grade Level, 2007). Research points to teacher quality as the single most important factor in student achievement (Stover, 2007).

*Special education framework for Mississippi high schools.* A critical element of special education teachers’ duties is to prepare students with disabilities for their transition into post school activities. Secondary education teachers must be prepared to promote access to challenging standards and opportunities that will connect academic learning to social development and positive work experience. For the most part school districts depend on the special education teachers to develop, implement, and manage transition planning and services.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook (2004-2005), it is the responsibility of the special education teacher to help develop Individual Education Programs (IEP). The IEP sets personalized goals which are tailored to the individualized learning style and abilities of the students. The programs include a transition plan in which the specific steps are outlined to prepare students with disabilities for adult life (IDEA. 2006).

IEPs used to guide instruction and related services are linked to curriculum frameworks. The frameworks for preparing special education students in Mississippi are the same for non-special education students. These frameworks are designed by subject
areas and are supported by a response to intervention (RTI) system that permits systematic interventions and monitoring of student progress. Curriculum requirements include expectations for receiving a standard high school diploma. To receive the standard diploma students must earn a minimum of 21 Carnegie Units and complete specified courses in U.S. history, English, biology, and algebra. The state permits alternate testing procedures for students with disabilities and in addition to regular diplomas, special diplomas are awarded.

Student outcomes in academics are measured on an end-of-year test. Scores are reported in terms of the following performance levels: basic, proficient, and advanced. Other outcomes measures are: (a) positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships); (b) acquiring and using knowledge and skills; and (c) taking appropriate action to meet needs. These outcomes are measured for early learners through the Battelle Developmental Inventory (BDI-2), “a comprehensive assessment designed for children from birth through seven years. It was specifically developed for identification of children who may benefit from special services, ongoing progress monitoring, and outcomes assessments” (State Performance Plan, 2010, p. 36). The literature supports that the attainment of student outcomes are directly related to teacher effectiveness and teacher efficacy (Carlson, Lee, & Schroll, 2004).

Teacher Efficacy

The research implies that teacher efficacy beliefs can affect students’ educational learning, self-perception, and aspirations (Melby, 1995; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Findings from studies (Ashton & Webb, 1986) suggest that poor outcomes for students with disabilities are possibly the result of the special education teachers’ perceptions of
their capability to plan and deliver transition services to students with disabilities. Additionally, teacher efficacy has been found to increase during student teacher training (Hoy & Spero, 2005); therefore, the teacher quality research has implications for schools of education providing, to the greatest extent possible, increased field experiences in the area of transition (Carlson, et al., 2002).

Research reveals that some trained teachers indicate that their personnel training programs did not deal with specific knowledge and skills essential to teaching such as overseeing paraprofessionals, making use of professional literature to address teaching concerns, and teaming up with general education teachers (Carlson et al., 2002). As a result, these teachers of teachers were reported as not feeling highly qualified to work with students with disabilities. For this reason, transition outcomes of students with disabilities may be negatively impacted by the self perception of special education teachers’ capacity to plan and deliver transition services.

Carlson, et al. (2004) conducted additional teacher quality research using factor analyses to develop a broadened aggregate measure of special education teacher quality. In order to identify indices within the model similar to the general education teacher quality constructs, the researchers combined the following five factors: experience, credentials, self-efficacy, professional activities, and selected classroom practices. Carlson et al. (2004) found that experience emerged as a strong teacher quality factor for special education teachers. After studying a group of experienced teachers’ perceived efficacy about their instructional efficacy, Ashton and Webb (1986) predicted their students’ achievement levels over the course of the academic year. Findings from this study showed that students learned much more from teachers filled with a sense of
efficacy than from those who demonstrated self-doubts. Ashton and Webb emphasized that those teachers with a heighten sense of efficacy saw challenging students as reachable and teachable. On the other hand, Ashton and Webb found that teachers of low perceived efficacy were more likely to view inadequate student capability as justification for why their students were not teachable.

Professional development. Researchers have illuminated the need for schools and school districts to provide extended training to special educators given the ever changing dynamics for meeting the needs of children with disabilities as well as to assist in the development of skills that may not have been addressed through their training. For example, Anderson et al. (2003) indicated that special educators are not equipped to develop and deliver services mandated under IDEA of 2004. Furthermore, other researchers have suggested that special educators are inadequately prepared to execute proper curriculum and instruction that will improve the outcome of students with disabilities (Blanchett 2001; Morningstar & Kleinhammer-Tramil, 2005; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003).

A study of Personnel Needs in Special Education investigated the national need for more special education recruits as well as the necessity to improve employees’ prerequisites (SPeNSE) (Carlson et al., 2002). More specifically, the SPeNSE project looked at the degree to which employees were sufficiently prepared, the disproportion in employee preparation, and facets that gave validation for the inconsistency. In addition, the SpeNSE project involved information from a sample of over 800 education employees including general and special education teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and speech and language pathologists.
Further investigations of the outcome of students with disabilities as they transition to post-secondary activities point toward problems associated with the recruitment, retention, and attrition rates of special education teachers. Moreover, data suggest that attrition in special education in proportion to general education teachers is much greater (McLeskey, Tyler, & Flippin, 2004). Throughout the country, public schools’ effectiveness is challenged by a severe teacher shortage (Miners, 2009). The teacher dearth is aggravated by national regulations mandating highly qualified teachers in all classrooms (Billingsley & McLeskey, 2004; Brownell, 2004; IDEA, 2006; NCLB, 2001). Also, vacancies from retirements, lack of maintenance of teachers past the beginning years of teaching, and an increase of students with disabilities being served in public school settings further impact the teacher shortage (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008; Billingsley & McLeskey, 2004). As a result, shortages of fully qualified teachers plague special education (Brownell, Sindelar, Bishop, Langley, & Seo, 2003) with a more mature workforce and painstaking criteria for completion from traditional preparation programs contributory to this event (Boe et al., 2008).

A variety of alternative certification programs have developed in response to the teacher shortage crisis. These programs range from emergency certification to professional preparation program for candidates who hold a baccalaureate degree, have considerable work experience, and desire to become teachers (Feistritzer, 2005, Roach & Cohen, 2002; Walsh, 2001). Although studies have examined various aspects of alternative certification routes, analyses and measures for fully understanding their impact differ (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000). However, some student teachers trained through an inclusion session were found to only be minimally prepared for teaching
special education students in the regular classroom (Chong Suk Ching, Forlin, & Mei Lan, 2007); others were not proponents of inclusion (Mintz, 2007). Schools and school districts augment previous training through a plan of improvement that may involve offering workshops, formal coursework, and opportunities to engage in professional conferences (State Performance Plan, 2010).

**Transitioning Students and Teacher Competencies**

Transitioning students with special needs to post-secondary activities has been a prominent topic in the special education literature. Many researchers recognize the transition from high school to post school activities as a serious challenge for students with disabilities (Shandra & Hogan, 2008; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine, 2005; Wehman, 2006). Unfortunately, according to Prater, Sileo, and Black (2000), the preponderance of secondary special educators lack self-assurance in their abilities to address the transition desires of their students.

The number of children with disabilities enrolled in public schools suggests the need for implementing effective transitioning practices that will lead to positive student outcomes. Past and current research studies show an increased number of children with disabilities are enrolled in public schools. According to reports of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2010), “in 2007-08, some 6.6 million children and youth, representing 13 percent of public school enrollment, received special education services. Of those who received services, 39 percent received them for a specific learning disability” (para. 1).

Researchers concur that youth with disabilities lag behind their peers without disabilities in all outcome including: (a) entering colleges and universities; (b) high
school graduation rates; (c) employment; and (d) independent living (Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009; Office of Disability Employment Policy, 2007; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics-Division of Labor Force Statistics, 2009-2010). The persistent dismal outcome of students with disabilities as they transition to post-secondary activities may be attributed to numerous factors including teacher self-efficacy (Bandura, 2000; Blanchett, 2001; Sinclair, Christenson & Thurlow, 2005). Although special education teachers have been trained in planning and delivering transition services, the question still lies in whether the lack of self-efficacy in the area of transition planning and implementation deters some teachers’ ability to adequately plan and deliver transition services (Blanchett, 2001; Knott & Asselin, 1999). Bandura (2000) resolved that teachers’ beliefs in their efficacy have an effect on teachers’ general orientation toward the educational process as well as their specific instructional activities.

Morningstar and Kleinhammer-Tramil (2005) documented that special educators were not entirely ready to deliver the services to students with disabilities mandated under IDEA of 2004. Support of this finding was evident in a studies of Melby (1995), Woolfolk and Hoy (1990), and Woolfolk, Rosoff, and Hoy (1990) who found that the goal of teachers who had a low sense of instructional efficacy was to provide for students’ basic needs. Other studies also suggested that teachers had a fundamental understanding of the transition procedure, however did not feel prepared to plan and provide transition services to students with disabilities (Blanchett, 2001; Knott & Asselin, 1999; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003).
Rationale for the Study

It is important to be aware of the perception of special education teachers toward their own capability to plan and deliver transition services to students with disabilities given the insistence to meet the transition requirements of an increasing number of special education students. The lack of transition training may be impacting the special education teachers’ self-efficacy in planning and delivering of transition services. Entering the profession without complete certification or through an alternate route may contribute to special education teachers feeling ill equipped to employ transition services successfully (Morningstar & Clark, 2003).

Wehmeyer (2003) and Morningstar and Clark (2003) found that special education teachers must have basics transition competencies and content knowledge that goes beyond the abilities and knowledge many secondary special education professionals receive in their undergraduate preparation programs. Transition service requirements have been stated for virtually thirty years. However, special education teachers who are not equipped to plan and deliver transition services or confident in their capability to plan and deliver transition services may perhaps contribute to the unfortunate adult outcomes students with disabilities persist to demonstrate. This observation is supported through the literature that links teacher self-efficacy to student achievement (Hoy & Spero, 2005; Romi & Leyser, 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007) and reveals that teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to provide modifications based on the needs of students.

Nonetheless, IDEA (2006) requirements outline the development of the IEP and transition plan as an essential task. Even so, little is known about how special education
teachers proffer transition services to students with disabilities and the scope to which teachers are equipped and pleased with the services they provide. Several years have lapsed since the publication of findings indicating that teachers felt unprepared to plan and provide transition services to students with disabilities (Blanchett, 2001; Knott & Asselin, 1999; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003). Therefore, in view of the current status of poor transition outcomes among students with disabilities, the need remained to look at whether this state yet exists.

**Problem Statement**

The problem investigated in this study is that the successful performance of students with disabilities has been linked to the perception of special education teachers toward their own capability to plan and deliver transition services. Further, the lack of transition training which may result from teachers not being fully certified may be among factors impacting the special education teachers’ self-efficacy in planning and delivering transition services (Morningstar & Clark, 2003). The teaching effectiveness literature makes clear that self-efficacy is directly related to student achievement (Hoy & Spero, 2005; Romi & Leyser, 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007) and student achievement for students with disabilities is dependent upon the delivery of transition services. Therefore, the basic premise of this study was to better understand special education teachers’ confidence and beliefs in their capability to plan and deliver transition services, their level of satisfaction with their preparation in transition, and the frequency to which they deliver transition services to students through data from a cross-sectional survey.
Purpose of the Study

Notwithstanding efforts made by legislators, researchers, and educators to develop and set into motion policies that lead to more successful outcomes, students with disabilities are persistently demonstrating unproductive adult outcomes. The literature offers a broad quantity of research relating to the inadequate employment state, post secondary enrollment, dropout rates, and living situation of adults with disabilities. This concern has motivated researchers to investigate the reasons students with disabilities continue to lag behind their peers without disabilities in post high school activities (National Council on Disabilities (NCD), 2000; Ochs & Roessler, 2001). This study was designed specifically to examine how special education teachers distinguish their own level of transition preparedness, their satisfaction with transition training, and how often they apply transition competencies in their daily work.

In a national leadership summit on improving adult outcomes for students with disabilities, more than twenty-five agency leaders, policy makers, educators, parents and youth with disabilities identified professional development for transition as one of the highest priorities for states (National Center for Secondary Education and Transition, 2004). Morningstar and Clark (2003) proposed that special education teachers may not be prepared to successfully deliver transition services to students with disabilities. In order to effectively develop and deliver transition services to students with disabilities, the literature in special education supports that special educators and transition specialists need an understanding of transition competencies and content knowledge that extends beyond the skills and knowledge that numerous special education teachers obtain in training programs (Anderson et al., 2003; Morningstar & Clark, 2003). The purpose of
the study was to explore the perceptions special education teachers have of their training and their ability to apply this training in conducting transition activities. Therefore, this study was designed specifically to answer the questions that follow.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

1. What is the level of self-efficacy of special education teachers toward their capabilities to plan and deliver transition services to students with mild and moderate disabilities?

2. How satisfied are special education teachers with the training they received in developing and delivering transition services to students with disabilities?

3. What is the frequency of special education teachers’ engagement in transition practices?

In order to examine the self-efficacy of special education teachers toward their transition competencies and capability to develop and deliver transition services the following hypotheses were developed:

H1 Teachers’ perceptions of their level of transitioning preparedness have a significant relationship to their level of training satisfaction.

H2 Teachers’ perceptions of their level of transitioning preparedness have a significant relationship to the frequency of transition activities performed.

H3 Teachers’ perceptions of their level of training satisfaction have a significant relationship to the frequency of transition activities performed.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the terms to follow have been defined operationally as used throughout this study:
Certified teacher refers to a person who holds a teaching certificate or license, who is employed as a special education teacher, as is required by the Mississippi State Department of Education.

Frequency of service refers to how often special education teachers utilize their knowledge and skills in planning and delivering transition services to students with disabilities.

Mental retardation refers to children with sub average general intellectual functioning which originates during the developmental period and is associated with impairment in adaptive behavior. The following are descriptions of the levels of mental retardation: (a) mild retardation is associated with an IQ range of 55-69; (b) moderate retardation; associated IQ range is 40-54; (c) severe retardation; IQ range of 25-39; and (d) profound retardation; associated IQ of 0-25.

Mild disability is a level of mental retardation that usually includes those with an IQ range of about 50 to 70 (Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 2008)

Moderate disability is a level of mental retardation that usually includes those with an IQ range of about 35 to 50 (Smith et al., 2008). A mild or moderate disability refers to those students who have been ruled eligible for special education services in the following categories: learning disability, mild mental retardation, and serious emotional disturbance.

Non-certified teacher refers to a person who holds an emergency certification who is employed as a special education teacher by the Mississippi State Department of Education.
Serious emotional disturbance refers to children who exhibit one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree which adversely affect educational performance:

1. An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors;
2. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;
3. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances exhibited in several situations;
4. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression;
5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

Special education teachers are individuals who are certified or non-certified and employed by school districts to plan and provide transition services to students with disabilities.

Specific learning disabilities refer to those children who have a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculation. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.
Transition preparedness (Self-efficacy) refers to extent that special education teacher feels confident in the planning and implementation of transition activities.

Transition satisfaction refers to how content or satisfied special education teachers are with their own transition knowledge and skills.

Assumptions
The following assumptions were made in regard to the study:
1. All respondents would honestly respond to the survey.
2. The respondents would understand the statements in the survey.

Limitations
Respondents’ individual characteristics such as the level and nature of training were recognized to possibly pose a threat to internal validity. To decrease this threat, the procedure for selecting respondents provided an equal chance for the inclusion of respondents with varying characteristics. An additional limitation of the study could have resulted from an inadequate number of respondents in the sampling pool to allow valid inferences to be drawn that could be generalized to the population. Procedures followed in view of this limitation included identifying a large sampling pool and employing follow up methods to secure responses.

Delimitations
This study was subject to the following delimitations:
1. Elementary, middle, and high schools with a special education population
2. Each school group was located in the state of Mississippi
3. Each teacher surveyed was currently teaching special education students.
4. Each high school student population was under 1,000.
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research study is based on the self-efficacy theory which is founded in social cognitive theory developed by Albert Bandura (1977, 1997, 2006). Bandura (1995) defined self-efficacy as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to manage prospective situations” (p. 3). Teacher self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Gibson & Dembo, 1984) is based on two distinct beliefs: (a) particular behaviors will lead to desired outcomes, and (b) individuals have the requisite skills to bring about the desired outcome. One of the major assumptions of this theory is that teacher self-efficacy influences student achievement.

The following excerpt from Gibson and Dembo (1984) demonstrates this assumption:

Teachers who believe that student learning can be influenced by effective teaching, and who also have confidence in their own teaching abilities would endure longer, provide a better scholastic focus in the classroom, and exhibit different types of feedback than teachers who have lower expectations concerning their ability to influence student learning. (p. 570)

Research indicates that increasing the self-efficacy of special education teachers may improve student transition outcomes. Since self-efficacy is linked to student achievement, schools would benefit from the impact of self-efficacy on the overall success of transition to post high school activities of students with disabilities. The self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1999) posits that all individuals attain skills or knowledge throughout life of which they are not aware. However, for individuals who are given the occasion or proper condition, a consciousness of this aptitude surfaces. Based on this reasoning, special education teachers who take the essential course work on how to
prepare students of this population for transition into post high school activities have the knowledge and skills to perform the tasks. Nevertheless, a number of findings show that despite the training some teachers are ineffective. In addition, some teachers do not perceive themselves to be efficient enough to perform what they have been trained to do (Blanchett, 2001).

Reflective of the meaning of Bandura’s theory, the theoretical framework of this study suggests that if special education teachers believe that they can make a difference in the lives of students with disabilities, they will plan and implement transition services in ways that demonstrate those beliefs. Moreover, research also suggests that what teachers believe about their capability is a strong predictor of teacher effectiveness. Teachers who hold strong self-efficacy beliefs tend to improve students’ transition outcomes. To improve the transition outcomes of students with disabilities, an emphasis of teacher preparation programs should be on the development of self-efficacy. Likewise, school districts that employ teachers with a sense of strong self-efficacy would likely produce more positive outcomes for students with disabilities.

Significance of the Study

Transition services are a critical component of the IDEA 2004 Act. The idea under girding the sanction of transition requirements was aimed at the following beliefs: (a) development and preparation in all phases of a student’s transition and in all aspects of life must occur for students to leave high school productively and go into adulthood; (b) transitions must be student-driven and sustained by stakeholders so the accountability is shared; (c) substantial forethought to recognizing barriers to successful outcomes; and stratagems and planning have got to take place to offset such obstacles (Halpern, 1994).
The regulations stipulate that educators have the primary task for steering the development and execution of school to adulthood transition services for students with disabilities.

Although special education teachers may have received adequate training and practical experiences in developing and delivering transition services to students with disabilities, they may not possess strong self-efficacy. This study will be significant in raising awareness among teachers, school administrators, and professional education trainers that the lack of self-efficacy could be contributory to the undesirable adult outcomes of students with disabilities. Further, since the literature has revealed that little is known about how special education teachers proffer transition services to students with disabilities and the scope to which teachers are equipped and pleased with the services they provide, the study was intended to identify how a select section of special educators in rural school districts perceive their delivery of services. Results of the study are intended to offer data useful for decision making relative to the preparation needs of special educators and the enhancement of outcomes for students with disabilities.

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized in five chapters. Chapter I served as the introduction to the study. Among contents of the chapter were a statement of the problem, the purpose, study’s rationale, research questions, hypotheses, definition of terms, limitations, theoretical framework, and significance of the study. The review of the literature reported in Chapter II is followed by the methodology used to examine the research questions and hypotheses in Chapter III. This chapter contains a discussion of the research design, sampling frame, instrument, and data analysis. Chapter IV contains a discussion of
findings; Chapter V provides the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the study.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The results of perception studies reveal that teachers’ opinions have been instrumental in identifying best instructional practices and in bringing about change in such areas as preparation and professional development programs (Lubbers, Repetto, & McGorray, 2008). For example, Dickerson (2008) and Mintz (2007) investigated how student teachers perceived their abilities to provide services to students with disabilities. Likewise, studies that Romni and Leyser (2006) and Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) conducted focused on the perceptions of practicing general and special educators regarding the delivery of services to students with disabilities. Transition planning for special education students is among topics in the literature where the perceptions of educators have led researchers to investigate self-efficacy from various perspectives.

In a study involving over 500 secondary-level special educators in 31 states, Benitez, Morningstar, and Frey (2009) examined teachers’ perceptions of their level of proficiencies in transition services. Specifically, these educators indicated their level of preparedness to plan and deliver transition services, their satisfaction with training, and the frequency of implementing transition activities. The researchers found positive relationships between preparedness, training, and frequency of engagement in transition activities. Their findings suggest that teachers’ perception of self-efficacy in transitioning planning is a determining factor in the special educator’s competence to deliver these services.

