LOOKING FOR SUCCESS: TRANSITION PLANNING FOR STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS IN THE STATE OF IOWA

By

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Dedicated to my family: my husband Carl, my son Evan, and my mother Janice Smith, without whose support and encouragement completing my Ph.D., would not have been possible. They all made huge sacrifices for me to follow this dream. A special thanks to my advisor, mentor, and friend, Dr. Anne Corn. Her confidence in my ability kept me motivated and sane throughout the process.

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DEFINITIONS

Competitive Employment

Competitive employment is a full-time or part-time job in the open labor market with competitive wages and responsibilities.

Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)

The ECC is a set of nine skill areas identified in the literature as critical for students with visual impairments: Career Education, Compensatory, Accessing Assistive Technology, Independent Living, Orientation and Mobility, Recreation and Leisure, Self-determination, Social Interaction, and visual efficiency.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

An IEP is a written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a meeting in accordance with SS 300.341-300.350 (300.340 [a]), *Federal Register*, March 12, 1999).

Individual Transition Plan (ITP)

An ITP is used by some school districts as a complementary document or is infused into the IEP for students who are 14 years or older to document transition services and activities. For purposes of this paper IEP and ITP will be used interchangeably.

Iowa Communication Network (ICN)

The ICN consists of 3,300 miles of fiber optic lines that allow full-motion interactive video sessions across Iowa.

Participating Agency

A participating agency is a State or local agency, other than the local education agency responsible for a student's education, that is financially and legally responsible for providing transition services to the student (300.340 [b], *Federal Register*, March 12, 1999).

Promising Practices

Promising practices are those strategies, activities, or approaches that have been shown through research and evaluation to be effective; also referred to as best or effective practices.

Quality Programs for Students with Visual Impairments (QPVI)

QPVI is a data-driven program-improvement process developed by Nancy Toelle to ensure quality programming and services for students with visual impairments.

Responsible Personnel

For purposes of this paper, responsible personnel are those listed on the IEP and/or family members, special educator, general educator, related service provider, administrator, student, vocational rehabilitation counselor, guidance counselor, or other pertinent personnel related to stated goals and outcomes for the student.

Transition

The Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) of 1990 defined transition services as "a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation."

The IDEA Amendments of 1997 defined transition planning as "a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability, designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, including instruction, related services, community experiences and the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation."

The *Federal Register* (1999) defined transition services as a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that: (a) Is designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated

employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; (b) is based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests; and (c) includes instruction, related services, community experience, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. Transition services for students with disabilities may be special education, if provided as specially designed instruction, or related services, if required to assist a student with a disability to benefit from special education.

Vocational Rehabilitation Agency

"A system of services (i.e., commission for the blind, blind services, and departments for the blind) that evaluates person, work, and work-related traits, resulting in optimal placement in employment (Moore & Wolffe, 1997)."

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Almost all students with disabilities encounter some problems as they make the transition from school to adult life. The National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS; Blackorby & Wagner, 1996) of students in special education tracked the outcomes of students with disabilities from 1985 to 1995. Results indicate that youth with disabilities were not employed, did not live independently, and were not enrolled in post-secondary educational placements at the same level as their non-disabled peers. Labor force participation rates for persons with disabilities increased in the 1980's, but little change has occurred since 1990 (USDE, 2001).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to review and document the three variables that appear to impact the employment rate of youth with disabilities: required skills, teacher quality, and transition planning. Although other barriers to employment have been identified, such as low motivation or the disincentive of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), this study did not gather that information.

Both the background and historical perspective for all three variables will be discussed.

This chapter will first include a discussion of the recent trends in employment. Second, national, state, and local outcome studies for persons with visual impairments will be reviewed, including perceived barriers to employment. Next, the background and historical information on the three variables that appear to impact employment for youth and adults with visual impairments during the secondary educational setting years will be discussed (i.e., required skills, teacher quality and transition planning). Last, a rationale will be presented for the in-depth review of transition planning as it relates to students with disabilities in general and, more specifically, for students with visual impairments.

Recent Trends in Employment

Futurework (1999) found that recent trends in employment have demonstrated the need for new and more technical skills. A few decades ago employers sought typists, switchboard operators, mimeograph repair technicians and keypunchers. Newspapers even had separate job listings for men and women. Today's want ads seek Webmasters, LAN operators, and desktop publishers. Many job seekers find their jobs on the Internet. We live in an

economy powered by technology, fueled by information, and driven by knowledge. Increased global competition will continue to affect the type of work being done in American work places by creating new high-skilled jobs and lessening the demand for low-skilled work. While many workers will continue to be in occupations that do not require a bachelor's degree, the best jobs will be those requiring education and training. In fact, the 20 occupations with the highest earnings all require at least a bachelor's degree. Occupations that require at least a college degree are growing twice as fast as those with less educational requirements (Futurework, 1999). In addition, the use of computers and the Internet in workplaces has become more pervasive and the functions performed using computers has dramatically increased.

Outcomes

The NLTS found the employment rate for youth with disabilities lagged significantly behind their non-disabled peers (57% vs. 69%, respectively) 3-5 years out of secondary educational setting (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). Recent findings from the second NLTS cohort (Wagner, Cameto, & Newman, 2003) indicated that more students with disabilities (15 to 17 year olds) had paid jobs outside the home (35.6 % vs. 39.6%, respectively) and tended to make more money (17.3% vs. 54.0 %, respectively) in 2001 compared to the first cohort in

1987. In addition, the same study revealed that youth with visual impairments were the only group of students (15 to 17 years of age) with disabilities to experience a significant decline in their overall rate of participation in extracurricular activities (57.5% vs. 44.2%, respectively) and had a decrease in percentage of students that were employed (22% vs. 16.7%, respectively) or currently working more than 16 hours per week (60.1% vs. 39.8%, respectively) compared to the earlier findings from the NLTS (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). In addition, they found that students with visual impairments had the largest gains in earnings for those youth with various disabilities who were working (+45.4%) compared to the findings from the 1986 cohort.

Blackorby and Wagner found that young adults with visual impairments experienced different challenges during their transition from school to work than did their non-disabled peers or those with other disabilities. In addition, they discovered that only 23.4% of students with visual impairments were competitively employed 2 years after secondary educational setting compared to 69% of all youth in general. The U.S. Labor Bureau (Associated Press, 1999) noted that, while the nation's overall unemployment rate neared a 29-year low of 4.3%, the level of joblessness among persons who were blind had remained stagnant for about a decade at 70%. The Bureau also estimated that most of the 30% of adults with visual impairments who were employed were under-employed in

relation to their qualifications.

Ongoing national studies were conducted by McMahon (2000; 2003) to determine the outcomes of students with visual impairments who had exited a special school program (schools for the blind). The Schools for the Blind Learning Outcome Project, conducted by McMahon (2003) compared the outcomes of cohort 1 (1997-1998) and cohort 2 (1999-2002). Both cohorts represented students with and without multiple disabilities (*N = 735*). Competitive and supported employment rates decreased between the two cohorts (18.7% vs. 10.1%, respectively; 13.1% vs. 9.3%, respectively) while placement in an adult disability training facility increased (20.6%vs 26.3%, respectively). Attendance in a 4-year college decreased (15.9% vs. 11.8%, respectively) but attendance in a 2-year college increased (13.1% vs. 14.8%, respectively). A significant negative change was found in the number of students with no placement after graduation between the two cohorts (12.1% vs. 22.2%, respectively).

Among the same cohorts of students with only a visual impairment, reported competitive employment rates decreased from 22% to 14.9% (compared to the 23% to 30% national employment rate). Supported employment rates decreased as well, from 3.4% to 2.4%, similar to the results for all students. At the same time all employment opportunities decreased, the number of students attending adult disability training programs increased from 6.8% to 11.0%. These

programs represented our vocational rehabilitation training opportunities, and whether these training opportunities would later result in increased employment was not explained. Additionally, attendance at a 4-year college decreased (23.7% vs. 20.9%, respectively) while attendance at 2-year colleges and other post-secondary placements increased slightly (23.7% vs. 23.9%, respectively; 6.8% vs. 6.9%, respectively). An increase in students with no placement at the time of graduation (13.6% vs. 20%, respectively) was similar to that of all students. It would appear that outcomes for students exiting a special school are actually decreasing, even for students with a vision-only diagnosis that typically should be more employable and attending post-secondary educational placements. These statistics should be an impetus to study further the skill level of exiting students, the quality of the teachers, and the quality of the transition planning at special schools to determine areas of concern related to these decreasing positive adult outcomes.

A search for statewide outcome studies produced minimal results, although follow-up studies have been identified as a promising practice within the area of transition. Follow-up studies are necessary to determine whether the current educational programming is sufficient to support positive adult outcomes. Oddo and Sitlington (2002) conducted a follow-up study with students (*N = 16*) who exited a special school, Iowa Braille School (IBS) between

1993 and 1995. Oddo serves as the transition coordinator at the special school and conducts follow-up studies on all exiting students. This research was based upon a similar follow-up study conducted by the Center for Social and Behavioral Research (1985) on a 10-year cohort of Iowa Braille School, which identified a 10% employment rate.

Oddo and Sitlington's research included a perceived rating scale for 6 of the 9 Expanded Core Curriculum content areas (see definitions). Instructors at Iowa Braille School were instructed to complete competency ratings in each of the areas for all students. Student interviews were conducted face to face or on the telephone. Oddo and Sitlington found that 69% of the participants (*n = 11*) were employed at the time of the study. Only 3 of the participants were unemployed and the other two respondents were full-time students in community college programs. Only 18% (*n = 2*) of the employed participants were making more than minimum wage, with most participants (*n = 8*) earning piece rates that ranged from $1.00 to $2.50. The researchers found that only one participant had attended a 4-year college, while all but two of the participants had received some training at the community college level.

While special schools for students with visual disabilities have embarked upon outcome studies (McMahon, 2000; Oddo Sitlington, 2002; Center for Social and Behavioral Research, 1985), local educational agencies have not engaged in

this process for students with visual impairments. To date there are no published data to compare the rate of employment of graduates and non-graduates of local public school programs with the national employment rate.

Blankenship (2000a) conducted an outcome study of students with visual impairments who had exited Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, in a major metropolitan area, within a 5-year period of time (1994-1999). Computer-generated databases were not available, but a hand review of closing reports for 5 years yielded a possible 34 participants. During the course of the year, 1 participant died and only 7 permission forms were submitted for inclusion, for a return rate of 21%. A guided survey was developed by the researcher and administered by telephone. The guided survey allowed the researcher to ask probing questions and clarify the questions for the participants. The instrument was designed to collect data on a correlation between student outcome and the services received during their secondary educational setting and possible predictors of employment, but the low return rate made generalization to other public school populations impossible. Results indicated that most participants were either in a training program or a post-secondary education setting ($n = 6$) and only one participant had engaged in competitive employment 3 to 5 years out of secondary educational setting.

Barriers to Employment

Two of the barriers to employment identified in research for youth with visual impairments are the attitude of employers and lack of transportation. Moore and Wolffe (1997) summarized a list of barriers that contributed to the under-representation of persons with visual disabilities in the labor market. These included negative attitudes of employers, lack of employment-related skills, and low motivation for employment (i.e., Supplemental Security Income). Another key barrier to employment cited by Corn and Sacks (1994) was the lack of transportation. The ability to access transportation is a common theme among research in the field of visual disabilities. A study by Sacks, Wolffe, and Tierney (1998) posited that, during the school year, parents and school personnel provide transportation for students with visual disabilities while sighted students walk, ride bikes, and drive themselves to school and other events. Corn and Sacks (1994) estimated from statistics found in the World Almanac in 1992 that approximately 67% of the 250,000,000 adolescents and adults in the United States drove cars. Inability to access transportation was cited by the respondents in the same study as the largest barrier to independent living.

Wolffe and Sacks (1997) found the range of employment opportunities was much narrower for students with visual impairments compared to their sighted peers. Although the employment figures for students with visual

impairments are very low, Blackorby and Wagner (1996) found that students with visual impairments were living independently (46.4% vs. 60%) and attending post-secondary educational placements (57% vs. 68%) at a rate closely comparable with their non-disabled peers. The concern remains that while these students are attending post-secondary placements in record numbers and graduating secondary educational settings with perceived skills to ensure that they are qualified employees, the employment rate is not reflective of their perceived potential and ability.

While these studies reveal the adult outcomes for students with disabilities, they do not provide much direction in what skills are actually needed for successful transition to the world of work. These skills, once identified, should provide the foundation for secondary educational setting programming. Those variables of required skills, teacher quality, and transition planning that appear necessary to ensure competitive employment for students with visual impairments are reviewed in the next section. Required skills are sometimes referred to as predictors and both terms will be used interchangeably.

Required Skills/Predictors

Competitive employment requires the student to have skills needed to be successful as well as the capacity to apply those skills in various situations. Many

predictors or skill areas can be associated with job performance, but the number one predictor within the general population was found to be a student's "g" or IQ (Hunter, 1986; Baehr & Orban, 1969). Hunter found that general cognitive ability had high validity in predicting performance ratings and training success in all jobs. Since learning the job is the key to job performance, and general cognitive ability predicts learning, it is to be expected that general cognitive ability is a key predictor of job performance. Blackorby and Wagner, (1996) found that youth with visual impairments had an average IQ higher than most students with an identified disability. Although Bradley-Johnson (1986) stated that the verbal scale of the WAIS-R was found to be an effective measurement tool for IQ in students with a visual impairment, Reid (1997) noted that relying solely on verbal assessment had its limitations and that at the time of his study no IQ tests had been established as reliable or valid for students with a visual impairment.

Other researchers have delved into school-based and work-based skills, not only for employment, but for post-secondary education as well. Benz, Yovanoff and Doren (1997) found that a series of school-based and work-based skills were related to higher rates of competitive employment for all students with disabilities, including those with visual disabilities. Students who exited secondary educational settings with work-based experiences and experiences

such as two or more work experiences during the last 2 years of secondary educational setting, were two to three times more likely to be competitively employed than were students without these experiences and skills. Students with disabilities, who exited a secondary educational setting with school-based skills such as high reading, writing, and math skills, were twice as likely to be competitively employed as were similar students with low academic skills.

Espin and Foegen (1996) found that students with disabilities were not as well prepared for class as their non-disabled peers; they completed fewer homework assignments, had lower work orientation, and higher rates of distractibility and off-task behavior than did their peers without disabilities. Compounding these skill and work-habit deficits, secondary students were faced with a demanding curriculum, no longer focused on the acquisition of basic skills but on the use of basic skills to acquire content knowledge.

As early as 1984, researchers such as Corn and Bishop found a disparity between students with visual disabilities and their sighted peers in the area of practical knowledge associated with personal, social, and occupational skills that are needed to live successfully in adult society. Corn and Bishop (1984) maintained that, if practical knowledge is an extension of the skills of a task, then practical knowledge in the areas of personal, occupational, and social competence should lead to functional living skills. Further, the authors stated

that because acquisition of many social and self-help skills relies heavily on vision, persons with visual disabilities may have difficulty modeling, imitating, and acquiring them.

The Social Network Pilot Project (SNPP) conducted by Wolffe and Sacks (1997) examined the academic involvement and performance, daily living and personal care activities, recreation and leisure activities, and work and vocational experiences for adolescents, ages 15 to 21, with visual disabilities. The intent of this study was to determine whether differences existed in these areas between adolescents with visual disabilities and their sighted peers. Students with visual disabilities required more support in their academic studies than did their sighted peers; homework assignments were less stringent, and many of the participants spent their time in passive activities when compared to their sighted peers. Wolffe and Sacks also found that, although vocational opportunities were available to the young adults with visual disabilities, professionals gave much more support to help these students obtain and maintain employment than they gave to the sighted young adults. The range of employment opportunities was found to be much narrower for students who are blind or have low vision than for their sighted peers. Furthermore, the sighted young adults recognized the value of work for pay and had specific goals for spending their money, whereas such goals seemed much more nebulous for the students with visual

impairments.

In a study of adults with visual impairments by Kirchner, Johnson, and Harkins (1997), two themes emerged as factors that supported employment: a need for literacy and skills for accessing transportation. Literacy was defined to cover reading and writing, using as appropriate, computers, closed circuit televisions, and low-vision aids; transportation skills were defined as cane travel and accessing public or private transportation.

Skills needed for employment present an additional challenge for students with visual impairments. Students with visual impairments require not only the skills that are obtained in most general education classes but skills identified in the ECC content areas as well (Hatlen, 1996). These skills are typically learned incidentally by sighted students but must be taught or facilitated for students with visual impairments. Many of the areas that are included in the ECC for students with visual impairments, such as functional academic skills, orientation and mobility, independent living skills, and career education have been identified by other researchers as skills that support employability. Teachers of students with visual impairments (TVIs) are responsible for the direct instruction in the content areas of the ECC (Hatlen, 1996). Researchers believe that students will achieve positive adult outcomes, including employment and a level of independence, if they are competent in these areas.

Teacher Quality

Over the past 20 years, research has emerged that shows a correlation between the quality of the teacher and student outcomes. In a Tennessee-based study, Sanders and Rivers (1996) found that the most effective teachers (i.e., efficacious, experienced, credentialed) produced the highest gains on standardized assessments for students who were low achieving and that these gains were consistent over a 2-year period of time. Similar results have been documented in other research (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ferguson, 1991; Fullan, 1982; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Moore & Esselman, 1992; Murnane, 1975; Ross, 1992; Rosenholtz, 1989; Turner & Camilli, 1988). These studies were conducted in regular education and it is unknown whether special education teachers such as TVIs needed similar practices, attitudes, attributes. In addition, the recent passage of No Child Left Behind in January of 2002 espouses the need for *highly qualified* teachers and effective instruction in order to increase student achievement. The parameters for *highly qualified* teachers and effective instruction have been set by the US Department of Education, but how each state interprets the regulations varies. A recent national survey conducted by Blankenship (2004) found that most states (*n* = 16) responded that *highly qualified* teachers and effective instruction had not been identified for students with visual impairments.

Similar research has been applied to improved achievement for low-income and minority students (Haycock, Jerald, & Huang, 2001; Lewis & Paik, 2001). Effective teachers have high levels of pedagogy (teaching skills to adjust to a variety of learning styles and abilities and engaging students in learning) and content knowledge (thorough understanding of the material and concepts).

These same attributes of quality teachers were applied to special educators. The Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education (SPeNSE), conducted by Westat (2002) was designed to describe the quality of personnel serving students with disabilities and the factors associated with workforce quality (i.e., working conditions). The study tested five teacher-quality factors (credentials, experience, professionalism, self-efficacy, and selected classroom practices) to determine whether similar teacher-quality study results would apply to special educators. The study included telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 358 local administrators and 8,061 service providers, including special and regular education teachers, speech-language pathologists, and special education paraprofessionals. Factor analysis was used in the initial data analysis and a second factor analysis was completed on the five variables in order to get one aggregated factor to measure quality teachers. A brief explanation and results of the five variables are presented below.

Experience. Positive relationships between teacher's experience and

student achievement at the individual, classroom, school, and district level were demonstrated by Ferguson (1991), Murnane (1975), Turner and Camilli (1988), and Wendling and Cohen (1980). Results indicated that students performed better as a result of having an experienced teacher and that those teachers with 3 to 5 years of experience were more effective than teachers with less than 3 years of experience.

Two variables were evaluated: years of teaching and years of teaching special education. The factor loading was very high and explained most of the variance. The SPeNSE (Westat, 2000) data showed that special educators averaged 14.3 years of teaching in 1999-2000; 12.3 of those years were spent teaching special education.

Credentials. Darling-Hammond (2000) found that the proportion of a state's teachers with full state certification and a major in their teaching field was a significant predictor of student achievement at the state level. In this study three variables were evaluated: level of certification (none, emergency, certified out of field, fully certified for position), number of fields in which teachers were certified, and highest degree earned. Level of certification appeared to be the most important of the three factors and the number of fields in which teachers were certified was the least important of the factors. SPeNSE data indicated that nationwide, 92% of special education teachers were fully certified for their main

teaching assignment. In addition, only 71% of teachers with fewer than 3 years of experience were fully certified for their positions, compared to 94% of those with 3 or more years of experience. Darling-Hammond found that most (59%) special education teachers had master's degrees compared to 49% of general education teachers.

Self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy has repeatedly predicted student achievement and other important student outcomes (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Moore & Esselman, 1992; Ross, 1992; Gibson & Dembo, 1984). In addition, research on school effectiveness designated efficacy as one of five school conditions related to improved student learning (Fullan, 1982). Rosenholtz (1989) also found that teacher's efficacy influenced students' basic skills and mastery. In the Rand Corporation's seminal research on school effectiveness, Berman and McLaughlin (1977) found that teacher efficacy was the single most consistent variable related to school success. The SPeNSE research evaluated three variables: (a) special education teacher's perceptions of their skill in completing a variety of tasks related to their work, such as using appropriate instructional techniques, managing behavior, monitoring student progress and adjusting instruction accordingly, and working with parents; (b) teachers' assessment of their overall performance as a teacher; and (c) the summarization of several items designed to measure teacher belief. The factor loadings for all three self-efficacy

variables were reasonably high.

Professionalism. Reading professional journals and belonging to professional associations may help teachers stay abreast of developments in the field and promote a sense of community among educators. Professionalism is seen as a proxy for attitudinal differences among educators, such as professional identity, commitment to teaching, or an orientation toward life-long learning. Three variables were evaluated as part of the SPeNSE project; the number of professional journals teachers read regularly, the number of professional associations to which they belonged, and the number of times per month that colleagues asked them for professional advice. Schmoker (2004) identified the effectiveness of communities of practice to advance the knowledge and professionalism of teachers. Benefits of communities of practice were also identified by Wagner (2003) as outcome based, collaborative in nature, and recipes for success.

The three variables were found to have more or less equal factor loading; their variance was largely unexplained. In addition, SPeNSE found that the typical special education teacher read one professional journal on a regular basis and belonged to one professional association. While professional activities emerged as a strong factor in their study, no research has been identified to support or refute the theory that professionals with higher levels of

professionalism have better rates of student achievement.

Selected classroom practices. Classroom practices are basic to teacher quality because interactions between teachers and their students directly affect student achievement. SPeNSE researchers relied on self-reports of classroom practices that might impact student achievement. They gave particular attention to five instructional areas that included facilitating transition to the next environment: reading, managing behavior, teaching English language learners, and promoting inclusion. Unfortunately for this study an analysis of facilitation of secondary transition was not conducted, as it was inappropriate for a majority of the participants (i.e., elementary or middle school teachers). Four variables were evaluated. Three of them were scale scores for the frequency with which special education teachers reported using specified best practices in teaching reading, managing behavior, and promoting inclusion. The fourth was a variable on the extent to which teachers individualized reading instruction. The reading scale and the inclusion scale had reasonable factor loadings. The other variables, although significant, had small factor loadings.

In an attempt to derive a single measure of teacher quality, SPeNSE researchers conducted a second-order factor analysis in which the first-order factors were combined to generate a single teacher-quality factor. In the aggregate teacher-quality measure, professionalism was the most important

factor, followed by self-efficacy. The other three variables measured were almost equal, with moderate factor loadings. It is assumed that this research would be applicable to the factors and variables that would indicate quality teaching for a teacher of students with visual impairments, with the possible exclusion of selected classroom practices since most TVIs are not reading instructors per se. Analysis of transition facilitation would have produced a comparable classroom practice for purposes of this paper and thus will be evaluated as a separate variable known as transition planning.

Effective Teaching Strategies

In addition to hiring quality teachers, many school districts are engaged in professional staff development in research-based instructional strategies. Research by Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) examined research-based instructional strategies that could be used in any content area to improve student achievement. The researchers postulate that there were three areas of classroom pedagogy that effected student achievement: research-based instructional strategies, classroom management techniques used by teachers, and curricula designed by the teacher to meet the needs of identified students. These classroom pedagogies have not been applied to the instruction provided by disability-specific teachers such as teachers of students with visual impairments

(TVIs).

Though these studies identified possible skills required for competitive and supported employment and the need for quality teachers, they did not tie such aspects of education as curriculum, work experiences, and additional required skills, such as those found in the ECC, to these outcomes. These same variables needed for positive student outcomes would be applicable to the population of students with visual impairments, taking into account the disability-specific skills noted. The vehicle used during the secondary educational setting years to ensure that all of the above skill areas are assessed and addressed is transition planning and the transition Individualized Educational Program (IEP).

