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IDEA Compliant Transition Program for High School Students with Mild to Moderate Disabilities

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**IDEA Compliant Transition Program for High School Students with Mild/Moderate
Disabilities**

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A Literature Review Presented
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Education

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Abstract

This is a literature review intended to investigate development of secondary school transition programs for students with mild to moderate disabilities, features of current transition programs, adopted curriculum and standards designations, and possible areas of improvement. It was expected that through reviewing compiled research there would be a clear sense of what a successful transition program should look like and what services it should provide. However, it was found that there are few successful models, and there continues to be little consensus or alignment amongst the nation on these areas. Since the 1800's, secondary transition programs for students with mild to moderate disabilities have been the topic of great discussion and debate. Providing well balanced transition services that take into account both vocational and academic education has fallen upon the school systems. However, there have been challenges in finding schools with programs that fit this description. In fact, it was discovered that many programs have struggled to even meet minimum requirements, as outlined in the Individual's with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), for compliance.

IDEA Compliant Transition Program for High School Students with Mild/Moderate Disabilities

There has been some debate over the past century of how secondary transition for students with mild disabilities should be taught in schools. As evolving philosophies on education and the amount of instruction focus in on student's preparation for adult life and work, the current heightened awareness of these transition skills shines light on present and future changes to what needs to be taught in these programs. The importance of preparing students for the complexities of adulthood continue to be increasingly necessary. Families, students, communities, and school staff have often failed to acknowledge the essential nature of transition

education. The responsibility has fallen upon families to teach these life skills, or the students have been expected to learn them on their own. It has been shown that students that have learning disabilities require extra support than that which is provided in the home; therefore, there is a need for schools to provide well rounded transition services to support these students.

Many researchers have searched across the nation to find an example of a transition program that would provide insight into the main components of a successful transition program. However, little progress has been made towards adoption of an overall program. Pavlova, Chi-Kin Lee, and Maclean (2017) gives a much clearer picture of what transition programs look like around the world. Out of six papers written, the common threads showed that most societies are moving towards the belief of the importance of lifelong learning. “Transitions from school to achieving a productive livelihood constitutes an important juncture in the lifelong process for all learners, as they move from more known, predictable environments, and more clearly defined pathways, into new open, less controlled and less certain and predictable terrain” (Pavlova et al., 2017, p. 1). In an effort to prepare students for twenty first century skills, teaching and learning of these skills have become more emphasized in secondary schooling to ensure that students are prepared for the next phase of life. It has caused debate not only in the United States but all across the globe on how these vocational skills should be taught and how to incorporate both vocational and academic education together. Since economies and culture continue to grow and change, so must the skills be taught in the classroom. There will always be a need for continuous learning regardless of location. Every country included in Pavlova, et al. (2017) findings showed two main challenges in forming a transition program, economic status and student motivation to learn.

Debra Neubert (2002) showed that since the 1800's there has been a trend in how transitional skills for secondary school are implemented in society during that time period. According to Landmark and Zhang (2012) there have been no studies that have been 100% compliant with Individuals with Disabilities Education of Improvement Act's (IDEIA) transition mandates and furthermore, even if a school should have fulfilled the legal requirements for transition services, there was little guarantee that the transition services had quality instruction or resources. "Transition planning and documentation in the Individualized Educations Plans (IEPs) have never been more important, and no published studies have reported the level of compliance with the more stringent transition requirements of IDEIA. In addition, the relationship between overall compliance and best practices has not been investigated in previous studies" (Landmark & Zhang, 2012, p.114). Studies on topics ranging from teacher readiness, to summaries of student progress, to challenges in implementing a set curriculum for secondary students with mild disabilities to be successful in transitioning to adult life and work, all suggest that there has been a lack of reporting and data collected on the mandates provided by the IDEIA. Having a mild to moderate disability, including learning disabilities and emotional disabilities, reduces the amount of support a student receives from the school, as comparative to students with moderate to severe disabilities, because according to assessment results these students should have the ability to provide daily living skills for themselves. This results in students not receiving necessary instruction in self-determination. Research has shown that it is the students that have been labeled with mild to moderate disabilities that benefit most from instruction on self-advocacy and self-awareness, regardless of whether they can be successful in the general education setting.