The literature on transition planning has begun to establish a list of best practices, including assessing a student’s work skills, teaching social skills, educating the student
on available employment options, and the “preparation of a formal transition plan” (Goupil, Tasse, Garcin, & Dore, 2002, p. 128). The importance of self-determination is among areas addressed as the literature suggests that the concept has become central to transition planning best practice (Hartwig & Sitlington, 2008; Oesterreich & Knight, 2008; Trainor, 2008; Van Dycke, Martin, & Lovett, 2006). Findings of Benitez et al. (2009) also have implications for best practice and training to be incorporated in teacher preparation programs. Therefore, the literature reported in this chapter addresses variables inherent in transition planning best practices, namely, teacher preparation, teacher qualifications, and teacher efficacy.

The chapter is divided in three major topics. Topical areas contain a synthesis of studies on the development of transition as a concept and transition planning as a practice in special education (Carter, Lane, Pierson, & Stang, 2008; LaCava, 2006; Waintrup & Unruh, 2008). The review also contains views of researchers including Nougaret, Scruggs, and Mastropieri (2005) in a discussion of case studies related to the role of teachers in IEP and transition planning. The review first presents a discussion of preparation for special educators, then various sub topics on teacher efficacy, and finally research related to transitioning students and teacher competencies is discussed.

Preparation for Special Educators

Transitioning planning has not always been a part of the emphasis in instruction for individuals with disabilities. As the need for transition planning has become evident, more attention has also been placed upon training teachers in this area. Additionally, professional development has involved transition issues in order to improve training in this area. Therefore, the discussion of the needs and issues related to preparing special
educators to competently plan and direct transition training is best understood from first a review of the historical development of transitioning planning.

Birth and Demand for Transition Planning and Development

The idea that special education students should think about life after school was born in the 1960s when work-study programs and the concept of normalization began to take hold (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Lubbers et al., 2008; Myklebust & Batevik, 2005). Career education was introduced in the 1970s, focusing on what a student needed in order to make a living. Passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 and the development of the bridges model assisted in the reversal of many poor outcomes that children with disabilities experienced in part because of a revised emphasis in career education research (Scanlon, 2008). A review of the work of Lubbers, Repetto, and McGorray (2008) reveals that researchers only began to think about transition planning in detail, however, with the publication of Madeleine Will’s Bridges Model in 1984. While at first focusing on employment, the bridges model has since been expanded to include other living skills needed for independent living.

In the intervening twenty years, transition planning has become established as a field with a fairly strong sense of best practice. The idea of transition planning itself was mandated by U.S. Congress which called for schools to ensure that all children with disabilities are provided services “designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living” (Individual Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004, para. 34). Many changes have focused on involving students themselves in the transition process, even though studies indicate that student participation levels remain uneven across various states:
Under the IDEA 2004 Act, transition services are defined as cited below. A coordinate set of activities . . . based upon the individual student’s needs, taking into account the student’s preferences and interests, including instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. (IDEA, 2006, Definition section, para. 34)

Contributors to the literature on transition planning report many efforts have been to address the purposes identified in the legislation. Carter et al. (2008) investigated the views of high school special educators regarding their transition practices. The researchers found that these educators placed emphases on ensuring that transition-age youth with disabilities were afforded appropriate training that would permit them to acquire skills that would result in the attainment of important life outcomes. Repetto (2003) observed that special education students could be considered to have successfully transitioned to adult life if they enjoy “physical and material well-being, performance in adult roles and personal fulfillment” (p. 78). While some studies have found that students with disabilities are transitioning more effectively to postschool life, others noted that many students have low-wage jobs or no jobs at all. On the basis of these studies, a notion of transition has emerged which is based on well-being in a number of adult roles.

Commonly agreed among transition planning proponents is that it must begin as early as possible. Repetto (2003) concurred with the current belief that transition can only be successful if efforts begin early, plans are centered on student self-determination, that the student’s family and community are involved, and there is strong interagency
commitment to the transition. Transition-to-living skills, ranging from how to be a consumer to self-maintenance, have also been found as necessary.

*Development of transition practices.* LaCava (2006) reviewed early transition practices and began to assemble a checklist of best practices. According to LaCava, transitions have the best chance of success if the student has as much autonomy as possible, which includes self-determination. Success is further contingent upon the program following a positive behavioral support framework. Transition meetings should also be held as early as possible in the school year and a calendar kept of major transitional moments in its implementation. A student’s IEP should also be reviewed annually. In terms of preparing the student for the school they are transitioning to, LaCava recommended that transition planning should include making a video, rehearsing the school environment, visiting the school, and identifying people in the new school who can help the student.

A number of studies have found that “the degree of success in adult life for individuals with disabilities is strongly determined by the quality of education or training received during the school years” (Goupil et al., 2002, p. 127). On the basis of these findings, attention has shifted to transition, and to providing students with the skills needed to manage the transition to college or adult life (Dolyniuk et al., 2002; Eisenman, 2003; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Wehmeyer & Gragoudas, 2004). Transition has been defined as referring to “a change in status from behaving primarily as a student to assuming adult roles in one’s community” (Goupil et al., 2002, p. 127).
Need and Issues for Teacher Training and Professional Development

A special area of research in the field of transitioning planning focuses on “the knowledge of transition held by professionals, in particular, teachers” (Lubbers, et al., 2008, p. 281). The need for training focused on managing transition plans has been evident through various publications. For example, Hasbrouck, Parker, and Tindal (1999), concluded that teachers needed more “support and guidance to modify their instructional practices to meet the needs of (special) students.” (p. 83) Failure of teachers to manage inclusion also led to some teachers taking on the role of consulting teachers. However, Hasbrouck et al. were among researchers who suggested that these teachers also lacked information perceived as useful in instructional efforts to improve student performance. Whether most teachers involved in transition processes for special students have the knowledge they need to use best practice remains a serious question in the research literature.

In a case study of first-year consulting teachers, Hasbrouck et al. (1999) found that most had trouble with the logistics of communication, were unsure if interventions were effective, and were in need of more and better case-related data. Hasbrouck et al. (1999), argued that most teachers value “a menu of ‘tried and true’ ideas from which they can select one or more” and that therefore it was helpful if they were able to “offer their consultees a menu of effective, concrete and classroom-appropriate ideas” (p. 89). Unfortunately, as shown in some reports, it appears presently that some consulting teachers only develop their strategies through a long-term trial and error method and not through training as required.
Teacher preparation and transitioning demands. Studies have investigated the perceptions of teachers about their role and skills in transition planning (Benitez et al., 2009; Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999; Goupil et al., 2002; Jones, 2005). Studies find that by and large teacher practice in transition planning and the transition process as a whole is at variance with best practice (Lubbers et al., 2008; Martin et al., 2006; Thomas, Held, & Saddler, 2002; Wagner & Davis, 2006). Generally, findings from studies indicate that most teachers are aware of a gap between theory and practice and that they will require more training in order to truly help special education students in transition (Davis & Bates, 1997; Held, Thoma, & Thomas, 2004; Lee-Tarver, 2004; Neubart, 2003).

Benitez and Morningstar (2009) created an instrument, Secondary Teachers Transition Survey, designed to identify teachers’ perceptions on 46 transition competencies. Researchers Benitez et al. (2009) used the instrument in their study to measure the levels of competencies on three scales: preparedness, training, and frequency of delivery of transition activities. Participants reported that they were somewhat satisfied with training provided in teacher preparation programs and somewhat prepared for the delivery of transition services. Participants also indicated that they occasionally engaged in the delivery of transition activities for students with disabilities (Benitez et al., 2009). Their findings suggest the need for preparation programs to determine why participants were only somewhat satisfied with training and what actions are necessary to enhance skills for the provision of transition activities.

In addition to investigations of how teachers conduct their roles in view of the changing society such as the study Wasburn-Moses (2006) reported, studies have also
focused on students’ families in terms of the roles played in transitioning planning and the effectiveness of the participation (Ward, Mallett, Heslop, & Simmons, 2003). Most importantly, the researchers have concluded that teachers must find a way to step to the side to allow special education students to fully establish self-determination in the transition process (Torgerson, Miner, & Shen, 2004; Trainor, 2005; Trainor, 2007; Wehmeyer, Palmer, Soukup, Garner, & Lawrence, 2007). Again, findings have implications for training special education teachers regarding student and family involvement in transition planning.

In general, the literature presents a scenario where special education teachers are responsible for multiple responsibilities that can be very demanding. Suggested in such a scenario is the belief that as a result of the demands, special education teachers suffer from more role conflict and ambiguity. Wasburn-Moses (2005), interested in improved efforts to define the role of special education teachers, examined the lives of a target group of 379 high school LD teachers in the state of Michigan. The surveys administered to them focused on their roles, responsibilities, and the effectiveness of their teacher preparation. The major finding Wasburn-Moses reported related to the time participating teachers spent in one-on-one instruction with students. About half of the participating teachers contributed less than an hour weekly in individual instruction and in general, teachers engaged students in one-on-one instruction two hours or less during a week.

The finding was revealing as special education calls for individualized instruction. Wasburn-Moses (2005) argued that the multiple responsibilities of these teachers may leave them little time for what they see as an extra dimension of teaching. The continued emphasis on the content model of teaching also means that many special education
teachers, moving from field to field across the day, teach out-of-field quite often, calling into question their qualifications. While the rhetoric of the field of special education calls for more inclusion and collaboration, Wasburn-Moses’ (2005) study found a continuing persistence of an outdated model of teaching. According to the researcher, the fact that individualized instruction was not occurring suggests future problems in terms of teacher management of IEP and transition meetings.

Training for effectiveness in IEP and transition planning. As revealed in multiple studies, the notion of how well teachers perform their duties in the transition process is debatable (Jones, 2005; Lee-Tarver, 2004; Lubbers et al., 2008; Thomas, et al., 2002). In a classic study Davis and Bates (1997) evaluated the effectiveness of an in-service training program which focused on how well teachers were able to correlate the objectives and goals stated in IEPs to actual practice. They argued that a smooth transition for disabled students will require changes in curriculums that “focus on the vocational and community living skills consistent with the postschool outcomes student desired and ensures that students generalize their skills from school setting to the community” (Davis & Bates, 1997, p. 38). The implication of their argument relates to the need for teacher expertise to extend beyond simply planning. In order to be effective, IEP objectives must be written in a technically adequate fashion, focus on specific functional skills and include a program according to which the student can learn to generalize the skills for use in the postschool world.

Most importantly, making plans for adult living are important primarily because unless a student can generalize a learned skill and use it in nonschool and general life situations, it can hardly be described as having been learned. The literature reports that
well over two thirds of IEPs planned in the U.S. adequately address these issues. However, other studies have found that “IEPs are deficient in critical skill areas required of adult life” (Davis & Bates, 1997, p. 38). Another study of IEPs also found that “less than 10% specified generalized performance as the desired outcome,” indicating that most teachers “are not planning for the generalization of….skills to situations outside the training environment” (p. 39).

Still another study that Davis and Bates (1997) reported found that the technical adequacy of the objectives were adequate in only 6% of IEPs for down syndrome children, indicating that “even practicing professionals who presumably have received preservice training on writing behavioral objectives may not include the three major components of condition, behavior and criterion” (p. 39). As a result of this review, Davis and Bates found that many IEPs were not functional with regard to transition planning, specifically with providing generalization for learned skills in adult life. This outcome caused the researchers to conclude the following:

There is a need to investigate the effectiveness of strategies for providing educators the information they need to plan for the meaningful transition of their students from school to adult life by selecting instructional objectives that plan for the generalized performance of functional skills [in adult life]. (p. 39)

In particular, Davis and Bates (1997) studied the effectiveness of in-service training on helping teachers obtain these outcomes. In their case study on the effectiveness of in-service training to improve teacher mastery of transition needs, these researchers found that the training had the most positive effect on statements of generalized performance on IEP objectives. After training, the average number of IEPs
which had adequate accommodations for generalization improved from 4% to 64%, a change which indicates that training was helpful in improving teacher input in statements of general performance.

**Teacher shortages and emergency-licensure teachers.** Identified in the literature is that there is a serious shortage of special education teachers in general. Researchers have contributed this shortage to the special education teacher’s ability to manage transition plans (Nougaret, et al., 2005; Sutherland, Denny, & Gunter, 2005; Thomas, 2005). Studies have not only documented a chronic shortage, but also that special education suffers from a higher attrition rate than mainstream education, possibly due to complications related to constantly changing laws and resulting paperwork. As a result of the shortage, a number of school districts have resorted to emergency licensure of special education teachers. This action, while it has filled employment gaps, also means that many schools make do with special education teachers who have no formal training in the field.

Contributors to the literature have begun to express concerns regarding the qualifications of emergency-licensure special education teachers. One argument presented in findings of Nougaret et al. (2005) maintains that content knowledge is more important than pedagogical knowledge in making a good teacher and that as a result which questioned the value of traditional teacher education programs that stress pedagogy. This assertion would tend to support the idea that emergency licensure teachers can do as well as certified teachers. However, contrary to this assertion, Nougaret et al. (2005) found that teacher preparation programs improve teacher competence and that in-field licensure is important to teaching quality.
Teacher effectiveness literature has also emerged to explore the broader issue of what makes for a good teacher. According to this literature, an effective teacher plans and prepares well for class, expertly manages the classroom environment, creates a positive climate of respect characterized by both teacher enthusiasm and clear rules and routines, and finally instructs students in a way that enhances learning. Overall, Nougaret et al. (2005) concluded that the goal of effective teaching is to “change the concept of learning from a spectator sport to one in which the student is engaged in active intellectual participation” (p. 221).

In order to determine if special education emergency-licensure teachers measured up against special education teachers who were trained traditionally, Nougaret, et al. (2005) studied 40 first-year teachers. The findings indicated that “teachers who had participated in a traditional education program greatly outperformed first-year teachers with emergency provisional licensure on observational ratings of planning and preparation, classroom environment and instruction” (Nougaret et al., 2005, p. 226). This determination was in spite of the fact that both traditionally-trained and emergency-licensure teachers evaluated themselves as competent, a finding which generally suggests that teachers may not be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. The implications of the findings is that the current practice of hiring emergency licensure teachers, while a stopgap measure to keep special education services in place, may in fact be undermining the provision of adequate services.

Reports in the literature show that some states have addressed the highly qualified teacher requirements of No Child Left Behind by allowing teachers to pass a standardized test as opposed to completing a full teacher preparation program in order to become
teachers. In a study of Sutherland et al. (2005) the researchers observed that the emergence of these alternative routes to classrooms has led to concerns in the literature that special education students are not getting the education they need. The problem is compounded in caring for emotionally behavioral disorder (EBD) children because the general literature has not finally settled on teacher requirements for effectively teaching EBD students. Sutherland et al. surveyed 109 mostly female EBD teachers in four school districts, finding that the teachers felt most comfortable when collaborating with other teachers. Traditionally trained teachers were also more comfortable in planning and preparing lessons than emergency-licensure teachers. The researchers concluded that the number of emergency-licensed teachers in special education itself might be linked to poor outcomes for these students.

Teacher Efficacy

The previous discussion of teacher preparedness is relevant to understanding teachers’ feelings about delivering services to students. Buell et al. (1999) studied the attributions and confidence of teachers in terms of being able to provide inclusive education and stated that, “a lack of personnel prepared to provide quality inclusive services to students with disabilities . . . is one of the primary barriers to serving students” (Buell et al., 1999, p. 144). The researchers used the concept of efficacy or a “belief that an action will lead to an outcome and that one has the ability to perform the action that will lead to an outcome” (Buell, et al., p. 145) in order to determine if special education teachers felt empowered to help included students. The study found a strong positive relationship between fully understanding inclusion and teacher beliefs that inclusion can help students. Moreover, if teachers believed that they could not do much to alter a
student’s home environment, their sense of efficacy with regard to inclusion declined. Nonetheless, the study also found that most teachers felt that they needed additional training in developing IEPs.

Perception studies of special education teachers and those investigating student transition outcomes show a connection between teacher efficacy and student performance (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Melby, 1995; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Ashton and Webb (1986) suggested that poor outcomes for students with disabilities are possibly the result of the special education teachers’ perceptions of their capability to plan and deliver transition services to students with disabilities. Researchers further conclude that poor teacher efficacy is revealed through teachers’ perceptions of performance in such areas as teaching in inclusive settings, guiding students to develop self-determination, and developing appropriate IEPs. Therefore, teacher buy-in of such basic special education concepts as inclusion also continues to be in question (Hasbrouck, et al., 1999; Wasburn-Moses, 2005; Winter, 2006).

Inclusion and Teacher Efficacy

The literature still shows that while most teachers support the idea of inclusion, they continue to experience considerable practical problems in making inclusion work for them. Recent studies revealed that inclusion is poorly addressed in some teacher training programs and that as a result too many teachers still have doubts about their ability to teach special education students in inclusive settings (Winter, 2006). A study that Winter (2006) conducted of teachers in inclusive settings in Northern Ireland revealed that many of the teachers lacked the confidence to teach students effectively. Exploring the impact that teachers’ beliefs in terms of self-efficacy played on their inclusive practices, Winter
found further that teachers were also reported as feeling inadequately prepared to teach special education students in inclusive classrooms. Although other studies have reported cases where positive teacher attitudes can compensate for lack of best practice to make inclusion effective, Winter’s findings suggests that the persistent weakness of skills in special education clearly situates transition planning on unsteady ground.

Classic studies of special education showed that only 42% of special education teachers felt they had been adequately prepared to accommodate the inclusion of special education students in mainstream classes (Boyer & Bandy, 1997). In a study of the perceptions of rural teachers, Boyer and Bandy (1997) reported such findings as most teachers lacked confidence in developing appropriate individualized programs and indicated the need for additional knowledge of inclusionary practices. However, regarding their capabilities in managing special education students, Boyer and Bandy’s findings showed that teachers were knowledgeable of the diversity of children with special needs and their impact on other students. At the same time, the teachers “indicated that productive inclusion would be more likely to occur if there was administrative and personnel acknowledgment of the demands placed on rural teachers to provide developmentally appropriate support and inclusion” (Boyer & Bandy, 1997, p. 16).

Developing Self-determination and Teacher Beliefs

Boyer and Bandy (1997) found that most teachers needed help in understanding an IEP and how it should be focused to address the specific needs of an individual student. These needs included preparing the student to transition to life. As transition theory has developed, self-determination has been recognized as a critical factor in
determining whether a student successfully transitions to life. This has caused the idea of self-determination to take “a more prominent role in discussion of transition services” (Carter, et al., 2008, p. 56). Thus, it is increasingly expected that teachers be able to teach students the “skills and opportunities they need to become more self-determined” (Carter et al., p. 56). Steere and Cavaiuolo (2002) have identified self-determination to include choice-making, problem-solving, goal-setting, risk-taking, self-regulation, self-advocacy and self-awareness.

Held et al. (2004) reviewed a case study of a transition plan drawn up for a student with autism based on Wehmeyer’s et al. (2007) research on the importance of self-determination during transition. The plan incorporated two systems designed as support mechanisms for student self-determination, namely the McGill Action Planning System and the Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope System. According to the research, as noted, self-determination involves “acting as the primary causal agent in one’s life and making choices and decisions regarding one’s quality of life free from undue external influence or interference” (Held et al., 2004, p. 177).

The transition planning literature reveals that in order to enact one’s self-determination, one must develop choice-making and self-advocacy skills and also “positive perceptions of control and efficacy, and self-knowledge and awareness” (Held et al., 2004, p. 178). However, studies also find that when so many other stakeholders become involved in transition planning, the student’s preferences can often be overshadowed (Thomas, 2005). Suggested from the review of literature is that even when teachers are working in the best interest of the child, their involvement does not always support student interests (Ward, et al., 2003). Some case studies have found instances
where students were allowed to make decisions, but their preferences were ignored (Carnaby, Lewis, Martin, Naylor, & Stewart, 2003) which suggests that the normal interplay of transition planning meetings needs to be altered so that students’ voices are heard.

How teachers support student self-determination, however, remains a problem. In the 1990s, a number of curricula were developed to help students develop self-determination. Many of these curricula however have proved to have limited success. Transition meeting assessment has also revealed that various strategies often used to encourage self-determination, such as making the IEP meeting student centered, rarely occur. All of this has led to the question, how much do teachers actually know about self-determination? Held et al. (2004) concluded from their autism case study that most special education teachers were aware of self-determination from reading publications but were not knowledgeable of how to promote it in their students.

The need for enhancing teachers’ knowledge of the delivery of strategies for developing self-determination was evident from self-reports of teachers and practices as cited by Held, et al. (2004) and other researchers. According to the researchers, teachers “reported that they were not comfortable with their ability to implement these strategies” (Held et al., p. 179). While the literature calls for hands-on training of teachers in self-determination, in studies of preservice teachers findings show that most had learned about self-determination through reading and discussion alone (Mintz, 2007; Romi & Leyser, 2006). Held et al. (2004) presented a case study of how a student with autism was taken out of a curriculum that provided no input on self-determination, and thus had no skills in that area, to one that prepared him for adult life. The study reported that IEP
transition meetings in high school were “very much deficit/remediation focused, with professional and family members talking about, not with, the student;” therefore, the student preferred not to attend his meetings.