Transition Planning

Transition planning is the vehicle used during the secondary educational setting years to ensure that students have the skills and coursework needed to achieve their chosen outcomes in the post secondary educational years. The writers of IDEA envisioned transition planning as the vehicle to assist youth with disabilities to achieve employment and positive adult outcomes that would include a level of independence. The federal government and researchers believe that if educators adhere to the requirements and intent of this legislation

(promising practices), students with disabilities would be able to obtain positive adult outcomes.

McAfee and Greenawalt (2001a, 2001b, 2001c) found that the courts have ruled that the appropriateness of the transition IEP may be the most important and complicated legal issue of the transition process. The courts have stated that an appropriate transition IEP must: (a) meet state and federal criteria (b) identify all areas of need through a thorough transition evaluation (c) reflect the evaluation, and (d) address all the areas of potential need. An incomplete IEP was found to be an inappropriate IEP. Furthermore, non-specific goals and objectives have resulted in the award of compensatory education to the student. In the court case entitled *Mason City School District (1994)* as cited by McAfee & Greenawalt (2001c) transition services for a student with severe disabilities were not initiated until 2 years before the planned graduation. Furthermore, the IEP was inadequate because it did not detail the specific responsibilities of the school or the vocational rehabilitation agency. The IEP also did not reflect consideration of all areas required by IDEA. The court ruled that transition services must be planned and initiated in sufficient time to have the desired impact. In another case *Marshall County Board of Education* (1997) as cited by McAfee and Greenawalt (2001b), the courts ruled that denial of transition services was a denial of "free appropriate education" and that transition services were an integral part of an

appropriate education.

The notion of transition implies movement from one situation to another. Critical and not-so-critical transitions are part of everyday life for all individuals (Patton & Dunn, 1998). Specific transition planning activities are federally mandated for only two of the many possible transitions that children and youth with disabilities experience. A transition plan is required for children at 3 years of age who are on the individual family service plan (IFSP) and are transitioning from Part C to Part B (school-based services) and for students aged 14 or older with disabilities who are served under an IEP. For purposes of this paper, the transition for adolescents aged 14 or older will be reviewed.

Successful transition for students to a post-secondary institute was identified as a benefit of guidance counseling in the National Standards for School Counseling Programs (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). Additional identified benefits for students in secondary educational settings were the development of self-determination skills, exploration of interests and abilities, and preparing students for the challenges of the 21st century through academic, career, and personal social development. Furthermore, career development is one of the three goals identified for all school counseling programs. All of these benefits would address the skills needed by students to transition successfully to the next environment. School counseling programs have provided vocational counseling

for nearly 100 years (Gysbers & Henderson, 1994) and are critical partners in the transition process.

The history of transition planning can be traced to Public Law 90-199, *Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1983* (EHA). This legislation introduced the federal government's initiative to address the needs of youth transitioning from secondary educational setting to the world of work. In 1983, Madeline Will, then Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), created a position paper on the need for transition services and planning (Will, 1983).

Seven years later, the reauthorization of the Education of the Handicapped Act (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 or IDEA) included transition services in the legislative language. IDEA of 1990 defined transition services as "a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation."

The 1990 regulations required that the IEP, beginning for students no later than age 16 (and at a younger age, if appropriate), include a statement of needed transition services, including, if appropriate, a statement of each participating

agency's responsibilities or linkages before the student left the school setting. Additionally, the law called for IEP teams to obtain knowledge regarding the purpose of transition services, identify the transition services needed by the student, and develop a statement describing those services (Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities Program and Preschool Grants; Final rule, 1999). About the same time the 1990 regulations were created, Rothstein and Miles (1995) found that special education funding had increased dramatically from 1961 to 1991 (4% vs. 17% respectively). In 1991 special education received 38% of the new K-12 monies set aside for education. Most of the new monies were spent on transportation and the use of paraprofessionals, not additional professionals, even though many new transition requirements were expected of educational professionals with this new legislation.

The 1997 regulations (IDEA, 1997) specified that the statement of needed transition services must address instruction, community experiences, development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. The regulations required further that if the IEP team determined that services were not needed in these areas of instruction, the team must explain the rationale for that decision. Additionally, if the student or the participating agency representative failed to attend the meeting, steps had to be taken to ensure that

the student's preferences and interests were considered in the statement of needed transition services. The 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) focused on transition as a way to ensure successful post-school outcomes and included students aged 14 (or younger, as appropriate).

System Change Grants

In 1991, OSERS made available monies, under section 626 (3) of the IDEA (1990), for a competitive grant program called the *State Systems for Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities Initiative,* commonly referred to as the System Change Grants to assist states in complying with the new transition requirements set forth in the IDEA of 1990. These grants were specifically intended to make available one-time 5-year grants on a competitive basis to individual states for the purpose of promoting statewide systems change focused on the improvement of school-to-work transition services for youth with disabilities and their families. These state-level projects were cooperative efforts, jointly undertaken by state education and vocational rehabilitation agencies that would address both required skills and teacher quality. Between 1991 and 1996, 45 states received System Change Grants. These grants averaged approximately $500,000 per year for 5 years.

Iowa received these grant monies in the first cohort (1991-1992). As a

result, 13 Area Education Agencies (AEAs) participated in a state-wide systems change initiative to increase the level of service to students with disabilities and increase the skills of special education teachers, which would in turn impact student outcomes. Iowa did not have disaggregated data that would address these areas of concern for students with visual impairments. The only outcome data that could be remotely related to this initiative were outcome data from the Iowa Braille School. Nancy Oddo, transition coordinator and work-experience coordinator was the only professional noted in relation to transition, although transition coordinators and work experience coordinators positions were created in some of the AEAs as a result of this grant.

An additional concern in Iowa and other rural states was the working conditions for the teachers of students with visual impairments (TVIs) and the certified orientation and mobility specialists (COMS) that provide instruction in and either lead or participate in the transition planning for students with visual impairments. Working conditions would include caseload, job responsibility, and the climate (i.e., perceived levels of support from administrators). Professionals needed support and realistic feedback from knowledgeable administrators as well as collegial support from other highly skilled professionals. Iowa presented the National Association of State Directors of Special Education training entitled Educational Guidelines for Students with

Visual Impairments (Pugh & Erin, 1999) for special education administrators in Iowa. The purpose of this training was to give administrators a base of knowledge in the area of programming for students with visual impairments. Participation in the training was very high: 50% of the Special Education directors, 80% of the AEA vision supervisors, and 100% of the parent advocates attended. The rural nature of Iowa precluded most of these needed supports, as many AEAs have just one TVI and possibly share one COMS to cover a large geographic area. In addition, TVIs and COMS provide service to all students' birth to age 21 in Iowa, requiring a wide array of skills and expertise.

Rationale

Both the federal government and researchers in the field believe that quality transition planning is a vehicle to ensure that students have the skills and coursework needed for positive adult outcomes. Quality transition planning would address the other two variables that are associated with positive student outcomes: skills and teacher quality. Skills that have been identified with positive adult outcomes would be listed on the transition IEP and on the program of studies. The variables related to teacher quality would be directly linked to a transition plan that would address both the law and the intent of the law. A teacher who had experience, credentials, self-efficacy, professionalism, and

selected classroom practices would understand the skills and instruction needed for positive transitioning to the next environment. Teacher quality could be measured by the quality of the transition IEP or planning. Additional skills (ECC) identified for students with visual impairments should be easily identified on a quality transition IEP. An in-depth review of transition planning would provide the reader with the current research for such an important vehicle and possibly provide an impetus for further research.

Additional research is needed to determine the impact of transition planning for students with visual impairments. Research in the area of transition IEPs and transition planning for students with disabilities will be outlined in Chapter II to provide an overall picture of the transition process. Transition planning studies for only students with visual impairments were not found. Students with visual impairments were included in some of the studies but application to this particular population will be discussed throughout the review. The review was narrowed to state and national studies that received monies from the System Change Grants either at the state or district level. An assumption was made that these grants would provide states with the resources needed to improve transition services and outcomes. Since Iowa received a System Change Grant the researcher assumed that it had some impact on the level of services to students with visual impairments, an increase in teacher skills

for TVIs, and a transition IEP that would contain the requirements of the law and the intent of the law (promising practices).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Almost all students with disabilities encounter some problems as they make the transition from school to adult life. The National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) of students in Special Education (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996) tracked the outcomes of students with disabilities from 1985 to1996. Results indicated that youth with disabilities were not employed, did not live independently, and were not enrolled in post-school educational placements at the same level as their non-disabled peers. Specific transition planning activities are federally mandated for only two of the many possible transitions that children and youth with disabilities experience. A transition plan is required for children 3 years of age on an IFSP who are transitioning from Part C to Part B (school-based services) and for students aged 14 or older with disabilities who are served under an IEP. For purposes of this paper, the transition for adolescents aged 14 or older will be reviewed.

In this chapter the writer will examine and synthesize the research on the impact of public policy on transition planning for students with disabilities in states that received System Change Grants. First, a review is presented of the

national and state-wide studies in transition planning that received System Change Grants. Second, a discussion on the perceived effectiveness of the public policy known as the System Change Grant is formatted around the four questions that each state was required to answer as part of the federal initiative: (a) Did the states with System Change Grants increase the availability, access, and quality of transition assistance through the development and improvement of policies, procedures, systems, and other mechanisms for youth with disabilities and their families as those youth prepare for adult life? (b) Did states with System Change Grants improve the ability of professionals, parents, and advocates to work with youth with disabilities in ways that promote the understanding of and the capability for successfully making the transition from school to adult life? (c) Did states with System Change Grants improve the working relationships among those who are or should be involved in the delivery of transition services, in order to identify and achieve consensus on the general nature and specific application of transition services to meet the needs of youth with disabilities? and (d) Did states with System Change Grants create an incentive for accessing and using the expertise and resources of programs, projects and activities related to transition (Johnson & Halloran, 1997)? Third, a discussion of the general findings and limitations of the reviewed studies will be presented. Fourth, implications for students with visual impairments will be

discussed. How these findings would be similar or impact students with visual impairments was taken into consideration throughout this review.

Study Summaries

This section contains a review of published research literature on transition planning for youth with disabilities. Articles identified for inclusion in this literature review met three criteria. First, the article described qualitative, quantitative, or case study research conducted after 1990. Second, the study evaluated or reviewed transition requirements in IDEA 1990 and/or IDEA 1997. The third and final criteria required both national studies and statewide studies (i.e., Ohio, Virginia, and Wisconsin) to be representative of states that received System Change Grants. In addition, Lawson and Everson (1994) provided a direct correlation to students with visual impairments. Articles that discussed transition planning as part of an outcome study were not used in the present review. Outcome studies provide the impetus for quality transition planning, but this review focused on the components of transition planning only.

To locate articles for inclusion in this review (transition planning studies that were conducted after 1990) a web-based search was conducted of ERIC (1982-1991, 1992-2002/03), PsychINFO (1993-1995, 1996-1997, 2000), National Rehabilitation Information Center (NARIC) and Exceptional Child EdRes (1969-

1992/03). Terms used for this literature search were "transition plans" (*n = 86*), "transition planning research" (*n = 1*) and "transition planning and studies" (*n = 18*). System Change Grants emerged as a common thread among most of the reviewed articles and became a part of the criteria to narrow the review. Most of the articles that included transition plans (*n = 86*) were book chapters, teacher or parent guides, outcome studies, or position papers rather than qualitative, quantitative, or descriptive research. A manual search of the reference sections of each article revealed one additional study appropriate for inclusion.

Nine articles were selected that met the criteria for inclusion (see Table I). Of those, five were national studies (Guy & Schriner, 1997; Hasazi, Furney & Destefano, 1999; Johnson & Sharpe, 2000; Lawson & Everson, 1994; Williams & O'Leary, 2001) and four were statewide studies (Collet-Klingenberg, 1998; deFur, Getzel, & Kregel, 1994; Getzel & deFur, 1997; McMahan & Baer, 2001). Although neither Lawson and Everson nor Hasazi et al. identified the states used in their studies, it is assumed that the national representation would include states that had participated in the System Change Grants.

The articles and books that discussed promising practices (Clark, Field, Patton, Brolin, & Sitlington, 1994; Erin & Wolffe, 1999; Everson, 1996; Sacks, Wolffe, &Tierney, 1998**;** Thoma, Rogan, & Baker, 2001; Wehman, 1996; Wehmeyer, 1992; Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998; Whitney-Thomas, Shaw, &

Butterworth, 1998; Wolffe, 1999) or the intent of the IDEA 1990 legislation will be used as a guide within each reviewed area of transition planning. The intent of the law or promising practices has been the subject of numerous research articles and professionals resource materials.

The review of each study will be divided into three sections: methodology, results, and limitations/strengths. The methodology section will include research question(s) or the purpose of the study, participants, instrument(s), and data analysis. The results section will be reported in two parts. The first will analyze the results using the four main constructs of transition planning: parent notification and participation, student and agency participation, content of the IEP, and agency responsibility; the second part will address promising practices using three-part delineation: planning, implementation and follow-up services (see definitions) recommended by Collet-Klingenberg (1998). The limitations/strengths of each study will be discussed last.

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used for most studies. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) defined qualitative research as a theory grounded in the assumption that individuals construct social reality in the form of meanings and interpretations. In addition, qualitative methods can offer a means of revealing personal and subjective viewpoints, which assist us in

understanding the human meanings associated with our choices about social policy and professional practice (Peck & Furman, 1992). Peck and Furman recommend the use of qualitative research to examine the non-implementation of public policy initiatives. The authors posit, that while specific variables related to this issue might be studied using traditional methods (quantitative), the essence appears to manifest at the level of the "whole," in which a multiplicity of factors at several levels operate simultaneously to affect one another and that qualitative methods are well suited to the task of providing rich description and holistic analysis. In addition, Kirchner (2003) noted that qualitative social research uses a wide range of data-collection methods, such as observation, and in-depth interviews of individuals or groups. It typically relies on open-ended rather than closed-ended questions and data analysis and reporting are typically narrative rather than numeric groupings of data.

Collet-Klingenberg (1998) Study

Methodology

Collet-Klingenberg (1998) conducted a case study (unstructured/ structured interviews, observations, and document review) to examine transition-related practices in use at one school and their effects on students with learning disabilities ($N = 6$). The program chosen for this study had been actively

involved in a statewide Systems Change Grant.

Teachers and staff of the program were interviewed and observed as were additional faculty and staff (i.e., guidance counselors, IEP team coordinators, psychologists, and superintendents). Additional stakeholders were interviewed (i.e., adult service providers, including rehabilitation counselors and parents of students in the program). Finally, the six students were interviewed and observed and their records were reviewed.

Data were conducted over a 9-month period and constant comparison in conjunction with a focus on the crystallization of data was used to derive themes from highly individual, discrepant, and often very specific events and conversation. Data from all sources were examined and re-examined throughout the study.

Results

The results of the study were presented as "thick descriptions" divided into three distinct categories (indirect transition practices, related transition instruction, and vocation-related practices) and reported out as both observed or intended. The results in the four constructs of transition indicated student participation was very low and passive and parents were the least involved of all IEP transition team participants. Students were enrolled in vocational educational coursework but were discouraged from taking higher-level

mathematics even if they were college-bound. Goals were all found to be teacher-directed and most goals were not aligned with student outcomes. In addition, the study documented that linkages to vocational rehabilitation did not occur until the junior year in secondary educational settings and typically the community transition team provided linkages to employers rather than the school-based team or a vocational rehabilitation counselor.

In the area of promising practices or the intent of the law this study, no evidence was found of either formal or informal assessments. Isolated instruction was observed in self-determination but the practice could not be documented from the IEP findings (implementation). Although there was evidence of interagency collaboration, the author noted that students and families were not involved (follow-up services).

Limitations/strengths

Collet-Klingenberg noted limitations of the study including small sample size and ungeneralizability. She chose constant comparison as a method to construct themes from her interpretational analysis. Gall et al. (1996) recommended that an inter-rater reliability for coding (themes) should be determined and reported, but none was reported in this study. The quality and validity of both the semi-structured and unstructured interviews depended on the skill of the interviewer. Collet-Klingenberg did not report whether a

statistical analysis software package was used for the thematic analysis or if it was completed by hand, but the reader would assume that 9 months of data collection would produce thousands of pages of information to process and analyze, which could present a barrier to quality data analysis.

A strength of this study was the in-depth description of the current reality (e.g., current transition practices). Unstructured interviews are highly subjective and time consuming but Collet-Klingenberg used them to provide participants a greater voice in analysis of the current transition practice. By using a variety of data collection methods, she countered for participant bias and observer effect, thus protecting the internal validity of the study and providing some triangulation of the data.

deFur et al. (1994) Study

Methodology

deFur et al. (1994) implemented a descriptive study of randomly selected transition plans for students with learning disabilities (*N = 100*) across 14 school divisions in Virginia to determine who participated in transition planning and to analyze the extent to which various types of post-school adult services and settings were identified. The transition plans were selected from those school districts that had participated and benefited from Virginia's System Change

Grant. School staff was always present to assist in the reviews and provide clarification information.

Frequency tables were developed to provide descriptions of the key demographic characteristics of the sample. Cross-tabulations were also computed by students' year in school (grades 8 and above). Descriptive statistics were reported but standard deviations were not presented.

Results

The researchers posited that an emphasis should be placed on enabling students to establish career objectives, identifying appropriate post-school settings, and accessing the services and supports that would help students achieve their career objectives after reviewing the findings of the study. The results in the four constructs of transition found parent participation in IEP transition meetings was relatively high (89%) but participation waned as students got older. The study also found that special education teachers and special education administrators were more likely to attend the transition meeting (90% and 31%, respectively) than any other participant (i.e., family, general educator, student, or vocational rehabilitation counselor). Guidance counselors were more likely to attend the meetings of students with learning disabilities than of students with significant disabilities (29% vs. 10%, respectively) although at a lower overall rate than would be expected.

Vocational educators attended IEP team meetings 5% of the time, although approximately 50% of the students were enrolled in vocational classes.

deFur et al. (1994) reviewed IEPs for both transition related goals and activities that supported transition. They found that only 38% of the IEPs addressed competitive employment, and 23% reflected goals for trade for technical school. Fifty percent of the students with learning disabilities had documented vocational coursework listed on their IEP. Thirty three percent of the IEPs reported counseling goals yet guidance counselors rarely attended IEP team meetings (29%). In the three areas of promising practices or the intent of the law, deFur et al. found that identified post-school outcomes were either not included or included on an inconsistent basis.

Limitations/strengths

Limitations of this study were the sampling procedures. School districts that had benefited from the State Systems Change Grant were selected and asked to choose IEPs that were included in the study, which compromised the external validity or the generalizability to all students in Virginia with learning disabilities. The research purpose did not match the sample. The researchers did not narrow their research questions to only review the results from school districts that had participated in the state grants. In addition, school district staff provided the researcher with clarification or additional information on the

selected transition plans, not allowing for interpretation by the researcher. This is both a strength and a weakness of the deFur study.

A strength of this study was the random selection of transition plans providing some strength to the external validity, although there is still an inherent bias using only transition plans from school districts that benefited from the state grant. Another strength noted was the comparison of services as students moved through the secondary educational system. In addition, this study provided a snapshot of transition services for the largest population of students with disabilities (learning disabilities). A possible unintended recourse of this study was the comparison data used in a future study by Getzel and deFur (1997), which conducted a similar review for students with severe disabilities.

Getzel and deFur (1997) Study

Methodology

Getzel and deFur (1997) replicated the deFur et al. (1994) study for students with severe disabilities ($N = 84$) to document current transition practices and note any differences for different disability subgroups. Students were selected from a data set of 2,364 students representing 24 school divisions that expressed an interest in transition across the state.

Data collection was achieved through the review of the *IEP Transition Planning Information Form*, which had been developed for the deFur et al. (1994) study. The form is reviewed and modified annually to reflect new and emerging trends in the design and delivery of transition services. All school personnel have received in-depth in-service training in the use of the form. Getzel and deFur analyzed results in relation to participation in the IEP process, identified outcomes, training provided, and anticipated community supports needed for the next environment. It appeared that basic descriptive statistics were used, but standard deviations were not reported.

Results

The results indicated that these students needed greater participation in the planning of their future, increased opportunities to access employment prior to exiting school, and access to a range of services to provide ongoing and long-term support in the community. The results in the four constructs of transition found parent participation in IEP transition meetings was relatively high (89%) and remained constant across all grade levels. While some students were present at their IEP transition meetings, an almost identical percentage did not attend (35% vs. 30% respectively), while other students were not invited.

In addition, Getzel and deFur found that special education teachers were more likely to attend the transition meeting (93%) than any other participant (i.e.,

family, general educator, student, or vocational rehabilitation counselor). Rehabilitation counselors were more likely to attend the meetings of students with moderate disabilities than those of students with a learning disability (4% vs. 0% respectively), and guidance counselors were more likely to attend the meetings of students with moderate disabilities than were rehabilitation counselors (5% vs. 4%, respectively), neither being significant.

Getzel and deFur reviewed IEPs for both transition related goals and activities that supported transition. They found that only 38% of the IEPs addressed competitive employment, while 32% listed supported employment as an option. Only 10% of the students with significant disabilities were recommended for vocational courses within the general education curriculum while 50% of the students with learning disabilities had documented vocational coursework listed on their IEP. Thirty-three percent of the IEPs reported counseling goals yet guidance counselors were rarely in attendance (10%). In the area of promising practices, or the intent of the law Getzel and deFur found no evidence of work experience (implementation) or planning and follow-up services.

Limitations/strengths

Several concerns were noted with this study. First, participants were selected by districts that expressed a desire to participate rather than being

randomly selected. These districts may have felt confident in the level of transition compliance and would thus not be a fair representation of all school districts, which could impact both internal and external validity. Second, school districts reported transition results for all students with disabilities while others used a sample. A third concern regarded the document review form that was used. The researchers noted that the form was reviewed and modified yearly to reflect new and emerging trends in transition. This would affect the reliability of this instrument in longitudinal data. It was not clear if the longitudinal data was taken from the one consistent document review protocol or if the various instruments were collapsed for similar themes.

A noted strength of this study was the training sessions provided on the data collection form. Staff training would have given the reader some confidence in the consistency of the data obtained from this instrument. Another strength in this study was the comparison with the participants in the deFur et al. (1994) study. Different outcomes were documented for separate disability populations.

Guy and Schriner (1997) Study

Methodology

Guy and Schriner (1997) conducted a descriptive study including surveys, unstructured/structured interviews ,and OSEP document review with System

Change Grant directors to determine the level of change that occurred in states that had received the grants during the first cohort (*N* = *24*). A more detailed description of the conceptual framework and evaluation design can be found in DeStefano, Hasazi, and Trach (1997).

Guy and Schriner sought to document the context and nature of change as it occurred over the 5 years of the system change initiative within and across each of these states and to answer the following four questions: (a) What was and is the context for change? (b) What strategies were used to effect systems changes? (c) What is the evidence of change relative to these strategies? and (d) With regard to each strategy, what were the supports and constraints that influenced implementation of the change effort?

The questions and sources of information were placed in a framework for a subcommittee of project directors to review, but they were narrowed to include only three areas of systems change: youth and family engagement in transition, professional skills and knowledge, and agency and community collaboration. Evaluation teams were established for each of the three evaluation areas. Each team received a summary of both the interviews and document reviews and was responsible for developing a code for each of their perspective areas. Consensus among the team members was used to document the frequency and concurrence of codes (DeStefano et al., 1997). Additional codes were created as themes

emerged.

Results

Directors reported an increased stakeholder awareness of transition needs and issues, increased participation of students with disabilities and parents in transition activities, enhanced collaborative relationships among school and community agencies, and established and improved policies to support better transition services and outcomes. Results in the four constructs of transition found that Systems Change Grant directors reported increased parent notification and participation as a result of this federal initiative, although parents reported that their own participation was superficial and not really a partnership (Guy, Goldberg, McDonald, & Flom, 1997). In addition, they reported systemic attempts to promote greater student participation through instruction in self-determination skills, yet they noted that it was only effective for those students with a physical, sensory, or mild cognitive impairment.

The strategies reported "most likely to be effective" in producing these changes included inducements and capacity-building activities, sustained commitment of highly skilled individuals, strategic integration of transition activities and resources within complementary initiative, involvement of all stakeholder systems, and planning and using evaluation information. In addition, directors reported an increase in interagency collaboration between

education and vocational rehabilitation as a result of the System Change Grants. Some states reported the creation of a new position within vocational rehabilitation devoted to the school age population (transition coordinator and/or work experience coordinator). While these positions were initially funded through the System Change Grants, many states opted to maintain these positions with other funding.