In the present paper, an inquiry of various literature has been done in order to determine what topics should be taught in transition classes and how those topics should be implemented for actual student success. Given the unique demands of secondary students with mild to moderate disabilities, there must be an emphasis upon student accountability, the establishment of curriculum standards for general education, and efficacy studies on special education transition services. Questions taken into consideration should include topics on school staff perception and preparedness in implementing transition services, development and implementation of a results-oriented transition program including competencies (main topics), and how to show evidence that students are prepared to transition from high school to adulthood. The following reviews on literature attempt to bring forward the challenges in teaching transition skills to students with mild to moderate disabilities and recommendations on how to address those challenges more successfully.

Review of the Literature

Perception of Transition Services

In the beginning stages of research, one starting point for research was identified, investigating whether there had been prior literature reviews on transition services for students with mild to moderate disabilities. Two such reviews were found. One review, completed in 2010, was very limited, with research spanning the years 1975-1994 and only considering work from four journals. The second review took place in 2014, and specifically focused on information on mild intellectual disabilities. Emily Bouck and Rajiv Satsangi (2014) provided various information, including that there has been a “lack of published research found in this review- and in conjunction with the earlier review of research on functional curriculum for secondary students with mild intellectual disability conducted between 1994-2009” (p. 478).

This causes one to consider what evidence has been gathered on functional curriculum for students with mild to moderate disabilities.

Bouck and Satsangi (2014) brought up the point that there has been a debate in the special education community about functional curriculum versus academically based curriculum. It has been loosely agreed upon that functional curriculum is for students with more moderate to severe disabilities and those students with mild to moderate disabilities should have more academically based curriculum. This has caused great discussion, as the other side of the debate has proposed that all students benefit from some functional curriculum such as balancing check books, cooking, employment skills, and social/relationship skills. Bouck (2014) suggested that “functional curriculum is at odds with current education policy” (p. 479). Limitations for this review included the time restraint between 1975-1994 and only articles from the following journals: *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities*, *Exceptional Children*, *Journal of Special Education*, and *Remedial and Special Education*. The results of this review showed that there were four components that were examined in the functional curriculum: functional academics, vocational/employment education, social skills, and daily living skills for both mild and severe students with intellectual disabilities. It was concluded that the students with mild disabilities had better pre-test to post-test differences and long-term maintenance of skills in all four components examined.

Debra Neubert (1997) explains the history of transition programs and classes starting from the 1800's to the present. In the 1980's, transition classes were questioned heavily due to the debate on balancing life skills such as: employability, vocational, and career education with the intensifying concerns for minimum competency testing, increased academic requirements for a diploma, and the inclusion movement. In the 1990's, it was suggested that there was limited

research that identified best practices with transition curriculum and programs. There was a list compiled of what those best practices included: “vocational training, parent involvement, interagency collaboration, social skills, paid work experience, individual plans, follow-up employment, community-based instruction, career education, employability skills, etc.”

(Neubert, 1997, p. 13). This article also proposed future issues that could occur in transition programs such as how to promote balance between academic prerequisites and inclusion and life skills for students with disabilities.

According to Greg Conderman and Antonis Katsiyannis (2002), creation and implementation of a survey to investigate the actual instructional issues and practices was necessary for understanding perceptions of transition services. One part of the survey focused on vocational instruction and transition services. Results from the survey showed that near 50% of the respondents reported that vocational skills and transition services should be provided by the special education teachers. Of their respondents, 35% responded that special education teachers should be the ones to also provide work experience opportunities. Conderman and Katsiyannis’ (2002) study ended their discussion with the following statement “the overall findings from this research suggest that the instructional and transitional responsibilities of secondary special education are unique enough to warrant specialized preparation—admittedly, a definite challenge for smaller teacher preparation institutions with limited or dwindling resources” (p. 175). Another article explained a survey went out to teachers to gain their perspectives on their transition competencies. The frustration for the impetus for change stems from teachers questioning the relevance of what has to be taught to every student, including the non-college bound, and the fact that most students even those that are not on IEPs will be moving into the next stages of life with little to no vocational or daily living skill knowledge.