In order to redress this problem the subject teacher in the study Held et al. (2004) conducted used backwards curriculum planning to map out self-determination goals, then went back and redesigned transition meetings. The Next STEP curriculum was used to infuse self-determination skills learning throughout the transition process. Since the student in question liked game shows, meetings were reformatted to allow him to make a presentation of his progress during each transition meeting using that format, a development with caused “the tone of the meeting [to shift] from deficit-based to strength-based” (Held, et al., 2004, p. 184). The transition meetings thus developed into self-directed conferences. Held et al. (2004) concluded that “teachers can make the significant changes necessary to promote self-determination in transition planning” (p. 185) for special students.

Studies have shown that self-determination is necessary in order for students to be involved in transition planning. Because self-determination skills are also needed to clarify one’s postschool goals, studies have found a strong relationship between student self-determination and postschool success (Steere & Cavaiuolo, 2002). A survey of teachers that Carter et al. (2008) conducted found that two thirds of them reported that self-determination was an important element in most IEPs and ITPs for special education students. A problem that emerged from the survey, however, was that many special education students demonstrated skill deficits in self-determination.
Studies have found that “many youth with disabilities lack the critical skills that can enhance their self-determination” (Carter, et al., 2008, p. 56). Moreover, research has documented that there are “substantial discrepancies in the extent to which special educators say they value self-determination and the extent to which they actually make efforts to promote it in their classrooms” (Carter, et al., 2008, p. 57). Teachers claimed, according to Carter et al., that attention to the lack of administrative support and additional training and resources were needed to redress this problem. A survey of general educators found that most were less aware of the requirement of self-determination than special educators. One study of teacher perceptions of self-determination found that teachers valued it and taught self-determination skills in their classes (Carter et al., 2008).

In their study of the extent to which general educators of inclusive students valued self-determination, Carter, et al., (2008) found that they “attached considerable importance to promoting various component elements of self-determination in their classrooms” and thus taught “problem-solving, decision making, self-management and goal setting” (p. 64). In addition, “general and special educators generally converged in their evaluations of the importance of promoting self-determination at the high school level” (Carter, et al., p. 65). At the same time, these researchers found teachers’ abilities to help students develop self-awareness and self-advocacy might be inhibited by lack of training, and that supplemental instructional contexts were needed in order to improve advocacy in transition planning meetings. However, Carter, et al. observed that these findings were not consistent with the perceptions of parents and students who viewed that
limited opportunities for developing self-determination are afforded youth with disabilities.

IEP: transition planning knowledge and teacher beliefs. Generally, the literature continues to find that special education is not sufficiently individualized. Many researchers blame teachers for these problems. Wasburn-Moses (2006) argued, however, that “the complexities of special education programs present myriad difficulties for teachers” (p. 23). In order to gain a better concept of these difficulties, Wasburn-Moses surveyed high school teachers of students with disabilities to determine how well they taught various kinds of skills. The study revealed that most teachers did not feel they were responsible for teaching functional skills and instruction of vocational skills was also limited. According to the author, a number of teachers complained that schools had begun to focus too much on academic transition to college, at the expense of training students for jobs. Other teachers critiqued their school’s transition programs as a hodgepodge of uncoordinated activities, and that there was no coordination with outside agencies. The overall results of the study indicated that many high school transition programs continue to fail due to lack of coordination and that efforts must be made to help teachers and personnel from outside agencies collaborate more effectively.

Steere and Cavaiuolo (2002) also noted that transition plans often floundered because the outcomes and goals were too vague. The vagueness caused the outcomes to be perceived as unrealistic and the outcomes were not revised over time based on the progress of the student. A major problem uncovered was that many team members including teachers held low expectations for the student. These researchers associated low expectations with stereotyping and prejudice.
In their study, Goupil et al. (2002) introduced transition planning into schools which previously did not have it, and then reviewed stakeholders’ perceptions and attitudes toward the plan. The researchers found that parents in particular appreciated the transition plan which provided them opportunities to discuss the future of their children in such a forum. However, the study also found that discussing “the concrete operationalization of the transition plan” was extremely difficult for most parents, primarily because it stirred up a lot of negative emotions (Goupil, et al., p. 129). According to the researchers, one couple in particular became upset when discovering that they should have been advised to start the transition program sooner than later. Generally, however, parents had positive perceptions of the value and efficacy of the transition plan. School personnel were also asked about their perceptions of the transition plan. The study found that while school personnel had a clear sense of services available within education, they were less clear about community services.

Teachers also “mentioned that they would need to have protected time set aside for the transition planning process” (Goupil, et al., 2002, p. 133). A review of the study’s findings revealed that most teachers also reported that they felt they needed more training on how to carry out elements of the IEP, especially in areas such staging IEP meetings, adapting IEPs to student needs, and knowledge related to community resources and services. Teachers generally believed that in order for a transition process to be successful teamwork was needed beginning early in the year, micro-graduated goals were best, and “the student must be included in the process as much as possible” (Goupil, et al., p. 133).
Team meetings and beliefs for best practice. The last perception identified in the study of Groupil et al. (2002) is important as at present students participate in IEP meetings only about half the time. Groupil, et al. suggested that many teachers allow students to be absent out of concern for their boredom with the meeting, but also recommended that “assistive technology and augmentative communication devices should be explored as essential supports permitting student participation and communication” (Groupil, et al. 2002, p. 134). The idea of teamwork has received a great deal of attention in the literature. Attention to support teams created to help at-risk students has resulted because some researchers believe that these teams “provide less support for students at risk and serve more as a conduit for special education placement” (Lee-Tarver, 2004, p. 526). Others have complained that “lack of training and teacher preparation results in the problems that appear to be inherent in the process” including the fact that some teachers may simply be expressing bias in referring students to special education (p. 526).

Lee-Tarver (2004) proposed that one problem may be that teachers do not understand the connection between student support teams and referral to special education. The researcher then explored how much training teachers on such teams received, as well as their level of participation, and their overall understanding of the connection between student support teams and referral to special education. Lee-Tarver (2004) concluded that an understanding of this relationship parallels a subsequent grasp of the essentials of transition planning. The examination found that the teams made the transition from a special to general classroom easier and did so by utilizing new approaches in teaching. By and large, this means that “teachers are accepting the
additional responsibilities that have accompanied legislative changes” and not only had additional training but “were actively involved in the student support team process” (Lee-Tarver, 2004, p. 532). Finding that teacher involvement was focused on helping students and not on referring them to special education, Lee-Tarver (2004) concluded that “teacher training programs will have to adjust their curriculum to provide comprehensive experiences and training regarding student support activities” (p. 532) to ensure student engagement in team and transition meetings.

Thomas (2005) described a series of transition meetings which were identified as successful as they resulted in sound placements for all special education students. Nonetheless, Thomas noted that “the reality was that these examples of transition planning were far from ideal when considered within the context of student self-determination” (p. 321). The statement was in recognition that in most of the cases professionals were still making all the decisions for the students, often based on what they believed was possible within a certain time frame. This, however, too often meant that students were often placed in jobs they did not care about, or in group home situations that did not correspond to student ideals.

The most difficult aspect of the transition meetings, Thomas (2005) found was that most of the teachers involved felt that they were in fact supportive of self-determination. On the basis of finding this discrepancy, Thomas (2005) argued that “it takes more than student self-determination skills to ensure student self-determination in the transition planning process” (p. 322). Commonly accepted is that an ecological approach is needed by which transition team members can shift their focus from planning in general to person-centered planning.
Van Dycke et al. (2006) argued that by the time students are finally invited to attend IEP meetings as adolescents, they have long since become used to the idea that such meetings are not for them. As a result, they recommended that special students should be invited to IEP meetings from an early age, if it is hoped that they will participate fully in them as adolescents. Studies of meetings have found that teachers talk most of the time, with students only contributing 3% of the conversation in which they only asked for feedback, reviewed past goals, and asked questions; this occurred in 9% of IEP meetings (Carnaby, et al., 2003). As a result, Van Dycke et al. (2006) called for teachers to incorporate self-directed IEP instruction into special education curriculums, so that student skills could be improved. Teachers have been found to hold positive perceptions of efforts to teach students self-directed IEP skills, convinced by positive outcomes. Overall, the research finds that student participation improves the quality of IEP meetings, but that teachers must work harder to invite students to participate fully in these meetings (Wehmeyer, et al., 2007).

Disabilities and teacher beliefs. Teachers’ knowledge and beliefs regarding disabilities also have been researched in connection with best practice for the delivery of transition services. Jones (2005) noted that teacher perceptions of disabilities may be influenced by a paradigmatic shift towards a more holistic view of disability. The so-called social model of disability constitutes a “classification that acknowledges individual strengths and also the environmental barriers that may compound a disability” (Jones, p. 379). There has also been a shift in the ownership of disability with society as a group rather than the individual person owning the disability. According to Jones (2005) acknowledging “the strengths and contributions to society of people with disabilities”
(p. 379) is an example of the shift. In Jones’ survey of teachers’ views of the educability of students with multiple disabilities, teachers discussed their students’ individual learning needs, and did so supported by strong positive views about achieving success.

Lubbers et al. (2008) administered the Transition Programs and Services survey to 2,000 middle and secondary school teachers in order to determine the extent to which teachers had a working knowledge of transition best practice. Previous studies have found that most teachers have a moderate level of knowledge about transition. In their study, Lubber, et al. focused on teacher knowledge of best practices of transition and also their knowledge of pedagogy in terms of effectively delivering the program. The study found that most teachers had developed transition IEPs and considered diploma options, and that middle school teachers needed more training in both areas. A number of teachers also mentioned the complexity of their responsibilities and indicated that they were not given sufficient knowledge in order to fully understand their responsibilities.

A particular finding that teachers had little knowledge about what other agencies ought to be involved in transition may account for the lack of agency representatives at transition meetings. Teachers called for the creation of new manuals on transition and possibly offering workshops and holding fairs to expedite agency contact with teachers. Overall, Lubbers et al. (2008) found that “teachers are overwhelmed and confused about their roles in the transition process” (p. 290) due to competing priorities and a wide range of disparate duties. Large caseloads and lack of time were also mentioned as major barriers to teachers engaging in best practice in transitions. Finally, the study revealed that teachers perceived that a majority of parents were uninvolved in the transition process, which runs counter to best practice. Thus, this study of the perceptions of
teachers about their skills and effectiveness in transition planning found a gap between actual and best practice, primarily due to lack of full participation by all required stakeholders.

Transitioning Students and Teacher Competencies

Best practice in transitioning planning considers both advantages and disadvantages of the transition plan. Therefore, the effective special educator is aware of the role of transition planning and its purposes. This section of the literature review provides an overview of what is involved in transitional planning for students and associated teacher competencies. Sub sections of this topic describe models designed to prepare students with disabilities for work, college, and living in established centers.

Transitional Planning

Best practices in transition planning reflect the use of different techniques and the participation of varied agencies and services. Evidence from the professional literature suggests that the ability to make connections to community services is clearly based on social capital (Trainor, 2008). Transition plans have emerged in order to provide alternatives for students with disabilities having trouble graduating from high school (deFur, 2003; Hartwig & Sitlington, 2008; Van Dycke, et al., 2006). Because students with disabilities score poorly on standardized tests, a number of diploma options have been developed for them. Hartwig and Sitlington (2008) conducted an investigation of employers to examine their willingness to hire prospective employees based on the type diploma they held. The researchers specifically studied how employers responded to students with disabilities who had received only occupational diplomas, certificates of completion, and general educational development (GED) diplomas.
Hartwig and Sitlington (2008) reported that of 25 employers, 20 were only interested in whether the student had graduated high school rather than if the student had a particular type diploma. Half of the employers placed more emphasis on how the person performed in the job interview than in what kind of diploma they had from high school. With regard to GEDs, “employers expected employees with GEDs to be willing to work and have good attitudes, a good work ethic and some sort of work history” (Hartwig & Sitlington, 2008, p. 12). Overall, Hartwig and Sitlington’s findings were encouraging. The researchers concluded that prospective employers of students with disabilities are willing to look at the employee’s individual characteristics and are not that concerned with what kind of degree they receive.

A good number of studies have argued that career counseling is an important element in a successful transition program. Funded by the 1994 School-to-work Opportunities Act, schools form partnerships with local businesses in order to smooth the transition of students into work. Lapan, Tucker, Kim, and Kosciulek (2003) suggested needs that should be developed in post-high school transitions to ensure students’ successful transition into adult life. The researchers stated the following:

Overlapping lines of career development research and theory suggest that growth in . . . academic achievement, expectations . . . initial goal formation and exploratory actions, work readiness behaviors and social skills, and active engagement in the process of crystallizing and beginning to implement one’s vocational preferences [are needed]. (p. 330)
Not only should these goals be gradually developed throughout the K-12 years, but “transition is enhanced if positive development in these six interrelated career constructs crystallizes in adolescence” (Lapan et al., 2003, p. 330).

In their report, Lapan et al. (2003) found that having a more career development focus in the program improved student outcomes. Further, students were more satisfied with a program when they could relate the coursework with their career goal. Studies show that transition plans can be more difficult to manage in rural locales. This has resulted in schools enlisting the help of business people and human resources personnel to enhance employment awareness (Mellard & Lancaster, 2003). According to Kinnison, Fuson, and Cates (2005) rural locales also provide “few, if any, readymade services . . . for daily living skills, development, social development or job training” (p.31) and as a result, for planners accomplishing the goals of a transition program “may appear to be largely a dream in many rural communities” (p. 31).

Important also in the planning process is the use of technology. A number of researchers have argued that problems in transition from high school to college can be alleviated by introducing technology in the process. While the number of students with disabilities attending college rose over a 10-year period from 29% in 1986 to 45% in 1996, it also remains true that students with disabilities are less likely to graduate than non disabled achieving students. For this reason, transition must be supported by efforts to keep students in school after they have been admitted to college (Madaus, 2005; Oesterreich & Knight, 2008). Mull and Sitlington (2003) reviewed the assistive technology currently in existence which could be used by students in transition to
improve their chances of success. Assistive technology can be used as a cognitive prosthesis or partner, though costs represent a major barrier.

Another difficulty is that persons working with students using assistive technology would also need to be trained. Most teachers at the college level, even though preservice training does exist to support assistive technology use, are currently inadequately trained in assistive technology issues. In order for assistive technology to be effectively integrated in a transition process, the specific technology must be identified and funding obtained to support its purchase. Both students and the professionals working with them must also be trained in how to best put assistive technology to use. Most importantly, transition teams should be thinking about assistive technology use while the student is still in high school so that all will be ready when the transition occurs and to ensure true incorporation of technology for intended outcomes.

Another element of transition planning was expounded by Trainor (2008) who applied the concepts of social and cultural capital to transition meetings, arguing that up to now such a connection has not been made. These concepts are especially helpful to explain why students of color or with more serious disabilities disproportionately fail to achieve a favorable outcome in special education. Trainor reported that disparities between ethnicity in transition students finding work after graduation is also strong, with 74.3% of Caucasian youth and only 61.7% of African American youth being employed. Also, ethnic students with disabilities attend college less than White students. The disparity is related to cultural capital as embodied in services that White parents are able to buy for their students, including test preparation courses. Trainor also relates the
disparity to the rules for funding which simultaneously open and limit access to programs for different populations of students.

A student’s relationship with a guidance counselor would be an example of cultural capital. Having or not having social and cultural capital is believed to explain why, while half of all special education students of any ethnicity express habitus-related aspirations for a prestigious career; “fewer than 30% reported involvement in transition planning with students with disabilities” (Trainor, 2008, p. 152). Moreover, Trainor concluded that many of these students are marginalized due to lack of capital and inconsistently applied best practice in transition based on the quality of teachers able to be involved because of limited capital. In short, a transition planning program cannot be successful unless planners take into consideration the amount of social and cultural capital that each student is able to bring into the process.

Trainor (2008) examined how capital influences best practice in transition planning with regard to four recommended policies: improving student self-determination, family participation, links to adult service agencies, and access to both general and vocational curricula. Trainor found that developing self-determination was very difficult in marginalized youth and that mainstream definitions of self-determination, focusing on autonomy, were also culturally influenced. Whether students from different ethnic backgrounds even desired to develop self-determination in the normal sense was also questioned. With regard to family involvement, this too was compromised by social capital as middle class students had parents whose actions were in concert with teacher expectations while parents with less social capital were viewed as uninolved.
Trends in transition planning have been observed in various publications. deFur (2003) observed that although transition planning and services have existed for a period of time, there remains a division in components of the IEP. deFur (2003) suggested that such a division has origins in the evolution of special education legislation, which at first focused entirely on academic outcomes, and only later realized that high subsequent rates of unemployment among special education graduates indicated that there was a problem. As a result, dual planning paths emerged, with one group of educators focusing solely on the IEP, while a mostly voluntary team began to address transition issues.

The literature reveals that for many years transition planning was left in the hands of local school districts. It was not until 1990 when amendments to the Disabilities Education Act required the inclusion of transition planning in IEPs that transition planning finally merged with special education services (Lubbers, et al., 2008). The new law reformulated the goals of special education as student success in adult living and employment after leaving school. In this context, agencies and other providers for transition services were invited participants to IEP meetings.

Studies of how this new fusion has succeeded have sometimes revealed a mismatch between compliance and quality in that services were not always provided in accordance with the perceived needs that parents and students expressed. For example, according to deFur (2003), a study reviewing IEPs with regard to transition goals found the following:

Vague statements of student outcomes, unclear transition roles and responsibilities, unclear timelines for services, no long-range planning or annual revision of transition plans, no plans for evaluation of transition goals, few goals
addressing adult living objectives, and few references to the community or workplace as an opportunity for integration with nondisabled students. (p. 117)

Also found was that IEPs for high school scenarios were overly focused on academics and did not provide an observable linkage from goals to transition outcomes and in 2001, a study of state compliance to IDEA found that more than half of them were not in compliance with the transition requirements.

IEPs and transition. A best practice of how to link IEPs to transition to postschool outcomes began to emerge. According to research, IEPs are best able to ensure that transition goals are met by involving students in transition planning and enabling active family involvement. deFur (2003) suggested that IEPs can ensure acquisition of transition goals by

Creating opportunities and access to participate in inclusive environments, ensuring opportunities for work experience while in high school, providing meaningful, occupationally specific vocational courses of study based on vocational assessment and exposure to career . . . instruction . . . and providing direct instruction in pragmatic skills for living independently. (p. 118)

Unfortunately, reviews of current practice in merging IEPs and transition goals find that these services have been inconsistent; the inconsistency has been attributed to lack of knowledge regarding career development and transition strategies among IEP team members.

deFur (2003) reported the results of another study that showed parental and student involvement in the IEP was mostly passive, undoubtedly due to a number of barriers including gaps in knowledge, educational jargon, and the perception of the
nature and function of (IEP) meetings. However, with the implementation of such strategies as role play and others that provided individuals with knowledge of required social skills for engaging in the meeting as well as the structure of meetings, student involvement increased. deFur (2003) lamented that in seeking compliance many states have inserted transition goals in IEP meetings in an add-on fashion and observed that what is needed is for the IEP meetings to be turned into “an annual action agenda for a strategic long-term plan” (p.120).

Researchers agree that an IEP must provide benchmarks for long-term goals, thereby serving as preparation for transition. Agreement is also seen in terms of the early introduction of transition goals rather than waiting until the student is 16, an age not viewed as optimal for integrating transition goals into a student’s IEP (Babbitt & White, 2002; deFur, 2003). Also visible in the literature is that transition planning and establishing competencies for students should be based on strategic and an integrated person-centered planning philosophy; this requires teachers to develop skills in teaching self-determination and fostering student and family engagement (Davis & Bates, 1997; Eiseman, 2003; Lubbers, et al., 2008; Morningstar & Clark, 2003, 2005).

Person-centered transition planning. One trend in special education is to make the transition planning process more person-centered, meaning that the student is to be involved in the review meetings (Carnaby, et al., 2003). Carnaby et al. studied a series of transition review meetings for students aged four to 19 over a four-year period. The researchers found that while most meetings were theoretically organized around a pathway approach model, the model along with materials needed for meetings was not always evident. The researchers concluded that the meetings were not sufficiently
focused on the future in that they found that complex and confusing concepts were used in conversations intended to guide student thought.

The context and content of meetings were changed to be more accommodating to the needs of student involvement. Career advice, allowing students to bring friends to the meetings, the establishment of a buddy system between current and ex-students, and the use of videotapes to record progress being made in the meeting were among the changes made in the content of transition meetings. The findings of the study indicate that improving family involvement in transition meetings was critical to effective guidance in transition meetings (Carnaby et al. 2003).