In the area of promising practices or the intent of the law Guy and Schriner reported that, in the area of implementation, a few states had included instruction in self-determination and reported the likelihood that students were employed at a high rate. Planning and follow-up services were not reviewed.

Limitations/strengths

Guy and Schriner attempted to identify similar themes of transition practice among states that had varied goals for their initiative. It would have been impossible to have significant system-wide findings with such a wide range of goals and data collection sources. These researchers noted that quantitative data were not available to substantiate the perceptions of the participants in most states, which would have provided some triangulation of the reported results. The purpose of the Guy and Schriner study was to document the context and nature of change over time, yet they noted that interviews were conducted only at the end of the project and annual reviews would have been necessary to

document dynamic change over time. In addition, data documenting the current level of transition services prior to the System Change Grants would have been required to document change. Interviews varied in length, and it was unclear if the 6-hour interview impacted the participant, the recorder, or the interviewer for consistency or validity.

A strength noted in this study was that the directors determined what data were important to collect for this project, enabling them to develop their state reports to OSEP; but on the other hand, this biased the information reported to the grantors. Inter-rater reliability was established through the use of individual coding and a consensus process. Additional codes were developed as themes emerged, strength of qualitative methods.

Hasazi et al. (1999) Study

Methodology

Hasazi et al. (1999) conducted a policy study, including in-depth interviews, observations, and document reviews to investigate implementation of the transition mandates of IDEA in nine sites across the United States (five model transition sites and four representative transition sites). Five sites were identified as model sites because they had a national reputation for effective implementation of transition policies and practices, while four were identified as

representative sites demonstrating progress and stratified for national representation.

Hasazi et al. reported that interviews were recorded, coded, and summarized. Results of each visit and interview were sent to participants for feedback providing some triangulation for the results. Cross case analysis was used by these researchers to compare variables between chosen model transition sites ($n = 5$) and representative transition sites ($n = 4$) in order to evaluate a suspected difference in compliance between the two types of sites.

Results

All sites purported that the mandate validated previous efforts in the area of transition and gave strength to extending the previous efforts. Cross-case analysis revealed substantive differences between model and representative sites with respect to implementation of transition policies and practices. Model sites reported an integrated system that centered on student and family needs and preferences, and fostered interagency collaboration, systemic professional development, and a coordinated and integrated set of reform efforts. Though a number of promising practices were found at the representative sites, they were fewer in number, less wide spread, and appeared to be the efforts of one program or person instead of being system wide.

The results in the four constructs of transition reported an increase in

parent participation at the model transition sites through system-wide strategies that encouraged both student and family participation, but similar strategies were not consistently used at the representative sites. Model sites reported the creation of one or more new positions jointly funded by education and rehabilitation agencies, (e.g., transition coordinator and/or work experience coordinator) and written agreements that articulated policies and procedures regarding students and their transition from school to adult service agencies or post-school education. In addition, model sites documented that most model transition sites reported that IEP planning was focused on the student's personal goals, interests, and needs and that instruction in self-determination was offered to students.

In the area of promising practices or the intent of the law, many teachers at the model sites reported the use of person-centered planning. They also reported the likelihood that students were employed at a high rate and that they were using follow-up studies. There was no evidence however, that follow-up studies were used to direct future educational programming, as intended.

Limitations/strengths

A limitation of this study is the lack of pertinent data on the cross-case analysis. Reliability data were not provided which would have given the reader enough information on the data collection to determine whether it was a strength

or weakness.

The strength of this study was the use of a variety of research methods (i.e., document reviews, interviews, and observations) to provide for triangulation of the results. Validity can be questionable with self-report interviews as individuals bias the information they offer about themselves or cannot recall accurately the events of interest (Gall et al., 1996). The researchers countered the concerns of internal validity by audio taping and coding the interviews, along with recorded notes from the observations and document reviews. The researchers analyzed all three methods for emerging themes and patterns. The summaries were sent back to the participants for review and confirmation, allowing for triangulation. This study documented systemic change that must occur to provide both required and intended transition services.

Johnson and Sharpe (2000) Study

Methodology

Johnson and Sharpe (2000) conducted a descriptive study using a structured survey of 548 local special education directors and coordinators to obtain information regarding local efforts to implement policies and practices related to the transition service requirements of IDEA (54.8% return rate).

Additional items were derived from specific rules for transition, interviews with local special education directors and reviews of state and federal documents.

These researchers used a four-point Likert scale on the survey but collapsed the top two (*almost always* and *frequently*) to represent "most likely to" and collapsed the low two (s*ometimes* or *almost never*) to represent "least likely to" for analysis. The researchers used cross tabulation of the frequency counts for each survey question in order to report out "most likely used" and “least likely used” strategies for transition.

Results

The authors concluded from the results that some progress had been made but that more work was needed to achieve the full purpose and intent of transition requirements. The results in the four constructs of transition were that students received only a verbal invitation to their IEP team meetings and families received a standard form letter but did not receive any formal training in the area of transition. A review of the IEP content revealed different strategies for the two subgroups. Students with mild/moderate disabilities received instruction in general education, including vocational coursework. In addition, students and families were consulted on needed transition services, yet only students with severe disabilities received instruction in daily living skills. Strategies that were rarely used for students with mild disabilities were paid community work and

instruction in daily living skills, while students with severe disabilities were not receiving instruction in general education or assistance from a guidance counselor. These are not surprising outcomes considering that the use of a functional curriculum for students with severe disabilities has not historically been aligned with a district's standards and benchmarks prior to the requirement mandated by No Child Left Behind. Some school districts have identified a separate stream of education and educational outcomes for students with more severe disabilities. In the area of promising practices or the intent of the law Johnson and Sharpe found that informal assessments were used more often than formal assessments and that student-led IEPs, which would demonstrate self-determination, were one of the "least likely used" strategies reported.

Limitations/strengths

Limitations of the study were not addressed in the publication. Johnson and Sharpe solicited strategies used to implement transition policies and practices yet reported that 50% of the possible participants would not have direct knowledge of the implementation of transition strategies. It was unclear how the participants gathered the information for the survey. Did they just refer to policy/procedure manuals or was it garnered from the special educators? Self-report surveys can be a limitation to any study if there is not other collected information to provide for triangulation of the data.

A strength of this study was the fact that the structured survey was field-tested with similar participants (i.e., special education administrators) to provide some reliability of the instrument and the content knowledge level. In addition, to the field test, the researchers randomly selected participating special education directors and then stratified in order to get a national representative sample, which strengthens the generalizability of these results. An additional strength of this particular study is the separate reporting for students with mild/moderate disabilities and those with severe disabilities. This strategy would counter for the possible within-group variability of these two sub-populations and again strengthen the generalizability to students with varying ability levels. Additional participants who actually implemented transition services would have strengthened this study.

Lawson and Everson (1994) Study

Methodology

Lawson and Everson (1994) conducted a descriptive review of the statements of transition services and the corresponding IEPs for a specific population of youths (i.e., deafblind). Twenty-four states chose to participate and 61 ($N = 72$) transition plans were analyzed (i.e., the first three students, aged 14 or older, listed on their state's deaf-blind census). This study had three main

research objectives: (a) review the connection between the format of the IEP and implementation of actual services, (b) review the content of IEPs for the mandates and intent of the transition requirements, and (c) determine whether those promising practices found reflected documented strategies for this particular population. The format of the transition plan was not considered for this review, but the findings did lend themselves to documentation issues that would apply to promising practices.

A document review protocol developed by Lawson (see Lawson & Everson, 1994) entitled *IEP/Statement of Transition Services Review Protocol* was used in this study. The researchers reportedly used descriptive analysis combined with means, frequencies and standard deviations, although standard deviations were never reported.

Results

These researchers reported that the purpose for including statements of needed transition services was not readily understood by the majority of the educational personnel responsible for the transition plans and that 25% of the reviewed IEPs did not have transition listed anywhere. In addition, 93% of the plans did not link the IEP goals to transition.

Transdiciplinarian team involvement was not evidenced in the transition process. In most cases, special educators were listed as the responsible party and

very few students or rehabilitation counselors participated in the IEPs. Related service providers (i.e., certified orientation & mobility specialist [COMS] and audiologists) or direct service providers such as TVIs were rarely listed on the IEPs. Transition services were not always individualized to a particular student's needs or desired outcomes, as special education administrators developed the majority of the transition IEPs. Transition IEPs seldom reflected promising practices such as vision statements that identified the needs and preferences of the student, person-centered planning, or instruction in self-determination.

Limitations/strengths

Limitations of this study were not addressed in the published report. Enough detail and description was included in the protocol to provide some confidence in the reliability of the data collection. Gall et al. (1996) has reported that within a document or record review the researchers create their own meanings by the context in which the protocol was produced, the purpose in writing, the working conditions, and the intended audience. The study by Lawson and Everson would not provide for generalizability or external validity to another group of students with disabilities due to the purposeful sampling, but it did provide some implications for students with visual impairments. While observations of transition implementation would have strengthened the findings of this study, the transition IEP should reflect accurately the transition services

recommended for students.

The strength of this study was the national representation of transition IEPs for this population and the similar findings across states. Students who are deafblind typically are very complex and require a transdiciplinarian approach for appropriate services. This study demonstrated that critical areas of transition planning were not being addressed across the nation and provided a direct link for those students with visual impairments. An increasing number of students with visual impairments have additional disabilities as well.

McMahan and Baer (2001) Study

Methodology

McMahan and Baer conducted a descriptive study using a structured survey with 186 participants to measure transition policy compliance and best practices at local education agencies (LEAs) and to identify predictors of transition policy compliance and best practice in the state of Ohio. The researchers attempted a partial replication of a similar national study by Johnson and Sharpe (2000) in their statewide study but added additional participants (i.e., special education administrators, families and educational personnel). It was reported, similar to Johnson and Sharpe's findings, that approximately 50% of the team members did not have a direct role in the delivery of transition services

(e.g., administrators and school counselors).

McMahan and Baer used a four-point Likert scale on the survey but collapsed the top two (*almost always* and *frequently*) to represent "most likely to" and collapsed the low two (*sometimes* or *almost never*) to represent "least likely to." The researchers also used a Pearson Product Correlation efficient to examine all the possible variable combinations in their survey and a step-wise multiple regression to determine which factors best predicted a high degree of policy compliance and promising practices. The use of this statistical analysis with such a low number of participants (N = 32) is problematic.

Results

McMahan and Baer found that respondents reported their schools were generally in compliance with the transition requirements of IDEA with the exception of the requirement to reconvene the IEP team if transition services could not be provided as planned. The strongest predictor of policy compliance and promising practices in the LEA was the existence of a school-based interagency transition team. In addition, transition training proved to be a weaker predictor of promising practices.

The results in the four constructs of transition were that parent notification for transition planning was most likely accomplished through a standard form or by phone, and formal workshops on transition planning or

personalized letters were identified as strategies rarely used. In addition, the researchers found that most students received a verbal invitation to the transition planning but rarely received a formal invitation or person centered planning strategies.

Similar to the Johnson and Sharpe study, McMahan and Baer analyzed IEP data from two subgroups of students with disabilities (i.e., mild/moderate and moderate/severe disabilities). A course of study was identified as a strategy for both subgroups. The development of employment and post-secondary goals and a vocational assessment were identified as strategies for students identified as having a mild/moderate disability, while related services and instruction in daily living skills were identified for those students with a moderate/severe disability. Community experiences were rarely used as a strategy for students with a mild/moderate disability and post-school living objectives were rarely used for students with moderate/severe disabilities.

In the area of promising practices or the intent of the law, McMahan and Baer found that informal assessments were used more often than formal assessments. In addition to these findings, they reported that a person-centered planning strategy based on the assessed needs and preferences of the student and student-led IEPs were some of the "least likely used" strategies. In addition, they found that objectives were developed for employability skills (career

awareness curriculum) for students with a mild/moderate disability but for students with moderate/severe disabilities, daily living skills training was reported, which would lack the depth of a career awareness curriculum that would encompass self-determination or work-related behaviors. These researchers found very little evidence of interagency collaboration or follow-up services.

Limitations/strengths

McMahan and Baer attempted to replicate the Johnson and Sharpe study, with the exception that they increased the participant group to include a wider variety of stakeholders, although those additional participants were the least likely to return the survey. McMahan and Baer had an overall return rate of 17%. Gall et al. report that a return rate below 20% is virtually impossible to generalize. In addition, Gall et al. (1996) state that the saliency of the questionnaire or survey impacts the return rate.

McMahan and Baer reported higher return rates among special education administrators and a very low return rate among families (48% and 18%, respectively). The authors cite the low return rate as a limitation but explain the phenomenon as a result of the length and depth of the survey. The internal validity of this study may be compromised by the low return rate of special educators and families, persons most knowledgeable regarding transition

practices. The inclusion of families and special education personnel, persons that would have the most direct knowledge of implementation could have provided strength to this study compared to the study by Johnson and Sharpe, but only if the return rates among those participants had been higher. McMahan and Baer included statistical measures to report factors which best predicted a high degree of policy compliance and promising practices. These statistical measures were a limitation since the study had a 17% return rate (N = 15).

A noted strength in this study was that their findings were similar to those of Johnson and Sharpe, but additional findings regarding predictors of transition policy compliance were flawed.

Williams and O'Leary (2001) Study

Methodology

Williams and O'Leary (2001) used a document review of OSEP monitoring reports (1993-1997) of 54 states and entities to answer three questions: (a) To what extent are states and entities implementing each of the transition service provisions? (b) Was there a difference in findings between the first monitoring (1993) and the last (1997)? and, (c) Was there a difference in findings (out of compliance) between states with a System Change Grant (n = 33) and states without a grant? This study reviewed the status of implementation prior to the

1997 amendments to IDEA that added the requirements for a statement of transition service needs and provided a direct link to change as a result in the System Change Grants.

The document review was aligned with the federal requirements on transition and only allowed for yes (evidence that it was addressed) or no (no evidence that it was addressed), as defined by OSEP monitoring procedures providing stronger internal validity due to the lack of interpretation.

The researchers tabulated the number and percentage of states and entities with findings (out of compliance) as an aggregate and by monitoring cycle for each transition services requirement to answer research questions one and two. They used a chi-square analysis to determine whether states that had received federal monies for a Systems Change Grant were more likely to be in compliance during scheduled OSEP monitoring visits (1993-1997), the third research question.

Results

The results of this study were consistent with those of previous studies that found students were not typically invited to their IEP meetings and student's preferences/interests were not usually considered in developing IEP goals. Moreover, the findings of this study indicated that the key elements that have been consistently identified as critical for effective transition services (i.e.,

interagency involvement and student participation) continue not to be in place in most secondary schools throughout the country. In addition, the results suggested that the percentage of states and entities that were in compliance with some of the transition service requirements were essentially static throughout the four-year review period.

The results in the 4 constructs of transition found most of the IEP invitations to families did not indicate that transition was the purpose of the meeting, and this percentage actually increased during the last monitoring cycle. In addition, state and local education agencies consistently appeared to deliver transition services without the benefit of interagency involvement. The researchers examined OSEP monitoring reports for the three required components of transition goals (community, employment, and post-school adult living) and for a required statement of why these services were not needed. They found that 48% of the IEPs did not include areas of instruction and 41% of the IEPs did not include a statement explaining why these services were not needed or how that decision was determined.

To address the impact of System Change Grants , Williams and O'Leary found that states that had not received the System Change Grants were more likely to be in compliance with OSEP monitoring than states that had received the System Change Grants. These results showed that the presence of a System

Change Grant did not directly link to the absence of monitoring findings. In the area of promising practices or the intent of the law, these researchers found that on the average, only 4% of the IEPs were developed from documented needs, preferences, and interests of the student and that many public agencies did not invite students to the IEP team, which would indicate that these same agencies did not have student-led IEP team meetings.

Limitations/strengths

A weakness of this particular study is the same as the strength. The study findings depended on a valid and reliable monitoring by OSEP, but a criterion for monitoring by OSEP was not provided.

The strength of this study was the use of citations and corrective actions from OSEP to determine non-compliance. Another noted strength was the comparison between monitoring cycles that would actually document some progress or regression. The researchers provided the document review protocol and the detail for inclusion, allowing the reader to make assumptions regarding the validity of the instrument. This study was the only reviewed study that could account for change. Data analysis calculated the change (+ or -) between the monitoring cycles.

Limitations of Reviewed Studies

The majority of the studies reviewed reportedly used descriptive analyses combined with means, frequencies and standard deviations, although standard deviations were never reported (see Table 1). Only one of the reviewed articles addressed the limitations of the study (Collet-Klingenberg, 1998). A few of the researchers gave the reader enough detail, or included the instrument in the appendices, in order to allow some assumptions regarding the validity or reliability of the instrument.

Both Johnson and Sharpe (2000) and McMahan and Baer (2001) reported that 50% of the participants were not directly responsible for transition services yet neither study addressed the issue as a limitation. Guy and Schriner (1997) set out to identify the level of change in the transition services that had occurred at the state level as a result of the System Change Grants. Unfortunately pre/post data were not collected to actually measure change; it appeared to be only the director's perception. Perception data can be useful, but only as one component. Additional data sources would be needed to document true systemic change. deFur et al. (1994) and Getzel and deFur (1997) had inherent bias in the study when they used school districts that were part of the state grants as a result of the System Change Grants. Districts had too much leeway in what student data were collected and then shared. Most studies answered their research questions but

lacked sufficient rigor that would have provided a stronger statistical finding.

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Table 1

Reviewed Studies

Author /Date	National / State	Research/ Design	Participants	Strengths	Weaknesses	Findings
Collet-Klingenberg / 1998	WS	Descriptive	LD classroom	Variety of methods for triangulation	Generalizability concerns	Low compliance & promising practices
deFur et al., 1994	VA	Descriptive	LD students	Random selection of transition plans	Generalizability concerns	Moderate compliance
Getzel & deFur/1997	VA	Descriptive	Students with profound disabilities	Between group comparisons	Generalizability concerns & test validity	Low compliance
Guy & Schriner/1997	National	Descriptive	System Change Grant Directors	Allowed for emerging themes, stakeholder input	No trends or baselines were established	Self-report of compliance
Hasazi et al./1999	National	Descriptive	Educators/ transition coordinators, educators, parents	Variety of methods for triangulation		Greater compliance at model sites
Johnson & Sharpe/2000	National	Descriptive	Special education directors, coordinators & supervisors	Instrument validity & reliability	Low involvement of knowledgeable persons	Reported compliance but low promising practices
Lawson & Everson/1994	National	Descriptive	Deafblind students	Document reviews	Generalizability concerns	Low compliance & promising practices
McMahan &Baer/2001	Ohio	Descriptive	Administrators, coordinators, families & supervisors	Variety of participants	Low return rate & inappropriate statistical measures	Reported compliance
Williams& O'Leary/2001	National	Descriptive	OSEP monitoring reports	Consistent study criteria	Study criteria determined by OSEP	Low compliance from states with SCG

Discussion of General Findings

The purpose of this review was to analyze research findings on transition planning, the vehicle for change to improve student outcomes after graduation from secondary educational settings. As the review progressed another vehicle for change emerged as a central theme in most of the reviewed studies. System Change Grants were noted as a vehicle for change to assist states in implementation of the transition requirements in IDEA 1990 and to improve transition services provided to students.

The review presented conflicted findings on the degree of change at the state level as a result of the regulations or the System Change Grants. Some researchers reported both positive and negative findings (de Fur et al., 1994; Getzel & deFur 1997; and Hasazi et al., 1999). de Fur et al. and Getzel and deFur found that both parents and students were participating in the transition IEP process but were not active participants. Guy and Schriner (1997) noted that systems change efforts must include the active participation of those individuals most affected by changes in policies and practices. Although families attended the meetings in high numbers, their level of participation was difficult to evaluate. Most researchers regarded family participation as passive and not truly participatory. Special educators typically wrote the IEPs, wrote goals that were teacher-directed, and had the greatest attendance at the meetings, yet they

appeared to be uninformed regarding the intent of the legislation or promising practices. In addition, de Fur et al. and Getzel and deFur found some significant differences between the two sub-populations (i.e., learning disabilities and severe disabilities). Students identified as learning disabled were more likely to take vocational classes, although college bound students were discouraged from taking the necessary higher level math courses. Guidance counselors were more likely to be participants in the transition IEPs for students with learning disabilities than for those students with more severe disabilities, although at a relatively low rate of participation. Hasazi et al. (1999) observed positive transition findings at both the model and representative transition sites, although it was more pervasive and consistent at model sites. In addition, they provided the reader with a foundation for "model" transition services. The findings of their study demonstrated "model" sites had true systems change, but it occurred only when it was an integrated system that centered on student and family needs and preferences, fostered interagency collaboration, provided systemic ongoing professional development and had a coordinated and integrated set of reform efforts. This model could possibly serve as the variables or attributes to collect from each LEA to determine if they are model sites.

Positive findings were reported by those researchers who collected perception data from special educators, administrators or grant directors (Guy &

Schriner 1997, Johnson & Sharpe 2000; McMahan & Baer, 2001). Both Johnson and Sharpe and McMahan and Baer reported that administrators felt the grants had improved services and that the respondents shared strategies that were implemented across their respective states. Both of these studies had limitations, as discussed in the previous section. Guy and Schriner found similar results from System Change Grant directors, who reported they were effectively implementing both the law and the intent of the legislation and that a significant amount of change had occurred as a result of the grants. Unfortunately none of these researchers collected quantifiable baseline data to establish trend lines that would indeed document the level of change that had occurred.

The last of the reviewed studies reported negative findings (Collet-Klingenberg, 1998; Lawson & Everson 1994; Williams & O'Leary, 2001). Both Collet-Klingenberg and Lawson and Everson documented dismal transition planning reviews for their various student populations (i.e., learning disability & deafblind). In both studies, student outcomes were not found to be identified through either a formal or informal process, and typically the special educator developed the student outcomes and goals. The only study that documented change was that of Williams and O'Leary, who reviewed OSEP monitoring reports (1993-1997). They found that the level of compliance in some transition areas actually decreased from the first to the last monitoring cycle, indicating

possible negative change.

Guy and Schriner (1997) and Johnson and Guy (1997) indicated that it takes a number of months to get staff on board, operationalize activities, and at least 3 to 5 years to realize results in any systems change project, yet states had been participating 5 years at the last monitoring cycle. Another finding, from the Williams and O'Leary study, was that states which had received System Change Grants were more likely to be out of compliance than states that did not receive these monies. Even Guy et al. (1997) assumed that the policies and procedures established as part of the System Change Grants would eventually improve services to students.

Although Guy and Schriner (1997), Johnson and Sharpe (2000), and McMahan and Baer (2001) reported a greater awareness of transition issues as a result of the System Change Grants, results of the reviewed studies suggested that increased awareness had little or no impact on actual planning and services for students.

Effectiveness of System Change Grants

Each state that participated in the System Change Grants had to report responses to the following four questions. These questions will guide the discussion in this section. The results of the combined studies will form the

basis for the discussion and conclusion for each question.

1. Did states with System Change Grants increase the availability, access, and quality of transition assistance through the development and improvement of policies, procedures, systems, and other mechanisms for youth with disabilities and their families as those youth prepare for and enter adult life?

Though states spent a great deal of money and time at the systems level to develop policies and procedures that were aligned with transition legislation the evidence did not support the hypothesis that system level policies impact youth with disabilities at the implementation level or provide a mechanism for states to obtain greater compliance with the OSEP monitoring. Results from these studies indicated that some transition practices actually decreased as time went on and that states without System Change Grants were more likely to be in compliance with OSEP monitoring (Williams & O'Leary 2001). Guy and Schriner (1997) noted that systems change usually takes five years and now 14 years later a review of the literature revealed very little progress in implementation for students.

2. Did states with System Change Grants improve the ability of professionals, parents, and advocates to work with youth with disabilities in ways that promote the understanding of and the capability for successfully

making the transition from school to adult life?

Studies documented the lack of formal school-based workshops for students or families. Without a formal system of instruction, it is difficult to measure the learning of students and families in order to document this goal. Although some states did provide initial staff development, teachers reported that the emphasis on transition provisions waned over the years. With the documented staff turnover in special education, transition training should be offered at least yearly or on a regular rotating basis. States have not had a federal framework for quality staff development until recently with the new Elementary Secondary Act entitled "No Child Left Behind."

3. Did states with System Change Grants improve the working relationships among those who are or should be involved in the delivery of transition services, in order to identify and achieve consensus on the general nature and specific application of transition services to meet the needs of youth with disabilities?

