

**The Transition to Postsecondary Education for
Students with Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder:
Perspectives from Postsecondary Disability Service Providers**

...

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Education: Curriculum and Instruction Option

...

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Capstone Project Proposal

Introduction

Students with disabilities are continuing their education beyond high school at an increasing rate. Newman (2005) in the National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 (NLTS2), identified that 77% of high school students with disabilities planned to attend some type of postsecondary training, and 53% planned to attend a two or four-year college (Newman, 2005). A much smaller percentage of these students were actually attending college two year later. Students with learning disabilities (LD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) were less likely than students with some other disabilities to attend college.

For students with learning disabilities or ADHD, adequate preparation for college or other postsecondary training and education is critical (Brinckerhoff, McGuire and Shaw, 2002). Through high school graduation, these students' educational supports are mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) provide academic accommodations and modifications to curriculum and an array of support services. Case managers/special education teachers often advocate for them, ensuring that their needs are met. Adequate preparation in high school of students with LD or ADHD for the transition to college will help promote successful transition to postsecondary education.

As a Special Education Case Manager for juniors at ..., I case manage approximately 15 students each year. The majority of these students have been identified with learning disabilities or ADHD, and most of them plan on applying to either two or four-year colleges. Most of my contacts with students involve implementing current IEPs and providing academic support. Similar to other case managers, there are one or two meetings per year with each student to discuss postsecondary transition planning. At

..., there is currently no systematic approach for helping students with learning disabilities or ADHD transition to college.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this investigation is to collect information about the transition needs of students with learning disabilities and ADHD from the perspective of postsecondary disability service providers. In the next two or three years, the intention is to design an effective approach for preparing ... students for transition to postsecondary education. The information from disability services personnel will be essential to understanding the needs of students transitioning from ... to postsecondary education and will help us to design an effective and systematic approach for this transition. By implementing defined transition services, ... will comply with IDEA 2004 regulations for transition and better prepare students with learning disabilities or ADHD for the differences between high school and postsecondary schools.

The literature addressing the transition to postsecondary education confirmed that students with learning disabilities or ADHD are not sufficiently prepared for the differences between high school and college. Getzel (2005) concluded that students lack the self-advocacy skills necessary for them to successfully transition to postsecondary education and beyond. They do not understand how their disabilities affect learning, and they do not know how to access services at the college level.

Students with disabilities also need to be informed about the laws that will apply to them in college. Roffman (2007) emphasized that Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) are civil rights mandates and not special education laws. Students need to be aware that services for students with learning

disabilities or ADHD vary from one postsecondary school to another; and students need to carefully research their school options.

Recognizing the need for transition planning for students who want to pursue further education, the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) added many provisions regarding secondary transition, including “a coordinated set of activities” to facilitate a student’s transition to postsecondary schooling. The student must be invited to attend IEP meetings that focus on measurable postsecondary goals and transition services (IDEA 2004).

An IEP transition planning meeting with the IEP team of parents, student, case manager, teachers, guidance counselor, and other related services professionals does not provide sufficient time to address all of the issues related to transition to college (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002). Effective transition planning requires more time to cover all of the issues involved in this process.

The components of transition to college planning are best generated by the colleges that students will most likely be attending (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). High school special educators focus on supporting their students through high school, and often lack sufficient knowledge of the circumstances that students with disabilities will encounter at various postsecondary schools. When college service coordinators in New York State were surveyed, they expressed little satisfaction with the transition services that had been provided to students with learning disabilities in high school. In addition to their critiques of transition services, several service coordinators recommended that more collaboration and communication between high school staff and college service providers was needed (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002).

At ..., the Special Education Department is just beginning to address the subject of transition planning. During the 2007 – 2008 school year, I was one member of a Transition Group of five special educators who were asked by the Special Education Coordinator to look at transition issues at The three activities that we planned were attended by 15 – 20 students who had learning disabilities or ADHD. The students reported that many of their questions about transitioning to college were answered, but the overall response was that more sessions were needed for all of the transition-related topics that needed to be addressed. For our third transition session in May 2008, we invited the Disability Services Coordinator from a local community college to talk about the differences between high school and college with 16 juniors and seniors with various disabilities. The positive responses from the students and the collaborative experience for the special educators support the need for more interaction with postsecondary disability service providers.

Students with learning disabilities and ADHD at ... are not well prepared for the transition to postsecondary schooling. Prior to last year's sessions, students said that they did not know how to access services at college, and most thought that they would have an IEP in college. Students with disabilities need to have more comprehensive transition planning so that they can have realistic expectations about college.

Case managers at ... would benefit from information from postsecondary disability service providers to improve our own knowledge of the supports and transition activities students with learning disabilities can expect in college. There is no specific training for special educators about transition issues at our school. My own lack of knowledge and my own need for more information in this area add to the purpose of this investigation.