School Staff Preparedness

“One reason student’s with disabilities face tremendous challenges during transition may be due to secondary special education teachers’ feeling unprepared to plan for and deliver transition services” (Benitez et al., 2009, p. 6). This team of researchers sent out a survey to special education personnel across the nation. Of those surveyed, 573 responses revealed information suggesting that less than half of the special education programs addressed transition standards, and only 45% offered an actual designated transition course. This survey also looked at the extent of how services were delivered. The overall data collected showed that the many of the participants felt somewhat unprepared to somewhat prepared as far as training was concerned. When looking further at the data, it also showed that the special education personnel responded differently depending on the student’s disabilities and severities. The educators with students with mild to moderate disabilities including learning disabilities and social emotional conditions, said they were more unprepared than the teachers who taught more severely disabled students. Landmark and Zhang (2012) came to similar conclusions in their study showing that less than two thirds of the IEPs collected showed evidence of community or agency collaboration a necessity for promoting teacher preparedness in these areas.

There were limitations to Benitez (2009) study including: results coming from self-reporting by the educators, misunderstanding the survey questions, a limited data pool from only 31 states not the entirety of the nation, and educators that did not respond could not be counted into the percentages. The correlation of the decline of functional curriculum being taught and the lack of training of teachers in these areas is an interesting side note. For future research, content of professional development for special education teachers and investigation into how well teachers are implementing transition competencies would be essential in this research. This

prompted a study on professional development and Individualized Education Plan (IEPs) components by Flannery, Lombardi, and McGrath Kato.

“The research on the inclusion of transition requirements in IEPs has documented a continued (a) lack of inclusion or clarity of mandated components, (b) limited inclusion of details and specificity of transition services to support postschool goals, (c) lack of long-range planning or revision of goals or plans, (d) differences across disability groups or ethnicity, and (e) limited participation of students and other critical IEP team members” (Flannery et al., 2015, p. 14). After researchers surveying 27 secondary special education teachers teaching transition services that had participated in specific professional development focusing on transition and the components on the IEPs, there were improvements in inclusion and quality in transitions. Peper and McMaster (2012) also did a study on special education teachers, and how they are facing more responsibilities to provide data-driven decisions. However, the roles of transition teachers have not been clearly defined.

Curriculum and Implementation

The following two articles looked at challenges in transition services and how to do more than meet the minimum compliance requirements. It is also discussed how use of summaries of performance (SOP) enhance transition planning and what current or future challenges are being discussed. A summary of performance provided by IDEIA provides allows Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams to build cohesive and consistent transition plans long before the secondary transition takes place. SOP's are to be reviewed regularly and include a portfolio where a checklist of competencies can have a running record on progress and completion. When examining how many teachers were informed and their confidence in teaching students to create a portfolio of summary of progress for the entirety of high school, many teachers felt very

inadequate in providing direction or even knowing how to compile that data. It also allows various stakeholders such as the parents, student, and education staff in developing the appropriate plan.

“Key issues influencing the implementation of the federal transition requirements of the IDEA Amendments of 1997 and policies at the state and local levels; examines the impact and implications of recent general education reform initiatives on secondary education and transition services; and presents the major policy, system, and other challenges that must be addressed over the next several years” (Johnson et al., 2002, p. 520). A common thread found in the challenges of transition programs indicates that the implementation of transition service requirements has been too slow, with many programs failing the minimal achievement levels of compliance. Education policy currently does not support the training or provides resources for educators to integrate functional skills into their classrooms. Many are left to build their own curriculum blend or resort to ignoring important discussions with students bridging the gap between academic skills and the functional skills they will need to be successful in life after high school.

The next article in this review looks at what topics or standards should be included in transition curriculum. “The traditional special education curriculum at the secondary level, driven by both graduation requirements and deficits in the student’s present level performance, often does not meet the transitional needs of youth with mild disabilities” (Kaiser & Abell, 1997, p. 70). According to this review there has been a focus on remedial academics with not enough focus on bridging the gap to functional skills. Kaiser and Abell (1997) claim that this topic should be included for a successful transition curriculum: first daily living skills, second personal/social communications, third occupational exploration, fourth community and federal program awareness. A report by the Department of Education showed that only 20% of students

with disabilities were functioning independently in all listed areas within the three to five years after high school. Additionally, reports showed that 45% were only functioning successfully in two of those areas. This article laid out a plan for improvement where if transition started at freshman year and was continuous through senior year it could have greater success. This causes one to question how an educator is to understand and implement this continuous transition plan.