Results from these studies indicate that the majority of families are attending the IEP transition meetings, per the requirements of the law but are not engaged as partners in the educational process. Guidance counselors were rarely involved, although a framework for vocational guidance has been in existence for nearly 100 years (Gysbers & Henderson, 1994) and outcomes and strategies

that address transition have been articulated (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). Greater attendance by outside adult agencies was noted, but they were not involved in developing goals and services in collaboration, thus meeting the letter of the law but not the intent. Administrators who were in charge of policy and monies appeared to have a less than realistic perception of actual transition services (Guy & Schriner 1997; Johnson & Sharpe, 2000; McMahan & Baer, 2001) as supported by the studies that completed document reviews (Collet-Klingenberg 1998; deFur et al., 1994; Getzel & deFur 1997; Lawson & Everson, 1994).

4. Did states with System Change Grants create an incentive for accessing and using the expertise and resources of programs, projects, and activities related to transition?

Some researchers reported cross agency training but documentation was not found on reviewed IEPs. All students with disabilities did not appear to have equal access to the programs, projects, and activities related to transition. Students with a documented learning disability actually received fewer services but greater programming in general education (deFur et al., 1994). Even though research documented the need for self-determination for all students with disabilities, administrators perceived that only students with a mild disability or a sensory impairment benefited from self-determination instruction (Guy & Schriner, 1997). The type and intensity of services appeared to be contingent on

level and type of disability, rather than on the documented needs. While some System Change Grants provided transition specific personnel (transition coordinators), the literature review did not document their active participation in either planning or implementation.

The one question that was not included in the System Change Grants but should have been was "Did the monies spent during the 5-year System Change Grants period enable your state to be compliant with the rules and regulations set forth by OSEP?" Williams and O'Leary (2001) answered that question with a review of OSEP monitoring reports from 1993-1997. States that had not received System Change Grants were more likely to be in compliance with the transition regulations than were those states that received grants. The federal government provided states with 5 years of grant monies at $500,000 a year with no apparent substantive change or improved transition services to students with disabilities.

Implications for Students with Visual Impairments

Although the reviewed studies included students with visual impairments, it was difficult to discern any data that were specific to this population. The study by Lawson and Everson (1994) of students who were deafblind lacked detail that would generalize to the generic population of students with visual impairments. The lack of disability-specific data did not

present the studies from providing implications for students with visual impairments. Every procedure and issue takes on unique challenges for students with visual impairments. Research results have suggested that adolescents with visual impairments are more passive than their sighted peers (Sacks et al., 1998), which would indicate an even greater need for instruction in self-determination skills. In the study that included students who were deafblind, orientation and mobility services were noted on some of the document reviews but services from a TVI was not evident. Orientation and mobility was added in the reauthorization of IDEA (1997) as a related service for students with visual impairment.

TVIs are encouraged to provide instruction in nine critical areas of need referred to as the ECC (Hatlen, 1996) content areas (see definitions). Students with visual impairments tend not to learn these skills incidentally through modeling or general education coursework. It is recommended that students with visual impairments receive quality, individualized instruction by a TVI in all deficit areas of the ECC. While all nine of these areas contribute to the successful outcomes for students with visual impairments two areas relate directly to the research in transition planning and implementation: career education and self-determination skills. Wolffe, Sacks, Corn, Erin, Huebner, and Lewis (2002) found in a recent study that the majority of TVIs were tutoring in

the general education courses and not providing instruction in the ECC content areas, outlined by Hatlen. Wolffe et al. noted that career education was undertaken as a secondary activity and incorporated only as time permitted rather than as part of the instructional program.

Results of the reviewed studies confirmed that detailed attention was not given to the assessed needs of the students as they related to the students' chosen outcomes, which appears to be a similar issue for students with visual impairments. Collet-Klingenberg (1998) confirmed that students with an identified learning disability were more likely to be enrolled in general vocational courses but Blackorby and Wagner (1996) found that only 54.7% of students with visual impairments had accessed vocational courses in secondary educational settings. This represented the second lowest level of access of all disability areas (profound, severe disabilities).

Conclusion

Transition planning is the vehicle to provide for positive adult outcomes such as employment and independence for students with disabilities. Outcome studies such as the one conducted by Blackorby and Wagner (1996) found that competitive employment rates for youth with disabilities in 1993 lagged behind those for youth without disabilities (57% vs. 69%, respectively), with lower rates

of employment for specific disability areas such as visual impairments (30%) or multiple disabilities (26%). These rates of employment have been stagnant for young adults with visual impairments for over a decade (Associated Press, July 3, 1999). Wagner et al., (2003) found that the second cohort of NLTS students with visual impairments had a decreased employment rate during high school compared to the first cohort (22% vs. 16.7%, respectively). The stagnant employment rate for young adults with visual impairment after 14 years of guidance in transition and 12 years after implementation of the System Change Grant would appear to substantiate the opinion that, if the purpose of transition planning is to improve the outcome of students with disabilities, it is not working- possibly because it has not been implemented as envisioned by the creators of the legislation for students with visual impairments.

While this is not an exhaustive review of research on the impact of public policy on the level of implementation for students, it does provide a possible format in which to evaluate the impact of public policy. Pre/post student data would be needed to evaluate fully the change related to the implementation of public policies.

Implications for Iowa

Transition planning was envisioned by the federal government as the vehicle to ensure that students and professionals had the skills necessary for

successful transitioning to the next environment. Iowa was one of the first states to receive federal monies from the System Change Grants. With these monies, Iowa supported professional staff development to improve the skill level of professionals and employed transition coordinators and work experience coordinators. All of these activities were intended to improve the transition process and outcomes for students with disabilities. Through anecdotal conversation, TVIs reported little or no collaboration with transition specialists in planning for students with visual impairments and said that the transition coordinators and the work experience coordinators employed in some of the AEAs refused to work with students with visual impairments. They cited lack of knowledge in this disability area as the barrier.

Iowa is known for its stellar educational system and they purport to have some of the highest student outcomes in the country for students without disabilities. Recently federal scrutiny has focused on students with disabilities, English language learners, and students from low socio-economic backgrounds. The 2003 Iowa State Report Card for No Child Left Behind reported that proficiency levels in reading (27.5% vs. 82%, respectively) and math (39.7% vs. 86.9%, respectively) at the eleventh grade level were considerably lower for students with disabilities than for students without disabilities. Iowa does not disaggregate their report card data for students with disabilities but other

literacy studies conducted by the author (Blankenship, 2002) would appear to confirm that the literacy level for students with visual impairments is not commensurate with the levels for their sighted peers.

Additional statewide research by the author (Blankenship, 2000b) found that 48% of the students with visual impairments are served through a consult model only, with no direct instruction provided. Iowa has additional challenges since all service delivery to students with visual impairments is either an itinerant service from the AEA or residential services from Iowa Braille School. Iowa has a lot of rural school districts and TVIs travel great distances to provide service.

The reviewed studies demonstrated that policies and procedures alone did not improve student outcomes. Focusing the research on the three specific factors identified in the literature (required skills, teacher quality, and transition planning) for a specific student population would give the field of visual impairments needed data from which to assess the quality of transition planning for students with visual impairments. With the current outcomes of students with visual impairments it would appear that all three of these variables are compromised for this population.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to review and document the three variables that appear to impact the employment rate of youth with visual impairments: required skills, teacher quality, and transition planning. In addition, the study was designed to prove or refute the logic model that a *highly qualified* teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) would produce a transition IEP that reflected both compliance and promising practices.

A descriptive research design, which involved a document review, guided telephone interviews, and surveys, was conducted in Iowa, a state that purports to be the most literate state in the nation. This research design was chosen due to the complexities involved in the transition process. The three relevant variables were identified through a review of literature, yet they had not been evaluated for students with visual impairments.

The descriptive research design used both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Quantitative analysis provided for consistency across the various instruments while the qualitative analysis gave participants an opportunity for an in-depth discussion of transition in Iowa. Gall et al. (1996) defined qualitative research as a theory grounded in the assumption that individuals construct social reality in the form of meanings and interpretations. In addition, qualitative

methods can offer a means of revealing personal and subjective viewpoints, which assist us in understanding the human meanings associated with our choices about social policy and professional practice (Peck & Furman, 1992). Peck and Furman recommend the use of qualitative research to examine the non-implementation of public policy initiatives. The authors posit that while specific variables related to this issue might be studied using traditional methods (quantitative), the essence appears to manifest at the level of the "whole," in which a multiplicity of factors at several levels operate simultaneously to affect one another and that qualitative methods are well suited to the task of providing rich description and holistic analysis.

In addition, Kirchner (2003) noted that qualitative social research uses a wide range of data-collection methods, such as observation and in-depth interviews of individuals or groups. It typically relies on open-ended rather than closed-ended questions. He states further that data analysis and reporting is typically narrative rather than numeric groupings of data. Both types of data analysis were necessary to answer the following research questions:

What are the levels of compliance/promising practices on transition IEPs for students with visual impairments in the state of Iowa?

What variables in the focus areas distinguish a transition IEP that reflects variability (low, medium, high) of compliance/promising practices?

This study was conducted in two phases (*Phase One, Phase Two*). The participants, procedures, variables and data analysis will be reported separately for each phase of the study.

Phase One

Participants

Potential participants were the 36 TVIs that are responsible for educational services to students with visual impairments in Iowa. There are currently 25 professionals who provide services to students with visual impairments in the public school setting and 11 advocates at Iowa Braille School (IBS) who are responsible for developing the IEPs of students attending the special school. Iowa does not maintain a student data base and an accurate count of transition-aged students with visual impairments is not possible. In addition, it was not known how many of the identified professionals currently served transition-aged students.

Instruments

Two instruments were created to collect the needed data for this phase of the study; *Transition IEP Review Form* (see Appendix B) and the *Transition IEP Cover Sheet* (see Appendix C). Both of these instruments were created to collect quantitative data on the submitted IEPs.

*Transition IEP Review Form (Appendix B.)*The Transition IEP Review Form was adapted by the researcher for students with visual impairments from the Transition Requirement Checklist (O'Leary, Lehman, & Doty, 2001). Additional questions on the ECC content areas identified in existing literature as needed for positive adult outcomes were added to the existing review form (Hatlen, 1996, Pugh& Erin, 1999). Area Education Agency (AEA) personnel use this transition review form as part of the transition process in AEA 267, one area of the state. The review form provided evidence on the extent to which transition IEPs, meeting notices, and meeting minutes contained required transition information (compliance) and promising practices, including the number of ECC content areas. Student variables and services were documented on this instrument as well as the level of visual acuity, and amount of instruction per week provided by TVIs and COMS. Although this instrument was varied slightly to collect disability specific information for students with visual impairments, both the compliance and promising practice sections were basically the same as the instrument used for over 5 years in AEA 267. In addition, O'Leary (2003) has used the form with seven states and regions across the nation to collect similar transition data for comparison.

Transition IEP Cover Sheet. A transition cover sheet was developed by the researcher to collect needed information on the presence/level of MR, ECC content areas considered, and the level of teacher involvement in the development of the IEP. The presence and level of MR allowed the data to be

disaggregated for any differences among the students. Iowa is a non-categorical state, and identifying information is not needed in order to obtain special education services.

Procedures

The Iowa Department of Education recently requested that all consultants collect Annual Progress Report (APR) state data required by OSEP for our specific disability areas. One of the required data areas in the APR is that of transition planning. The researcher (Iowa Consultant for Visual Disabilities) developed a plan of research (research questions, methodology) to gather the needed data for Iowa's APR. The research plan was presented to the state vision supervisors who meet with the consultant semi-annually. The researcher, as a Department of Education employee, requested the transition IEPs for each transition-aged student with visual impairments in both the public schools (AEA) and at IBS in order to answer the first research question: What are the levels of compliance/promising practices on transition IEPs for students with visual impairments in the state of Iowa? Students attending public schools in Iowa receive services for their visual impairment (TVIs, COMS) from the AEA; LEA s do not hire professionals in the field of visual disabilities. The researcher's secretary developed a list of potential participants and assigned each participant a teacher code. She mailed out a packet with a cover letter that included instructions (Appendix A), Transition IEP Cover Sheet, and coding labels. TVIs

of students with visual impairments in Iowa were asked to submit coded transition IEPs (ages 14, 16, and > 16 years of age), the Transition IEP Cover Sheet, and parent notification letters for each transition-aged student. If a student was 14 years of age, teachers submitted one IEP, if the student was 16 years of age, two IEPs were submitted, and if the student was older than 16, the last IEP written for the specific student was submitted as well (n = 3). The researcher requested that all student-identifying information on the IEPs be blacked out except for the birth date and that the coding labels applied. The birth date was necessary for matching age and requirements (i.e., program of studies at age 14).

Each set of transition IEPs (n = 3) were rated using the *Transition IEP Review Form* by the researcher and two independent evaluators. Both of the independent evaluators had their Ph.D.s and had both had been previously employed at universities. One evaluator had expertise in the field of visual impairments while the other had expertise in the area of transition. The first independent evaluator rated a random sample (25%) of IEPs and the second rated a random sample (50%) of the first independent evaluator's IEPs. Consensus was formed between the researcher and the other two evaluators. This process was extremely important in identifying the areas of the ECC documented on the collected IEPs. Each IEP was then scored (39%-84) for the number of fields addressed and ranked according to the IEP score. Teachers' names were then revealed and added to the Excel worksheet. The researcher felt that knowing teachers' names during the scoring process could possibly bias the

evaluation. These scores and ranking order were used to identify potential participants in *Phase Two*.

Variables and Data Analysis

The variable for *Phase One* was the mean score (sum of) compliance, promising practices and the number of ECC content areas recorded on the collected IEPs. Each set of IEPs (1-3) received a percentile rating (see Coding Sheet, Appendix G). Additional variables such as the mean hours of instruction by a TVI and COMS were calculated for use in *Phase Two*.

The quantitative analysis consisted of sums, means, ranges and standard deviations. The quantitative data analysis provided continuity in the evaluation of the transition IEPs and the identified variables (i.e., required skills, teacher quality, transition planning) that appear to impact employment across all participants.

Simple means and standard deviations were calculated across the multiple IEPs for each student in the areas of compliance and promising practices, including the mean number of ECC content areas found where the TVI or COMS were listed as the responsible party. In addition, analysis was completed on the identified level of TVI development in the IEP, and the presence (and perceived level) or non-presence of MR as recorded on the Transition IEP Cover Sheet. The researcher attempted to collect the level of visual acuity (blind, legally blind, not legally blind) for each student for comparison but

this information was not documented on the collected IEPs as had been expected. The hours of weekly instruction by the TVI and the COMS, and whether students had access to either a work experience or transition coordinator, was recorded for each set of IEPs for additional data points.

The level of compliance for each IEP was based on the mean of the total number of possible fields for the compliance and promising practices areas. In addition, the mean ECC content areas documented on the IEP was calculated. After the variance in the IEPs were calculated and applied, the IEP scores fell into three groups, high (72% to 84%), middle (66% to 71%) and the low (39% to 61%). A separate worksheet was created that moved all of the data into a rank order (84% to 39%).

Data sheets were created by groups (high, middle, low) with the teacher names/codes, IEP scores, presence/non-presence of MR, level of involvement in the IEP process, weekly hours of instruction by the TVI and COMS, and the mean number of ECC content areas found on the IEPs.

Phase Two

Participants

Phase Two used the IEP rating/ranking from *Phase One* to identify potential participants to represent the high, middle, and low (IEP mean score and rank) group for analysis and comparison. Eight TVIs were selected for an in-

depth guided telephone interview and surveys. Three TVIs were selected from both the top and low group along with two TVIs from the middle group.

Instruments

Two instruments were selected and revised to gather data for these this phase of the study; the *Service Provider Survey: Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments* (see Appendix D), the *Teacher Efficacy Scale* developed by Gibson and Dembo in 1994 (see Appendix E).

Service Provider Survey: Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments: Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (Appendix C). This instrument was adapted by the researcher from a similar survey entitled Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education (SPeNSE), developed by WeSTAT (2002) and designed for teachers who work primarily with students with visual and/or hearing impairments. Only those questions that related to the seven teacher and/or service variables (i.e., professionalism, efficacy, credentials, experience, working conditions, perceived pedagogy and content knowledge, transition planning) were selected for inclusion. In addition, some of the questions were changed to reflect the reality of a teacher who provides educational services to students with visual impairments. Open-ended questions were added for in-depth teacher response across four broad areas (i.e., pedagogy, content knowledge, collaboration, transition). This instrument (excluding the open-ended questions) was piloted with teachers who do not reside in Iowa (the open-

ended questions were excluded since they had been added to reflect the reality of TVIs in Iowa). Teachers were asked to provide input on its efficiency (time needed) and effectiveness (appropriateness of the questions), and survey questions were modified or eliminated as a result of their feedback. On the average it took the teachers in the pilot study approximately 45 minutes to complete the one survey without the open-ended questions.

Teacher Efficacy Scale. This 30-item scale was developed by Gibson and Dembo (1984) and was used for its established reliability, in lieu of the efficacy questions included in the SPeNSE survey. Teachers are asked to respond to statements on their beliefs about their own effectiveness as teachers (personal efficacy) and about the influence a teacher has on students' learning and behavior (teaching efficacy). Reponses to each item are scored on a 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), with a perfect score of 6. This study used a shortened 16-item scale, similar to the one used by Kim and Corn (1998). Gibson and Dembo (1984) found sufficient reliability (alpha = .79) when only the 16 items were considered from their original 30-item scale.

Procedures

Phase Two was conducted to answer the second research question: What variables in the focus areas distinguish a transition IEP that reflects variability (low, medium, high groups) of compliance/promising practices? The eight TVIs

(participants) who were selected for participation in this study received a packet that included the IRB participant letter with instructions for the study (Appendix F), and the two instruments that were used during the guided interview. In addition, a stamped, self-addressed envelope was included for the return of the consent form. The first mailing resulted in three returned consent forms. A second mailing was sent, along with an electronic reminder regarding the purpose of the study and a request that consent forms be returned in a timely fashion. The second mailing resulted in five consent letters being submitted, resulting in three additional participants. Two other participants were selected (below or above, as appropriate) from the IEP ranking list to represent those potential participants who chose not to participate. The needed information was sent to the two additional potential participants, and a phone call was made to encourage participation.

A total of eight TVIs agreed to participate in *Phase Two*. These participants were selected to represent a variance in the quality of transition IEPs (i.e., high, middle, or low group). TVIs who represented the three highest rated IEPs chose not to participate in this study. Three participants represented the top ranked IEPs (range = 84% to 72%), three represented the low ranked IEPs (range = 39% to 61%), and two represented the middle (range = 71% to 66%). Unfortunately, one participant had IEPs across all groups (i.e., top, middle, and low group), four participants had IEPs in two different groups, and the remaining three participants had IEPs in only one group. Individual participant data were

analyzed for an answer to the phenomenon but nothing of interest emerged. The researcher then collapsed all of the submitted IEPs and calculated a mean IEP score for each participant (n = 5). The collapsed mean IEP scores continued to support the group assignment of each participant.

The participants completed most of the survey (except for the open-ended questions) and the teacher efficacy scale prior to the guided telephone interview for the participant's convenience and time constraints. In addition, this allowed the researcher to review some of the information prior to the guided interview and to ask for additional clarification or information as appropriate. The guided telephone interview (open-ended questions, any needed clarifications) lasted between 45 minutes and 1½ hours, depending on the length of each participant's response. The guided telephone interviews were recorded verbatim on a computer and read back to the participants for clarity and accuracy. The transcripts were then printed out (28 pages) and the responses were charted under each broad area (pedagogy, content knowledge, collaboration, transition). From the broad areas the researcher then developed consistent themes reported by the respondents. The number of similar responses was charted under themes derived from the threads of conversations for triangulation. In addition, the researcher read through the transcripts again to look for evidence that these were not the constant themes reported by the participants.

Variables and Data Analysis

The independent teacher variables used in *Phase Two* were (a) experience-years of teaching experience with students who are visually impaired and highest level of education; (b) credentials- Iowa endorsement in visual impairments; (c) professionalism-number of journals read on a regular basis, professional organization membership, estimated number of professional staff development hours in the last year; (d) efficacy level (personal & teaching); (e) working conditions-caseload, job responsibilities and perceived support from administration and colleagues, recruitment/retention; (f) perceived pedagogy and content knowledge, and (g) the level of participation in the development of the IEP-primary, secondary, or tertiary. Additional variables from *Phase One* were used as well: (a) amount of direct instruction from both a TVI and COMS; (b) access to a transition/work experience coordinator; (c) number of ECC content areas; and (d) presence/level of MR. The dependent variable for both sets of independent variables was the mean score of compliance and promising practices for each participant's set of transition IEPs.

Phase Two used both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative analysis (open-ended questions) to address the same variables (i.e., required skills, teacher quality, transition planning) that appear to impact student outcomes. The quantitative analysis consisted of sums, means, ranges and standard deviations. The quantitative data analysis provided continuity in the evaluation of the teacher variables across all eight participants.

Qualitative analysis was conducted to allow for in-depth exploration and background context for more focus on activities and events (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The qualitative data analysis conducted in this investigation allowed for an in-depth exploration of teacher perspective, and provided support and evidence for all areas of analysis, especially in the four thematic chunks of data (i.e., pedagogy, content knowledge, collaboration, transition planning). In addition, the researcher reviewed the threads of conversations for constant themes among the participants. Kahn and Cannell (1957 p. 149) referred to in-depth interviews as a "conversation with a purpose." Lincoln and Guba proposed four alternative constructs to ensure the validity of a descriptive study that uses qualitative data analysis (i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability).

All data points were analyzed across each participant and participant groups (high, middle, low). The qualitative data responses will be used below to support, repute, demonstrate or expand on the quantitative findings. In addition, the qualitative responses will be used to provide a description of professionals and services for transition-aged students in Iowa.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study was conducted in two phases. First transition IEPs for students in Iowa were collected and analyzed. The rating and ranking of those IEPs were then used to select participants who represented IEPs in the top, middle, and low group to provide a rich qualitative and quantitative description of the differences between those IEPs and teacher characteristics. The results of the two phases (*Phase One, Phase Two*) are presented separately to answer the two identified research questions: What are the levels of compliance and promising practices on transition IEPs for students with visual impairments in the state of Iowa? and What variables in the focus areas distinguish a transition IEP that reflects the variability of compliance and promising practices? The threads of conversation collected qualitatively during *Phase Two* will be used as examples for results in both *Phase One* and *Phase Two* sections. These threads of conversations provide background information and some possible rationale for the findings. Although some participants do not have an Iowa endorsement in visual impairments, all teachers who serve students with visual impairments in the public schools and the advocates at Iowa Braille School will be referred to as TVIs for purposes of this paper.

The results in *Phase One* are first reported separately for two of the three variables (required skills, transition planning), and then a combination of all data

is reported to answer the first research question. The results in *Phase Two* are first reported for teacher quality, and then a comparison is presented of the IEPs and teachers who represented the rank scores of the IEPs.

Phase One

The Iowa Department of Education requested transition IEPs (ages 14, 16, >16), parent notices, IEP minutes, and the Transition IEP Cover Sheet for each transition-aged student with a visual impairment in Iowa. Participation and submission of IEPs was voluntary. A total of 25 TVIs submitted transition IEPs (N = 88) and cover sheets that represented 50 transition-aged students. Iowa does not have a statewide data base and it would be impossible to determine what percentage of the total transition-aged population this represents. Although the parent notices were requested, only two participants submitted the parent notification letters, and all of the submitted letters contained 100% of the required fields, so those items were deleted from the review. The IEPs were evaluated for evidence of the required fields in compliance and promising practices using the Transition IEP Review Form. The fields were rated for evidence only, the quality of the fields and goals were not addressed in this study.

Teacher and Advocate Demographics

Of the 26 TVIs (public schools & Iowa Braille School) who submitted transition IEPs, 9 were advocates from Iowa Braille School. Advocates

may or may not be TVIs but are responsible for the development of the IEP for assigned students (n=3-4). Of those nine advocates, three are endorsed TVIs, two are dually certified TVIs and certified orientation and mobility specialists (COMS), two are endorsed teachers of students with multiple impairments, one is an adaptive physical education teacher, and one is the transition coordinator, who has an endorsement in transition. Four of the advocates do not have an endorsement in visual impairments. With the new No Child Left Behind guidelines for *high qualified teachers* three of the four non-endorsed professionals are expected to complete the endorsement coursework in visual impairments within 2 years. The only exception is the adaptive physical education teacher (state monitoring reports). Of the other 16 professionals that serve students in the public schools, only two do not currently have an endorsement in visual impairments or a dual certification in visual impairments and orientation and mobility. Both of the teachers without an endorsement in visual impairment have completed all of the needed coursework and are waiting on the completion of the paperwork. All of the 26 professionals are Caucasian and all but one has a master's degree. Although some TVIs employed in Iowa are visually impaired (*n* = 3) none of those professionals chose to participate.