*Transition Plans and Models*

Transition plans are designed to prepare children with disabilities for engagement in life to include through an occupation and or attending college. In reviewing the theoretical literature on factors predicting postschool success, Eisenman (2003) found that personal characteristics account for much of students’ postschool employment. Families with social capital also help students find jobs. Research has demonstrated that a person’s degree of self-determination, measured by goal orientation and persistence, also correlates with postschool employment.

Studies have shown that many students with disabilities have “career indecisiveness, career immaturity and lower career aspirations” (Eisenman, 2003, p. 91). However, a further finding was that students who held more than one job during high school had a greater probability of employment after completing high school. Although graduating from high school and attending college also in the long term lead to more employability, the contributions from high school experiences to possible employment
are difficult to assess because of the varied content and vocational courses in which students engage.

*School-to-work (STW).* In addition to being concerned about college, transition studies also seek to improve school-to-work transitions of special education students. The purpose of school-to-work models is to assist students with disabilities in making adult life transition by becoming employable upon completing school. Some researchers suggest that the models should not have a heavy academic focus but should reflect a comprehensive curriculum that includes academic, vocational, and life skills (Eisenman, 2003). In this way students can be prepared to transition to work or college.

Eisenman (2003) explored the theoretical underpinnings of most school-to-work models and discovered evidence of theories such as career theories from vocational psychology, the person-environment fit theory, and learning and sociocognitive theories. The person-environment theory seeks to find congruence between the student and the subsequent working environment. According to Eisenman, in contrast to the person-environment fit theory, “career development theories focus on individuals’ awareness of career choices, attitudes, information and planning, which facilitate their movement through recursive career stages” (p. 97).

Learning and sociocognitive theories focus on self-efficacy and goals, and how these influence a person’s progress through a career. Eisenman (2003) argued that too often the individualistic theoretical underpinning of STW transition programs are aimed at a narrow interpretation of the values and experiences of the middle-class. This means that these programs have a skill-building focus and explain the nature of work, but rarely address the irregularities in the career-development patterns of youths with learning
disabilities (LD). Therefore, ecological theories explore how factors such as workplace culture and broader life-span and life-space perspectives can alter the path of postschool work for persons with LD. In this context, the student’s active participation in the process, through circumscription or compromises, leads to self-creation. Such ideas offer broader views of how students actually transition to work after school, taking into account a wide range of societal forces that shape their ultimate experience of work.

Regarding preparation for school-to-work, Eager et al. (2006) suggested that better assessment of the work capacity of students with disabilities may improve their transition to real life. They argued that functional assessment is needed, because generally transition programs have not proved to be helpful. These researchers relied on the fact that while 78% of abled students are employed after school, only 35% of special education students are employed. The failure of transition programs to place special students in jobs is possibly related to the descriptive nature of the literature. However, Eager et al. suggested that a better understanding of variables such as living skills or academic skills could increase the potential for employment in this student population.

Studies have shown that indicators of improved student outcomes are students having acquired a high level of social skills and not needing vocational instruction one year after leaving school. Other factors found to have bearing on transition were school completion characteristics and whether the student obtained a job in the immediate post-graduation period. Eager et al. (2006) also noted that many researchers have avoided studying transition issues because it is so difficult to claim direct links between specific curriculum and later life skills. The failure to address this issue has implications for the
need to ensure that a student’s functional status is assessed in order to better determine how the student may transition postschool.

In a functional analysis of the Adult Training, Learning and Support program in Australia which assisted students in making the transition to life, Eager et al. (2006) found that there was “a predictable hierarchy of functional acquisition among school-leavers with disabilities” (p. 347) in three domains associated with future work potential. The researchers found that the best predictor of a student’s future capacity for work was the student’s development of daily living skills. This kind of study then recommends that teachers involved in transition programming focus on helping students develop skills which predict future employability.

In spite of progress in developing transition plans, Smart (2004) observed that special students attending residential special schools are being overlooked, exacerbating the fact that it remains quite difficult to place them in adult-life jobs. Studies have shown that while the literature supports parental involvement, staffs in adult placements often fail to establish partnerships with parents. Smart studied problems of parental involvement in transition planning and placement for 44 students in a residential special school. In the study, Smart found a gulf separating parents and staff regarding their beliefs about the transition process, and attributed the gulf to the staff not placing as much emphasis on partnering with parents as the independence of their students.

The findings suggested that differences in beliefs of parents and staff also resulted in staff pushing for independence even when it was not merited, or when students continued to need support. A side-effect of this conceptual problem was that planning input by parents steadily declined after time, as they were worn down from fighting the
system. Overall, Smart (2004) found that parents are willing to take on the management of transition of severely disabled children into adult life, and will do so, but only if they are informed in detail of their expectations. Reports of placement breakdown and regression also indicate the extent to which the transition problems involve stakeholder miscommunication.

*Transition to college.* The presence of almost a million students with disabilities now in colleges is evidence that transition planning for high school students with disabilities has improved (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). Studies have begun to outline best practice in transitioning high school students with disabilities into college that take into consideration the specific kind of skills they require. For example, differences in the legal requirements in accommodating students with special needs between colleges and high schools demand that students develop specific access skills before entering college. Since colleges will only provide accommodations at the student’s request, the development of self-advocacy skills is important. Janiga and Costenbader (2002) further observed that if high school students with LD or other disabilities have developed the idea that they are not smart enough for college, these attitudes must be addressed and overcome.

The identification of best practice also considers other potential problems that students with disabilities may encounter. Among problems is that students with disabilities may enter a program of study not suited to their career aspirations if they are pressured to attend college by their families. Still another issue is that disabled students transitioning to college may begin to deny their disability as not to be categorized as in need of special education as they were in high school. This behavior may place college
students with learning disabilities in particular in jeopardy. Considering these and other potential problems, Janiga and Costenbader (2002) recommended creating a comprehensive plan to include students’ goals.

In a study of the views of postsecondary school teachers and other professionals, Janiga and Costenbader (2002) did find that most felt that transition services were inadequate. However, conclusions from the study revealed that “evaluations conducted in secondary schools in the last 3 years of high school may not be thorough enough to guide the provision of services at the postsecondary level” (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002, p. 467). Therefore, to improve student self-advocacy, thereby guarding against potential problems cited earlier, the researchers recommended that students be afforded a thorough understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, and needed accommodations through the inclusion of career counseling, social and self-awareness skill training in the transition plan. The plan will then enable students to have a clearer sense of their limitations so that they will be able to relay their need for any special modification to their college professors.

Transition to college is in some ways more difficult than transition to work, because a student must contend with the fact that special services change in nature from high school to college (Madaus, 2005). In addition, in the transition from high school to college the responsibilities of parents and students change. While on the secondary school level schools must develop an IEP for any special student not meeting standards, no such system exists in postsecondary education. The only element of special education that carries over into the college level is that of accommodations. Teachers offering these accommodations moreover are not required to have any training in special education.
Commonly known from a review of college and university regulations, though some colleges have individual disability coordinators and more attentive services, the level of service varies by college and differs greatly from college to college.

Studies have also shown that self-advocacy is critical for special students at the college level, as colleges are liable for failure to provide services only if the student discloses his or her needs. The extent to which a student may or may not self-disclose during the admissions process also varies from state to state, making for a confusing transition process. Given these circumstances, Madaus (2005) concluded that the primary skills students need to successfully transition to college are self-advocacy skills.

Another consideration in preparing students to transition to college concerns minority students. The disproportionate representation of minority students in special education presents a number of challenges to the transition to college. Oesterreich and Knight (2008) concluded that most students with learning disabilities, for example, contributing to increased percentages of attendance in college, are White, middle-class, while minority special education students have “more stigmatizing disabilities within special education. The researchers also observed that not only do these students have less support from private tutors, but less social and cultural capital to help them transition to college” (p. 301).

The research suggests that the extent to which teachers act as gatekeepers, accepting or rejecting various displays of social capital, often shuts ethnic students out of the transition process. For example, Trainor (2008) articulated that a significant problem in transition meetings is that “teachers’ facilitation or obstruction of the transmission of capital resources can happen with or without intention as well as with or without their
knowledge of its occurrence” (p, 157). Suggested in the research is whether a student moves from special to general education classes, with the latter having greater potential in terms of obtaining social capital, also impacts transition success. Following Bourdieu’s notion that capital is exchanged in abstruse ways in order to differentiate between haves and have-nots, Trainor (2008) also found that disabled students who had general as opposed to vocational training had better results in employment. As such, many transition plans only contribute to the reproduction of capital and its inequities over time.

Oesterreich and Knight (2008) provided advice on how minority students can improve their social capital and develop the self-advocacy skills necessary to enroll in college. Among advice given, these authors viewed as most important that special education teachers begin to talk to their students about college beginning as early as middle school and onward. In this way the rates for minority student to successfully transition to college would likely improve. Trainor (2008) also found that teachers play an important role in leveling inequities in social and cultural capital and concluded that by getting to know their students on a more than superficial level, teachers can help find ways to compensate for gaps in a student’s social capital. An overall recommendation emerging from Trainor’s work was that transition models could be strengthened by including procedures for sociocultural interactions.

Sociocultural interactions could be facilitated to some extent through the inclusion of different types of community agencies. Mellard and Lancaster (2003) noted that transition plans are likely to be more successful if school staff becomes involved in forging interagency linkages with community services. However, they also acknowledged that having teachers undertake these tasks represents for them a significant
shift of attention away from academics toward social and employment skills, with some question as to whether or not teachers can make this change. Change is required, however, because at present most high school students with disabilities more often than not attend community college, and in most cases ten years later still have not earned a postsecondary degree. It is because of such bleak outcomes that the literature on transition has placed more attention on best practices including attention to sociocultural interactions.

Interagency cooperation has been determined to be a best practice, as most successful transition programs cooperate with community sources to smooth the process of transition. Even though studies have shown that interagency cooperation is needed in order to fulfill the requirements of several steps of the transition process, however, recent research shows “that programs in a number of states are not rigorously inviting parents and other adult agency representatives to transition planning conferences” (Mellard & Lancaster, 2003, p. 360). Mellard and Lancaster (2003) reviewed a number of agencies which were cooperating with transition planning, including those related to adult education, vocational rehabilitation, the social security administration, and centers for independent living. Community and technical colleges, as well as other agencies, are also increasingly becoming involved in transition planning. At present, however, Mellard and Lancaster (2003) noted that “the young adults with disabilities with whom we have interacted indicated that they had very little knowledge of these agencies and their services” (p. 366).

Independent living centers. Finally, transition models exist in recognition that not all special education students go directly from high school to college or work, but may
transition through centers for independent living (CIL). CILs are sites where students can live and receive a number of interventions to improve their self-determination during transition. These may include job training, self-determination training, and benefits advocacy.

Indeed, CILs may be critical in helping students develop self-determination skills, which have been found to be strongly related to the likelihood of obtaining a job (Wehmeyer & Gragoudas, 2004). Wehmeyer and Gragoudas reviewed an empowerment program offered in CILs in Kansas and their findings demonstrated how CILs and self-determination programs can be merged according to best practice. Their study revealed that self-determined students were much more likely to have moved from home and held a job within a year after graduating high school or college.

*Transition: Disadvantages and Advantages*

While transition programs have been developed to prepare special students’ transition to working life, Dolyniuk et al. (2002) are among researchers in the literature that question the effectiveness of this process. The researchers reported that studies on the employment history of high school student graduates with disabilities suggest that only 44% were employed two years after graduating. Moreover, 70% of mentally disabled children continued to live with their parents for “several years after exiting high school, and the majority of their social activities and interpersonal relationships were passive or occurred within their own homes” (Dolyniuk et al., 2002, p. 236). Given these findings regarding transition programs, Dolyniuk et al. concluded that special students are not provided equal access and opportunity.
In a study of teacher perceptions of transition programs, Dolyniuk et al. (2002) found that their leading transition concern was with regard to students being able to develop social skills that would permit them to feel accepted despite whether these skills are what limit their transition to the real world. Direct learning from the environment is believed to enhance self-determination, though care must also be taken to manage context in order to avoid exposing students to events “beyond an individual’s control” which may lead to learned helplessness (Dolyniuk, et al., p. 237). In order to correct these problems, these researchers presented a case study of a transitional program for a college student with mental retardation involving experiential learning and engagement with course content. Dolyniuk, et al. concluded that the study “supports the benefits of experiential learning where learners are in touch with subject matter” (p. 242).

Finally, transition research has been enriched by studies of how diverse populations of adolescents, including those currently incarcerated transition to work in adult life. Waintrup and Unruh (2008) reported that the transition success of incarcerated youth is much worse than either abled or disabled counterparts. A service model developed to transition incarcerated youth to adult work in focused on specific activities offered under the framework of the model. In Waintrup and Unruh’s review of the model they determined that it appeared to be an example of best practice in so far as it sought to enhance self-determination, included social skill instruction, and focused on getting adolescents jobs.

In reviewing the program, the researchers found that the transition specialist was critical to achieving success, primarily because he or she had wide knowledge about inter-agency cooperation potentials. An important part of the model is that the transition
specialist oversees the transition well after the subject has work in order to prevent recidivism. Waintrup and Unruh (2008) further envisioned that the ecological basis of the wraparound model used in this project was also designed according to best practice. Other advantages of transitioning planning are reported in the section to follow.

*Improved outcomes.* As a result of transition planning, the number of students with disabilities going on to college has improved and according to Eckes and Ochoa (2005), during the 1990s, the number of freshmen reporting disabilities increased by 10%. Nonetheless, Eckes and Ochoa argued that there is still much work to be done. Improving college entrance rates for students with disabilities is problematic not only because of the difficult nature of transitions per se, but also because of changes in laws which require new compliance for users. The latest reform of IEP mandates, for example, is that special and general education teachers as well as a transition specialist must be included in IEP meetings. The law has also changed with regard to when the transition should occur and what it should involve. Not only should the IEP be in place by the time the student is 16, but student self-advocacy should be emphasized. As Eckes and Ochoa observed, self-advocacy means “decisions about transition activities [should] be based upon the student’s preferences and interests” (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005, p. 8).

Colleges are required to provide some accommodations to disability, so long as they are not burdensome to the college or student. One difficulty in the transition to college is that the law does not require professors to alter their teaching techniques; this is understood in that many of the college professors would not be trained to provide inclusive practices. However, Eckes and Ochoa (2005) argued that there is a missing link in the transition of secondary to postsecondary education and noted that during transition
meetings in high school the transition specialist can begin to alert students to the fact that service offerings will be more limited at the college level. These researchers’ observations offer even further support for the idea that students in transition to college need self-advocacy skills so that they are able to articulate and obtain the services and accommodations they need and deserve. Therefore, as these researchers suggested, the secondary school and parents need to work together to ensure students are empowered through developing self-advocacy skills.

Reducing attrition. Though students with special needs are provided a number of social services, the literature continues to report that the flow of students through the special education pipeline is poor, resulting in an unacceptably high drop-out rate (Myklebust & Batevik, 2005). Moreover, the research on the success rate of students in terms of transitioning to additional education or employment in their postschool lives is inadequate. Myklebust and Batevik (2005) supported this assertion through observing the limitations of the only two major studies reporting success rates. The researchers declared that both the National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students and the National Educational Longitudinal Study were not only more than ten years old, but also were “not applicable in terms of examining the effectiveness of different types of support in assisting adolescents with special educational needs” (Myklebust & Batevik, 2005, p. 272).

Drawing upon this finding, Myklebust and Batevik (2005) utilized a life-course approach in order to examine the extent to which special education students become gainfully employed at postschool. They also deconstructed the roles various agencies played in expediting transition. Their study found that special education students who
were male, childless, and had high functional abilities had much better success in finding jobs than females with children and lower functional levels. An implication of the finding was that successfully graduating high school also often translates into employment. For those who do not graduate, having attended school in special as opposed to mainstream classes is a serious drawback, as determined by Myklebust and Batevik (2005) because “the vocational prospects are gloomy for those dropping out of these classes compared with those who turn their back on regular classes” (p. 294).

Life course theory informs analysis of these results by pointing out that current transitions are influenced by previous events and because special education students may need more time to achieve results, they make transitions in the context of what is termed life-course discontinuity. This concept means that these students achieve results at their own pace, which is often at odds with the pace of most non disabled achieving students. It is also important that special students meet gatekeepers; while some gatekeepers will serve as obstacles, others will serve as inspirations. In the transitioning experiences prior to postschool, the way that students navigate through various agencies and find gatekeepers or not has a major impact on whether they gain employment in their postschool life (Myklebust & Batevik, 2005). Increasingly seen is that a student needs a transition plan in order to successfully move from school into college or working life.

**Concluding Perspectives: Teacher Competencies and Best Practice**

This section of the major heading of transitioning students and teacher competencies serves to bring attention to areas especially significant in recognition of best instructional practices for students with disabilities. The literature has illuminated the importance of the participation of parents and students in transition planning. Noteworthy
is that when the student transitions to college, any modifications required will be much
dependent upon the study being able to advocate her own needs. Therefore, additional
attention to student participation as best practice is provided here. Additionally, this
section contains a discussion of the teacher’s role in transition planning meetings,
assessment, facilitating self-determination, and addressing the needs of the whole child.

Student participation as best practice. Martin et al. (2006) attended over 90 IEP
meetings in the context of transition planning to determine the extent to which teachers
are performing up to best practice, particularly with regard to student participation in
meetings. The study was undertaken due to a scarcity of knowledge in the literature on
what actually goes on at transition IEP meetings. Teacher behavior was observed during
IEP meetings and teachers were found to dominate the meetings. Moreover, in the study,
students attended only two meetings, and most of the meeting time focused on academic
goals. However, when the observations included general education teachers, the
researchers found that general education teachers contributed little and knew less about
the goals of IEP meetings. Also, found was that most participants in most meetings
“remained unclear about their role in the process” (Martin et al., 2006, p. 188).

The literature is also mixed on how important it is for students to attend IEP
meetings. While a number of researchers support participation under the banner of self-
determination, one study Martin et al. (2006) reported concluded that if the student is not
adequately trained with regard to what is expected of him or her during these meetings,
attendance at the meetings could engender in them disillusionment. In reviewing
participation at a series of observed meetings, Martin, et al. found that almost all
meetings were begun and managed by special education teachers and that participation by
other stakeholders, including general teachers, was irregular. Stakeholders were observed as often coming and going due to other commitments. While special education teachers discussed transition issues, general educators appeared to struggle to understand transition issues fully. However, while special educators conducted the meetings and reported satisfaction with them, Martin et al. surmised that their claim that students participated in up to 40% of the meetings was contrary to their observation that students talked only 3% of the time in most meetings.

Results of the study showed that overall, transition items scored the lowest of any other issues discussed. This finding suggested there was a general lack of knowledge of the importance of transition issues being discussed. Martin et al. (2006) suggested that the low level of student involvement in the IEP planning process and in discussing transition issues was an example of tokenism. A conclusion drawn from findings was that in order to change this situation, teacher-directed meetings must give way to meetings where students are given the floor and allowed to discuss their needs.

*Teachers and students in transition planning meetings.* Researchers including Carnaby et al. (2003), deFur (2003), and Wehmeyer et al. (2007) linked student involvement and best practice in transition meetings with the requirement that students attend transition or IEP meetings. However, Wehmeyer et al. (2007) also noted that there has been little study of the relationship between a student’s self-determination and its reflection in how the student actually is involved in transition planning. Wehmeyer et al., therefore, studied 180 special education students in four states to determine if their level of involvement in transition reflected their measured state of self-determination. The
study indicated that a high level of global self-determination in students resulted in more active involvement in the transition process.

Among the various factors of self-determination, self-regulation was found to be the most significant predictor of active involvement in transition. Whether a student had self-determination was even more important than what kind of disability they had. The study thus reinforces the importance of “not only involving students in educational planning, but also of providing them the capacity to more effectively participate by promoting self-determination” (Wehmeyer et al., 2007, p. 44).

Teachers and assessment. The transition literature supports that assessment is of critical importance in ensuring that a transition process for a special education student continues on its course. Neubart (2003) noted that throughout a student’s transition, stakeholders must constantly monitor student progress and, if there is a problem, recommend additional services. Assessment can also serve as the site for improving goal-setting and identifying services that could further help a student transition into adult working life. Optimal assessment policy has been repeatedly identified as best practice in transition plans. At present, most assessments take the form of “assessing the individuals and their potential environments, informal transition assessments and person-centered planning approaches” (Neubart, 2003, p. 66). Data developed during assessments, moreover, are frequently used to refine goals and perfect a fit between theory and practice in the student’s IEP.