Hamblet (2014) came up with nine strategies that would improve a student's success in transitioning to college. In Hamblet (2014) study she focused on students with Learning Disabilities (LD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and what strategies they needed to successfully transition to the college setting. Students with LD and or ADHD showed that they struggled more with making adjustments to the pace of the college classes including: how to keep themselves organized, effective note taking, increased quantities of writing, and independent study skills. "Although all students (with and without disabilities) have to make adjustments when they get to college, these new challenges may affect students with LD and ADHD more than others" (Hamblet, 2014, p. 54). The first challenge for these students is having to independently apply for accommodations due to the fact that they are legal adults and previous IEP accommodations do not automatically transfer to the college setting without active involvement. In the previous school setting the accommodations were created and implemented by the school staff with some input from the parents. While transferring accommodations from the secondary setting to the college setting may be helpful to some extent certain accommodations may no longer be suitable for the next setting the student is currently working in. This can cause a lack of support needed for the student to succeed. Educating the IEP team members was the first strategy that Hamblet (2014) discussed. If all parts of the IEP team (including student and parent) know the accommodations that are provided at the students future

school, as well as how the disabilities office paperwork should be filed, then the student and team can start working on the procedures for applying in advance so the student is able to get the necessary support.

Encouraging independence and advocacy are covered in the next few strategies that are necessary for one to be successful in transitioning to college. During the student's freshman year IEP meeting, a transition plan is started. It should be mandatory for the not only the parent to attend but the student as well. If the student is a part of the beginning of the process, they will be more understanding of what and why they are receiving the supports and accommodations. Teaching the student to advocate for themselves by knowing what their strengths/weaknesses are and how they need support to successfully complete tasks is a major step towards success. In being able to advocate for themselves they should be able to explain assistive technology needs, documentation, and how to use their accommodations in several settings. More importantly, students need to be taught learning and organization skills. "Students should receive direct instruction in techniques that they can apply across a variety of courses and can utilize independently" (Hamblet, 2014, p. 58). Preparing students with mild disabilities for success takes effort by everyone involved, but most importantly the student.

Student Measured Success

Much of the current research has focused on the transition program itself and what should be taught but limited information has been provided on how any of it is measured. Most transition programs tend to just abruptly end communication once a student has graduated. How does the school know if that student transitioned into college or trade school or work place successfully? Alexson and Kemnitz (2004) did a focused study in Wisconsin on curriculum articulation and transitioning student success. The purpose of this study was to articulate a well

thought out curricula that aligned with the state education system to provide a seamless transition between secondary education and post-secondary education. A major finding in their research showed that it was not the curriculum that was faulty but misaligned expectations. There was a divergence in expectations of teachers, post-secondary professors, and students in regard to what curricula is important, how families should be supported, and the role of personal responsibility. This divergence has an impact on success of transitioning students.

For students, it was found that success rate was higher on skills when the information was presented by two or more presenters. For an example, “having two faculty members present worked very well as it engaged the students more effectively and offered them different perspectives. However, based on verbal and written responses, the students would find it most useful to have a current college student also visit the class to provide information from the student perspective” (Alexson & Kemnitz, 2004, p. 24). The findings resulted in recommendations in having high school students hear from other faculty, professors from local colleges, trade-school instructors, and workplace employees on their various perspectives and experiences. These results also provide information that suggests it is important to have frequent communication between the secondary staff and post-secondary community to close the gap in expectations of students through the transition and set accommodations and establish learning strategies for life after secondary school.

Novakovic and Ross (2015) reported a huge increase in student interest in college after participating in their program, College Student for a Day. The research showed, 85% of the students that participated felt confident in accessing resources and accommodations as well as excitement about transitioning to college. The last recommendation that was given from this study was to get the students and the IEP team involved early. If a student participates in the

making of the transition plan and goals beginning in their freshman year, they will be able to advocate for themselves and truly understand what skills are needed to have a successful secondary to post-secondary transition. In the research from Landmark and Zhang (2012) evaluating the correlation between compliance of IEPs and practices of transition mandates outlined by the IDEIA, out of the data collected 41.5% of IEPs were compliant with transition timelines and only 44.8% had all the postsecondary information, including measurable goals. Out of all the collected IEPs only a quarter of them had all the requirements.