IEP Demographics

Eighty-eight IEPs (50 students) were submitted. Of the 50 students, 30 were served in the public schools by the AEA and 20 were served at Iowa Braille School. The presence of mental retardation (MR) was reported for 31

(62%) of the students, most reported as having moderate MR (45%). All but one student from Iowa Braille School was identified with MR (95%), with the majority of students identified as having a moderate level of MR (58%). The 30 public school students represented by the IEPs had the presence of MR at a lower rate (46%) than the students at IBS (95%). Of those public school students with MR (46%), most were identified with profound MR (50%).

IEP Results

The 88 collected IEPs were collapsed and analyzed for each student (N = 50) using the Transition IEP Review Form (Appendix B). The IEP for age 14 was used to determine whether the course of study was provided, and the statement of needed transition services was determined by the IEP for age 16. The Expanded Core Curriculum content areas (see definitions) were collapsed and a mean for the number of submitted IEPs was derived. The other areas were scored and a mean was determined for the collapsed IEPs.

The mean score of the submitted IEPs was 67.48 (SD = 10.357) with a range from 39% to 84%. A slight difference in the mean was found on IEPs from the public school programs (63%) and Iowa Braille School (65%), although the IEPs from Iowa Braille reflected more ECC content areas (M = 4) than IEPs from the public school programs (M = 1.42).

Teacher Involvement in the Development of the IEP

TVIs (*N* = 26) who submitted transition IEPs reported that their involvement in the IEP process varied for the identified students. The respondents reported their roles (see Appendix C for criteria) were either a primary role (*n* = 27), a secondary role (*n* = 14), a tertiary role (*n* = 1), or were neither present nor developed goals for the IEP (*n* = 4). The advocates (*n* = 9) who submitted IEPs from Iowa Braille School reported a primary role for the development of the IEPs, the identified responsibility for a student's advocate at Iowa Braille School. The wide variance was among the teachers who serve students in the public schools. For those IEPs, where the TVI submitted goals but did not attend the IEP (*n* = 1), or did not attend or contribute goals (*n*=4), it was assumed that the unique needs of students with visual impairments were not addressed; however the mean scores of those IEPs were higher (70% and 74%, respectively) than those IEPs reported as primarily developed by a TVI (68%).

Formal/Informal Assessments

The IEPs submitted were reviewed for the presence of formal and informal assessments. Credit was given for any assessment or screening tool noted on the IEP. Most of the noted assessments were either conducted by a special education teacher or the COMS. Many IEPs did not name the instrument but alluded to a tool by the use of some quantifiable data (i.e., reading words per minute, comprehension). Formal assessments were noted on 29% of the submitted IEPs and informal assessments were noted on 75%. The IEPs were

disaggregated to review the ones submitted by Iowa Braille School and public schools. This review found that 20% of the IEPs from Iowa Braille School reflected a formal assessment, while 32% of the ones from public schools noted a formal assessment. In addition, 100% of the IEPs from Iowa Braille School reflected informal assessments and only 68% of the IEPs from public schools noted similar data.

Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) Content Areas

Instruction in the ECC content areas, and duration and intensity of instruction by qualified personnel were documented. Instruction in the ECC content areas is a recognized promising practice in the educational programming for students with visual impairments (Pugh & Erin, 1999). Only those goals or services reported in the nine areas of the ECC provided by a TVI or COMS were given credit. The mean ECC content areas were calculated across all of the submitted IEPs for each student. The mean number of ECC goals found for all of the IEPs in the study was 2.6 (*SD* = .7). The mean number of ECC goals found for students attending Iowa Braille School was four. The three most prevalent ECC content areas found on the IEPs were compensatory (braille, accommodations for students with multiple impairments), orientation and mobility, and assistive technology, all of which are required for consideration by law (IDEA, 1997). Although assistive technology was noted on most IEPs, instruction in those devices was rarely addressed. Four of the participants in *Phase Two* noted that the ECC content areas should be imbedded in the classroom instruction or provided

in the natural environment. Most IEPs did not reflect the TVI as the sole provider of these goal areas; many listed the vision para-educator, general education teacher, or special education teacher as well. The deciding factor for inclusion was the reference of a TVI or COMS somewhere on the goal or service page.

In addition, the data were disaggregated to look for differences in students with or without MR. The data revealed that students without MR had a mean of 2.1 ECC goal areas, while students with MR had a mean of 3.23 ECC goal areas. The data were disaggregated further by the level of MR, and it was found that students with mild MR had a mean of 3.3 ECC goal areas, while students with a moderate level of MR had a mean of 3.42. Students with profound or severe MR had the lowest mean of ECC goal areas (1.59).

Duration/Intensity of Instruction

The review of duration and intensity of instruction was not distinguished between consultation and direct service delivery models. The type of service delivery model was not found on the IEPs, but frequency and time were found on the service page of the IEP. All times listed for the teacher (public schools only) or COMS were calculated for weekly instruction (i.e., 60 minutes per month = 15 minutes a week). The average hours of weekly instruction provided by teachers in the public schools were .65 hours per week, less than an hour a week. (The IEPs submitted from Iowa Braille School were excluded from this statistic since the students receive at least 37 hours of instruction per week there and the mean would be inflated). Eight public school IEPs did not reflect any

time for instruction or services provided by a TVI. Additionally, these data were disaggregated to determine any differences between students with varied ability levels. Students without MR had a mean instructional time of 0.68 hours per week, again less than an hour a week, compared to all students with MR (1.36 hours per week). Students with a mild level of MR received the most instruction from a TVI (2.31 hours per week), while students with either a moderate or profound levels received the least amount of instructional time (0.32 and 0.367 hours per week, respectively).

The average instruction by COMS across all students (public school & Iowa Braille School) was 0.52 hours per week. When the IEPs from Iowa Braille School were disaggregated, the findings were somewhat different, with a mean of .249 hours per week for students in the public school and .68 hours per week for students attending Iowa Braille School (N = 20). Only two students at Iowa Braille School (N = 20) did not receive any instruction at all in the area of orientation and mobility, while 13 students (N = 30) in public schools did not receive any instruction.

These data were also disaggregated across all students to determine any differences between students with varied ability levels. Similar to the findings for instruction provided by a TVI, students with mild MR received the most weekly instruction by COMS (1.27 hours per week) while students with profound MR received the least amount of service (0.50). Students without MR received less service than all students with MR (0.52 hours per week and 0.75, respectively).

Access to Transition Specialists

Work experience and transition coordinator positions were initially created in some of the AEAs as a result of Iowa's Systems Change Grant. IEPs were analyzed to determine the presence of a work experience coordinators or transition coordinator at the transition IEP team meeting. Fifty-six percent of the IEPs (n = 28) reflected services from one of the specialists in the area of transition (i.e., work experience or transition coordinators).

Research Question One

What are the levels of compliance and promising practices on transition IEPs for students with visual impairments in the state of Iowa? The transition IEPs in Iowa ranged from a low level of compliance and promising practices (39%) to a moderate level of compliance and promising practices (84%) with a mean score of 67.4 % (SD = 10.35). The mean score of transition IEPs submitted from the public school programs were 63% and 65% from the transition IEPs submitted from Iowa Braille School. When the scores were disaggregated for students with and without MR the mean scores were 69% and 65%, respectively. When the scores were disaggregated further for the level of MR students findings documented similar mean scores for students with mild or moderate MR (72.6% and 72.5%, respectively), while students with profound MR had a mean score of 63.9%.

Phase Two

The IEPs collected and analyzed for *Phase One* were rated and then ranked from high to low (89% to 39%) for the possible fields on the Transition IEP Review Form. The variance between the collected IEPs was used to categorize the IEPs into groups referred to as high (84% to 72%), middle (71% to 65%), and low (62% to 39%). Eight teachers or advocates were selected to represent all three groups. This phase provided a detailed description of the selected professionals and a comparison of the professionals and IEPs found in all three areas. The participants (N = 8) completed the *Service Provider Survey: Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments*, the *Teacher Efficacy Scale* and participated in a guided telephone interview based on the open-ended questions in the areas of pedagogy, content knowledge, transition planning, and collaboration found on the *Service Provider Survey: Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (*questions 22, 24 to 30, 32, 36 to 39). The results are first presented across all TVIs and then disaggregated to explore the differences among the reviewed IEPs. The feminine pronoun is used to report the results but is meant to be gender inclusive so as not to identify the gender of the participants. The coding sheet (Appendix G) lists the criteria for each of the reported areas.

Participant Data

The participants (n = 8) collectively represented 152 years of teaching, 117 of those with students who are visually impaired (M = 14.6 years). Two participants do not currently have the Iowa endorsement in visual disabilities.

All but one of the participants has a master's degree. The mean efficacy score across all of the participants was 4.6 (*SD* = .32), from a range of 1 (lowest level) to 6 (highest level).

Working Conditions

The rural nature of Iowa and the AEA service delivery model makes working conditions, including caseload size, important to document and analyze. The data fields for working conditions (*n* = 8) included caseload size, administrative/professional support, miles traveled per week, percentage of work week in travel, percentage of students served on a direct basis, mean number of hours spent on instruction found on the IEPs for the participants, perceived ability to meet the IEP goals of all students, and presence of an AEA transition policy to guide their work. Each of these areas will be presented across all participants and individually when the variance in transition IEPs and teachers are presented.

Caseloads

The mean caseload for the participants in this study was 18, with a range of 10 to 31. The two participants with the highest caseloads (30 and 31, respectively) are different from the other participants: the participant with 30 students serves all transition-aged students at the special school Iowa Braille School, and the other participant had to absorb the caseload of another part-time teacher when that TVI left the AEA (reported during interview). The mean

caseload of the other participants without exceptional circumstances was 13.8 (10 to 18).

Support

Six questions that covered support, resources, paperwork, and common mission were explored. The mean score across all participants for these areas was 3.05 (*SD* = .45), which represented a moderate amount of perceived support. Three areas were ranked low by four participants (i.e., support, resources and shared beliefs among colleagues). In the area of support (administrative, professional) there was a consensus among all participants that neither administrators nor other professionals knew the role of the TVI or valued the ECC content areas instruction needed by students with visual impairments. In addition, none of the participants had ever received a formal evaluation of their teaching competencies by an administrator knowledgeable in the area of visual impairments.

One participant cited as an example that some teachers had taken responsibility for the general education of students with visual impairments, but if the student was a braille reader, literacy suddenly became the TVI's responsibility. The participant went on to say that this was really brought to the forefront when one of the school districts, which were piloting a new reading curriculum, sent it to the teacher just 3 weeks before the start of the new school year for brailling and implementation. The AEA no longer had a certified braillist, due to retirement.

Another participant noted that to be successful, instruction in the ECC content areas must be embedded in the daily activities provided by the special education teacher for students with visual impairment and additional disabilities. The same participant noted that in some classrooms she spent most of the instructional time modeling for the classroom teacher, and that when she returned later none of the strategies had been implemented. In addition, she said that some days the "classrooms just looked custodial." Another participant echoed the need for collaboration but noted that it was actually discouraged in her AEA; TVIs were expected to do pull out instruction only. Another participant posited that possibly the come and go nature of the itinerant service delivery model is most likely a barrier to understanding by other professionals where the traditional classroom model is still the norm.

Two other participants cited the supportive nature of the other TVIs in their AEA. They noted that the TVIs and COMS met together as a community of practice on a monthly basis as part of their QPVI (see definitions) process. From these meetings the participants shared that they had written a professional development plan to continue their learning and collaboration. The community of practice had developed assessment tools, curricula, and documented effective teaching strategies. She noted that all of the vision personnel worked together and gave each other feedback.

Access to resources appeared to be another common theme. Some TVIs have a certified braillist in their AEAs, while others must produce all of the adaptive materials for their individual caseload of students. Participants noted

that they spent a total of 0 to 4.5 hours per week producing adaptive materials (i.e., braille, large print, adapted materials for students with multiple impairments).

Travel

The next area addressed under the broader theme of working conditions was the number of miles the participants drove each week and what percentage of their work week was devoted to travel in order to perform the responsibilities of their job. The mean across all participants was 406.25 (range of 0 to 800) miles per week and accounted for a mean of 30.3% of their workweek (range 0 to 50%). One participant noted that, due to the rural nature of Iowa, teachers must be very flexible. She cited an example of driving 100 miles to reach her first school of the day. When she arrived, she learned that the student was absent and no one had bothered to call her on her cell phone and let her know. In addition, a school district's schedule can change on the spur of the moment, and consequently, the TVI must change her whole lesson plan and schedule. Another participant spoke about brailling on her dashboard as she drove for at least 100 miles to see a student.

Direct Services

The next area addressed was the percentage of direct instruction. TVIs were asked to determine the percentage of students on their current caseload that received direct instruction instead of consultation. Participants reported a mean of 52.3% (25% to 82%) of their caseload was direct instruction. Most participants noted that they considered collaborative instruction for students with multiple

impairments as essential for increased student achievement. The mean amount of instruction collected from *Phase One* provided by the eight participants was 7.8 hours a week. For the participants in the public schools a mean instructional time of .50 hour a week was documented. Only two IEPs reflected an hour or more of instruction, while three IEPs reflected no instructional time by the TVI. Participants did not discuss the level of instruction needed for students other than those with profound/severe multiple impairments. Participants noted that, for these students to make progress, instruction must occur in the natural environment, and be embedded in their classroom instruction, rather than being taught in isolation.

IEP Goals

When asked about their perceived ability to meet the IEP goals of students on their caseload, 5 of the participants ($N = 8$) reported that they could meet the IEPs to a moderate extent; only one participant felt that she couldn't meet the goals of the IEPs at all due to other working conditions (e.g., caseload, miles traveled). One of the issues and concerns mentioned by the participants included the time it took for students to meet their goals. Two other participants noted that it sometimes takes years to see the fruition of their instruction. All participants agreed that the collaborative relationships with the classroom teacher were important, yet noted that some teachers would not follow through with the suggested strategies. Participants reported frustration when they had to rely on others to implement instructional strategies; at the same time, they felt

they did not have the time to provide all the instruction a student needed for progress in the ECC content areas.

Policy

The last question related to the presence of a policy on transition planning that would guide these participants to both plan and provide the needed services for transition-age students. Most participants (n = 6) noted that a transition policy was in place to guide professionals. They were not asked to explain this policy or to rate their knowledge level regarding this policy. This would have been necessary to determine the extent to which this policy actually guided their work. This data point just documented that a policy was in place without measuring its usefulness.

Pedagogy

Pedagogy refers to those skills that quality teachers possess that enable them to assess student skill level, as well as plan for and implement effective instruction. In addition, skills are needed to evaluate student progress and make needed adjustments in instruction.

The first data point in the area of pedagogy (i.e., assessment, planning, instruction, ongoing probes) documented the amount of time participants noted on the *Service Provider Survey* in those skill areas defined as pedagogy as found on the Coding Sheet (Appendix G). The mean hours spent each week in activities that related to pedagogy was 14.18 (SD = 8.37) with a

range from 4 to 30 hours across all students. Participants were asked to identify the attributes of a highly effective teacher and then rate themselves on those identified attributes. Some of the words used to describe an effective teacher were book learning, leadership and collaboration skills, positive, passionate, mission-driven, willingness to learn, flexible, and the ability to evaluate and adjust to meet the needs of students. Three participants rated themselves as very competent; three others rated themselves as competent; and the two remaining participants rated themselves as somewhat competent.

All but two of the participants noted that ongoing probes were necessary to evaluate their teaching practices. In addition, some of the participants received informal feedback from families and other teachers. One example a participant cited was conducting workshops at one of her schools. The next week she received phone calls from two other schools asking for the same workshop. The same participant cited an example of a new teacher who purchased all of the materials she had used with her student in the classroom in order to implement the same strategies with the whole class. Another participant noted that if her students loved her she felt she was effective, while another noted that principals expressed appreciation for her presence in the building but didn't really know what she was supposed to do.

Content Knowledge

Content knowledge for TVIs is the ECC content areas, which includes making accommodations needed for students to access the general education

(i.e., compensatory skills). Some participants noted that these collaborations are sometimes difficult. One participant noted that some of the teachers in the AEA would not allow her in the classroom and saw her presence as adversarial or evaluative. Another participant reported that she served as the case manager for instruction and assigned roles and timelines for implementation of needed ECC content areas.

In addition to compensatory skills, the other eight areas of the ECC must be assessed and addressed, if needed (Pugh & Erin, 1999). Content knowledge was measured by two separate questions (see Coding Sheet, Appendix G). The first data point was the number of hours each week that teachers or advocates reported they spent in ECC content area instruction. The mean instructional time reported was 6.4 (0.5 to 20) hours per week. Participants were then asked to rate their competency level in each of the ECC content areas. Across all participants and all areas they ranked themselves as competent (2.7) using a 1 to 4 Likert-like scale (see *Service Provider Survey*, Appendix C). Areas that were noted by participants most often as ones in which they did not feel very competent or somewhat competent were O&M, and assistive technology, although these two areas were found most often on the collected IEPs. Although A assistive technology was found on most IEPs, instruction was rarely mentioned; only the piece of equipment or device was noted. One participant ranked herself as either not very competent or somewhat competent in 7 out of 9 areas. Two participants ranked themselves low in the area of compensatory skills that are needed to assist students in accessing the general education. Most participants felt that all

areas of the ECC were important for students, but in the area of transition three areas emerged as the strongest: career education, self-determination, and independent living skills. One participant stated that career education was the overarching umbrella for all the other areas, while another participant noted that instruction in the content area of career education must begin at preschool. The same participant shared how she explores various career options through stories and community visits. Several participants (n = 4) cited the assistance of an independent living outreach consultant and a transition consultant from Iowa Braille School in previous years, and the same participant felt these services were both effective and needed.

Collaboration

Collaboration is necessary for all aspects of the education appropriate for students with visual impairments. Two participants noted that finding the key collaborative relationships in the AEA or school district could be difficult. Participants identified various collaborations that were needed for the transition process. Interestingly, they did not cite families or other school personnel. The two collaborative partners cited most often were the Iowa Department for the Blind, Iowa's vocational rehabilitation partner for students with visual impairments, and the transition coordinators or work experience coordinators in each AEA. Additionally, school psychologists and guidance counselors were cited as partners by only two of the participants. For each of the cited partners,

the TVIs were asked to rate their services and collaboration skills. The two partners cited most often are addressed below:

Iowa Department for the Blind

The Iowa Department for the Blind has a long and rich history. They purport to serve the highest number of aging blind clients in the country. In addition, they report the highest client employment outcomes for the nation. Participants rated the collaboration skills of the department personnel as poor more often than average. All participants noted that the department personnel attended student meetings but did not contribute to goals or assist in obtaining work experience for the students. A few of the participants (n = 3) found that other teachers in their AEA were more helpful in providing work experience for students. In addition, they reported services to be inadequate; or at best, only some services were provided. One participant noted that collaboration with the department was awkward at best. Another participant noted that nothing would occur for students if she did not provide the transition services herself. Some of the participants (n = 4) noted that it appeared that separate meetings were held with families outside of the transition IEP meetings and that they never received follow-up from these meetings or the summer/weekend transition classes provided by the department.

On a more positive note, two participants noted exceptions to other participants' poor rating of the department collaboration and services. One participant noted very good collaboration with one of the named counselors, and

the other participant noted that another counselor was locating external funding to purchase needed equipment for her student.

Work Experience/Transition Coordinator

All but one participant rated the collaboration and level of services provided by the work experience coordinators or transition coordinators as average collaboration skills and reported that some services were provided. Examples noted by some of the participants included the willingness of the transition coordinators and work experience coordinators to brainstorm, try new things and "go out on a limb." A concern over a recent layoff of many of the transition coordinators was reported by one of the participants. She reported that the number of available personnel had decreased from seven to two in one AEA due to budget cuts.

One statement from a participant appeared to be telling about the itinerant service delivery model. This participant believed prior years of experience as a TVI, in multiple settings, was an added value being new in the AEA, she felt that a first year TVI would have difficulty finding the critical partners and establishing those collaborative relationships. She also noted that experience had helped her understand the different terminology used by the various collaborative partners. Two other participants noted that collaborative partnerships appeared to work better in other states where there were monthly meetings of all service providers and where some service was provided at on-the-job sites. One participant felt that the reason for this was that other states did

not have the financial resources of Iowa and people had to pull together and collaborate to make a difference in a student's life.

Transition

Transition planning is the vehicle used by high schools to ensure that students with visual impairments have the skills, coursework, and services needed to reach their chosen outcomes for the next environment. A question was designed to query participants on the effectiveness of their AEA/IBS transition planning process and to document strengths and barriers within each site. Most participants believed their transition planning was effective or somewhat effective (n = 6), and only one participant felt her transition planning was very effective. Most of the participants (n = 7) felt the transition planning was not as effective as it could be and cited unidentified local resources, a lack of work experience opportunities, lack of student motivation, a lack of training for TVIs and other personnel, and inconsistent case management as barriers to effective planning. Another participant believed that students without MR were being left out of the whole transition process and had to figure the system out on their own.

One comment generated from the interviews was very disturbing in the area of transition planning. A participant relayed that her AEA was so strict in the role and responsibility of the TVI that she was not allowed to address transition planning, only reading and math. However, the same participant noted that transition coordinators had expressed to her that they really do not

know how to assist students with visual impairments. In addition, the participant noted that schools are so consumed with No Child Left Behind that transition is not a focus area.

Some positive attributes of transition planning were found. One participant reported using person-centered planning for most transition-aged students, but noted that it was time consuming and couldn't be used for all students. Another participate noted the use of the Transition Tote System, available from the American Printing House for the Blind to address all needed areas of transition. Yet another participant was collaborating with a counselor to provide classes in self-determination to give students the skills needed to lead the transition planning process.

Several suggestions to improve the transition planning process were noted. Most participants (n = 6) thought that the transition planning process did not seem to be coordinated. They suggested that the planning process consist of three separate meetings that would address planning, developing goals, and Follow-up. Two of the participants noted that the special schools in other states for which they had worked provided a tremendous amount of support and expertise in this area. Some participants noted that IBS used to provide some transition services through the outreach program and that they would like to see those services provided again. Iowa Braille School was documented as a linkage on some of the reviewed IEPs.

Qualitative Data Results

Additional qualitative data analysis revealed some constant themes espoused by the participants within these four broad areas (pedagogy, content knowledge, collaboration, transition). Within these areas, additional themes emerged such as data-driven-decision making (i.e., "I have a self-assessment tool that my students fill out, " "I help students find the right vocabulary to demonstrate growth and improvement, " "I constantly probe for learning retention, " "we use progress monitoring to chart instruction, " "ability to use data to evaluate and adjust for student learning"), uninformed administrators and teachers (i.e., "not like 15 years ago when your supervisor was trained in visual impairments, " "collaboration is not encouraged, " "some teachers implement suggested strategies, " "while most do not, some teachers ask what I am doing, " "principal says they are glad that I am there but they don't know what I'm supposed to be doing, " "the other teachers in the vision program give me my best feedback"), the importance of collaboration (i.e., "contacts with the needed partners in the AEA is critical for transition, " "students need mentors with a visual impairment, " "co-teaching would be the strongest model of instruction for some of my students, " "teacher is just a case manager for the instruction in the ECC content areas, " "most of my students have MR and instruction has been difficult due to the lack of collaboration by classroom teacher, " "I can't get teachers to give my students enough response time, " "it's important to model and supervise other individuals who are working with the student, " "I embed these goals into the IEP and expect other professionals to

implement and keep data"), and the importance of the ECC content areas (i.e., "In another state I had social skills clubs and recreational programs after school, " "I'm working on emergent literacy tactile books for early readers, " "I want to see increased independence and self-advocacy of my students, " "must be well-organized and goal directed to meet the ECC areas, " "I use computer-based story books with Intelli-tools for braille and recreation/leisure, " "I provide a class on self-determination, " "we have a competency based curriculum for all of the ECC content areas, " "must be knowledgeable in the areas of the ECC, " "I use a combination of curriculums to teach the ECC content areas, " "we are not allowed to teach in the ECC content areas, start career education in pre-school") as reported by the participants. Guba (1978) recommended that as categories of meaning emerge, it is important for the researcher to search for internal consistency. Most of these responses were used to support or refute other areas but the themes stand alone as an area of concern and focus expressed by the participants in this study.