Of particular importance in achieving success in transition, is to develop a clear sense, through assessment, of the students “needs, preferences, interests and abilities in relation to postsecondary goals” (Neubart, 2003, p. 66). It is also under the umbrella of
assessment that introducing self-determination skills to students is enacted. Neubart is among researchers who have argued that this process should begin in middle school in order to match a student’s IEP with his or her real goals. Assessment data can also be utilized in order to create a transition profile for the student to use while actually transitioning to college or work. A transition profile includes a complete history of the student’s academic and work experience, as well as a full description of skills.

Transition profiles have been found in the literature to be helpful tools in improving the self-advocacy skills of special students. However, problematic with developing a transition profile is that it necessarily includes data extracted from the transition process by a wide range of different stakeholders. These stakeholders range from guidance personnel to work-study coordinators and data are supported by interagency linkages, all of which is difficult to assemble. In the absence of specialists in this area, special educators are most likely involved in bringing together the data. Whether special educators have the competencies required to effectively assemble the data may need to be further explored in the literature.

*Teachers and student self-determination.* Thomas et al. (2002) also noted that though self-determination has been accepted as an important goal in transition planning, “the reality is that special educators do not seem to know how to teach the component skills that are part of self-determination” (p. 242). Studies of transition meetings have also found that most educators do not engage in activity that encourages student self-determination. In a study of Arizona special educators Thomas et al. found that most of them were familiar with most transition assessment methods and had used them.
Nonetheless, it was also found that at most transition meetings teachers did not use strategies that would have helped students develop self-determination.

In order to express self-determination during meetings, commonly understood in transition training is that students should be allowed to set and articulate their goals, as well as share portfolios. However, researchers have found that less than 22% of teachers involved in these meetings let students undertake such person-centered strategies. This gap between theory and practice is most likely due to the fact that most teachers reported that they had had no formal training in transition assessment and were either self-taught or “learning by watching another person administer the assessment” (Thomas et al., 2002, p. 250). Thus, Thomas, et al. concluded that most special education teachers still need more training in order to ensure that their actions during meetings routinely encourage student involvement and self-determination.

While supporters of student self-determination argued that students should be able to voice their views in IEP or transition meetings, most studies indicate that students continue to have poor self-determination skills (Torgerson, Miner, & Shen, 2004). In order to achieve this result, Torgerson et al. (2004) asserted that teachers must take an active role in enabling student self-determination. This can be done primarily through teaching students self-monitoring skills and structured lessons on IEP participation. Torgerson et al. outlined a training sequence in which students are taught how to develop a rationale for their actions, fill out workbooks recording their thoughts, and videotape students to provide feedback on their activities. Students should be taught how to make empowerment statements in particular. A discussion of a case study of IEP meetings in which Trainor (2007) determined that student self-determination was maximized follows.
Self-determination theory provides foundational knowledge for centering transition meetings on students. The literature suggests that it is the convergence of self-knowledge and self-worth in youth that leads to a student’s ability to participate effectively in transition planning meetings. Self-determination curricula have also been found to improve student participation levels. How sociocultural differences result in inequities among students has been less studied; however, Trainor (2007) sought to fill the void in the literature by gaining a sense of the perceptions of adolescent girls of their self-determination in meetings. Trainor examined the degree to which adolescent girls with LD were able to exert their self-determination in transition meetings. Findings reported included that most girls perceived themselves as self-determined, even though their practice of it was “inhibited by underdeveloped component attitudes, skills and knowledge” (Trainor, 2007, p. 40). This means that while students were forced to make their own decisions, they often did so with limited understanding of the consequences of their decisions.

Most of the study’s participants also reported they were unsure about resources and “lacked faith that their choices had significant meaning to the adults involved in their education” (Trainor, 2005, p. 409). The chronic involvement of adolescent girls in dating violence and child-bearing impedes their ability to exploit social capital. Trainor also reviewed various programs created to enhance student self-determination, including Steps to Self-Determination and Whose Future is it Anyways. Studies indicate that students view self-determination positively, but the research has yet to establish conclusively the various factors that facilitate student participation.
Recent studies have found that students believe that parental involvement provides them with more motivation to become self-determined and that there remains a “high degree of variability” in the self-determination outcomes of diverse students (Trainor, 2005, p. 234). Variability in self-determination outcomes, moreover, dramatically increases when diverse students are involved, many of whom may bear completely different notions of self-determination. Trainor (2005) interviewed African American, European American, and Hispanic male adolescents in order to determine their perceptions of the efficacy of self-determination efforts in transition meetings. While all students exhibited some common component skills, the study also revealed that ethnic students reported that teachers were unresponsive to requests about decisions, and that decision-making questions were not addressed. The study also found that even though cultural differences in self-determination were noted, limited opportunities afforded students during transition planning to demonstrate self-determination made identifying cultural differences difficult. The failure of teachers to respond adequately to questioning also suggested that much transition planning remains below best practice. Trainor contended that to enhance student motivation to practice self-determination, teachers must complement parents’ involvement in transition planning using a strengths-based approach to planning and not deficit-oriented methods.

Teachers and the whole child. Wagner and Davis (2006) analyzed data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study to investigate how well high school youth with disabilities have transitioned to adult life in order to determine whether or not the transition process represents best practice. Reviewing best practice, Wagner and Davis (2006) argued that relationships, rigor and relevance are of critical importance in insuring
optimal goal-driven transition planning. Not only must the process have rigor, but studies show that students are less likely to disengage if instruction is authentic and involves instilling career awareness and occupational skills. Studies also show that the best transition planning involves providing improvements for the whole child, including social as well as academic skills. Involving students and their families directly in the process, of course, is also best practice.

Wagner and Davis (2006) examined the extent to which these principles are embodied in transition planning in cases reviewed by the National Longitudinal Transition Study. They found that generally students are involved in best-practice-level transitions, but that students with ED receive insufficient support in a number of areas. Wagner and Davis also concluded that not only is there room for improvement in delivery of services, but also recent improvements are also insufficient. With regard to teachers, even those with experience teaching students with disabilities reported “being unprepared to teach students with ED and did not get a lot of training in this particular area” (Wagner & Davis, 2006, p. 97).

The ability to maintain the quality and effectiveness of transition meetings also is influenced by locale. A study of transition meetings in Britain found that parents were routinely dissatisfied with meetings and that most felt they had not been given sufficient information to make informed decisions. In general, parents argued that coordination between teachers and other stakeholders could be improved (Ward, et al., 2003).

Conclusion

This literature review has examined the issue of teachers’ perceptions of their capabilities and performance in carrying out effective transition meetings and programs
for special education students seeking to move on from high school to college or work (Lubbers, et al., 2008; Myklebust & Batevik, 2005). The review examined the evolution of transition planning as an element of special education and the development of best practices in transition meetings in particular, and the transition process as a whole (Carter, et al., 2008; LaCava, 2006; Waintrup & Unruh, 2008). The literature of best practice in transition of special education students finds that student self-determination is of particular importance (Hartwig & Sitlington, 2008; Oesterreich & Knight, 2008; Trainor, 2008). Moreover, research reveals that it is primarily on this point that most teachers fall short of best practice, failing to provide enough opportunities for student self-determination in transition planning meetings (Nougaret, et al., 2005; Sutherland, et al., 2005; Thomas, 2005).

Case studies of teacher performance in various special education tasks and in transition planning meetings in particular were reviewed. Studies of teachers’ perceptions of their capabilities in transition planning and meetings suggest that teachers are fully aware of the gap between theory and practice. Additionally revealed in the literature is the need for more teacher training in transition, especially in how to step back and give students self-determination in transition (Martin, et al., 2006; Trainor, 2007; Wasburn-Moses, 2006; Wehmeyer, et al., 2007). The procedures outlined in Chapter III were informed from findings presented in this review of the literature. Additionally, the remaining chapters of this dissertation will show any consistencies and inconsistencies in the literature reviewed with findings from the current study.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

This chapter will present the research design, a description of the target population, and the instrumentation used to collect and analyze the data. The research methodology also addressed the limitations of the study and measures taken to ensure the validity of the findings. The study investigated how special education teachers in the Mississippi Delta perceive their preparedness to perform transition activities based on their satisfaction with the quality and frequency of state department or district training. Secondly, the researcher examined the frequency teachers perform transitional activities as part of their daily classroom routine. In addition, the study was designed to determine what training is available for Mississippi Delta special education teachers in the content area of transition services for students of mild-moderate disabilities.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions were addressed in the study:

1. What is the level of self-efficacy of special education teachers toward their capabilities to plan and deliver transition services to students with mild and moderate disabilities?

2. How satisfied are special education teachers with the training they received in developing and delivering transition services to students with disabilities?

3. What is the frequency of special education teachers’ engagement in transition practices?
Three hypotheses were tested related to the research questions. They are the following:

H1 Teachers’ perceptions of their level of transitioning preparedness have a significant relationship to their level of training satisfaction.

H2 Teachers’ perceptions of their level of transitioning preparedness have a significant relationship to the frequency of transition activities performed.

H3 Teachers’ perceptions of their level of training satisfaction have a significant relationship to the frequency of transition activities performed.

Research Design

A quantitative research design for the descriptive study was used employing a cross-sectional survey strategy. The design is identified in research methodology as appropriate to determine the present conditions of an area of interest and for seeking statistical significant differences in opinions, for example, through numerical data analysis (Creswell, 2009). Likewise, cross-sectional surveys are used for collecting data on a population at a single point in time. The survey yields a numerical description of a sample representative of the population. The survey as an inquiry strategy was used to collect data reflective of special education teachers’ perception of their capabilities to plan and deliver transition services to students with mild-moderate disabilities. Variables to include preparedness, self-efficacy, teaching experience, and implementation frequency were studied through the research design.

The survey approach has been identified as one of the most common, but valuable forms of self-report research (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2005). Along with Gay et al. (2005) and other researchers, Creswell (2009) noted the value of the survey for identifying necessary information for seeking answers to research questions and
hypotheses. The design for this study was selected for its appropriateness and convenience for collecting data from a sample of special education teachers located in rural school districts. Survey research was supported in the literature as an appropriate strategy for permitting inferences to be drawn about the needs of special education teachers as they relate to transition preparation courses and field experiences based on their perceptions of self-efficacy in the delivery of transition activities.

Participants

Respondents for this study were selected from a population of 446 elementary, middle, and high school special education teachers from school districts in the Mississippi Delta. Separate public school districts, county school districts, and consolidated school districts constituted this population. Respondents consisted of a purposeful sample of special education teachers employed during 2009-2010 in schools located in 15 rural counties. Anticipated was that the entire targeted population would constitute the actual respondents. However, Krejcie and Morgan (1970) suggested that a sample size approximately one half of the population would be representative of the targeted population. Contact information for school districts and special education teachers was obtained from the Mississippi Department of Education, Division of Special Education. The response rate was 191 out of 446 teachers. These respondents were females representing the following ethnic groups: African American, Asian American, Native American, White, and Other.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation used in this study was the Secondary Teachers Transition Survey (STTS) created by Debra T. Benitez, and Mary Morningstar (see Appendix A).
Permission for the use of this survey was obtained by the researcher through written communication from the authors on November 30, 2009 (see Appendix B). To establish content and social validity of the STTS the researchers, Benitez, Morningstar, and Frey (2009), executed a comprehensive analysis of the special education transition literature to identify: (a) effective transition-planning and service delivery practices; (b) the provision of transition-related content within teacher preparation programs; and (c) teachers’ perceptions of their own delivery of transition services. Their analysis included the works of Blanchett (2001), deFur and Taymans (1995), Knott and Asselin (1999), Kohler (1998), and Wolfe, Boone, and Blanchett (1998). Benitez, et al. (2009) also examined national certification standards (i.e., Standards for All Beginning Special Education Teachers in Individualized General Curriculum, and the CEC, 2000, Standards for the Preparation of Transition Specialists) in order to identify transition-related competencies for inclusion in the survey.

The STTS consists of two sections: (a) demographic information and (b) ratings of three major scales of preparation, satisfaction, and frequency of engagement in transition service and delivery competencies for six instructional and planning areas. Part I includes demographic questions that solicit information about the community, highest degree obtained, planned additional degrees, number of years teaching, number or transition courses taken, number of staff development hours, number of special education hours completed, classification of students taught, certification type, licensure status (e.g., certified, provisionally certified, etc., grade level of students, type of classroom setting and race/ethnicity (Benitez, et al., 2009). Part II of the STTS was designed to elicit participants’ perceived levels of preparation, satisfaction, and the frequency with which
they performed transition activities. The participants were required to assign a four-point Likert-type scale rating regarding (a) their level of preparation where ratings ranged from 1(*very unprepared*) to 4 (*very prepared*), (b) level of satisfaction with training that ranged from 1 (*very unsatisfied*) to 4 (*very satisfied*), and (c) frequency of performance that ranged from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*frequently*) (Benitez et al., 2009).

According to Benitez et al. (2009), the instrument was found to have an acceptable reliability level. The researchers applied Cronbach’s alpha coefficient to determine item consistency of the survey across the three rating scales. The preparation, satisfaction, and frequency scales were found to have alphas of .96, .97, and .94, respectively, indicating high reliability estimates.

In this study the instrument was used to identify teachers’ perceptions in six areas: (1) instructional planning; (2) curriculum and instruction; (3) transition planning; (4) collaboration; (5) assessment; (6) additional competencies. Respondents identified levels of perception based on three scales for each of the six areas. These scales are preparation to perform the activity, satisfaction with training, and frequency of performing transition activities.

**Procedures**

Permission to conduct the study in school districts was obtained from superintendents (see Appendix C). Upon approval of the Institutional Review Board (see Appendix D) the survey was mailed to elementary, middle, and high school special education teachers in each school in the Mississippi Delta. Teachers were identified through a database retrieved from the State Department of Education. A participation letter (see Appendix E) accompanying the survey to elicit participation and their
informed consent included the purpose of the study, the rationale for participant selection, and information relative to their rights as a human subject. Respondents’ return of the survey confirmed their consent to participate. Respondents were provided a self-addressed, postage-paid envelope and asked to return the survey two weeks from the date of mailing.

Procedures recommended in the research methodology literature (Creswell, 2009; Gay, et al., 2005) to ensure good response rates were used. After two weeks, for districts where there were few or no responses a second notice was sent requesting teachers to return the survey within two weeks. For low returns after the second mailing, surveys were mailed to school principals for distribution in teachers’ mail boxes. The procedure for maintaining data in a locked file at the researcher’s residence for the number of years (3-5) as specified through IRB guidelines was followed in this study; all data will be destroyed through shredding at the end of the required period.

Data Analysis

Survey questions were categorized to coincide with the research questions and hypotheses in preparation for analyses. Descriptive statistics were utilized for demographic variables and competency ratings related to the scales of preparation to perform the activity (transition preparedness), satisfaction with training (transition satisfaction), and frequency of performing transition activities (transition frequency). These statistics indicated the frequencies, means, and standard deviations for the demographic variables, the independent variables (teaching experience, satisfaction with training, and preparedness [self-efficacy]), and the dependent variables (preparedness [self-efficacy] and transition performance).
Research Question 1 (What is the level of self-efficacy of special education teachers toward their capabilities to plan and deliver transition services to students with mild and moderate disabilities?) was analyzed from responses to 46 survey items divided in six categories. These items required respondents to reflect on their transition training to indicate their level of preparedness to perform practices in the following categories: instructional planning, curriculum and instruction, transition planning, assessment, and collaboration. The stem of the survey question for response to the 46 survey items for Research Question 2 (How satisfied are special education teachers with the training they received in developing and delivering transition services to students with disabilities?) required that respondents identify their level of satisfaction with this training. Similarly, for Research Question 3 (What is the frequency of special education teachers’ engagement in transition practices) respondents identified on a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (frequently) how often they perform practices associated with each of the 46 items. The analyses for these questions were completed through descriptive statistics.

Three hypotheses were tested related to the research questions. The region of rejection was .05 or .01 for all hypotheses. H1 stated teachers’ perceptions of their level of transitioning preparedness have a significant relationship to their level of training satisfaction. The Pearson Product-Moment Coefficient (Pearson r) was the statistics used to establish if there was a relationship between the scores for preparedness in the seven transition planning areas and those of training satisfaction for these instructional areas.

According to research methodology authorities, Pearson r is an appropriate method for calculating a correlation coefficient when interval data are used and results in the most reliable estimate of correlation (Gay, et al., 2005). A +1.00 coefficient
represents a perfect positive correlation and a 0.00 is indicative that a relationship does not exist. The same statistics was used to determine if a relationship existed between perceptions of the level of transitioning preparedness for the instructional planning areas and frequency of transition activities performed for the second hypothesis. The hypothesis stated, teachers’ perceptions of their level of transitioning preparedness have a significant relationship to the frequency of transition activities performed.

Hypothesis 3 sought whether a relationship existed between instructional planning areas and performing transition activities. The hypothesis stated teachers’ perceptions of their level of training satisfaction have a significant relationship to the frequency of transition activities performed. In addition to employing Pearson r for the three hypotheses, data analysis was also facilitated through cross tabulating demographic variables included on the survey to the three scales examined in the study of transition preparedness, transition training satisfaction, and transition frequency of service implementation. Among demographic variables were type of certification, number of years as a special education teacher, type of preparation courses, number of transition courses taken, number of staff development hours attained, and grade level of students taught.

Summary

This study was designed to explore how a representative sample of special education teachers in Mississippi Delta Schools perceive their capability to plan and implement transition services for students with mild-moderate disabilities. Through a survey design, procedure in the study specifically examined how special education teachers in the Mississippi Delta perceive their preparedness to perform transition
activities, their satisfaction with training, and the frequency that they perform transition activities as a part of their daily routine. This chapter presented the research design, a description of the target population, the instrumentation used to collect data, and the statistical test used to determine if a significant relationship was found among variables identified in three hypotheses.
CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS OF DATA

The motivation for this study was based on the impact of IDEA and research linking the serious challenge for transitioning student with disabilities from high school to post school activities (Babbitt & White, 2002; Beresford, 2004; Morningstar & Clark, 2003; Ochs & Roessler, 2001; Shandra & Hogan, 2008; Sinclair, et al., 2005; Wagner, et al., 2005; Wehman, 2006). Current researchers such as Hoy and Spero (2005), Romi and Leyser (2006), and Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007), drawing on the 1986 research findings of Ashton and Webb (1986), continue to suggest that poor outcomes for students with disabilities are the result of special education teachers’ perceptions of their ability to plan and deliver transition services to students with disabilities. In addition, the research links poor planning and delivery of professional practices to the lack of successful performance of students with disabilities.

The intent of this research study was to examine how special education teachers in the Mississippi Delta distinguish their own level of transition preparedness, their satisfaction with transition training, and how often they apply transition competencies that insure successful student transition from school to post school activities. This chapter consists of a presentation of the results of the research. It begins with a restatement of the research questions and hypotheses of the study. Next, the collection method, compilation of data, and analysis of the Secondary Teachers Transition Survey are presented. The analysis is divided into three components: respondent demographics, research questions, and hypotheses. The correlation between teacher preparation, training satisfaction, and performance is examined in the hypotheses’ component.
Research Questions and Hypotheses

The study investigated three main research areas: (a) the level of self-efficacy of special education teachers concerning their ability to plan and implement transition to students with mild and moderate disabilities; (b) the level of satisfaction with education and district level training received in transition services development; and (c) the frequency of special education teachers’ engagement in transition practices. This researcher sought to answer specific research questions stated below and to test the corresponding hypotheses.

*Research Question 1*

What is the level of self-efficacy of special education teachers toward their capabilities to plan and deliver transition services to students with mild and moderate disabilities?

*Research Question 2*

How satisfied are special education teachers with the training they received in developing and delivering transition services to students with disabilities?

*Research Question 3*

What is the frequency of special education teachers’ engagement in transition practices?

*Hypothesis 1*

Teachers’ perceptions of their level of transitioning preparedness have a significant relationship to their level of training satisfaction.
Hypothesis 2

Teachers’ perceptions of their level of transitioning preparedness have a significant relationship to the frequency of transition activities performed.

Hypothesis 3

Teachers’ perceptions of their level of training satisfaction have a significant relationship to the frequency of transition activities performed.

Data Collection Procedures and Analysis of Demographics

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between teacher self-efficacy, teacher training, and the development and implementation of transition services for students with disabilities. To examine this relationship the study limited itself to secondary special education teachers in the Mississippi Delta. Using a roster of special education teachers provided by the Mississippi Department of Education, Division of Special Education, the researcher identified 446 Mississippi Delta special education teachers.

These teachers were invited to participate in the study through returning the completed survey to the researcher by mail in a stamped and addressed envelope. Informed consent was implied when the researcher received the completed survey by mail. Of the invited teachers, 191 responded representing school districts classified by the state as separate or municipal, county, or consolidated school districts located in 15 counties.