Guiding Questions

The purpose of this investigation is to research transition-planning needs for students with learning disabilities and ADHD as identified by disability service providers at postsecondary schools. A review of transition practices as described in current literature provides a foundation for interviewing postsecondary service providers. Recommendations for high school special educators will be used to improve transition-planning practices at The following questions guide this study:

- (1) What does the literature say about effective practices regarding the transition of students with learning disabilities and ADHD to postsecondary education?
- (2) What do postsecondary service providers (administration and staff) identify as transition needs for students with learning disabilities or ADHD transitioning to college, and what preparation suggestions do they have for high school special education case managers?
- (3) What activities and supports do postsecondary schools provide for students with learning disabilities and ADHD to promote success and aid the transition process in the following areas:
 - a) social/daily functioning
 - b) academic
 - c) technical/administrative (including financial aid and documentation of disability)?

Definition of Terms:

ADHD – Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. “ADHD is a neurobiological disorder that

includes a combination of inattentive, hyperactive, and impulsive behaviors that are developmentally inappropriate and severe enough to impair function at home and school” (Paquette & Tuttle, 2003, p. 46).

Learning disabilities (LD) – This is a term used to describe “a variety of learning problems that affect storing, processing, or producing information. When these problems create gaps between ability and performance, they are called learning disabilities” (Paquette & Tuttle, 2003, p. 11).

Postsecondary education – This term includes all formal education beyond high school, including four-year colleges, junior colleges, community colleges, trade schools and vocational schools.

Transition services – Complete definition of transition services from Individuals with Disabilities Act (2004):

The term “transition services” mean a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that:

- Is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment); continuing adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;
- Is based on the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child’s strengths, preferences, and interests; and
- Includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

[34 CFR 300.43 (a)] [20 U.S.C. 1401(34)]

Method

Introduction

This study, which explores the postsecondary transition needs of students with learning disabilities and ADHD, stems from the need to design an effective and systematic approach at ... for students with disabilities who plan to pursue postsecondary education. While the literature on the subject of transition services is considerable, the perspectives of New Hampshire area postsecondary disability service providers will help to target the specific areas that they find are critical in preparing students for the transition to college.

Interviews with administrators and disability service providers at two and four-year colleges in New Hampshire will address the research question: What do postsecondary service providers identify as transition needs for students with learning disabilities or ADHD transitioning to college, and what preparation suggestions do they have for high school special education case managers? In addition, these interviews will explore the research question: What activities and supports do postsecondary schools provide to promote success and aid the transition process in the areas of social/daily functioning, academic, and technical/administrative assistance? Finally, a researcher's journal will be used to reflect on the data collection process and how the information from the service providers could be used to improve current transition services at the high school level.

This method section is divided into five subsections and provides a framework for this investigation: (1) Project Participants and Setting, (2) Data Collection Procedures, (3) Materials, (4) Data Analysis, and (5) a Timeline of target dates for completion.

Project Participants and Setting

In this investigation, the information and recommendations from onsite interviews will be used to improve the transition planning practices at The researcher will also participate in this study by writing ongoing reflections in relation to the purpose and research questions for this study. Many of the students with learning disabilities or ADHD from this high school tend to continue their education at two and four-year colleges in New Hampshire. Following approval by the Souhegan High Administrative Team, administrators and disability service providers from colleges in this state will be asked to participate in this study (see Appendix A for administrator approval letter).

The participants for the onsite interviews will be disability service providers (administrators and staff) from two community colleges and two four-year colleges in New Hampshire. There will be a total of eight interviews, with one administrator and one staff member (i.e. writing tutor, math tutor, or counselor) from each college (see Appendix A for informed consent letter). The setting for the interviews will be at the colleges' disability service offices and service-delivery areas. This will allow the researcher to not only get verbal input from the participants, but also to observe the learning environment and collect sample materials being used with students.

The overall context setting for this study is ..., located in the small town of ..., New Hampshire. ... has a population of approximately 950 students, with about 110 students receiving special education services due to learning disabilities or ADHD. An additional 50 students with ADHD receive academic accommodations in accordance with their 504 plans. Approximately 87% of students from ... continue on to postsecondary education.

The initial contact with the prospective participants will be via telephone to request participation in the study, and to explain the purpose of the onsite visits, interviews, and

collection of materials. The incentive for the disability service administrators' participation in this study is to help to improve transition services so that they may benefit from better-prepared incoming students with disabilities in the next few years. Participants will be given a \$5 gift certificate to thank them for their participation in this study. Dates and times will be determined, and a confirmation letter, with the questions to be asked, will be sent.