Research Question Two

What variables in the focus areas distinguish a transition IEP that reflects the variability of compliance and promising practices? The areas that impacted the IEP level of compliance and promising practices were experience, self-efficacy, pedagogy, content knowledge. Professionalism, education and credentials did not impact the IEP level of compliance and promising practices. The working conditions that impacted the IEP level of compliance and promising practices

were the number of miles traveled each week, the percentage of work week spent in travel. Caseload size did not impact the IEP level of compliance and promising practices.

This question addressed both IEP variables and teacher variables. The IEP score, documented and described in *Phase One,* provided the three groups (high, middle, low) that were used for comparison to answer this research question. The variability of the IEPs was described in *Phase One,* but for this section, the data were collapsed for all IEPs in the three areas. Similar procedures were used for TVI variability. Participant data were collapsed by groups (high, middle, low) and a mean was derived for each area.

IEP Variance

The following areas from *Phase One*: level of TVI involvement in the IEP, number of ECC goals, level of MR, instructional time by TVI and COMS, presence of a work experience coordinators or transition coordinators were reviewed for noted differences (see Table 2) among the three groups of concern (high, middle, low). Additional threads of conversations collected as part of *Phase Two* were used to present supporting or conflicting data, as needed.

Participants had a higher level of involvement with the IEPs in the low IEP group. The top and middle had the only level four involvements, where a TVI neither attended nor submitted goals to develop the IEP. Very little difference was noted in the other levels of involvement. The mean number of ECC goal areas was higher on the high IEPs compared to the other two groups (3.0, 2.3, and 2.2, respectively). All three groups had about the same number of

students with MR (11, 11, 9). The low IEPs had a higher number of students with profound/severe MR (*n* = 6) compared to the top (*n* = 2) and the middle (*n* = 3) areas.

Table 2

IEP Variance

IEP Group	Level of TVI involvement[a]	Mean # of ECC content areas	Level of Mental Retardation[b]	TVI instruction	COMS instruction	Presence of WEC/TC[c] (*N*=28)
Top	Level 1 = 9 Level 2 = 6 Level 3 = 0 Level 4 = 2	3	1 = 1 2 = 7 3 = 2	17.9 hours	.62 hours	*n* = 13
Middle	Level 1 = 8 Level 2 = 5 Level 3 = 1 Level 4 = 2	2.3	1 = 3 2 = 5 3 = 3	16.4 hours	.89 hours	*n* = 10
High	Level 1 = 10 Level 2 = 6 Level 3 = 0 Level 4 = 0	2.2	1 = 1 2 = 2 3 = 6	9.2 hours	.56 hours	*n* = 5

[a] Level of TVI Involvement in the IEP process: 1= wrote IEP, 2= contributed goals & attended IEP, 3=contributed goals but did not attend IEP, 4= did not attend IEP or contribute goals

[b] Level of Mental Retardation: 1= mild, 2= moderate, 3= profound/severe

[c] WEC/TC: Work experience coordinator/transition coordinator

The mean instructional time reported by TVIs was much higher for the top group (17.8 hours per week) compared to the low group (9.2 hours per

week); however, the IEPs included from Iowa Braille School appeared to skew these numbers. When the data were disaggregated for students served in the public schools, the top group received a higher amount of instruction (0.99 hours per week) compared to both the middle and low groups (0.42 and 0.69 hours per week, respectively). Weekly hours of instruction in O&M, across all students were actually higher in the middle group (.89 hours per week) than either the top or low group (.62 and 56 hours per week, respectively). The last area was the presence of a work experience coordinator or transition coordinator as documented on the IEP. These specially trained personnel attended the transition IEP more often in the top group (13 IEPs) compared to the middle or low IEP group (10 IEPs and 5 IEPs, respectively).

Participant Variance

The differences between participants in the three groups of IEP rankings (high, middle, and low) are described in this section. Some of the participants (*n* = 5) had IEPs in more than one group but when the IEPs were collapsed and a mean was calculated across all submitted IEPs the participants remained in the three identified groups (see logic model discussion in Chapter V for further explanation). Ten of the identified areas (*N* = 17) appeared to be different for the teachers in the high IEP group (see Table 3). Each of these data points is provided and discussed. Additional qualitative evidence collected in *Phase Two* is provided as well to either confirm or discount the finding.

Table 3

Participant Variance

Data field	Top	Middle	Low
Mean IEP score	80.7	65.0	47.6
Mean years of experience	16.0	12.5	14.6
Education level[a]	2	2 = 1 2 = 2	2
Credentials[b]	2 = 2 1 =1	2	2 = 2 1 = 1
Mean self-efficacy rating	4.4	4	3.7
Professionalism[c]	3 = 1 2 = 1 1 = 1	3	2 = 2 3 = 1
Mean # of students on caseload	21.3	12	18.6
Mean level of administrative/ professional support	2.8	3.2	3.1
Mean number of miles/week	216.6	500.0	533.3
% of work week in travel	11.0	35.0	46.6
% of work week in direct instruction	50.3	72.0	41.3
Mean hours of VI instruction in IEP	12.5	.55	.22
Mean ability rating to meet IEP goals	3.0	3.5	3.0
AEA/IBS transition plan[d]	2 = 2 1 = 1	2 = 1 3 = 1	2
Mean hours spent in pedagogy activities	21.7	14.0	6.8
Mean effective teacher rating[e]	4	3	3
Mean hrs spent in ECC content instruction	12.0	6.0	1.1

Data field	Top	Middle	Low
Mean competency rating for instr in ECC[f]	3.4	2.9	2.0
Effectiveness of transition policy[g]	4 = 1 3 = 1 2 = 1	2 = 1 3 = 1	1

[a] Level of Education: 1=Bachelors, 2= Masters

[b] Credentials: 1=No Iowa endorsement, 2= Iowa endorsement

[c] Professionalism: 1=low, 2=moderate, 3=high

[d] Transition Policy in Place: 1=no, 2=yes

[e] Teacher attribute rating: 1= not competent, 2= somewhat competent, 3=competent, 4= very competent

[f] ECC competency rating: 1= not competent, 2= somewhat competent, 3=competent, 4= very competent

[g] Effectiveness of transition planning: 1=not effective, 2=somewhat effective, 3=effective, 4=very effective

Teachers in the high IEP group had 48 total years of experience with a mean of 16 years, while the mean for teachers in the middle group was 12.5 years; the mean for teachers in the low group was a little higher at 14.6 years. Teachers in the high IEP group had a higher efficacy mean (4.3) than teachers in either the middle (4) or low (3.7) group. Caseload size did not seem to make a difference since the teachers in the high group had a higher caseload mean (21 students) than teachers in the middle (12 students) and low (18.6 students) IEP groups. One participant cited caseload as a critical barrier to effective transition planning, although these data would not substantiate such a premise.

Travel does appear to impact policy and procedures. The teachers in the low group traveled further (*M* = 533.3 miles) and spent more of their work week in travel (46%), compared to teachers in the high group who only traveled a

mean of 216 miles and devoted only 11% of their work week to travel. Instruction provided by the participants found on their IEPs from *Phase One* was higher in the high group of teachers (16.46 hours per week) compared to teachers in the low (.33 hours per week) group.

Teacher Quality

The two skill areas (pedagogy, content knowledge) found in the literature to be associated with a *highly effective* teacher (Jordan, Mendro, & Weerasinghe, 1997; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Westat, 2002) were highest for teachers in the high group. They spent more time in activities of pedagogy (21 hours) and instruction in the ECC content areas (12 hours) than did teachers in the low (6.8 hours and 1.1 hours, respectively) or middle group (14 hours and 6 hours, respectively). Teachers in the high area were more likely to talk about data-driven decision-making and the importance of being a lifelong learner. In addition, they could articulate the need to plan, implement, and evaluate with integrity. Teachers in the high area rated their effectiveness as teachers (4.0) and their knowledge in the content areas (3.4) at a higher rate than did teachers in the low (2.6 and 2.0, respectively). The last area of difference was that teachers in the high area had more confidence in the effectiveness of their transition planning (2.5) compared to teachers in the low group (1.0) using a four point Likert-like scale (*Service Provider Survey*, Appendix C). See coding sheet (Appendix G) for criteria for each area noted.

Unlike in the SPeNSE survey (Westat, 2002), factor-loading analysis was not conducted to determine the predictive value of the chosen variables due to

the low number of participants and the desire to provide some quantifiable data along with a more detailed description of transition services.

The seven areas that did not appear to impact the IEP ranking were the level of education, credentials, professionalism, administrative and professional support, percentage of time devoted to direct instruction, ability to meet student IEPs goals, or having a transition policy in place.

Triangulation

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four alternative constructs to ensure the validity of qualitative data analysis (i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability). The researcher addressed all four of these constructs by providing the reader with a detailed description of the procedures and results for both credibility and dependability. In addition, the researcher listened to the participants with an empathic ear in order not to bias the conversations. The transferability of this research was not an issue. This study was conducted to reflect services and professionals in Iowa but the same procedures could be used in other states or with other disability populations (i.e., deaf/hard of hearing).

The Survey of Service Providers; Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments was adapted from the previous SPeNSE survey (Westat, 2000) and piloted with TVIs in another state for instrument reliability, and a response from one of the participants provided an additional validation of the instrument content. The survey was developed to capture the TVIs perception of the questions not to

measure the level or quality of the services. One of the participants remarked at the end of the interview that the questions were not only profound but made her really think about her profession. She went on to say that the questions made her reflect on her current practice and that she would evaluate herself on the effective teacher attributes that she had identified.

Summary

The variety of instruments, number of data fields, and the use of both qualitative and quantitative data analysis provided a rich description of current transition planning, available services for students with visual impairments, and of the TVIs that provide those services in the state of Iowa. Although the number of promising practices found on the transition IEPs was low, there were a number of positive findings from the guided-telephone interviews. It is possible that TVIs are implementing promising practices but are not documenting them on the IEP. In addition, the described attributes of a highly qualified TVI were aligned with the national research and provided great promise for skill development. These identified attributes should be incorporated into all on-going professional staff development opportunities to build skills in pedagogy and content knowledge simultaneously.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of both phases of this study was to review and describe the importance of the three variables (required skills, teacher quality, transition planning) for youth with visual impairments that appear to impact the employment of all youth with disabilities. In addition, the study was designed to answer the following two questions: (a) What are the levels of compliance and promising practices on transition IEPs for students with visual impairments in the state of Iowa? and (b) What variables in the focus areas distinguish a transition IEP that reflects the variability of compliance and promising practices?

Unlike previous investigations that evaluated the three variables in isolation, the primary objective of this study was to describe how all three were inter-related. In addition, this study was designed to describe the frequency and areas of instruction provided to students with visual impairments by TVIs and COMS. The attributes of teacher quality as they relate to TVIs, and the current transition planning practices for students with visual impairments in Iowa were described as well.

The two research questions will be addressed separately and the three variables will be addressed as part of both research questions, as appropriate. In the first section, data from both phases of the study will be used as evidence or

examples for both of the research questions. Data from *Phase Two* is signified by the use of the word "participants" or as *Phase Two*. The next section will present the findings for the identified logic model that was assumed throughout this study: *A Highly qualified teacher will produce a transition IEP that reflects a high level of both compliance and promising practices*. The last sections will address the limitations, issues and future questions, summary, Iowa's response and future direction, and implications for the future.

Research Question One

What are the levels of compliance and promising practices on transition IEPs for students with visual impairments in the state of Iowa? This research question was assessed and analyzed as *Phase One* of this study and used the Transition Review Form to assess the identified fields in compliance and promising practices, including ECC content areas. The transition IEPs in Iowa ranged from a low level of compliance and promising practices (39%) to a moderate level of compliance and promising practices (84%) with a mean score of 67.4 % (*SD* = 10.35). The mean score of transition IEPs submitted from the public school programs were 63% and 65% from the transition IEPs submitted from Iowa Braille School. When the scores were disaggregated for students with and without MR the mean scores were 69% and 65%, respectively. When the scores were disaggregated further for the level of MR students findings documented similar mean scores for

students with mild or moderate MR (72.6% and 72.5%, respectively), while students with profound MR had a mean score of 63.9%.

The IEPs in Iowa displayed a wide variance in the levels of compliance and promising practices (84% to 39%). Generally, most IEPs in Iowa reflected areas of compliance. Parents were in attendance 100% of the time, although this study did not include collection of data on the level of participation by parents or the level of agreement with the developed transition IEP. Most national studies reflected a high level of parent participation but it was mostly passive, and parents were not seen as collaborative partners. Staff from Iowa Department for the Blind attended the meetings but only one plan was noted that reflected any responsibility or goals for their participation. Students did not always attend IEP team meetings. Only a few parent notices were submitted, and all of them contained 100% of the required fields. They appeared to be in a standardized format that was developed to include all required fields. The course of study required by age 14 and the statement of needed transition services were addressed for most students.

Of the five required transition areas (instruction, related services, community experiences, employment and post-school living objectives, and life-long learning objectives), instruction and related services were identified more often than community experiences, or employment and post-school living objectives on the reviewed IEPs. Community experiences were most often provided by a work experience coordinator, COMS, or a general special

education teacher. Some IEPs reflected a community-based curriculum but credit was not given unless community experiences were noted. Objectives in life-long learning were very rarely documented on the IEP. Again, the IEPs were evaluated for evidence only and not for quality. The requirement that activities are presented as a coordinated set of activities is broadly defined in law, but the present researcher determined that all five required transition areas would have to be addressed to receive credit for this field. Most IEPs did not address all five areas and did not receive credit for this field of compliance. Most IEPs included the statement for the age of majority. Only 34% of the IEPs did not identify orientation and mobility as a related service. Consideration of orientation and mobility is required by law. It would be impossible to know the assessed needs of the students not receiving orientation and mobility. Consideration of assistive technology and braille instruction (compensatory skills) are also required by law. These three ECC content areas were found most often on the reviewed IEPs. Again, there was no way to determine what the assessed needs of the students were. TVIs were asked to circle the ECC content areas considered for each student on the Transition IEP Cover Sheet. Most circled every area, which appeared not to be a credible method of determining the alignment with the areas needed and the instruction provided. In general, the IEPs in Iowa were compliant with the required IEP fields, but in the area of promising practices or the intent of the law, the results were not as conclusive.

In the area of promising practices, Iowa IEPs reflected the student/family vision as part of the older IEPs that were developed by each AEA and the latest state-wide IEP. No evidence was found that students were leading their IEPs. This data point would be difficult to identify on the IEP if it was not noted by the developer. Some students may have lead their IEPs and it was not captured on the IEP itself. Only one IEP reflected parent training in the area of transition, an identified promising practice. Only one IEP from the public school programs and two IEPs from Iowa Braille School reflected person-centered planning, another identified promising practice. The one IEP from the public schools that did reflect Person -centered planning (promising practice) listed Iowa Braille School as the linkage to complete the process for the family. Person-centered planning is time intensive but is recommended in Iowa to bring all collaborative partners together (including the student) to set realistic outcomes based on the identified interests and preferences of individual students and their assessed skills and abilities. The use of person-centered planning was an identified component of *model* transition sites (Hasazi et al., 1999).

Assessment and instruction in the ECC content areas is considered a promising practice for students with visual impairments (Hatlen, 1996; Pugh & Erin, 1999). The number of ECC content areas found on the IEPs was generally low. Career education and self-determination would be expected on the IEPs for transition-aged students yet compensatory and assistive technology goals were found more often. The IEPs from Iowa Braille School reflected three times more

ECC content areas than those from public schools. Informal assessments were noted most often for O&M.

Type and Amount of Instruction (Required Skills)

Required skills are those competencies identified in research that students need to successfully transition to the next environment. A review of literature found both school-based (i.e., reading, writing, math) and work-based skills (i.e., social skills, work experience, job search skills) were needed for successful transitioning and positive adult outcomes that included competitive employment. In addition to the identified skill areas, the literature suggests that students with visual impairments need direct instruction in another set of skills known as the ECC content areas (Hatlen, 1996; Pugh & Erin, 1999).

The mean ECC content areas noted on the reviewed IEPs for students in public schools was 1.42 compared to those for students from Iowa Braille School (4.0). For both groups with moderate MR had the highest number of ECC content areas reflected on their IEPs (3.42) compared to all students without MR (2.1). Hatlen (1996) has posited that instruction in these content areas is the primary role of the TVI, although Wolffe et al. (2002) noted that most TVIs were tutoring in the academic areas instead of providing direct instruction in the ECC content areas as recommended. The difference in the number of ECC content areas addressed on IEPs from Iowa Braille School was not a surprise. Iowa Braille School has a competency based curriculum for teachers to follow in all ECC content areas and that curriculum was cited as an asset for instruction in the

content areas by one of the participants. Monthly Quality Programs for Students with Visual Impairments meetings at Iowa Braille School revealed that most students received continuing instruction in the ECC content areas in the residential setting (after school hours), a more naturalistic environment. In addition, it was expected that the frequency and duration of instruction by the TVI would impact the competency levels (ECC content areas) achieved by students with visual impairments. The mean level of instruction noted from both a TVI (.50 hours per week) and COMS (.68 hours per week) was less than an hour a week on the IEPs from the public schools. Although the type of service (direct, consultative, collaborative) was not reflected on the reviewed IEPs, participants reported that direct instruction varied for the students on their caseload (*M* = 49%) with a range of 26% to 82%. In a previous needs assessment, Blankenship (2000b) found that only 52% of the students with visual impairments in Iowa were served on a direct basis, even when it was defined to include collaboration and accommodations. In addition, the needs assessment revealed that students with MR accounted for 50% of the braille instruction in the state, including those students with moderate or profound MR, which may account for the high number of ECC content areas for these students.

School-Based Skills

School-based skill levels for students with visual impairments were impossible to determine from this IEP review, although needed accommodations to access the general education is a compensatory skill (ECC) and the TVI is

responsible for making recommendations based on both formal and informal evaluations. For purposes of this study formal evaluations were the three assessments conducted by a TVI (functional vision assessment, learning media assessment, assessments in the ECC content areas), basic reading inventories, and other academic assessments noted. The assessments that were considered informal were checklists or presumed checklists from the goal statements. Consistent rater reliability was established for formal and informal assessments.

Only 20% of the IEPs from Iowa Braille School reflected formal evaluations while 32% of the IEPs from public schools reflected a formal evaluation. Informal evaluations were reflected on 100% of the IEPs from Iowa Braille School and on 68% of the IEPs from the public schools. Although these assessments are not criterion-referenced, they are considered formal by the researcher for this study since they are published and used nationally in the field of visual impairments. One IEP (N = 88) reflected a functional vision assessment and one IEP reflected a learning media assessment. ECC content area assessments were never noted in the baseline on the goal pages as expected. Some of the IEPs reflected an informal checklist developed and used by the COMS. In addition, participants reported that the amount of time spent each work week conducting assessments varied among participants (mean of 1.5 hours). The amount of time ranged from .5 to 4.0 hours per week, depending on the participant. Participants were not asked to distinguish between formal or informal assessments.

Informal evaluations were noted more often than formal evaluations, as has been seen in other studies (Johnson & Sharpe, 2000; McMahan & Baer, 2002). The lack of noted formal evaluations was not surprising. Blankenship (2000b) found that TVIs reported only 38% of the students in Iowa with visual impairments had ever received a functional vision assessment, one formal assessment tool administered by TVIs to determine needed accommodations.

The research regarding the correlation between content knowledge in core areas and student achievement for students without disabilities is compelling (Ferguson, 1991; Jordan et al., 1997; Murnane, 1981; Rosenholtz, 1989; Sanders & Rivers; 1996; Turner & Camilli, 1988; Wendling & Cohen, 1980). For the core curriculum or general education the regular classroom teacher is considered the specialist in reading, math, and science, those areas of instruction measured by the No Child Left Behind educational act. It is imperative that the TVIs collaborate and provide the needed accommodations for students with visual impairments to successfully participate in the general education. In addition, collaboration skills are recognized as essential by Iowa licensure standards for any professional who serves students on an itinerant basis. Although collaboration is necessary to meet the educational needs of students with visual impairments, the task can be daunting when one thinks of TVIs who serve 50 school districts and drive 800 miles a month.

Work-Based Skills

The identified work-based skills (social skills, work experience, job search skills) are included in two of the ECC content areas (social interaction skills, career education), and instruction in these two content areas is recommended by Wolffe (1999) for transition-aged students. In addition, instruction in self-determination, the newly identified ninth area of the ECC (Hatlen, 2003) has been identified as important for all students with disabilities (Wehmeyer, 1992).

Although these three areas (social interaction skills, career education, self-determination) would be expected to be documented more frequently than others for transition-aged students, the three areas that were most often identified were assistive technology, O&M, and braille instruction (compensatory skill). Instruction in self-determination was found more often on the orientation and mobility goals.

All three of the areas (assistive technology, braille, O&M) are required by law for consideration, which may indicate that TVIs are more familiar with compliance than promising practices. Although assistive technology was identified frequently on the reviewed IEPs, instruction in these devices was never found. It would be impossible with this study to determine if the students were proficient with the identified technology, thus not requiring instruction, or if instruction never occurred.

Self-determination is a relatively new concept for students with visual impairments. Some of the constructs of self-determination were immersed in the social interaction skills content area. Self-determination is a recognized

promising practice for students with disabilities. The low numbers of identified self-determination goals were similar to those described in the reviewed studies. Both Johnson and Sharpe (2000) and McMahan and Baer (2001) found that instruction in self-determination was one of the "least likely" strategies used for transition planning. In addition, Lawson and Everson (1994) found no evidence of self-determination for students identified as deafblind. Similar to the findings by Collette-Klingenberg (1998), self-determination was mentioned by participants, yet was infrequently documented on the IEP.

Collaborative Partnerships

Effective transition planning requires a collaborative partnership among education personnel, other transition professionals, and the rehabilitation agency. In Iowa the rehabilitative agency is the Iowa Department for the Blind. Although Department representatives attended most of the IEP team meetings, evidence of goals or outcomes was rarely found on the IEPs (n = 1). A consistent theme reported by most of the participants was their perception that the Department only wanted academic students. One participant cited that a counselor from the Department asked if the student could be "rehabilitated"; the participant assumed that students with multiple disabilities would not meet those criteria and therefore would not be served.

Participants noted philosophical differences and issues of trust among the Department personnel and those in the educational system that appear to be a barrier for true partnerships. The few positive partnerships reported appeared to

be contingent on the person providing the service rather than on any department policy and procedures. Currently Iowa Department for the Blind has not developed written policies and procedures regarding service delivery for transition-aged students.

An interesting data point that emerged in this study was the number of work experience coordinators and transition coordinators found on the reviewed IEPs. These professionals were in attendance and identified on 56% of the IEPs. The highest group of IEPs in *Phase Two* had these personnel in attendance 2.6 times more often than the lowest group. These positions were added as part of the System Change Grant that Iowa received in 1992, but TVIs have anecdotally complained that students with visual impairments did not have access to these transition specialists. However, the data would not support that premise since 56% of the reviewed IEPs documented collaboration with these professionals. Additional collaborative partners such as guidance counselors or school psychologists were rarely noted on the IEPs, as was found in an earlier study by Getzel and deFur (1997).

Research Question Two

What variables in the focus areas distinguish a transition IEP that reflects the variability of compliance and promising practices? Much research has been devoted to the identified attributes of a highly effective general education teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Sanders & Rivers, 1996, & Westat, 2000). It was assumed that the findings of these researchers would hold

true for a sub-population like teachers of students with visual impairments as well. The areas that impacted the IEP level of compliance and promising practices were experience, self-efficacy, pedagogy, content knowledge. Professionalism, education and credentials did not impact the IEP level of compliance and promising practices. The working conditions that impacted the IEP level of compliance and promising practices were the number of miles traveled each week, the percentage of work week spent in travel. Caseload size did not impact the IEP level of compliance and promising practices.

After the transition IEPs were rated (percentage of fields in compliance, promising practices, including the mean number of ECC content areas) and ranked from high to low, participants were selected to represent the three identified IEP groups (high, middle, low). This study was not designed to evaluate a causal relationship between student outcomes and teacher quality, but the findings do support the supposition that teacher quality does impact the level of compliance and promising practices found on an IEP, the level of instruction provided, and higher levels of pedagogy and content knowledge for teachers of students with visual impairments.