Sample Demographics

Section I, DSI’s 1 – 13 of the STTS (Appendix A) gathered information that described significant cultural and behavioral data. Respondents provided information by
checking applicable boxes to questions regarding school setting, education, experience, training, instructional assignments, and ethnicity. Completed surveys were tallied, placed in SPSS 18, and a descriptive analysis was run. Analyses of responses to Demographic Survey Items (DSI) especially pertinent to the purpose of the study and to implications for professional practice are shown in tabular form. For example, DSI 1 identified the type district for the participant’s teaching assignment, DSI’s 5, 6, and 7 referred to preparedness through college or professional development, and DSI 8 identified areas of certification. Information from other survey items associated with the tabular presentations is included in the discussions.

To illustrate the scope and number of special education assignments in the Mississippi Delta targeted for the study, Table 1 contains the number of Delta special education teachers and type of districts constituting the targeted population of the study.

Table 1

*Type Delta District and Total Teachers Targeted*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type District</th>
<th>$f$</th>
<th>Total Teachers</th>
<th>Teacher %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidated</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate/Municipal</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Mississippi Delta had a comparable number of county and separate/municipal school districts where the 446 special education teachers were employed. However, the majority \( (n = 331) \) of special education teachers employed represented county schools (MARS, 2008/2009). The number of responses delineating the type of community where respondents’ districts were located is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Frequency of Responses by District Location*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>( f )</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>167</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No responses</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority \( (n = 105) \) of responses came from teachers who indicated they worked in rural school districts. The respondents were females representing the following ethnic groups: African American \( (n = 86, 45\%) \), Asian American \( (n = 2, 1\%) \), Native American \( (n = 3, 1.6\%) \), Other \( (n = 6, 3.1\%) \), and White \( (n = 94, 49.2\%) \). In addition, responses to survey question 2 revealed that one respondent held a doctoral degree, nine held a specialist, while half of the respondents held either a master degree or a bachelor degree.
Information relevant to special education training is course training in transitioning. DSI 5 provided information related to this specific type training. The frequency (semester hours) of respondents engaging in this type course training in their undergraduate or graduate course of study is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Frequency of Transition Course Training*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training time</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 2 hours</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – 4 hours</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6 hours</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9+ hours</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of respondents indicated that they had not engaged in transition course training at either the undergraduate or graduate level. Table 3 reports both the number of training courses and course credit hours of respondents’ participation. The majority (n = 22; 33) of respondents who received training were trained for 1–2 semester
hours at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Computation of the average number
of respondents having received training resulted in 11 at the undergraduate level and 18
at the graduate level. DSI 6 pertained to transition hours through professional
development provided by the Department of Education or school district. Responses
revealed that 43% of 165 respondents had not engaged in professional development for
transition training; however, 31 respondents had engaged in 21 or more hours of
transition training. Matriculated collegiate courses are available for the designated
population to receive training in certification areas of special education.

The tracking of respondents’ coursework was provided through DSI 7. This item
revealed respondent demographics related to specific courses taken in special education.
The majority \( n = 100 \) of the respondents completed 21 or more courses in special
education. Responses indicated that these hours were associated with having completed a
degree in special education at either the undergraduate or the graduate level. The number
of courses taken in areas of special education is identified in Table 4. As indicated in
Table 4, 30 respondents had not completed any courses in special education.
Table 4

*Frequency of Special Education Course Training*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 –5 courses</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 –10 courses</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 courses</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 courses</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ courses</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>92.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DSI 8 pertained to the certification status of respondents. Respondents stated that their certification fell within the following perimeters: 85.9 % respondents were fully certified in their assigned teaching areas; 3.7% of respondents did not hold a valid certificate in their teaching assignments; 2.1% of respondents were provisional certified; 6.3% of respondents held emergency certifications; 2.1% of respondents did not hold a current teacher’s license. Table 5 presents the percentage of participants by certification type.
Table 5

*Type of Certification*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certification area</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General education</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>72.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood special ed.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary special education</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12 special education</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While 85.9% respondents were fully certified in their assigned teaching areas, over 14% of the teachers had certification issues. These issues included teachers holding provisional and emergency certifications, and certifications in fields outside of the teaching assignment. Also revealed in Table 5 is that the majority \((n = 138)\) of the respondents held a certificate for a special education generalist rather that a specialized area of special education.

The final demographics included in this section of the analysis refer to the type teaching assignments respondents held in special education and levels of students taught in courses assigned. Demographic Survey Items (DSI) 10-12 provided data for these demographics. Item 10 identified the category of students primarily taught (learning
disability; mental retardation; emotional/behavior disability; other). Table 6 is a summarization of the results of DSI 10.

Table 6

DSI 10: Categories of Students Taught

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning disability</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>70.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental retardation</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional/behavior</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>99.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evident from an examination of Table 6 is that most respondents (n = 134) taught students in the category of learning disability as defined in Chapter I. The next highest category (n = 25) of teaching assignments was mental retardation which refers to teaching children with sub average general intellectual functioning which originates during the developmental period and is associated with impairment in adaptive behavior.

Responses to DSI 11 and 12 inquired of the grade levels of students taught and where the majority of the day teaching was spent. Table 7 summarizes the responses.
Table 7

*DSI 11–12: Categories of Grade Levels Taught and Types of Class Settings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>$f$</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>53.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>191</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self contained</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GED classroom</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting services</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>191</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses to DSI 11 that inquired of the grade levels of students taught revealed the majority of respondents ($n = 103$) taught children with disabilities at the high school level. The middle school level followed for the next highest level where respondents taught. Also, revealed in Table 7 is that the majority of respondents spent the day teaching in a self-contained special education classroom.
Analysis of Research Questions

Section II, items 1–46 of the STTS, a list of statements grouped in six categories, asked respondents to indicate how they felt about their level of preparation, their satisfaction with the training itself, and their implementation of training. Response ratings to preparation items ranged from 1 (unprepared) to 4 (prepared). Items for the satisfaction items were rated from 1 (unsatisfied) to 4 (satisfied) and the implementation ratings ranged from 1 (never) to 4 (frequently). Instructional Planning, the first category contained items 1–8; the second category was Curriculum and Instruction, items 9–18; followed by Transition Planning, 19–25, Assessment, 26–31, Collaboration, 32–40, and ending with Additional Competencies, 41–46. The researcher tabulated the responses from the 46 items, uploaded them in the SPSS 18 database, and ran descriptive statistics.

Research Question 1

The study investigated three research questions, with the first question referencing the level of self-efficacy of special education teachers toward their capabilities to plan and deliver transition services to students with mild and moderate disabilities. Data for the research question resulted from responses to survey items 1-46 organized into six categories. Directions for responding to items in these categories required respondents to reflect on their transition training to rate their level of preparedness (self-efficacy) to perform practices in each category. Respondents rated items using a four-point Likert scale: 1 (unprepared), 2 (somewhat unprepared), 3 (somewhat prepared), and 4 (prepared). Data were analyzed through descriptive statistics by examining the frequencies and percentages for each survey item in each category. Table 8 represents respondents’ beliefs in their preparedness for instructional planning on eight items.
Table 8

*Frequency of Instructional Planning Preparedness Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Prepared</th>
<th>Unprepared</th>
<th>Somewhat Prepared</th>
<th>Somewhat Unprepared</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$f$</td>
<td>$%$</td>
<td>$f$</td>
<td>$%$</td>
<td>$f$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know models</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environments</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-school</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job sites</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use models</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>191</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $N = 191$.

As shown in Table 8 respondents’ responses to the transition item (develop transition programs based on outcomes) represented the highest rating, Level 4 (*prepared*), among all items. The support item (knowing how to support students in taking state and district assessments, $n = 50$) was the second item representing the highest level of preparedness but also generated the highest number of responses ($n = 35$) for
Level 1 (*unpreparedness*). The greatest frequency (*n* = 91) for Level 3 (*somewhat preparedness*) was environments (modify work and community environments to accommodate youth with disabilities).

Curriculum preparedness was measured through items 9–18 of the STTS. The overall stem providing the directions for the 10 items was stated, “Thinking of your transition training, how prepared do you feel to perform the following practice?” Respondents checked the same four-point response type to this category as the previous category. According to items checked, respondents’ level of self-efficacy toward their capability to perform several activities in the curriculum and instruction category was Level 4 (*preparedness*). The majority of responding respondents indicated preparedness to teach the career awareness skills (*n* = 132 of 187), use a variety of behavior management strategies (*n* = 118 of 190), provide community-based instruction (*n* = 108 of 189), and use instructional and assistive technology in academic, work, and community environments (*n* = 112 of 190). These activities also received high frequencies of responses for Level 3 (*somewhat prepared*). Table 9 summarizes the statistics for curriculum and instruction preparedness.
Table 9

*Frequency of Curriculum and Instruction Preparedness Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Prepared</th>
<th>Unprepared</th>
<th>Somewhat Prepared</th>
<th>Somewhat Unprepared</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapt curric.</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodate</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-advocacy</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily living</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job skills</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use technology</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 191.
The data in Table 9 reflect a sense of preparedness concerning curriculum and instruction from the majority of respondents. As shown, the highest number of responses indicating unpreparedness (Level 1) in this category was for teaching job skills which was identified by employers as critical for successful employment \((n = 12)\). Frequencies for responses for transition planning appear in Table 10.

**Table 10**

*Frequency of Transition Planning Preparedness Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Prepared</th>
<th>Unprepared</th>
<th>Somewhat Prepared</th>
<th>Somewhat Unprepared</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>(%)</td>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>(%)</td>
<td>(f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDEA</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involve</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Align</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistive</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \(N = 191\).

Responses revealed that respondents felt somewhat prepared to deliver activities related to transition planning. This category generated more responses from the sample
than any other categories. Responses at Level 4 (*preparedness*) were highest for including instructional and assistive technology into IEP (\(n = 139\)), developing transition outcomes using interest and preferences of the student (\(n = 113\)), and knowledge about IDEA requirements for developing transition IEPs (\(n = 104\)). Table 11 presents frequencies for the assessment preparedness items.

Table 11

*Frequency of Assessment Preparedness Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Prepared</th>
<th>Unprepared</th>
<th>Somewhat Prepared</th>
<th>Somewhat Unprepared</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply result</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use method</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match skills</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpret</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop Technology</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology assessment</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: \(N = 191\).
The statistics reported in Table 11 show that respondents felt better prepared to apply results of student assessments to transition plans \( (n = 54) \) than other activities in the assessment category. Tables 12–13 contain statistics for the collaboration and additional competencies preparedness categories.

Table 12

*Frequency of Collaboration Preparedness Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Prepared</th>
<th>Unprepared</th>
<th>Somewhat Prepared</th>
<th>Somewhat Unprepared</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( f )</td>
<td>( % )</td>
<td>( f )</td>
<td>( % )</td>
<td>( f )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agencies</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaming</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \( N = 191 \).
According to responses presented in Table 12, respondents felt more prepared to develop and provide transition-related resources \((n = 71)\) than other collaboration activities. More respondents felt unprepared \((n = 62)\) to use transitioning planning strategies that facilitate input from team members than to perform the other activities. The results of responses show that for almost every category, the frequency of preparedness for “resources” was much greater than the frequency for all other items. The additional competencies category presented in Table 13.

Table 13

*Frequency of Additional Competencies Preparedness Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Prepared f</th>
<th>Unprepared f</th>
<th>Somewhat Prepared f</th>
<th>Somewhat Unprepared f</th>
<th>Total f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>services</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The finding for the collaboration category that preparedness for one item far exceeds those of other items is similar for the results shown for additional competencies in Table 13. The frequencies reported in Table 13 confirm that more respondents found they were prepared for understanding different family beliefs, values, and practices \((n = 107)\) than in other areas. Evaluating the quality of transition services generated the highest number of responses \((n = 34)\) for unprepared.

The statistical analyses for Research Question 1 were also derived from an examination of the mean and standard deviation scores for each of the categories. Mean scores were equated to the scale descriptions which provided the level of preparedness. The analysis found that the level of preparedness for four categories was 3 (somewhat prepared). These categories were (a) instructional planning; (b) curriculum and instruction; (c) transition planning; and (d) additional competencies. The category, additional competencies, had activity items representing Levels 2 and 3, but through rounding the means, the end result was Level 3. Level 2 (somewhat unprepared) was found for two categories: (a) assessment, and (b) collaboration.

A review of Table 14 reveals that in the category of instructional planning alone, the majority of respondents perceived they had an average level of preparedness. An average of the means reported in the table revealed that the overall level of preparedness for the category of instructional planning was 2.7 (somewhat prepared). Responses showed a higher level of preparedness for developing transition programs based on outcomes, whereas less preparedness was for identifying post-school services and programs for students with disabilities. Table 14 contains the mean and standard deviation scores for self-efficacy perceptions for instructional planning.
Table 14

Means for Instructional Planning Preparedness Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Models</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post school</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job sites</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use models</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 191. NR = no responses.

Similarly, frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations for the remaining five categories of capabilities for this research question were calculated. Calculations identified the levels of preparedness for each item in the six categories: Instructional Planning, Curriculum and Instruction, Transition Planning, Assessment, Collaboration, and Additional Competencies. Table 15 contains the statistics for curriculum and instruction.
Table 15

*MMeans for Curriculum and Instruction Preparedness Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>(f)</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adapt</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach skills</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily living</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job skills</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \(N = 191\). NR = no responses.

As shown in Table 15, respondents indicated that the highest level of preparedness was for career (teach career awareness skills, \(M = 3.7\)) in the curriculum and instruction category. All mean scores revealed that respondents rated their level of preparedness as *somewhat prepared* with the categories of career and manage (use a variety of behavior management strategies) approaching level 4 (*prepared*). Table 16 displays means for transition planning.
Table 16

*Means for Transition Planning Preparedness Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IDEA</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involve</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Align</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistive</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 191. NR = no responses.

In the category of transition planning the majority of the respondents felt *somewhat prepared* as visible in Table 16. In addition, the majority of respondents felt *somewhat prepared* using assistive technology in an IEP. The mean score for the assistive technology item was 3.6. Table 17 contains means for assessment activities.
Table 17

*Means for Assessment Preparedness Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apply result</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use method</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match skills</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpret</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology assessment</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 191. NR = no responses.*

Respondents, as chronicled in Table 17 stated that they felt *somewhat unprepared* in their capabilities to plan and deliver transition services for the assessment category. The highest mean for an assessment activity was for apply result (apply results of student assessments to transition plans, M = 2.9) which approached the level for *somewhat prepared* for the majority (n = 187) of the respondents on this item. The means for collaboration activities are reported in Table 18.
The mean scores reported in Table 18 showed that teaming or planning with team members for transition that encourages full participation in the community and developing and providing transition-related resources to others received a mean rating of 3 (*somewhat prepared*). However, the overall mean scores for other items in this category indicated that respondents felt they were *somewhat unprepared* (Level 2) to conduct the collaboration activities. Table 19 contains means for the final category of activities, additional competencies.
Respondents indicated they felt somewhat prepared for the activities associated with beliefs (understand different family beliefs, values, and practice, M = 3.4) than for other activities. Findings showed that respondents were somewhat prepared or nearly somewhat prepared to plan and deliver transition services to students with mild and moderate disabilities for the six categories of activities. A review of the descriptive statistics for this research question showed that the highest frequency of responses for Level 4 (prepared) for all categories was found for transition planning on the item, including instructional and assistive technology into IEP (n = 139). Similarly, the highest frequency of responses for Level 1 (unprepared) for all six categories was found in

Table 19

Means for Additional Competencies Preparedness Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 191. NR = no responses.
collaboration for the item, *use transition planning strategies that facilitate input from team members (n = 62)*.

**Research Question 2**

This question asked, “How satisfied are special education teachers with the training they received in developing and delivering transition services to students with disabilities?” The analysis also used descriptive statistics for 46 satisfactory survey items in the second column of the instrument. Mean scores were used to determine the extent of satisfaction based on a four-point scale ranging from 1 (*unsatisfied*), 2 (*somewhat unsatisfied*), 3 (*somewhat satisfied*), 4 (*satisfied*) for six categories of activities. Calculations of means showed that three categories were identified as Level 2 (*somewhat unsatisfied*) and three were Level 3 (*somewhat satisfied*). The results of each category are reported in the tables to follow.

Table 20 contains means for instructional planning. Responses to activity items in Table 20 reveal that respondents were *somewhat unsatisfied* (Level 2) with their training for developing and delivering transition services for the activities associated with instructional planning. The means range from 2.4 for the transition item (*develop transition programs based on outcomes*) to 3.3 for the program item (*selecting appropriate vocational education programs*). The highest frequency for *satisfaction* (Level 4) on instructional planning was 96 for the item programs (*selecting appropriate vocational education programs*).
Table 20

*Means for Instructional Planning Satisfaction Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>(f)</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Models</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post school</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job sites</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use models</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \(N = 191\). NR = no responses.

Table 21 contains results for curriculum and instruction. The curriculum category contained 10 items where a low mean of 2.6 was found for community (*provide community-based instruction*). The highest mean score was 3.5 on the item modify (accommodations and modifications to instructional activities). Seven of the items showed that respondents were *somewhat satisfied* with their training (Level 3) and were approaching the *somewhat satisfied* level on three other items. An average of mean scores showed the overall level of satisfaction was Level 3 (*somewhat satisfied*).
Table 21

*Means for Curriculum and Instruction Satisfaction Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>$f$</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adapt</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach skills</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily living</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job skills</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $N = 191$. NR = no responses.

Table 22 contains means and standard deviation scores based on responses to items for transition planning. The means for the seven-item transition training category ranged from 3.1 goals (*developing IEPs that transition goals and objectives*) to 3.6 meeting (*coordinating IEP meetings with all transition related team members*).
Table 22

Means for Transition Planning Satisfaction Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>$f$</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IDEA</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involve</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Align</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistive</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 191. NR = no responses.

Transition planning items knowledge about IDEA requirements for developing transition IEPs ($n = 133$), and coordinating IEP meetings with transition team members ($n = 131$) had the highest frequency of Level 4 (satisfaction) responses. Mean scores show that respondents were somewhat satisfied (Level 3) with training for this category of activities. Table 23 provides statistics reporting differences in the average responses on six items. Additionally reported is how much deviation from the means occurred in those responses for each item in the assessment category.
Six items in the assessment category yielded the lowest means of all categories. These items were (a) apply results of student assessments to transition plans; (b) use a variety of formal and informal career and transition assessment methods; (c) match job skills and interest with jobs or vocational programs; (d) interpret results of transition assessments for students, families, and other professionals; (e) develop accommodations and modifications for state and district testing; and (f) conduct assistive technology.

Mean scores ranged from 2.4 for technology (conducting assistive technology assessments) to 2.8 for applying results of student assessments to transition plans. Items in Table 23 revealed that responding participants registered a somewhat unsatisfied level
(Level 2) of satisfaction with assessment training for developing and delivering transition services. Table 24 shows the frequency of responses, the means, and standard deviations for collaboration.

Table 24

*Means for Collaboration Satisfaction Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agencies</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaming</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 191. NR = no responses.

Collaboration training contained nine items with means ranging from 2.3 for agencies (working with outside agencies to identify and provide community services) to 2.8 for methods (knowing about methods to increase transition services through interagency agreements and planning). The level of training satisfaction indicated for the
collaboration category was 2 (somewhat unsatisfied). The final training category, additional competencies, items 41-46 is reported in Table 25.

Table 25

*Means for Additional Competencies Satisfaction Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>$f$</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up services</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate services</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $N = 191$. NR = no responses.

Table 25 contains six items with means from 2.4 (evaluating quality of transition services) to 3.2 beliefs (understanding different family beliefs, values, and practices).

Overall, averaging the means for this category resulted in the satisfaction level of Level 3 (somewhat satisfied). The belief item showed a satisfaction level of 3 (somewhat satisfied). Additionally, the competencies of promoting cultural responsiveness in transition planning and encouraging parent participation in order to foster transition outcomes that support families’ cultures approached Level 3.
Research Question 3

This question was posed as, “What is the frequency of special education teachers’ engagement in transition practices?” Responses in the third column of the survey were used to address this question. Respondents were asked to indicate how often they perform transition-activity practices. Responses were organized on a four-point scale representing 1 (never), 2 (almost never), 3 (sometimes), and 4 (frequently). The frequency of respondents employing transition practices was reflective of six categories included on the survey: instructional planning (eight items), curriculum and instruction (10 items), transition planning (seven items), assessment (six items), collaboration (nine items), and additional competencies (six items). The frequencies and means for the six categories were analyzed to determine the level for frequency of conducting activities.