Analysis

In the past 30 years there has been an increased focus on improving transition programs for students with disabilities. The whole purpose of transition services and planning is to address skills that students will need to be successful in young adulthood and ensure that those skills are addressed during the student's higher education. After reviewing many different research and literature reviews, it was noted that there has been a shift in transition programs/services focus. Under the federal mandates for transition planning, the following elements should be adhered to by all schools. The first element states that the IEP includes a statement of transition needs before the age of 16 and should be reviewed every year following. In many California schools transition plans are started as the students begin their freshman year of high school to make sure this deadline is completed in the proper time frame. The second and third mandates explain "transition services are defined as a coordinated set of activities designed within an outcome-oriented process; postsecondary areas of concern include postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation" (Patton, et al., 1997, p. 296). The last two mandates explain that the transition services are student needs based as well as informed

by student preference and interest; such needs determine what the instruction will include and how it is implemented. Further studies have been conducted on the correlations between teacher training, quality of instruction, and specific mandates from the IDEA. Such studies have also looked at the process of transition programs in the beginning planning stages, during, and post outcomes.

The IDEA and the No Child Left behind Act of 2001 defines scientifically based research as “ research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs...an example of this would be Response to Intervention” (Test, Bartholomew, & Bethune, 2015, p. 255). Data has consistently shown that students with disabilities have lower employment, independent living, and post-secondary education success percentages than those who do not have disabilities. The push for evidence-based practices (EBP) through the IDEA and No Child Left Behind Act mandates has caused some concern with administrators and school staff as they would agree with the research that EBP works but believe that the resources and professional development opportunities have lacked. Test, Bartholomew, and Bethune (2015) found seventeen EBP predictors that if present, students had higher percentages of success in those areas. One predictor used parent training modules. These modules are short packets that go over a broad topic for a given period of time. Another predictor used is peer assistance. “Peer assistance involves having a student deliver academic instruction to another student and includes peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and peer instruction” (Test et al., 2015, p. 259). Self-management strategies involving self-monitoring, self-evaluation, goal setting, and student assessment of behavior and academic success are also a predictor in successfully transitioning students from high school.

Application

Going from a disability and deficit-focused program to a program providing education based on ability, self-determination, and options is a necessary paradigm shift. Kohler and Field (2003) the research on transition programs shows five framework practices that are necessary for a successful transition program. Student-focused planning, student development, interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration, family involvement, and program structure are necessary for students to have successful transitions after secondary schooling. These parallel the eight practices that are outlined in the IDEIA for compliant transition services. Student-focused planning is when the IEP and educational planning is drafted with the students' vision, goals, and interests in mind. This means that the student needs to be involved and have a sense of self-awareness. The staff teaching the transition class needs to incorporate, at the freshman level, activities on self-awareness. Examples include; skills profilers, interest surveys, goal writing (short and long term), and information on how to reflect and respond to their progress or lack of growth. When taking part in these activities, including a school-based example, college or trade school example and a workplace example can be beneficial for the students understanding of the task in a multitude of settings. The IDEIA mandates that a student with a disability should work with several people during the transition process, these would be those IEP team members (school psychologists, special education teachers, counselors, parents, and administrators). Students must be able to advocate for themselves in order to be successful in their transition. Once the student has a sense of empowerment and understanding of their transition plan the development of skills comes next.

Student development is the practice that most think of when asked what transition programs cover. Skills in employment, life, and occupation are taught in a variety of ways

including experiences outside the classroom (if the local community has those options). This includes what type of assessments the students will be taking and what accommodations they truly need to be successful transition. “Research continues to support the importance of the student development practices in preparing individuals with disabilities to assume independent adult roles” (Kohler & Field, 2003, p. 177). One of the main reasons there is a lack in self-determination is that the educators themselves have not been trained or provided resources to teach quality self-determination practices. Hands-on experiences and field related demonstrations directly correlated with an increase in the student’s skills autonomy, self-realization, and overall understanding.

Collaboration between interagency and community-based businesses/organizations is one piece of the puzzle for a successful transition program. Transition programs and the community need to have very specific roles, responsibilities, and communication outlined in order to ensure a well-rounded program. The collaboration piece is key as it helps to bridge the gap between school led and family led skill building. Landmark and Zhang (2012) showed that there is a lack in work experience opportunities in the transition programs due to lack of employers/community availability and the lack of knowledge concerning appropriate models and best practices by educators. The school team provides the initial introduction of skills and how to implement them, but then it is the job of the student and family to continue those practices. This does pose a question for later research. How does this exchange of roles work with the ever-changing learning environments of public schools? In many states, there are opportunities for traditional on-site learning, online learning, and hybrids between the two. If student is attending an online school, how does the school staff build rapport with the local community that the student lives in or be able to know the exact steps to apply for the local community college and disability center?

With the expansion of various programs suited to meet individual student need there may be a disconnect in building a community identity.