Both the quantitative and qualitative data supported differences among TVIs in the high IEP group and those TVIs who represented the other two groups (middle, low). TVIs in the high group had more years of experience teaching students with visual impairments (M = 16 years) compared to the middle group or the low group (M = 12.5 years and 14.6 years, respectively), higher self-efficacy ratings (4.3) compared to the other two groups (4.0 and 3.7,

respectively), and engaged in weekly activities that reflected pedagogy and content knowledge more often than TVIs in the low group (21 and 12 hours vs. 6.8 and 1.1 hours, respectively). In addition, the TVIs in the high group traveled fewer miles (*M* = 216 miles and 533 miles, respectively), rated their effectiveness as a teacher (4.0 and 2.6, respectively) and rated their knowledge in the ECC content areas (3.4 and 2.6, respectively) at a higher rate than TVIs in the low group. Expected differences among the high IEP group and the low group were not found for two other areas that were explored (credentials and professionalism). In the area of professionalism only one participant in the high group reported a high level of professionalism, while both of the participants in the middle group reported a high level of professionalism. Only one participant in the high-IEP group belonged to a professional organization and only two of the participants in the same group read journals regularly. All three groups reported a high number of staff development (conferences, courses, workshops) hours each year, although the low IEP group reported the highest number of professional staff development hours for the year (*M* = 82.6). The high group engaged in peer to peer (work teams, other opportunities to collaborate) staff development at a higher rate (mean=9 hours per month) than the middle (*M* = 7 hours per month) and the low group (*M* = 8 hours per month). This data is difficult to explain, the one participant in the high group that can espouse promising practices and appeared to understand the alignment among assessment, instruction, and ongoing evaluation does not belong to a professional organization, nor does she read any journals, although she does

engage in more hours of professional development (110 hours per year) than any of the other participants. In addition, she spends more than 10 hours a month in peer to peer staff development.

The findings on teacher quality from this study extended those found by Westat (2000). The mean years of experience for TVIs in the high group (*M* = 16 years) was higher than the same data for general education teachers (15.5 years) and all special education teachers (14.3 years) reported by Westat (2000). In addition, self-efficacy has repeatedly predicted student achievement and Westat found that is was the second most important factor to identify teacher quality with special education teachers. The teachers in the high IEP group had a higher mean of efficacy (4.3) compared to the low group (3.7).

The one area, professionalism, that Westat (2000) found as an indicator of teacher quality was not substantiated by this study. It is possible that participants in the other two groups misrepresented the number of journals read and organization membership or the high number of staff development hours are better indicators of teacher quality than professional memberships or journals read.

Working Conditions

Three of the variables in working conditions appeared to represent issues or concerns for the participants; caseload, travel, and support. Iowa is a rural state with 99 counties and approximately 350 different school districts. In addition, Iowa values "local control" and each school district has identified

standards and benchmarks for the students (i.e., there are no state standards). Another distinction found in Iowa is that all special education services in the area of visual impairments originate from the Area Education Agency or at Iowa Braille School. Participants were asked to report caseload size, and miles traveled each week to provide services, and to rate the support offered by the Area Education Agency, administrators and other colleagues. All three of these areas will be reported and discussed separately.

Caseloads

TVIs in the high group (M = 21) had larger caseloads than TVIs in either the middle or low groups (M = 12 and 18.6, respectively). Findings would support that, although these TVIs have larger caseloads, they are providing more instruction, developing their own curricula and using data-driven decision making to guide their instructional practice. Nationally, there has been an assumption that high caseloads for TVIs impacted student outcomes and teacher instruction. While this study did not evaluate student outcomes, the results suggest that caseload does not impact the level of compliance and promising practices found on the IEPs.

The findings in this study are interesting considering the amount of attention this issue is receiving at a national level. A noted publication in the field has recommended a caseload of eight students (Mason, Davidson, & McNerney, 2000). It has long been assumed that students with visual impairments would have better outcomes if TVIs had smaller caseloads. Recently, an entire pre-conference day at the Association for the Education and

Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired International Conference in Orlando, Florida, was devoted to developing an action plan to address Goal 4 (caseloads based on the assessed needs of students with visual impairments) of the National Agenda (Corn, Hatlen, Huebner, Ryan & Siller, 1995).

Travel

While caseload did not appear to be a barrier to the level of compliance and promising practices on IEPs, travel did. Collectively, the eight participants traveled 3,250 miles a week (M = 416.6) to provide services to students with visual impairments. The number of miles traveled by teachers in the low IEP group was identified by the participants as a concern through the conversations and was substantiated through the data collection. Teachers in the low group (M = 533.3 miles) traveled more miles and spent a significant amount of their weekly time in travel (M = 46% of workweek) from one student to another compared to teachers in the high group (M = 216 miles, 11% of work week).

The rural nature of Iowa and the two service delivery models available (itinerant, residential) makes it difficult to serve students and not travel great distances. Iowa is paying TVIs with a mean of 14.3 years of experience to drive around the Area Education Agency in lieu of providing disability-specific instruction to students with visual impairments. If one assumes that a TVI with 14 years of experience is making $45,000 to $50,000 a year, the state is paying approximately $20,000 a year per TVI ($n$ = 3 in the low group) to travel the state, excluding the cost for mileage reimbursement and benefits. This is a questionable use of federal funds.

Administrative and Peer Support

Regular classroom teachers receive frequent feedback on their instructional style and effectiveness, especially in the first years of employment; yet participants had not received any formal feedback. This is a real concern, especially considering the rural nature of Iowa. Most Area Education Agencies have one TVI who does not have access to a mentor or realistic feedback. Most participants noted that administrators were too uniformed to give realistic feedback. University programs can only give TVIs a base of knowledge to build on and the hiring agencies (Area Education Agencies, Local Education Agencies, Iowa Braille School) are responsible for making sure that each teacher has the skills necessary to improve student outcomes. Although Iowa recently acquired a program in visual impairments at the University of Northern Iowa, it is not currently accredited by the state of Iowa or the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired. The Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired accreditation is an in-depth review of programs in visual disabilities related to identified standards and competency areas. Iowa has defined "highly qualified" teachers as those who have an endorsement in their area of instruction. The research would indicate that credentials are one of many variables that would indicate a "highly qualified" teacher.

Logic Model

A Highly qualified teacher will produce a transition IEP that reflects a high level of both compliance and promising practices. At first glance, the fact that many of the participants had IEPs in more than one ranked group (high, middle, low) would have the reader believe that the logic model proved false. Wouldn't a highly qualified teacher produce a highly effective IEP (level of compliance/promising practices) on a consistent basis? The researcher first reviewed the individual teacher data (across all submitted IEPs) for an explanation. For some participants the lower IEP scores were for students with profound MR (n = 3), and for others it was the level of instruction by a TVI or COMS (n = 3) but for others it appeared to be just a procedural issue. An alternative explanation could not be confirmed. When each of the IEP scores was averaged for each participant the teachers remained in their original group on the IEP ranking scale. Analysis was then completed on the three areas. The teachers in the top group consistently rated higher in the areas that the SPeNSE survey (Westat, 2002) identified for highly qualified teachers (i.e., efficacy, experience). In addition, they scored higher in the areas of pedagogy and content knowledge, those areas identified by No Child Left Behind as critical for student achievement. Further, the teachers in the high group were able to articulate the components of effective practices (i.e., assessment, implementation with integrity, and on-going evaluation for effectiveness). Analysis of the quantitative data as well as the transcripts from the guided telephone interviews would suggest that the logic model did hold

true that a *highly qualified* teacher would produce *highly qualified* transition IEPs (high percentage of compliance and promising practices).

Limitations

Participation in this study was strictly voluntary and there is no way to confirm that these results reflect the experiences of all the students or TVIs in Iowa. All participants in *Phase Two* are currently participating in Quality Programs in Visual Impairments in their Area Education Agencies or at Iowa Braille School which automatically excludes those TVIs not participating in QPVI (n = 8) and may present a difference in the knowledge level of the participants. In addition, the relationship between the researcher and the participants may have biased their responses. Although the researcher does not evaluate TVIs in the state she is responsible for statewide policy and procedures. Participants may have felt the need to respond differently due to that relationship.

An identified weakness of qualitative research is the inability to generalize the findings of one study to other entities. In addition, the vast differences among state and local structures and policies do not allow for generalizability of this particular study. This study reflected only the reality of Iowa but could be replicated in Iowa with other disability populations. A second limitation related to qualitative analysis was the lack of statistical significance. The surveys and the guided telephone interviews were all self-report and there was no means to substantiate the self-report findings with structured observations or other quantifiable data.

Another limitation noted with the interview was the possible inherent bias in the development of the open-ended questions within the four broad categories. Although the researcher added the open-ended questions only in the four broad areas, the responses were applicable to all areas of inquiry and provided a rich description of the current transition planning and services in Iowa.

A consistent limitation in most research within the field of visual disabilities is the lack of empirical findings. The field of visual impairments is a low incidence area and the low number and variability of students and teachers makes empirical research difficult. Most of the research in visual disabilities found in the literature and cited in this study would be considered action research or our best educated guess based on experience and findings from other studies.

Finally, Phase One only collected evidence and did not evaluate the quality of the required transition areas or the areas of promising practices. This would limit the results as only applicable to the policy and procedures of the IEP, not a true reflection of quality transition planning.

Issues and Future Questions

A number of issues arose from the results of this study: quality IEPs, differences among high and low IEP groups, and low level of instruction). Each area is discussed separately below.

Quality IEPs

The low to moderate level of compliance and the low level of promising practice found on the reviewed IEPs is problematic. The IEP is the document that should reflect the overall programming for students with visual impairments and it appears that all personnel need additional training in basic IEP development and in the role of the TVI. The IEPs developed without any input from the TVI had higher levels of compliance and promising practices. Why would a student be identified as visually impaired and not have any input from the TVI? Students that do not require any instruction or input from a TVI probably are not visually impaired.

A number of other issues emerged from the reviewed IEPs, such as the type of ECC content areas listed and the instructional time devoted to those areas. In general, the researcher found a lower number of ECC content goals than expected. Although one would expect to see career education or self-determination on most IEPs, the two areas identified most often were braille and assistive technology. While braille was listed frequently, there is a real need to determine who is receiving braille instruction and whether it is appropriate. It appears on the surface that students are receiving braille instruction without any real purpose or stated outcomes. Iowa's braille law may have students receiving braille instruction that will never be used effectively as a reading medium. Additional research is needed to truly align braille instruction with the assessed needs and identified outcomes.

The number of assistive technology devices noted on the IEP without any instruction is another concern. If students are proficient with the noted device it would be appropriate to note that on the IEP, with follow-up instruction for increased speed or applications to other environments. Additional data are needed on the number of assessments, recommended devices and student outcomes to make any determination on the quality of assistive technology for students with visual impairments. In general, the TVIs need additional information and professional staff development in both the ECC content areas and effective instructional practices.

Differences Among the Groups

Identifying differences among the high IEP group of TVIs and the low group presented some real challenges. Pedagogy and content knowledge were espoused easily by the TVIs in the high group but not by the low or middle group. In addition, the high IEP group spoke of integrated IEPs, data-driven decision making and various evaluation tools. The TVIs in the low group spoke of making instruction real. It would appear that some TVIs need additional instruction in pedagogy (effective teaching strategies). Some university programs do not require students to have dual certification in both general education, which addresses pedagogy skills through the methodology coursework and special education. Although this study neglected to collect information on whether participants had a general education degree, it might explain the

difference in levels of pedagogy demonstrated by the various IEP groups. These strategies could be incorporated into all ongoing professional staff development.

Another issue that was apparent in the different IEP groups was the number of miles traveled per week and the percentage of time spent in that activity. It is logical that if one is spending 45 to 50% of the workweek in travel it would be impossible to prepare adequately for direct instruction. This situation could force the TVI to prioritize the caseload and not provide instruction based on the assessed needs of students but, rather, on what was logistically realistic. Additional training and information is needed for administrators who make the personnel decisions.

Instruction

The low level of instruction provided by the TVI and COMS to all students, especially students without MR, is a real concern. Less than an hour a week of instruction would appear on the surface to be low considering the numerous skills and services that students with visual impairments need in order to transition to the next environment. Current ECC content area outcome data are needed to analyze the extent of this concern. Although the present researcher did not evaluate student needs or skill level, it is assumed that students with visual impairments would, at a minimum, still need direct instruction in those ECC content areas associated with transition (i.e., career education, self-determination, social interaction).

The mandates of No Child Left Behind require annual yearly progress, although the only three areas recognized for students presently are reading, math, and science. Accountability for instruction is a relatively new concept in special education, although the IEPs require these data. TVIs have a professional obligation to assure progress in the ECC content areas of instruction. Additional professional staff development will be required to stress how important the concept of yearly progress is and to provide instruments and training that would assist in the data collection (see Table 4). Although the policy implications are probably unrealistic in Iowa the author thought they were important to note.

Summary

This study was designed to provide a description of the skills, teachers, and transition planning that is occurring in Iowa for students with visual impairments. Iowa purports to be the most literate state in the United States, ranks in the top three states for college entrance scores on the ACT, is the top state for Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) scores, and prides itself on a stellar education system. The results of this study suggest that students with visual impairments may not be reaping the benefits of Iowa's stellar education system.

Table 4

Summary of Findings

Finding	Policy Implication	Recommendation
IEPs reflected low levels of compliance & promising practices	Create a mandatory ongoing professional staff development process and follow-up implementation strategies to maintain VI endorsement each year	• Mandatory on-going professional staff develop will include the following topic areas: promising practices, research to practice, transition policies, procedures & needed instruction, measurable IEP goals, alignment between assessment, planning, instruction & student outcome data, and implementation of quality web-based IEPs that reflect all topical areas. • Similar topical on-going professional development implemented as workshops for pre-service teachers at UNI • TVIs/COMS use the Transition Review Form developed by this study to complete a self-assessment as part of their professional development
IEPs from IBS reflected more instructional time and ECC content areas	Develop and implement a research study to compare similar student outcomes for students from IBS & public schools that aligns with both instructional time and ECC content goal areas addressed	• Develop and implement recommendations for similar instruction across all service delivery models
High IEPs were 2.6 times more likely to reflect the presence of a work experience/transition coordinator	Require IEP documented participation and services of a work experience or transition coordinator for each transition-aged student with VI	Provide this service as part of the outreach program at IBS

Summary of Findings continued

Finding	Policy Implication	Recommendation
Low levels of weekly instructional time provided by the TVIs/COMS Higher weekly instructional time by a TVI/COMs was found for students with the presence of MR	All AEAs & IBS will submit caseload analysis documentation biannually that demonstrates instruction is based on the assessed needs of students and instruction is designed & implemented to improve student outcomes	Caseload analysis is reflected as considerations for the IEP and must include the assessment data and instructional time needed to meet each IEP goal area on the PLEP page
Most IEPs appeared to be unrelated to transition The goals developed by the COMs appeared to measurable compared to the goals developed by TVIs	A post-hoc study is recommended to quantifiably determine the quality of the IEP and the goal development	Recommendations should be based on the study findings
Participants reported the requirement to teach reading, math, & science (NCLB) in lieu of the ECC content areas or transition services	AEA and IBS student monies will be tied to the level of instruction in the ECC content areas and the implementation of quality transition services instead of student weighing based on level of disability	Policy guidance will be developed and implemented to assist AEAs and IBS in meeting this requirement
Participants reported that IDB, our rehabilitation partner conducted separate meetings with transition-aged students and families, and did not collaborate on the IEP development	DE requires IDB to submit written guidelines for policy, procedures and services prior to IEP participation. These will be shared with AEAs and IBS	Provide guidance to the IDB transition service providers to develop written guidelines that include collaborative goal development and active IEP participation
TVIs in high IEP group reported higher levels of pedagogy & content knowledge activities, efficacy, experience, teacher attributes & effectiveness, provided more instruction, articulated data-driven instruction, had higher caseloads and traveled fewer miles than TVIs in the low IEP group	Competencies in pedagogy & content knowledge are assured as part of the licensure process for all educational personnel	• Infuse pedagogy & content knowledge skill development into all statewide trainings for current education staff and as an on-going strategy for skill retention • Implement the Iowa Teaching Standards for all TVIs & COMS as an evaluation tool for pedagogy and content knowledge statewide • Caseload analysis is used to address instructional time needed for student competency based on the IEP goals and to evaluate the impact of travel

In addition, the results of this study indicate that documentation of needed transition services, skills, and outcomes for students with visual impairments is low to moderately adequate. Positive findings were few and inconsistent. These findings will be used as a baseline for improving the training and instruction needed by all professionals that serve transition-aged students with visual impairments. The differences found among the IEP groups provide opportunities to incorporate needed training into existing professional development opportunities. This study provides a snapshot of transition for students with visual impairments in Iowa and will be used as a baseline toward moving us forward as a state. Although data on employment outcomes were not collected in this study, the review of literature supports the logic model that if educational systems provided quality transition services (general education and ECC content areas) for students with visual impairments and used the transition IEP as the plan of action for all transition services and experiences then students would achieve greater adult outcomes, including employment. Additional follow-up studies are necessary to evaluate the educational services and track the employment opportunities of students.

Iowa's Response and Future Direction

The data from this study provide direction for the state of Iowa and reinforce some of the activities that are currently in place. Participants validated many of the statewide initiatives that have been put in place by the researcher (i.e., Quality Programs for Students with Visual Impairments, FVA training, and

shared resources) to improve required skills and teacher quality. Two of the participants in *Phase Two* noted that the one activity that had really impacted their knowledge and instruction of the ECC content areas was Quality Programs for Students with Visual Impairments. The Department of Education implemented Quality Programs for Students with Visual Impairments statewide in 2001 (Blankenship, 2004). Quality Programs for Students with Visual Impairments provides an opportunity for AEAs and Iowa Braille School to develop communities of practice to assess and address any deficit areas in their program for students with visual impairments. It is a data-driven ongoing program-improvement process. One participant reported that the ECC content areas had been a focus of their monthly Quality Programs for Students with Visual Impairments meetings for almost a year. Together as a team they developed and purchased needed assessments, developed curricula, and shared teaching strategies. In addition, this participant noted that all of the needed materials were collected and selected for her current caseload and were sitting on her desk ready for implementation when the new school year began.

Research on the value of communities of practice is not new (Schmoker, 2004; Wagner, 2003), but the difficulty in implementing these with an itinerant service delivery model in Iowa has been many years in the making. Many of these issues and concerns can be addressed by the existing Quality Programs for Students with Visual Impairments groups or with additional professional staff development. Iowa is also replicating Quality Programs for Students with Visual Impairments for students who are deaf and hard of hearing and will serve as a

pilot site for Quality Programs for Students with Multiple Impairments, once the development is completed by Nancy Toelle, which may allow for similar data collection and comparisons among student populations.

Some of the participants noted that they needed additional staff development in the area of transition planning. Last year, the statewide transition conference offered, for the first time, a stream of information in visual disabilities. The stream of information was planned collaboratively by the Iowa Department of Education (DE), Iowa Braille School and Iowa Department for the Blind. Attendance was low the first year but the goal of the planning group is to give personnel who serve students with visual impairments opportunities to be members of the larger transition group and to become collaborative partners. TVIs in Iowa have numerous on-going professional staff development opportunities throughout the year. The DE offers specific coursework during the school year and statewide conferences, and Iowa Braille School offers a summer institute with a varied focus each year. These opportunities need to be designed around research-based effective strategies and follow-up data should be collected on the level of implementation. A collaborative partnership with the Area Education Agencies and Iowa Braille School will be necessary to collect the implementation data.

In addition, this researcher believes that these data could be used to improve the collaborative relationship with Iowa Department for the Blind, the state's rehabilitation agency. An executive summary with recommendations such as strategies to improve collaboration with the Iowa Department for the Blind

during the IEP team meeting will be presented to the Department and an action plan will be devised to document progress and student outcomes based on a greater collaboration. Iowa Department for the Blind recently employed a full-time transition director for transition-aged students. Prior to the employment of a transition specialist they partnered with Iowa Braille School to provide a summer program entitled the Orientation to the World of Work. The newly hired transition specialist has developed summer and weekend programs for transition- aged students. Three separate workshops were offered during the summer that included blindness skill training, volunteerism, and transition skills training. These workshops are held on a college campus to encourage independent living skills. Participants noted that follow-up information from these various activities was never provided. This information will be necessary in order to plan for additional needed skills or training.

In the area of pedagogy, the state of Iowa recently researched and implemented state teaching standards that will be used to evaluate the skills of both pre-service teachers and certified teachers. A collaborative effort with the Iowa Department of Education (consultant in visual disabilities) and Iowa Braille School resulted in these standards being applied to the role and responsibility of a TVI and COMS. The standards and criteria (pedagogy and content knowledge) remained the same, but the examples and evidence that specifically addressed the unique role and responsibility of the professional for students with visual impairments (ECC content areas) were developed. IBS will begin using these standards to assess the teaching skills of all of their employees. The TVIs and

COMS will be required to keep portfolios and data sheets as evidence of their teaching abilities, along with structured observations. The use of these revised teaching standards statewide will create similar expectations and evaluations for all TVIs and COMS.

The Iowa Department of Education has recently asked that the needed data points in early childhood, transition, and student outcomes from the annual progress report be collected for all low-incidence disability areas. The researcher meets twice a year with all vision supervisors of the Area Education Agencies and Iowa Braille School programs for students with visual impairments. The spring 2004 meeting agenda consisted of a presentation on the state of the state APR for all students with disabilities and the mandate to collect similar information. The researcher developed a data collection sheet with an accompanying coding sheet in order to collect data on student outcomes and some transition data. The results of this study will give the supervisors some baseline data needed on transition, but a follow-up study will be needed to adequately address most of the other transition data points. The supervisors have agreed to develop a statewide follow-up study that will be implemented in all AEAs, similar to the one developed by Nancy Oddo at Iowa Braille School. Some early childhood data are collected from the Iowa's Early Childhood Registry for Children with Visual Impairments and submitted to the American Printing House for the Blind for the national database.

Implications for Future

This particular study was designed to look only at evidence of required IEP fields; a post-hoc study should be conducted on the quality of the required fields. It appeared that the IEPs reflected a real disconnect between an individual student's interests, chosen outcome, and educational programming. The reviewed IEPs rarely had a statement of transition service needs and did not reflect a coordinated set of activities or promote movement to post-school work or education settings. O'Leary (2003) found similar results in the Transition Outcome Project but increased the accuracy of those areas with staff development. A number of IEPs had an identified outcome that obviously required a college degree (i.e., teacher, minister), yet instruction was provided in a special education classroom with the assistance of a para-educator. In addition, the students would have reading levels reported at the third or fourth grade level. Most of the IEPs could have easily been a fourth or fifth grade student's IEP instead of a transition-aged student.

Outcomes in the ECC content areas (except O&M) were rarely articulated. It was apparent that the goals developed by the TVIs, if there were any, were not based on the assessed needs of students. Most TVI services were recorded on the service page with no attached goals. Most IEPs never explained how the visual impairments affected the educational programming for students. The researcher expected to see noted findings from the FVA in this area. In addition, it appeared that the goals created by the COMS were of higher quality (i.e., outcome oriented

and measurable) than goals created by TVIs, although this was not substantiated by a quantifiable process.

There is a need for Iowa to develop a truly integrated transition system for students with visual impairments similar to the integrated systems reported in *model* transition sites (Hasazi et al., 1999). Hasazi and colleagues noted that model transition sites had systemic staff development in the area of transition, clear goals and expectations, and collaborative transition teams (i.e., Iowa Department for the Blind, Iowa Braille School, Area Education Agencies) that assisted in the process and delivery of services. Iowa Braille School appeared to have more services, activities and skill development in place for transition-aged students than did the public schools. In addition, Iowa Braille School collected follow-up data to make educational programming changes as needed that are not currently available in the public schools.

Appendix A:

Instructions

Looking For Success: Transition Planning for Students with Visual Impairments in Iowa

Thank you in advance for participating in this research project. I think this will give us valuable information in current transition practices and a direction for improved service delivery. Please follow the directions and return the appropriate IEPs as soon as possible. I need them before you leave for summer break. In addition, please fill out the summer information sheet for the possible in-depth guided interview.

1. Copy 3 transition IEPs for each transition aged student on your caseload (IEP for age 14, 16, and the last one that you participated in). If a student is 14 you will only submit one IEP, if they are 16 you will submit two IEPs and if they are older than 16 you will submit three IEPs. I need multiple IEPs to evaluate the identified recommendations at different ages.