Respondents indicated they employed the practice between almost never and sometimes. The average mean for instructional planning was 2.7 where standard deviations scores ranged from .95–1.1, averaging a distance of .64 from the averaged combined means. The average means for the other categories were: (a) curriculum and instruction (2.9); (b) transition planning (3.3); (c) assessment (2.8); (d) collaboration (2.3); and (e) additional competencies (2.4). Standard deviations found furthest from the mean were for the categories collaboration and additional competencies (sd = 1.1). These means show that one category of activities, transition planning, was implemented sometimes. Two categories, collaboration and additional competencies, were almost never implemented. Included in Table 26 are frequencies of no responses; all respondents replied to the items for identifying post school services and knowledge about supporting
students in taking state and district assessments. The means and standard deviations for these and other items appear in Table 27.

Table 26

Means for Instructional Planning Performance Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Models</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post school</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job sites</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use models</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 191. NR = no responses

The similarity of means reported in Table 26 show that respondents approached the level of sometimes (2.8) in performing these activities. Little deviation from the mean existed for the majority of items. Data included in the table indicate that respondents felt stronger in the ability to modify work and community environments to accommodate youth with disabilities. Likewise, respondents felt less strong in selecting appropriate vocational programs and practices. Table 27 contains means and standard deviations for performance items in curriculum and instruction.
Table 27

Means for Curriculum and Instruction Performance Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>$f$</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adapt</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach skills</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily living</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job skills</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $N = 191$. NR = no responses.

An average of the means reported in Table 27 for curriculum and instruction performance show that respondents completed activities at Level 3 (*sometimes*). The highest number ($n = 89$ of 181) of respondents indicating Level 4 (*frequently performed*) on items in this category was for adapting or altering the general curriculum for disabilities which generated a mean of 3.1. Although responses to the item, teach daily living skills resulted in a mean score of 3.0, this item had the highest number ($n = 31$ of 181) of respondents who indicated they never performed an activity in this category. The
analyses of data for this research question through descriptive statistics were conducted on the remaining categories for performance of activities. The analyses of mean scores revealed that the most frequent activities performed, with little deviation from the mean for items, were in the category of transition planning and appear in Table 28.

Table 28

*Means for Transition Planning Performance Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>$f$</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IDEA</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involve</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Align</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistive</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $N = 191$. NR = no responses.

An average mean score of 3.0 for transition performance items reported in Table 28 shows that the overall frequency level for performing transition planning activities was *sometimes* or Level 3 for the majority of respondents. Descriptive statistics performed revealed that three items in the category had means of 3.5 or above that were important to respondents’ performance in applying their training to the transition needs of students. Important also is that the statistics reveal similarity in responses as the standard
deviations showed that the average distance from each item score was not far from the mean; less than one standard deviation. Table 29 is a report of means and standard deviations for items in the assessment performance category.

Table 29

Means for Assessment Performance Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apply result</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use method</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match skills</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpret</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assessment</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 191. NR = no responses.

Calculations of the means for items in the assessment category revealed that three of the assessment activities received a Level 2 (*almost never*) performance level and three received a Level 3 (*sometimes*). The low means for the items, technology (*conduct assistive technology assessments*) and develop (accommodations and modifications for state and district testing) reflect the performance activities where more than 30% of the responses to these items indicated respondents never performed the transition activity.
The means above 3.0 can be interpreted from an item analysis of frequencies for each of
the four-point choices which showed activities where some respondents indicated
*frequently performed* (Level 4). For example, the item, apply results of student
assessments to transition plans had Level 4 (*frequently*) responses for most respondents.
Similarly, many respondents indicated Level 4 (*frequently*) for the item match job skills
and interest with jobs or vocational programs.

The statistics showing the means and standard deviations for collaboration are
reported in Table 30. According to mean scores reported in Table 30, respondents *almost
never* (Level 2) performed activities in the collaboration category. The descriptive
statistical analysis resulted in a mean of 2.6 for the item; *know about methods to increase
transition services through interagency agreements and planning*. The mean resulted
from the highest frequency (*n* = 41 of 184) of respondents indicating *frequently*
performing (Level 4) an activity in the collaboration category. Similarly, the lowest mean
score of 2.0 was a result of the analysis showing that of 184 respondents, 78 of them
never performed the activity *provide information to families about transition services and
post-school options*. 
The final category, additional competences, is presented in Table 31 which describes the frequency of responses in terms of means and standard deviations. As seen in Table 31, the highest means were found on the items *research (refer to transition outcomes research as a resource)* and *beliefs (understand different family beliefs, values, and practice)*. Calculations of descriptive statistics included the frequency of responses to each of the four-point items. The research item had 46 of 188 responses identified as Level 4 (*frequently*) for performing the activity.
The data extrapolated from responses revealed that 56 of 188 participants never performed the activity *evaluate the quality of transition services*. Likewise, 54 of 187 participants never completed the *participate* activity (*encouraged parent participation in order to foster transition outcomes that support families’ cultures*) which was one of two items with a mean score (2.3), the lowest of all those reported for the additional competencies category. This mean was also found for the item *evaluate the quality of transition services*. The standard deviation of 1.0 or 1.1 on each item shows little variation in the distance of the item scores from the mean. Data in Table 31 show that respondents were very similar in their responses which indicated they felt the frequency level of their performance for additional competencies was *almost never*.

Table 31

*Means for Additional Competencies Performance Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate services</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 191. NR = no responses.
Test of Hypotheses

The data presented in this section were used to test three hypotheses of the study. The hypotheses concerning transition training were found to be statistically significant. The results of the statistical analysis are reported for each hypothesis.

_Hypothesis 1_

Teachers’ perceptions of their level of transitioning preparedness have a significant relationship to their level of training satisfaction was tested using the Pearson \( r \) for significance on all survey items. The Pearson Correlation indicated a significant correlation between all seven categories of transition preparedness. Table 32 contains the results of the Pearson Correlation (two-tailed) for the seven measures.

_Table 32_

**Correlation of Transition Preparedness and Transition Training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P-Measure</th>
<th>T-Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. IDEA</td>
<td>566**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Meeting</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Involve</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Outcome</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Goals</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Align</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Assistive</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. P-Measure = preparedness; T-Measure = training. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \( p < .001 \).
Results of the Pearson Correlation presented in Table 32 show that all measures listed for preparedness and training satisfaction were significant. The range of coefficients ($r = .275 - .614$, $p = .01$) found for items supported acceptance of Hypothesis 1; a significant relationship exists between the perceptions of teacher transitioning preparedness and the level of training satisfaction. Further support of the hypothesis was found through examining preparedness and training for items in each of the remaining categories. Table 33 reveals that similar findings resulted in the correlations between preparedness and training satisfaction for the remaining five categories.

Table 33

*Correlations of Preparedness Categories and Training Survey Items*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P-Category</th>
<th>T- Survey Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional planning</td>
<td>.486 .742 .501 455 .433 .431 .461 .248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>.661 .704 .609 .802 .771 .571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>.564 .596 .552 .612 .633 .498 .645 .637 .488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competencies</td>
<td>.405 .530 .482 .682 .622 .529</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 191. P- Category = preparedness; T-Survey items = training. * Correlations significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) except $r = .080, p < .01.$

Table 33 indicates that all survey items except for Item 5 in Curriculum and Instruction were statistically significant when preparedness items were correlated with training items within each category. For Item 5, provide community-based instruction,
only 64 of 186 participants responding to the item indicated that they frequently performed the activity. Strong correlations were consistent throughout the assessment category items. Additional analyses of all categories of the survey examined the relationship between preparedness/ training satisfaction and the frequency of engagement in transition activities. The results of the Pearson Correlation conducted for these measures are addressed in the hypotheses to follow.

**Hypothesis 2**

Teachers’ perceptions of their level of transitioning preparedness have a significant relationship to the frequency of transition activities performed. Data for the hypothesis were taken from responses to column one of the survey for preparedness and column three, frequency of engagement in transition activities. Responses to items were arranged on a Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*unsatisfied*) to 4 (*satisfied*). Data for H2 relied on responses to seven items related to transition planning preparedness and performance of transition services. The Pearson $r$ was used to test for significance. Table 34 contains the results of the correlation for each of the seven items for the category.
Table 34

*Correlation of Transition Planning Preparedness and Performance Activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P-Measure</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. IDEA</td>
<td>.453**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Meeting</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.403**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Involve</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.260**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Outcome</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.352**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Goals</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.403**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Align</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.254**</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Assistive</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.346**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* P-Measure = preparedness; T-Measure = performance. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). $p < .001$.

Results of the Pearson Correlation illustrate that all measures listed for preparedness and performance were significant. The range of coefficients ($r = .260 - .453$, $p = .01$) found for the items supported acceptance of the hypothesis that a significant relationship exists between the perceptions of teacher transitioning preparedness and the frequency of performing transition activities. Coefficients found through cross referencing all other categories for preparedness and performance were significant at either .01 or .05 and ranged from .182 (competencies) to .923 (collaboration).
Hypothesis 3

Teachers’ perceptions of their level of training satisfaction have a significant relationship to the frequency of transition activities performed. Data from the second and third columns of the survey (satisfaction; performance) were used applying the Pearson r Correlation. The category of instructional planning for these two columns was specific to training for and performance of transition activities. Instructional planning items 1–8 were used for the correlation between training satisfaction and frequency of performance. Table 35 contains the results of the Pearson Correlation (two-tailed) for the eight measures.

Table 35

Correlation of Instructional Planning Training Satisfaction and Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITS-Measure</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Model</td>
<td>.253**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Environment</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.198**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Post school</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.594**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Programs</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>499**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Job sites</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.360**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Support</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.486**</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Use model</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.479**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Vocational</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.160*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ITS-Measure = training satisfaction. P = performance frequency ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). *p < .05. ** p < .001.
Based on computations for the range of coefficients \((r = .160 - .594, p = .05; 01)\), the hypothesis was accepted that a significant relationship exists between the perceptions of teacher training satisfaction and the frequency of performing transition activities. Training satisfaction items correlated with frequency of performance items were statistically significant \((p = .01; .05)\) except for the curriculum and instruction item, *use instructional and assistive technology in academic, work, and community environments* \((r = .089)\). The range of coefficients for the other categories was the following: assessment \((r = .277 - .577)\); collaboration \((r = .598 - .747)\); competencies \((r = .536 - .808)\); transition training \((r = .183 - .696)\); and curriculum training \((r = .150 - .358)\).

**Summary**

This chapter has presented findings from the analyses of data for three research questions and hypotheses. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were useful in identifying areas where respondents perceived they least or most frequently engaged in transition activities. These statistics revealed that very few of the 191 respondents indicated that they *frequently* conducted the transition services identified on the questionnaire. The mean scores found for Research Question 1 indicated that respondents were *somewhat prepared* in four transition categories and *somewhat unprepared* in two categories. Similarly, findings for Research Question 2 revealed they were *somewhat unsatisfied* with their training in three transition categories and *somewhat satisfied* in three other categories.

Research Question 3 revealed that respondents implemented activities associated with transition planning *sometimes*; those associated with collaboration and additional competencies were *almost never* implemented; and the frequency of implementing
activities related to instructional planning, curriculum and instruction, and assessment was near the level for *sometimes*. The analyses for the three hypotheses revealed statistically significant relationships between respondents’ perceptions of their level of preparedness, satisfaction with training, and the frequency they engage in performing transition activities. A discussion of the implications of the findings appears in Chapter V.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY

Access to public school education and other services for individuals with special needs is required by federal legislation. This legislation, Public Law 94-142, was influenced by the demands of parents, advocates, and organizations such as the RFK Center for Research in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities established through the efforts of the Rose F. Kennedy family (Associated Press, 2005).

Amendments to the law not only require access to a free and appropriate education, but now emphasize that students with special needs be prepared for employment, additional schooling, or independent living. Thus, special educators are called upon to provide transition training for these individuals that will help them adjust to the world of work or to live more independently as adults.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook (2004-2005), the special education teacher is responsible for assisting in the development of Individual Education Programs (IEP). The IEP sets personalized goals which are tailored to the individualized learning style and abilities of the students. A transition plan is a component of the IEP in which the specific steps are outlined to prepare students with disabilities for adult life (IDEA, 2006). The special educator’s role in transition planning and implementation includes teaming with parents, the student, and agencies; encouraging parent participation to foster transition outcomes; providing information to families about transition services and post-school options; and conducting assistive technology assessments. Successful completion of these and other responsibilities has implications for the certification of the special educator, the
transition training received, and the self-efficacy of the special educator to complete transition related activities.

Among recurring questions in the transition literature is the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and special educators performing transition activities. This literature suggests that the level and frequency of performance in transition planning is based on teachers’ perceptions of their capabilities and performance in carrying out effective transition meetings and programs for special education students seeking to move on from high school to college or work (Lubbers, et al., 2008; Myklebust & Batevik, 2005). It was with this in mind that this study was implemented to examine the relationship between preparedness, training, and performance based on the perceptions of special education teachers about their roles in transition planning and implementation. This chapter presents a summary of the study, data provided in Chapter IV, and links the findings to the relevant literature discussed in Chapter II. Discussions of the study’s limitations and recommendations for professional practice and future research are also included. The chapter ends with a summary statement that provides an overall perspective based on the study for stakeholders in the arena of transitioning for special needs learners.

Summary of the Study

This study set out to investigate the attendant problems of special education students transitioning from school to adult life and the ancillary reasons students with disabilities continue to lag behind their peers without disabilities in post high school activities (NCD, 2000; Ochs & Roessler, 2001). In so doing, the investigation relied on studying capabilities of the special education teacher as a possible factor for students lagging behind. The investigation was guided by implications in the transition literature
of a linkage between student outcomes and teachers’ perceptions of their capabilities to engage in effective transition planning. Therefore, this investigation studied the impact of special education teachers’ perception of their level of transition preparedness, their satisfaction with transition training, and how they apply transition competencies in their daily work to their effectiveness in completing transition activities.

A quantitative research design for the descriptive study was used employing a cross-sectional survey strategy. The Secondary Teachers Transition Survey (STTS) created by Benitez and Morningstar (2009) was used to collect data from elementary, middle, and high school special education teachers located in rural and urban settings of the Mississippi Delta. Of the invited teachers, 191 female special education teachers responded. Descriptive statistics and correlations were run through SPSS 18 to respond to three research questions and hypotheses for the variables preparedness, training, and performance; five types of demographics were used as predictor variables. The Pearson Product-Moment Coefficient (Pearson r) was used to establish significance between variables for three hypotheses at the .05 level of rejection.

Summary of Findings

Research Question 1

*What is the level of self-efficacy of special education teachers toward their capabilities to plan and deliver transition services to students with mild and moderate disabilities?* Findings showed that respondents were *somewhat prepared* or nearly somewhat prepared to plan and deliver transition services to students with mild and moderate disabilities for the six categories of activities. They were *somewhat prepared* (Level 3) in (a) instructional planning; (b) curriculum and instruction; (c) transition
planning; and (d) additional competencies. Respondents were somewhat unprepared (Level 2) for activities in assessment and collaboration.

Research Question 2

How satisfied are special education teachers with the training they received in developing and delivering transition services to students with disabilities? Calculations of means showed that respondents were somewhat unsatisfied with training received in instructional planning, assessment, and collaboration. They were somewhat satisfied in their training for curriculum and instruction, transition planning, and additional competencies.

Research Question 3

What is the frequency of special education teachers’ engagement in transition practices? Respondents implemented activities associated with transition planning sometimes (Level 3). Activities associated with collaboration and additional competencies were almost never (Level 2) implemented. The frequency of implementing activities related to instructional planning, curriculum and instruction, and assessment was near the level for sometimes (Level 3).

Hypothesis 1

Teachers’ perceptions of their level of transitioning preparedness have a significant relationship to their level of training satisfaction. That a significant relationship exists between the perceptions of teacher transitioning preparedness and the level of training satisfaction was evident from the range of coefficients found ($r = .275 - .614, p = .01$); therefore, Hypothesis 1 was accepted.
Hypothesis 2

Teachers’ perceptions of their level of transitioning preparedness have a significant relationship to the frequency of transition activities performed. The range of coefficients \( r = .260 - .453, p = .01 \) found for the items supported acceptance of the hypothesis that a significant relationship exists between the perceptions of teacher transitioning preparedness and the frequency of performing transition activities.

Hypothesis 3

Teachers’ perceptions of their level of training satisfaction have a significant relationship to the frequency of transition activities performed. Based on computations that identified the range of coefficients \( r = .160 - .594, p = .05; .01 \), the hypothesis was accepted that a significant relationship exists between the perceptions of teacher training satisfaction and the frequency of performing transition activities.

Discussion of Findings and Implications

This investigation resulted in several findings of the self-efficacy of special education teachers and their perceptions of transition training and performance. Self-efficacy was used synonymously with preparedness. Responses to questions aimed at discovering the level of preparedness for instructional planning, curriculum and instruction, transition planning, assessment, collaboration, and additional competencies showed that the overall preparedness level for elements of curriculum and instruction far exceeded any of the other categories. Positive self-efficacy was also found for elements of all categories; however, overall self-efficacy or preparedness was not a frequent occurrence for most practices. On a four-point scale where 4 represented prepared, the load for preparedness ranged from 2 (somewhat unprepared) to 3 (somewhat prepared).
Among the most positive feelings of preparedness were (a) providing accommodations and modifications to instructional activities; (b) teaching self-advocacy and self-determination skills; (c) using a variety of behavior management strategies; (d) teaching career awareness skills; (e) including instructional and assistive technology into IEP (for transition planning); and (f) understanding different family beliefs, values, and practice.

Findings for preparedness (self-efficacy) also revealed areas where respondents felt unprepared and somewhat unprepared. The assessment category contained the highest responses for unpreparedness with the most unprepared skills identified as conducting assistive technology assessments and developing accommodations and modifications for state and district testing. Higher levels for unpreparedness throughout all categories were (a) identifying post-school services and programs for students with disabilities; (b) using transition planning strategies that facilitate input from team members; (c) participating in community level strategic planning for transition services; and (d) knowing methods to increase transition services through interagency agreements and planning; (e) participating in community level strategic planning for transition services; (f) using transition planning strategies that facilitate input from team members; and (g) evaluating the quality of transition services.

These findings support claims of other researchers that some special education teachers do not perceive that they are prepared to deliver transition and other services (Blanchett, 2001; Knott & Asselin, 1999; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003). Results of the study are directly aligned with findings of Benitez, Morningstar, and Frey (2009) who examined teachers’ perceptions of their level of proficiencies in transition services. Similar to the current study, Benitez et al. (2009) found positive relationships between
preparedness, training, and frequency of engagement in transition activities. Their findings suggested that teachers’ perception of self-efficacy in transitioning planning is a determining factor in the special educator’s competence to deliver these services.

Somewhat contrary to Morningstar and Kleinhammer-Tramil’s (2005) documentation that special educators were not entirely ready to deliver the services to students with disabilities mandated under IDEA, respondents in the current study perceived they were well prepared regarding IDEA requirements for developing transition IEPs. Further, respondents showed high levels of preparedness for the delivery of services in the area of curriculum and instruction. Overall, however, respondents did not consistently demonstrate high levels of preparedness.

Other studies also suggested that teachers had a fundamental understanding of the transition procedure; however, did not feel prepared to plan and provide transition services to students with disabilities (Blanchett, 2001; Knott & Asselin, 1999; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003). Findings of this study support that the preparedness knowledge level regarding IDEA requirements are consistent with the just mentioned researchers. In contrast to the latter part of the researchers’ observation, responses to the transition planning preparedness items differed. Responses revealed that the majority of respondents felt they were prepared or somewhat prepared to develop transition programs based on outcomes and to use different models of transition programs and practices.

This study’s findings relied in part on respondents’ demographics. These demographics included years teaching, the amount of transition training in undergraduate and graduate courses, the amount of transition training through staff development, and the number of special education courses taken. Carlson et al. (2004) used some of these
same variables in a study of teacher quality involving factor analyses and found that experience emerged as a strong teacher quality factor for special education teachers. However, in this study respondents’ engagement in transition training through staff development more frequently than through college courses was evident from all types of analyses performed. These findings suggest that the quality of special educators preparing for transition activities would be dependent upon the number of training hours completed. Transition preparedness was significantly related to the level of training satisfaction. These finding regarding transition training through staff development further support the assertion that school districts need to provide training.

Consistent with findings in the literature, respondents did not register maximum satisfaction with their transition training. Research reveals that some trained teachers indicate that their personnel training programs did not deal with specific knowledge and skills essential to teaching such as overseeing paraprofessionals, making use of professional literature to address teaching concerns, and teaming up with general education teachers (Carlson, et al., 2002). Respondents also indicated they were not satisfied with training for referring to transition outcomes research as a resource or knowing how to use transition to follow-up studies.