Family involvement is one of the constant pieces to a successful transition program. In the areas of participation, empowerment, and training, the family is needed to help provide support to their student because the school system is not a lifelong placement. "...students view their family members as playing important roles in the development of their self-determination and their visions for the future. Thus, the student-focused planning and student development practices described previously are supported and extended through the family involvement" (Kohler & Field, 2003, p. 178). The research has shown in the past an assumption that school staff alienates families from involvement causing more concern in their child's transition than providing confidence and support to their student. Overall research has shown that parents are looking for more informational materials, a single contact person through-out the process, and opportunities to network with local resources and other families going through the same process. Families that were interviewed through many of the articles mentioned prior and a common result came about. Effective and constant communication from the school staff allows parents to support their child.

Effective communication is just one part of a transition program structure. Transition services should include planning, policy, evaluation, and development of resources. The structure of the program should include qualified staff, sufficient resources, a clear mission, community-based planning, and a sensitivity to the student/families cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Transition programs need support and buy-in from all parties to exceed expectations of the government. The qualified staff should use student and family focused strategies, help facilitate community and family relations, help support through example and

leadership, and continually provide information of local and federal initiatives that are available for transitioning beyond secondary school. Administration and other supportive staff need to also be versed in the resources available so when going into IEP meetings or conversations with families that have students transitioning they have productive dialogue. “Educators, service providers, and families must help students develop their skills and abilities, provide services and supports that enhance and facilitate these abilities, and develop opportunities through which students can apply those abilities. “One size fits all” and “check in the box” transition planning strategies do not effectively prepare students with disabilities -who have unique needs- for successful, fulfilling adult roles” (Kohler and Field, 2003, p. 181).

Conclusion

Evidence on teacher perception suggests that there is not a clear definition of what transition services entail in terms of curriculum, or clear guidelines for implementation. Surveys of special education teachers provided data to suggest that many feel unprepared to provide these services adequately and require additional training and professional development. To elaborate upon this point, a study of research on content of professional development for special education teachers in relation to transition requirements and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) components by Flannery, Lombardi, and McGrath (2015) was conducted. According to their research, it was found that there were many areas lacking inclusion of transition requirements in IEPs. Additionally, with special education teachers participating in professional development to alleviate the discrepancies there were improvements in compliance and alignment (Flannery et al. 2015). The compiled research suggests that there also needs to be greater clarity and education on expectations and roles for special education teachers, to ensure compliance with transition requirements in terms of data collection and documentation. Not only have these

expectations been woefully undefined or unclear, curriculum and standards have also received minimal focus. There has been a lack of consistency amongst programs, and according to Kaiser and Abell (1997) many programs were unbalanced, focusing primarily on remedial academics but lacking in instruction of functional skills. With the necessity of preparing students for success in their adult life, and the concerning report from Kaiser and Abell (1997), the Department of Education that only 20% of students are functioning successfully in all areas in the three to five years post-secondary, there needs to be greater direction in how to improve student success in transitioning to adulthood and to post-secondary education.

According to research by Alexson and Kemnitz (2004), divergence in expectations amongst varied educators and students on important curricula, family roles and support, and personal responsibility has had an impact upon student success in transitioning. The main threads from all these articles show that transition planning and services is an ever-evolving program that needs to be addressed for current times and current societal skills. These articles give great background information of where transition programs started, where it is now, and where and what challenges may arise in the future. Individualizing plans and including specific competencies on student focused planning, development of the student as an individual, collaboration with school and community agencies, family involvement, and program structure and attributes are what is needed for a compliant transition program. Implementing these competencies by a well-prepared team are key in a successful secondary transition program for students with mild to moderate disabilities. The need for more evidence is necessary in order to create a successful program.

As empirical evidence for transition practices surmounts, reauthorizations from the IDEIA need to update mandates on the practices. Although there is a correlation between

compliance and evidence-based transition practices, the oversight and tracking of these services will lead to more positive post-secondary outcomes. It was suggested in research from Novakovic and Ross (2015), that possible improvements might include programs to promote college awareness and student involvement in the IEP process. However, a guaranteed plan for success has not yet been established. Amidst all the various research, there is a clear sense of the need for increased clarity in all areas, in order to develop more coherent and aligned successful transition programs. This extends to teacher preparedness, acknowledgement of standards of practice as well as curriculum, definitive roles for each individual participating in student transition, consistency in documentation and data collection, and additional programs to promote student success beyond secondary school.

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