2. Black out the identifying student information on the IEP except their birth date.

3. Place the appropriate label over the blacked out information (i.e., teacher 1/student 1/IEP 1)

4. Fill out the IEP cover sheet and staple to the IEP. An IEP coversheet will be completed for each submitted IEP.

5. Send all appropriate IEPs and coversheets to the DE using the envelope provided

6. If you are selected for the in-depth interview I will call you or send you an email soliciting the best time for the guided interview.

7. If you are selected for the in-depth interview please fill out the Service Provider Survey: Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments and the Teacher Efficacy Scale in this packet. In addition, I will ask some open-ended questions regarding your pedagogy and content knowledge found on the Service Provider Survey: Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments.

Appendix B:

Transition IEP Review Sheet

Transition IEP Review Form (Collect transition IEP, minutes, invitation and IEP cover sheet)

Teacher Code No. _____ Student Code No. _____

IEP(s) submitted New Statewide IEP: Y N

- 14
- 16
- ___ age

IEP Documentation of Work Experience/Transition Coordinators Y N

Additional Disability (MR) Y N Level of Disability 1 2 3

Hours of direct VI service _____ Hours of direct O&M service_____

Level of TVI in IEP process 1 2 3 # of ECC areas _____

O&M Y N

Asst. Tech Y N

Braille Instruction Y N

*Leave any space blank if you can't find the answer

1. Did the AEA invite the student?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1. Unavailable	1. Unavailable	1. Unavailable
2. No	2. No	2. No
3. Yes	3. Yes	3. Yes

{Reference: written student invitation, student signature on IEP, evidence of verbal invitation}

Comment:

2. Did the student attend the IEP meeting?

IEP1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.Unavailable	1.Unavailable	1.Unavailable
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

{Reference: student name on IEP persons in attendance}

Comment:

3. Was the Iowa Department for the Blind represented at the IEP?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
0. N/A	0. N/A	0. N/A
1. No	1. No	1. No
2. Yes	2. Yes	2. Yes

4. If No, if a representative from Iowa Department for the Blind was unable to attend did the AEA take other steps to obtain their participation in the planning of any transition services? (leave blank if answer was YES)

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1. Unknown	1. Unknown	1. Unknown
2. No	2. No	2. No
3. Yes	3. Yes	3. Yes

5. Did the AEA take steps to ensure that the student's preferences and interests were considered in the development of the IEP?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

{Reference: evidence that student's preferences and interests are integrated into the IEP, such as courses of study, goals & objectives, transition services}

6. Was parent notice provided?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1. Unavailable	1. Unavailable	1. Unavailable
2. No	2. No	2. No
3. Yes	3. Yes	3. Yes

{Reference: notice of IEP meeting}

Comment:

7. Does the parent notice indicate that one of the purposes of the meeting will be the development of a statement of transition service needs or a statement of transition services?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1. Unavailable	1. Unavailable	1. Unavailable
2. No	2. No	2. No
3. Yes	3. Yes	3. Yes

{Reference: notice of IEP meeting}

Comment:

8. Does the parent notice indicate that the public agency will invite the student?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1. Unavailable	1. Unavailable	1. Unavailable
2. No	2. No	2. No
3. Yes	3. Yes	3. Yes

{Reference: parent notice clearly identifies/states that the student is invited}

Comment:

9. Does the parent notice indicate the date, time, and location of the meeting and who will be invited?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1. Unavailable	1. Unavailable	1. Unavailable
2. No	2. No	2. No
3. Yes	3. Yes	3. Yes

{Reference: notice of IEP meeting}

Comment:

10. Does the parent notice inform the parents that they may invite other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding their child, including related services personnel, as appropriate?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1. Unavailable	1. Unavailable	1. Unavailable
2. No	2. No	2. No
3. Yes	3. Yes	3. Yes

{Reference: notice of IEP meeting}

Comment:

11. Was a course of study developed by age 14?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

{Reference: IEP}

Comment:

If the only IEP submitted was the one for age 14 skip Qs 13-20 and leave them blank

12. For students 16 years of age and older does the IEP include a statement of needed transition services?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

{Reference: IEP needed transition services}

Comment:

13. Does the IEP include a statement of current performance related to transition services?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

Does the statement of needed transition services consider?

{Reference: IEP needed transition services}

14. Instruction;

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

15. Related services

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

16. Community experiences;

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

17. Development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

18. Development of lifelong learning objectives?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

19. Are the activities in the statement of needed transition services presented as a coordinated set of activities?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

Comment:

20. Do the activities in the statement of needed transition services promote movement from school to the student's desired post-school goals?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

Comment:

21. If appropriate, does the IEP include a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
0. N/A	0. N/A	0. N/A
1. No	1. No	1. No
2. Yes	2. Yes	2. Yes

22. Does the IEP include a statement that at least one year before the student reaches the age of majority under state law that the student has been informed of the rights under Part B that will transfer to him/her when he/she reaches the age of majority?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
0. N/A	0. N/A	0. N/A
1. No	1. No	1. No
2. Yes	2. Yes	2. Yes

{Reference: Transfer of Rights stated in IEP}

23. Is there evidence that the student led his/her IEP?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
0. N/A	0. N/A	0. N/A
1. No	1. No	1. No
2. Yes	2. Yes	2. Yes

24. Is there evidence of a student vision statement?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

25. Is there evidence that parents were offered formal training in the transition process?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

26. Is there evidence that formal assessments were used?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

27. Is there evidence that informal assessments were used?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

28. Does the parent notice identify (by agency, position, and title) any other agency that will be invited to send a representative?

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1. Unavailable	1. Unavailable	1. Unavailable
2. No	2. No	2. No
3. Yes	3. Yes	3. Yes

{Reference: notice of IEP meeting}

Does the IEP reflect instruction provided by a **TVI or COMS** in the following content areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum?

{Reference: IEP needed transition services}

Independent living skills;

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

29. Career Education;

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

30. Compensatory Skills

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

31. Instruction in Self-Determination

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

32. Use of Assistive Technology

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

33. Social Interaction Skills

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

34. Orientation & Mobility

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

35. Visual Efficiency Skills

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

36. Recreation & Leisure Skills

IEP 1	IEP 2	IEP 3
1.No	1.No	1.No
2.Yes	2.Yes	2.Yes

Rating:

1. 14 only IEP submitted

    a. 24 possible fields (*20) plus 9 areas of the ECC= 33 (*29)

2. 16 only IEP submitted

    a. 41 possible fields (*40) plus 9 areas of the ECC=50 (*49)

2. >16 IEP submitted only

    a. 41 possible fields plus 9 areas of the ECC=50

3. 14 & 16 IEP submitted

    a. 63 possible fields plus 9 areas of the ECC=71

4. 16 & >16 IEP submitted

    a. 80 possible fields plus 9 areas of the ECC=89

5. All 3 IEPs submitted

    a. 87 fields possible (*84) plus 9 areas of the ECC=96 (*93)

*For students identified as profound/severe (*n*=12) some of the fields are not appropriate or expected. Statistical accommodations were made for this population so the IEP results would not be biased.

Appendix C:

Transition IEP Cover Sheet

Please attach this completed cover sheet with each submitted transition IEP

Teacher/Student /IEP Code _____

1. **Would you consider this student to have the presence of MR?**

    a. Y

    b. N

2. **If you marked yes, would you consider this student to have? (Please mark one)**

    a. Mild MR (modified academic work)

    b. Moderate MR (functional academics)

    c. Profound/severe MR (life skills curriculum only)

3. **What would you consider your role in the development and implementation of this IEP?**
    a. Primary role (responsible for the development of the IEP)
    b. Secondary role (submitted goals and attended IEP meeting)
    c. Tertiary role (submitted goals but did not attend IEP meeting)
    d. Other (neither submitted goals nor attended the IEP meeting)

4. **Which areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum content areas were considered for this student? (Circle all that apply)**
    a. O&M
    b. Visual Efficiency
    c. Self-determination
    d. Recreation & Leisure
    e. Social Interaction Skills
    f. Independent Living Skills
    g. Compensatory Skills
    h. Career Education
    i. Use of Assistive Technology

Appendix D: Survey

Service Provider Survey: Teacher of Students with Visual

Directions: I am going to ask you some questions. These are the same questions that you received in your study packet. Each set of questions describes the variables that are listed in purple above the questions, such as working conditions, experience and credentials. I will ask the 16 efficacy questions as soon as we finish these questions found on the Service Provider Survey. I will give you the answer options after each question. Some of the

1. Do you currently work in an Area Education Agency (AEA) that participated in the Iowa System Change Grant as a development site (AEA(s) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15 and 16)?

    1. No
    2. Yes

Working Conditions

2. What is the total number of students with visual impairments (birth-21 years of age) on your caseload? _____

3. Of those students, how many do you provide:

    a. Direct Services___
    b. Consult Services__
    c. Other Services ____ Explain _____

4. How many of those identified students have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)? _____

5. To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?

{1= Not at all, 2= Small extent, 3= Moderate extent, 4= Great extent}

a. The Area Education Agency (AEA) or Special School (Iowa Braille School) administrator's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging

    1. Not at all
    2. Small extent
    3. Moderate extent
    4. Great extent

b. Necessary materials are available when you need them (textbooks, supplies, copy machine)

    1. Not at all
    2. Small extent
    3. Moderate extent
    4. Great extent

c. Routine duties and paperwork interfere with your job of teaching

    1. Not at all
    2. Small extent
    3. Moderate extent
    4. Great extent

d. Most of your colleagues share your beliefs and values about the central mission of your Area Education Agency (AEA) or Special School (Iowa Braille School)

1. Not at all
2. Small extent
3. Moderate extent
4. Great extent

e. The Area Education Agency (AEA) or Special School (Iowa Braille School) supports you in the interactions with parents

1. Not at all
2. Small extent
3. Moderate extent
4. Great extent

f. The Area Education Agency (AEA) or Special School (Iowa Braille School) backs you up when you need it

1. Not at all
2. Small extent
3. Moderate extent
4. Great extent

6. In a typical week, how many miles do you travel to serve students? __

7. What percentage of your workweek is devoted to traveling? _

8. Thinking about the total number of hours you work in an average week, how many hours do you spend on each of the following activities? Please round to the nearest ½ hour.

a. Conducting assessments?
_____

b. Collaborating with general education,
special education teachers or related service providers?
_____

c. Teaching in one of the Expanded Core Curriculum content areas? _____

d. Completing forms and administrative paperwork outside of your work week?
_____

e. Coordinating the content of your instruction with the local district standards?
_____

f. Preparing for lessons?
_____

g. Reading background material for your lessons?
_____

h. Counseling students outside of your scheduled time?
_____

i. Attending special education-related meetings (Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), or other meetings)?
_____

j. Attending other school meetings (outside of special education)?
_____

k. Communicating with parents or other primary care providers?
_____

l. Tutoring students in class work or homework?
_____

m. Supervising Para-educators?
_____

n. Sharing expertise with other educational professionals?
_____

o. Traveling from school to school?
_____

p. Enlarging instructional materials?
_____

q. Brailling instructional materials?
_____

r. Performing other activities that I have not named?
_____ Please explain:_____

9. Think about your job, including all your professional responsibilities. To what extent do you agree that you are able to meet the assessed needs of students and Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) goals? Would you say…

1. Not at all,
2. A small extent,
3. A moderate extent, or
4. A great extent

10. Does your Area Education Agency (AEA) or Special School (Iowa Braille School) have a written policy regarding transition planning?

1. No
2. Yes
3. Don't know

Experience

11. Including this school year, how many years, in total, have you worked as a teacher? _____

12. How many of those years have you worked with students with visual impairments? _____

13. Did you have the Association for the Education & Rehabilitation of Persons with Visual Impairments (AER) recommended 350 contact hours with students with visual impairments during your preparation program?

1. Yes

2. No

14. What is your highest level of education?

    1. Bachelor's Degree
    2. Master's Degree
    3. Education Specialist Degree
    4. Doctorate
    5. Other _____ (explain)

Credentials

15. Do you currently hold an endorsement in visual impairments in Iowa?

    1. No
    2. Yes

16. If NO, are you currently on ..

    1. Exchange Certification
    2. Provisional Certification
    3. Emergency Certification
    4. Extended Provisional Certification
    5. Other _____(explain)

Professionalism

17. Do you have an individual professional development plan written in conjunction with your Area Education Agency (AEA) or Special School?

    1. No

2. Yes

18. In the past 12 months, approximately how many hours, altogether, have you spent in professional development (conferences, workshops, professional reading, or courses)? _____

19. Since the beginning of the school year, how much time have you spent meeting with other teachers on lesson planning, curriculum development, guidance, and counseling, evaluation of programs, or other collaborative work related to instruction?

    1. Less than 1 hour per month
    2. 1-4 hours per month,
    3. 5-9 hours per month, or
    4. 10 hours or more per month?

20. How many professional journals or other literature related to visual impairments do you read on a regular basis {weekly or monthly} and please list the titles? _____

    _____

21. Are you currently a member of any of the following associations

    1. Association for the Education & Rehabilitation of Persons with Visual Impairments (AER)
    2. Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
    3. Teacher Association
    4. Other ____ (explain)

Pedagogy

22. What do you think are the attributes of a highly effective teacher?

23. How would you rate yourself on those same attributes

    1. Not very competent

2. Somewhat competent

3. Competent

4. Very competent

24. Describe instructional strategies that have you implemented in teaching the Expanded Core Curriculum content areas?

25. How do you know your instruction is effective?

26. Describe any curriculum that you have designed to teach in the Expanded Core Curriculum content areas?

27. Describe the feedback (informal/formal) you received on teaching in the Expanded Core Curriculum content areas?

Content Knowledge

28. Tell me what areas of the ECC are most critical for transition age students?

29. Think of an individual student and describe the process that you used to determine what areas of instruction were needed.

30. How do you know that this same student is making progress in those ECC areas of need?

31. How would you rate your skill level in teaching these ECC content areas, for each area rate your competency level (1) not very competent, (2) somewhat competent, (3) competent and (4) very competent?

a. Assistive Technology

    1. Not very competent
    2. Somewhat competent
    3. Competent
    4. Very competent

b. Visual Efficiency

    1. Not very competent
    2. Somewhat competent
    3. Competent
    4. Very competent

c. Self-determination

    1. Not very competent
    2. Somewhat competent
    3. Competent
    4. Very competent

d. Career Education

    1. Not very competent
    2. Somewhat competent
    3. Competent

4. Very competent

e. Compensatory Skills

1. Not very competent
2. Somewhat competent
3. Competent
4. Very competent

f. Independent Living

1. Not very competent
2. Somewhat competent
3. Competent
4. Very competent

g. Social Interaction

1. Not very competent
2. Somewhat competent
3. Competent
4. Very competent

h. Recreation & Leisure

1. Not very competent
2. Somewhat competent

3. Competent

4. Very competent

i. Orientation and Mobility

1. Not very competent

2. Somewhat competent

3. Competent

4. Very competent

Collaboration

32. What collaborative partners (people and agencies) are available in your AEA to assist students with visual impairments in the transition process?

33. Think about those partners that you have identified and rate their collaboration skills. (collect this same information on all partners identified)

1. Very poor collaboration skills

2. Somewhat poor collaboration skills

3. Average collaboration skills

4. Excellent collaboration skills

Comments:

34. Thinking of those same partners how would you rate the service they provide to students and families

1. No service at all has been provided
2. Inadequate services provided
3. Some services are provided
4. Excellent services are provided

Comments:

Transition Services

35. Do you feel your transition plans are effective?

    1. Not very effective
    2. Somewhat effective
    3. Effective
    4. Very Effective

36. If you answered effective or very effective, what do you consider the reason?

37. If no, what are the barriers to quality transition planning or instruction that you would like to share?

38. Are there additional resources or skills needed to improve the transition planning?

39. Is there anything else you would like to share about transition planning in your AEA?

Adapted from SPeNSE Service Provider Survey (2002)

Appendix E

Teacher Efficacy Scale

(Gibson & Dembo, 1994)

Please answer the following questions using the 1-6 code listed below. Think about your work related to your role and responsibilities with your students who have IEPs; please tell me the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Somewhat agree
5. Agree
6. Strongly agree

1. If you try hard, you can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated student. _____
2. If one of your students mastered a new skill or concept quickly, it probably would be because you knew the necessary steps in teaching that concept or skill. _____
3. When the grades of my students improve it is usually because I found more effective teaching approaches. _____
4. If a student did not remember information I gave in a previous lesson I would know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson. _____

5. When a student does better than usual, many times it is because I exerted a little extra effort. _____
6. If a student on my caseload becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect them quickly. _____
7. If one of my students couldn't do a class assignment, I would be able to accurately assess whether the assignment was at the correct level or difficulty. _____
8. When a student is having difficulty with an assignment, I am usually able to adjust it to his/her level _____
9. When a student gets a better grade than he/she usually gets, it is usually because I found better ways of teaching that student. _____

Please answer the following questions using the 1-6 scale listed below. Think about your work related to your role and responsibility. Please note the change in the scale for the next nine statements.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Somewhat agree
4. Somewhat disagree
5. Disagree
6. Strongly disagree

1. A teacher is limited in what she/he can achieve because a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her achievement. _____

2. If students aren't disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline. _____
3. The hours in my instruction have little influence on students compared to the influence of their home environment. _____
4. The amount that a student can learn is primarily related to family background. _____
5. The influence of a student's home experiences can be overcome by good teaching. _____
6. If parents would do more with their children, I could do more. _____
7. Even a teacher with good teaching abilities may not reach many students. _____

Appendix F:

Participant Letter

Looking for Success: Transition Planning for Students with Visual Impairments in Iowa

June 2004

Dear Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments,

The purpose of this letter is to request your participation in a study of transition planning for students with visual impairments in Iowa.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to describe the current status of transition planning and services for students with visual impairments (aged 14-21 years) in Iowa, a state that received federal grant monies to improve transition planning and services for students with disabilities.

Procedures to be followed and approximate duration of the study

The Iowa Department of Education has recently collected transition Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and transition IEP cover sheets for each transition-aged student with visual impairments on the teachers' caseload in the Area Education Agencies (AEAs) and at Iowa Braille School (IBS) as part of the statewide transition study. The IEPs were rated for level of compliance and promising practices (high, moderate, or low). Ten teachers have been selected for an in-depth guided interview by telephone this summer to describe current transition practices in Iowa. These results will be compared to the results of the

analysis of transition IEPs. In addition, this study will attempt to describe the level of participation in the development of the IEP by the teacher of students with visual impairments (TVIs) and the current working conditions that serve as a barrier to full participation in the IEP development. The two attached instruments (Service Provider Survey and the Teacher Efficacy Scale) will provide the questions for the guided telephone interview. The variables that are explored by both of these instruments include professionalism, efficacy, credentials, experience, working conditions, pedagogy, and your content knowledge in the areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum (promising practices for students with visual impairments). The interview should not take more than 30-35 minutes, depending on the length of your answers. All answers will be recorded on the computer by the researcher. The open-ended questions will be recorded verbatim from the participants and the researcher will read back and ask for additional feedback as triangulation for the qualitative data analysis.

Expected costs: None

Description of the discomforts, inconveniences, and/or risks that can be reasonably expected as a result of participation in this study:

It will take approximately 30-35 minutes for you to complete the guided telephone interview, depending on the length of your responses. The two instruments that will be used to guide the telephone interview are included in this packet for your perusal. Individual responses to the survey will not be

shared and all data will be aggregated for discussion and presentation. Although the researcher has a collegial relationship with each participant she does not have any authority over your performance.

Anticipated benefits from this study:

This study is intended to benefit students with visual impairments in Iowa in numerous ways. Using information gained in this study I propose that we develop a transition IEP checklist to assure that our students' IEPs document both the requirements in the state of Iowa and promising practices identified in the literature needed for students' successful transitioning to the next environment. In addition, findings from this study will be used to develop training for all professionals who work with students with visual impairments during the transition process.

What happens if you choose to withdraw from study participation?

You are always free to abstain from answering any question that you are not comfortable with. I do not expect that any discomfort or harm will result in your participation in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

Contact Information:

The following is information required by the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and pertains to participants of this study. By signing the

consent document you agree to participate in the study but may withdraw at any time. The results of this study will be shared with Vanderbilt University and the Iowa Department of Education. The aggregated data will be archived for further analysis or publication.

Please **sign** the attached consent form and mark the top box if you are willing to participate. If you **do not wish** to participate please mark the other box; no signature is required. Please return in the provided envelope by **July 9, 2004**. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at Karen.Blankenship@ed.state.ia.us or by phone 515.281.7972, Dr. Anne Corn (supervising professor) at Anne.Corn@vanderbilt.edu or by phone 615.322.2249. For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact the Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board Office at 615.322.2918 or toll free at 866.224.8273.

The results will be shared with institutional and/or governmental authorities, such as Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board, Vanderbilt Department of Special Education and the Iowa Department of Education. Your confidentiality will be protected in that all results of this study will be reported as aggregated data, not teacher specific. No one else will have access to your interview responses and the transition IEP results other than the researcher.

Looking for Success: Transition Planning for Students with Visual Impairments in Iowa

I have read this consent letter and understand the purpose and procedures of this project.

- **I freely and voluntarily choose to participate**
- **I do not wish to participate**

_____ _____

Signature Date

Best phone number to reach me: _____

Best days of the week to phone: _____

Best time of the day to phone: _____

I will not be available on these dates: _____

Appendix G:

Research Question Coding Sheet

What variables in the focus areas distinguish a transition IEP that reflects the variability of compliance and promising practices?

I. Independent Variables:

A. Experience:

1. Years of teaching students with visual impairments-

B. Highest level of education

1. Bachelor's degree
2. Master's degree
3. Above a Master's degree

C. Credentials

1. No current endorsement in visual impairment
2. Endorsement in visual impairment

D. Self-Efficacy- both personal and teaching will be combined to determine a continuous rating for efficacy.

1. Mean score and range

E. Professionalism

1. High level of professionalism
    - Has a written professional development plan
    - Has spent at least 24 hours in professional development

- Has collaborated with other professionals at least 5-9 hours per month
- Reads at least one journal per month
- Belongs to at least one professional association

2. Moderate level of professionalism, and

- Has a written professional development plan
- Has spent at least 14 hours in professional development
- Has collaborated with other professionals at least 1-4 hours per month
- Reads at least one journal per month

3. Low level of professionalism

- Has spent at less than 8 hours in professional development
- Has collaborated with other professionals at less than 1 hour per month
- Does not read any professional journals
- Does not belong to any professional association

F. Working conditions

1. Number of students on caseload

2. Question 5: Administrative/Professional Support (mean of all but report out specific examples in discussion)

1). Not at all

2). Small extent

3). Moderate extent

4). Great extent

3. Miles traveled per week

4. Percentage of workweek devoted to travel

5. Percentage of direct service instruction

6. Mean of VI service across all IEPs

7. Question 9: Ability to meet the IEP goals of students

1). Not at all

2). Small extent

3). Moderate extent

4). Great extent

8. AEA/Special School transition planning policy in place

1). No

2). Yes

3). Unknown

G. Pedagogy

1. Hours spent (recorded on Question 8 (a, c, d, e, g)

2. Question 23: Attribute rating

1). Not very competent

2). Some what competent

3). Very competent

3. Open ended answers recorded as themes or patterns

H. Content Knowledge

1. Hours spent as reported on 8 (c)

2. Mean competency rating for Question 31

1). Not very competent

2). Some what competent

3). Competent

4). Very competent

3. Answers to other questions will be recorded as themes or patterns

I. Collaboration

1. Themes and patterns discussed

J. Transition Services

1. Question 35: Effectiveness of Transition Plans

1). No

2). Yes

2. Themes and patterns discussed for other questions

II. Dependent Variable: level of compliance/ promising practice (see definitions) on transition IEPs (ages 14, 16, and >16, if available) for students with visual impairments in Iowa (Percentage of fields addressed in compliance and promising practices, see below)

A. 14 only IEP submitted

1. 24 possible fields (*20) plus 9 areas of the ECC= 33 (*29)

B. 16 only IEP submitted

1. 41 possible fields (*40) plus 9 areas of the ECC=50 (*49)
2. >16 IEP submitted
3. 41 possible fields plus 9 areas of the ECC=50

C. 14 & 16 IEP submitted

1. 63 possible fields plus 9 areas of the ECC=71

D. 16 & >16 IEP submitted

1. 80 possible fields plus 9 areas of the ECC=89

E. All 3 IEPs submitted

1. 87 fields possible (*84) plus 9 areas of the ECC=96 (*93)

*For students identified as profound/severe (*n*=12) some of the fields are not appropriate or expected. Statistical accommodations were made for this population so the IEP results would not be biased.

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