Researchers further conclude that poor teacher efficacy is revealed through teachers’ perceptions of performance in such areas as teaching in inclusive settings, guiding students to develop self-determination, and developing appropriate IEPs (Wasburn-Moses, 2005; Winter, 2006). More respondents in the current study found dissatisfaction with training for teaching self-advocacy and self-determination skills than those who were satisfied. Respondents were highly satisfied with training related to
knowledge of IDEA requirements for developing transition IEPs but less satisfied with training for developing IEPs that transition goals and objectives and that align with state and local academic standards. A great deal of consistency exists between the self-efficacy findings in the current study and in previous studies including those of Prater et al. (2000). These researchers concluded that the preponderance of secondary special educators lack self-assurance in their abilities to address the transition desires of their students.

Researchers have illuminated the need for schools and school districts to provide extended training to special educators given the ever changing dynamics for meeting the needs of children with disabilities as well as to assist in the development of skills that may not have been addressed through their training (Anderson, et al., 2003). The frequency that respondents indicated unsatisfied and somewhat unsatisfied levels regarding elements of their training provides examples for the need of school districts providing opportunities to expand the knowledge base of special educators. For example, high numbers of responses indicating these levels occurred for such training as modifying work and community environments to accommodate youth with disabilities; identifying post-school services and programs; developing transition programs based on outcomes; matching job skills and interest with jobs or vocational programs, and collaborating with families in transition goal setting.

This study’s findings regarding transition training through staff development further support the assertion that school districts need to provide training. Respondents’ engagement in transition training through staff development more frequently than through college courses was evident from all types of analyses performed. Additionally,
given that IDEA was amended in 1997 to not only allow disabled students access to a free and appropriate education (FAPE), but to prepare them for employment and independent living, the need for continuous training through employing agencies is evident. This preparedness is termed transition preparedness which involves the delivery of activities that will permit the special education student to engage in services at other educational levels and for real world living. Demographic analyses suggest that this preparedness through college training was not available as most respondents completed degrees with several hours in special education but few in transition training.

The frequency of respondents completing transition activities was significantly correlated with preparedness and training in this study. Similar to findings of the dependent variables investigated, Benitez et al. (2009) reported that participants in their study were somewhat satisfied with training provided in teacher preparation programs and somewhat prepared for the delivery of transition services. However, participants were found to occasionally engage in the delivery of transition activities for students with disabilities. These services included coordinating services with other educators and providing services to students in inclusive settings.

Studies revealed that inclusion is poorly addressed in some teacher training programs, and as a result, too many teachers still have doubts about their ability to teach special education students in inclusive settings (Winter, 2006). Likewise, few respondents in the current study developed and provided transition-related resources. This was also true for providing case management during transition by coordinating with others, and interpreting results of transition assessments for students, families, and other professionals.
The research literature reveals that teacher practice in transition planning and the transition process as a whole is at variance with best practice (Lubbers, et al., 2008; Martin, et al., 2006; Wagner & Davis, 2006). Generally, findings from studies indicate that most teachers are aware of a gap between theory and practice and that they will require more training in order to truly help special education students in transition (Held, et al., 2004; Lee-Tarver, 2004; Neubart, 2003). Similarities in the findings of previous and the current study suggest the need for preparation programs to determine why practicing professionals register only somewhat satisfaction with training and what actions are necessary to enhance skills for the provision of transition activities.

Findings from this investigation have additional implications supportive of other research findings. Researchers suggest the existence of a persistent and dismal outcome for students with disabilities as they transition to post-secondary activities (Blanchett, 2001; Sinclair, et al., 2005). Bandura (2000) has attributed teacher self-efficacy as a factor in student outcomes. Correlations presented in this study between preparedness, teacher training, and teacher performance along with correlations between these variables and demographics (i.e., experience, training) support that how respondents feel about their ability to perform has some influence on their performance. These findings imply the need for preventive and corrective actions among teacher training programs and school districts to better ensure that students with disabilities are able to transition to further study or job placement.

The study showed that performance is also influenced by formal and extended training through professional development opportunities. Washurn-Moses (2006) reported that the overall results of a study of teacher transition performance indicated that
many high school transition programs continue to fail due to lack of coordination. The researcher concluded that efforts must be made to help teachers and personnel from outside agencies collaborate more effectively. Given that performance in coordinating case management was not frequently completed and only done sometimes, this finding illustrates the need for extended training in the coordination of transition programs.

Collaboration with families is also emphasized in the literature. Eckes and Ochoa (2005) argued that there is a missing link in the transition of secondary to postsecondary education. These researchers concluded that secondary schools and parents need to work together to ensure students are empowered through developing self-advocacy skills. Responses to the survey in the current study showed across the three outcome variables that collaboration was an area in need of attention. Additionally, respondents showed less than frequent in their teaching both self-advocacy and self-determination skills. Other activities closely allied to self-advocacy where performance was low were teaching daily living skills, career awareness skills, and planning for transition that encourages full participation in the community.

Limitations

The conduct of the study acknowledged that the individual characteristics of respondents may pose a threat to internal validity. These characteristics included the level and nature of training. This threat was decreased through providing the population of special educators at the middle and high school levels the opportunity to participate. This selection process provided an equal chance for the inclusion of respondents with varying characteristics. The number of respondents was also recognized as a possible limitation. An inadequate number of respondents in the sampling pool to allow valid inferences to be
drawn that could be generalized to the population would pose a threat to the validity of the results. Procedures followed in view of this limitation included identifying a large sampling pool and employing follow up methods to secure responses.

Recommendations

*Policy or Practice*

The successful transition of special education students to other educational levels, college, or work remains a concern in the teaching profession. The results of the study showed that transition training through college courses did not occur for 126 respondents at the undergraduate level and 113 at the graduate level. Further, only 82 of the respondents were trained through school districts. These findings suggest a need for teacher training programs to include appropriate transition courses at both levels that provide special educators the requisite skills for guiding the transitioning process.

Further, school districts and training programs (including alternate route programs) should consider initiating or enhancing the coordination of services for transition planning.

The literature supports the existence of gaps in the provision of transition services between students, families, and agencies. Further, perceptions of respondents in this study demonstrate the lack of preparedness, training, and performance in conducting services that require coordination and collaboration. The accountability for these services rests with the district and teaching personnel. Therefore, recommended is that districts engage in an annual needs assessment that involves identifying the type of training teachers have completed for transition planning, the type professional development
available through local and state agencies, and the availability of resources through agencies that can augment the transition of students.

Teacher shortage and the location of schools impact the quantity and quality of teachers available for instructional services including special education. The creation of networks to support the exchange of information among highly qualified teachers and nationally certified special educators may assist in enhancing opportunities for teachers to acquire knowledge about transition planning. These networks may include the provision of video recorded teaching episodes where viewers can engage in debriefing discussions of the instructional piece. Instituting mentoring programs for teachers that permit them to also make visits to schools known to have successful transition programs is suggested.

Providing incentives to attract teachers to teacher shortage areas is also recommended. These incentives would require collaboration among city or town leaders and planners, school leaders, and to address improving the demographics of the area. Such conditions as the quality of schools, the type industry or jobs available, cultural attractions, and amusement centers will need to be considered for some areas as in the site of the study, the Mississippi Delta.

**Future Study**

This survey research was beneficial for acquiring data from large samples. However, more meaningful information about the transition practices of special educators and their needs may result through qualitative research. A follow-up of this study in the form of a case study using interviews and observations is recommended. Additional information for understanding participants’ responses could also occur through conducting a multiple regression on the data included in the current study. Through this
data analysis procedure areas of emphases that resulted in the percentages and means for responses to the questionnaire items would be identified.

Further study of transition planning training through surveying teacher training programs and school districts’ professional development programs would assist in identifying gaps between training and real world practice. Associated with the purpose of this type study would be to create a training model that integrates best practice among colleges, school districts, and professional societies for the delivery of transition instruction.

Additional research is recommended for specifically addressing the concern and lack of fully certified teachers in special education. A study where percentages of certified teachers for special students are compared with those of non-special needs students may offer additional insight as to barriers for positive outcomes of students enrolled in special education. Through such research additional information regarding factors contributing to the shortage of fully certified teachers in both urban and rural locations may be revealed.

Conclusion

This study was based on a sample of 191 elementary, middle, and high school teachers in rural and urban settings. The majority of the respondents represented high school teachers who were certified in special education. The perceptions of their capabilities to plan and deliver transition services mirrored the findings of other studies reported in the literature review and in the discussion of findings. These findings imply the continuous need for attention to the training of special educators through teacher training, alternate route, and local school district programs. The findings illustrate
specific areas of transition where training may be emphasized and show that the vast amount of exposure to transition training among respondents was through opportunities provided in school districts. Despite the areas calling for additional training, clearly illustrated was that completing a special education program and some transition training did not equate to positive self-efficacy for performing transition activities.

These findings appear to support that increasing the self-efficacy of special education teachers may improve student transition outcomes. Revealed through the results is that when confidence in the ability to perform a transition task is lacking, the task is either not completed or completed with less effectiveness. The theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1999) posits that all individuals attain skills or knowledge throughout life of which they are not aware. However, for individuals who are given the occasion or proper condition, a consciousness of this aptitude surfaces. Based on this reasoning, special education teachers who take the essential course work on how to prepare students of this population for transition into post high school activities have the knowledge and skills to perform the tasks. The question for all stakeholders in transitioning students is why some teachers perceive themselves not to be efficient enough to perform what they have been trained to do (Blanchett, 2001).

Given the results of this study, some teachers may find that their training was not sufficient to enable them to feel effective in the delivery of transition services. The obvious response here would be to assess their training needs and provide instructional enhancement. What about teachers who are satisfied with their training and still have reservations about delivering transitioning activities? Since research suggests that what teachers' believe about their capability is a strong predictor of teacher effectiveness,
perhaps the piece missing from preparation and professional development programs is attention to developing self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Gibson & Dembo, 1984) is based on two distinct beliefs: (a) particular behaviors will lead to desired outcomes; and (b) individuals have the requisite skills to bring about the desired outcome. Therefore, training in how the teacher can develop a positive stance on the ability to perform effectively may be just as important as training in the what, how, and when to deliver transition activities. The challenge may be in finding the training keys to facilitate the development of teacher self-efficacy in transition planning and activities.
This survey is being administered to gain valuable information about the way teachers feel about how they plan and deliver transition services to students with disabilities. This survey is intended to evaluate your perception of your own transition competencies and transition training, not to evaluate your instructional capabilities as a teacher. It is for research purposes only, and will be kept completely confidential. Thank you for your cooperation and the valuable information you provide by completing and returning this survey.

Please complete the following demographic information. Check the boxes that apply to your current professional role. If you are not currently working with special education students, please check the first box and return the survey.

☐ I am NOT a special educator (If applicable, check this box and return the survey).
☐ I am a special educator (e.g., teacher, transition specialist).

(1) In what type of community setting do you teach? Check all that apply
☐ Urban  ☐ Rural

(2) What is your highest degree obtained?
☐ Bachelor’s Degree  ☐ Doctoral Degree
☐ Master’s Degree  ☐ Other________

(3) Are you currently working toward another degree?
☐ No  ☐ Yes If yes, what degree?______

(4) How many total years have you been teaching?___________

(5) How many transition course(s) have you taken that meet the following criteria?

A Transition course is a course taken at the graduate or undergraduate level that specifically covered content related to transition. Transition courses would typically be semester long (fall, spring, summer) at the graduate or undergraduate level. A summer workshop for college credit would count as a course. This would be different that a workshop for staff development credit.

Please add up the total number of courses you have taken and record a specific number. Estimate if you do not recall the specific number of transition courses.
• Total transition undergraduate courses______________________________
• Total transition graduate courses______________________________

(6) Based on the criteria below, how many transition staff Development hours have you completed? ______

(7) How many special education course hours have you completed? ____

(8) What is your current licensure/certification status?
   □ Fully certified for current teaching assignment
   □ Certified in a field other than what I am teaching
   □ Provisionally certified
   □ Emergency certified
   □ Not certified, currently working toward certification or recertification
   □ Not certified, not working toward certification or recertification

(9) What type of licensure/certification do you have? Check all that apply
   □ General Education (please list type of certification):________
   □ Special Education
   □ Early Childhood Special Education
   □ Secondary Special Education
   □ K-12 Special Education (7-12)
   □ Other:____________________

(10) In your present position, which category of students do you Primarily teach?
    □ Learning Disability    □ Emotional/Behavior Disability
Mental Retardation

Other: ____________________

(11) What is the grade level of students with disabilities you primarily serve? Check all that apply

☐ Elementary School
☐ High School
☐ Middle School
☐ Other (please specify) ________

(12) Where do you primarily serve students with disabilities? (e.g., where do you spend the majority of your day teaching)

☐ Special School

☐ Self-Contained Special Education Classroom (serve students in Classroom for majority of the day)

☐ Resource Room

☐ Consulting Services (e.g., general ed. Classroom, transition Services etc.)

☐ Co-teaching in General Education Classroom

☐ Other: __________________________

(13) How would you describe your race/ethnicity?

☐ American Indian or Native American (persons having origins in any or the original peoples of North America and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition)

☐ Asian or Asian American (persons having origins in any people Of the Pacific Islands, the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian continent. This includes Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Philippines, Samoa, China, India, etc.)

☐ Black or African American (not of Hispanic origin) (persons Having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa)
White (not of Hispanic origin) (person-having origins in any of The original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East.)

Hispanic or Latino (a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Or Central or South American, or Spanish culture or origin Regardless of race)

Other________________________________________

The column on the left represents transition activities statements. Please complete the three columns on the right by circling.

(1) How prepared you are to perform the activity:
   1 (Unprepared), 2 (Somewhat unprepared), 3 (Somewhat prepared), 4 (Prepared)

(2) How satisfied you are with your training:
   1 (Unsatisfied), 2 (Somewhat unsatisfied), 3 (Somewhat satisfied), 4 (Satisfied)

(3) How frequently you perform the transition activity in your daily professional routine:
   1 (Never), 2 (Almost never), 3 (Sometimes), 4 (Frequently)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Planning</th>
<th>Reflecting on your transition training, how prepared do you think you are to perform the following practices?</th>
<th>How satisfied are you with this training?</th>
<th>How often do you perform this practice?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UnPrep  Prep</td>
<td>UnSatis  Satis</td>
<td>Never  Freq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1  Know about and use different models of transition programs and practices</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Modify work and community environments to accommodate youth with disabilities</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Identify post-school services and programs for students with disabilities</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Develop transition programs based on outcomes</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Identify potential job sites</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Know how to support students in taking state &amp; district assessments</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Know about and use different models of transition programs and practices</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Select appropriate vocational education programs for students</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  Adapt or alter the general curriculum for disabilities</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Provide accommodations &amp; modifications to instructional activities for students</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Teach self-advocacy and self-determination skills</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use a variety of behavior management strategies</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Provide community-based instruction</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Teach career awareness skills</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Teach daily living skills</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Teach vocational and work related skills</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Teach job skills identified by employers as critical for successful employment</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Use instructional and assistive technology in academic, work and community environments</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Transition Planning</td>
<td>Reflecting on your transition, training, how prepared do you feel you are to perform the following practice?</td>
<td>How satisfied are you with this training?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UnPrep Prep</td>
<td>UnSatis Satis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Know about IDEA requirements for developing transition IEPs</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Coordinate IEP meetings with all transition related team members</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Involve students, parents, and families in IEP and transition planning meetings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Develop transition outcomes using interest and preferences of the student</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Develop IEPs that transition goals and objectives</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Develop IEPs that align with state and local academic standards</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Include instructional and assistive technology into IEP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reflecting on you transition, training, how prepared do you feel to perform the following practice?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UnPrep Prep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How satisfied are you with this training?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UnSatis Satis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How often do you perform this practice?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Apply results of student assessments to transition plans</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Use a variety of formal and informal career and transition assessment methods</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Match job skills and interest with jobs or vocational programs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Interpret results of transition assessments for students, families, and other professionals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Develop accommodations and modifications for state and district testing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conduct assistive technology assessments</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reflecting on your transition, training, how prepared do you feel to implement the following practice?</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UnPrep Prep UnSatis Satis Never Freq</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Provide case management during transition by coordinating with others (e.g., students, parents, educators, service providers, employers)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Collaborate with families in transition goal setting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Work with outside agencies to identify and provide community services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Develop and provide transition-related resources and maintain to others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Plan with team members for transition that encourages full participation in the community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Provide information to families about transition services and post-school options</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Know about methods to increase transition services through interagency agreements and planning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competency Description</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Participate in community level strategic planning for transition services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Use transition planning strategies that facilitate input from team members</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additional Competencies</td>
<td>UnPrep</td>
<td>Prep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Understand different family beliefs values, and practice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Promote cultural responsiveness in transition planning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Encourage parent participation in order to foster transition outcomes that support families cultures</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Refer to transition outcomes research as a resource</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Know how to use transition to follow-up studies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Evaluate the quality of transition services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hi Vickie, thanks for considering the use of our assessment instrument for your research. Debra Benitez and I recently published an article about the STTS that can provide you with additional information related to your questions in your letter. If that is not sufficient, then Deb can probably send you additional information from her dissertation.


Please just properly cite the instrument if you choose to use it for your dissertation. Good luck and let us know if you have any further questions. MM
APPENDIX C
REQUEST TO SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Superintendent:

I am Vickie Curry, a doctoral candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi. As part of the requirements for the doctoral degree, I have proposed a research study to survey special education teachers to examine how special education teachers distinguish their own level of transition preparedness, their satisfaction with transition training, and how often they apply transition competencies in their daily work. The approved research project is entitled An Examination of the Perception of Special Education Teachers in the Mississippi Delta Toward Their Transition Competencies. This letter is a request for permission to conduct the study in your district during school year 2010-2011.

The results of the study are anticipated to provide special education teachers, school personnel, and teacher preparation program personnel information that may be useful in raising their awareness of the importance of self-efficacy and its potential relevance to student outcomes. I am requesting permission to conduct the research through using a survey. The survey data will facilitate answers for the following research questions: (a) What is the level of self-efficacy of special education teachers toward their capabilities to plan and deliver transition services to students with mild and moderate disabilities? (b) How satisfied are special education teachers with the training they received in developing and delivering transition services to students with disabilities? (c) What is the frequency of special education teachers’ engagement in transition practices?

Results of the study will have the potential for presenting useful data for decision making relative to the preparation needs of special educators and the enhancement of outcomes for students with disabilities. I am available for further explanations or questions regarding this request. In addition to contacting me through mail, I can be reached at XXX. Your most immediate response is needed. Your cooperation is truly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Vickie Curry
Doctoral Student
APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Institutional Review Board
118 College Drive #5147
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Tel: 601.266.6820
Fax: 601.266.5509
www.usm.edu/irb

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE
NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
- Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 10120202
PROJECT TITLE: An Examination of the Perception of Special Education Teachers in the Mississippi Delta Toward Their Transition Competencies
PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: 12/02/2010 to 12/01/2011
PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: Vickie E. Curry
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education & Psychology
DEPARTMENT: Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education
FUNDING AGENCY: N/A
HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: Exempt Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 01/20/2011 to 01/19/2012

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair

Date
APPENDIX E

PARTICIPATION LETTER

I am Vickie Curry, a doctoral student at The University of Southern Mississippi, and am completing a dissertation as a requirement for the degree. You have been asked to participate in the research study entitled, “An Examination of the Perception of Special Education Teachers in the Mississippi Delta Toward Their Transition Competencies.” You were selected to be a possible participant because you were identified as a current special education teacher in the Mississippi Delta. The study is designed in recognition of the importance of transition services to student outcomes. The purpose of the study is to examine how special education teachers perceive their own level of transition preparedness, their satisfaction with transition training, and how often they apply transition competencies in their daily work. This study will be significant in raising awareness among teachers, school administrators, and professional education trainers of the importance of self-efficacy and its potential relevance to student outcomes.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete the enclosed survey. You will respond to 46 items that elicit your opinions of your preparedness for conducting transition activities, your training, and the frequency that you complete transition services. This survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. There are no perceived risks associated with this study except possible discomfort for the time taken to complete the document; this risk is no more than minimal. There are no benefits for participating in this study. You will not receive any monetary compensation for completing the questionnaire. Information requested in this study is confidential and made known only in the form of aggregate data. Your returned survey will not carry any information that can identify you personally. Names of participants and the school will not appear in any document reporting this study. The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely and only the person who is conducting the study will have access to them. These records will be maintained for three to five years after the study is completed as required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and will then be shredded.

Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University as a student or employee or your employment at your school. If you decide to participate, you are free to refuse to answer any of the questions that make you uncomfortable. You can withdraw at any time without your relations with the University, job, benefits, etc., being affected. This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820. Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions, and received answers to your satisfaction prior to completing the survey. Your completed survey returned in the enclosed stamped envelope serves as your consent to voluntarily participate in the study. Please return the completed survey within five days and maintain a copy of this information for your records.

Thank you.
REFERENCES


Office of Special Education Program. (2001). *Twenty-third annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.*


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