Participants will be asked to sign an informed consent letter on the day of the interview (see Appendix A for Letter of Consent to Disability Service Administrator or Service Provider).

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection tools for this study include in depth interviews with service providers during site visits, a materials review, and the researcher's journal. These tools will be used to develop a systematic approach for helping students with learning disabilities and ADHD transition to college.

Interviews. Following recommendations in Seidman (2006), initial contact with prospective participants for onsite visits and interviews will be by telephone. Both Seidman (2006) and Rubin and Rubin (2005) stressed the importance of personal contact for this type of responsive interviewing, as the goal is to build a relationship between the interviewer and the participant. If possible, both an administrator and a service provider will be interviewed at each school. The researcher will request 45 minutes to one hour for each interview, which will be recorded using a recording device; and the researcher will also use a notepad and pen to take note of observations that cannot be recorded. The researcher will also use the interview script to write in demographic information and responses to the oral survey. Seidman (2006) recommended a 90-minute period for an interview, but since there will be two interviews at each college, one hour was considered to be an adequate amount of time.

At the beginning of each interview, an informed consent letter will be presented for signature. The participant will be given a gift certificate to thank them for their participation in the study. The researcher/interviewer will give the participant information about the purpose of the study and the research questions that will be explored in the interview. The first questions posed to the participant will be about the participant's job title, job description, and the number of years that the participant has held that position. After taking the demographic information, the researcher will follow an interview script (see Appendix A for Postsecondary Service Provider Interview Script). The interview script starts with a brief oral survey. Participants will be given a copy of these questions to look at during the oral survey.

As outlined by Rubin and Rubin (2005), the interview will be comprised of main questions, follow-up questions, and probes. Although the main questions will be derived from the research questions for this study, Rubin and Rubin (2005) stressed the importance of flexibility of design and questioning to accommodate new information and unexpected situations.

The purpose of conducting these interviews at the participants' schools is not solely to have in depth interviews with service providers and administrators. It gives the researcher an opportunity to observe the learning environment for students with disabilities at these postsecondary schools. The researcher may also obtain materials that can be used with high school students. Lastly, the longer-term benefits of onsite interviews derive from the opportunity to develop ongoing relationships between high school and postsecondary disability service providers.

Materials review. At each site, the researcher will collect a range of materials that are currently being used by the college to support students with disabilities, such as pamphlets, orientation materials, and any other materials that might be helpful to secondary students in high school or to prepare them for the transition to postsecondary education.

Reflective journal. The researcher's journal will be used to reflect on the data collection process for the onsite interviews, the materials collected during the site interviews, and the relationship to current transition practices at This journal will also be used to document reflections from the site visits and what was learned from spending time in the environment in the context of the research questions for this study. The reflections will be framed by the research questions. This will be done bi-weekly for approximately 30 minutes at a time, beginning in February 2009.

Validity and reliability of data collection tools. In this research study, site visits, collection of transition-related materials, and a researcher's journal are used as data collection tools. According to Johnson (2008), use of a researcher's journal increases the validity of the study by reflecting on the researcher's biases; reflective planning; and providing thick, description of the setting, study and participants. The validity of the study will also be increased by triangulation of the various perspectives in transition from the literature, interview information from postsecondary service providers and researcher's observations and reflections. Including different voices in the interview process, administrators and direct service providers, also supports triangulation (Johnson 2008). Reliability will be increased through the use of questions adapted from a previous survey of disability service providers which will be posed during the interviews (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). These questions will be reviewed with the Special Education

Coordinator and pilot-tested with colleagues in special education to further address any reliability issues.

Materials

The following list of materials will be used during this investigation:

- Notepad and pen to record notes during interviews
- Recording device for interviews
- Interview script for interviews (includes oral survey)

Data Analysis

In this study, the data collection tools are primarily qualitative, rather than quantitative. This study examines the perspectives of current disability service providers on transition services for students with learning disabilities or ADHD. Triangulation of the data from this study with the literature on transition will be used by the researcher to improve transition planning at the high school level.

Interviews. The interviews will be transcribed and then organized around the themes from the interview questions. These results will be compared with the reflections in the researcher's journal, synthesizing all of the themes presented in the literature, including comparisons with the responses from a New York State survey of postsecondary disability service coordinators (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). The findings from the interviews will be presented in narrative form in the final report of this study.

The results of the oral survey will be presented in a table with six statements about transition and the number of participants responding in a range from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree with each statement. The participants' comments on each statement will be presented in narrative form and organized by the themes that emerge.

Materials review. The materials collected from the site visits will be coded by school (1–4). They will be sorted by categories (orientation pamphlets, disability services guides, support materials, unique materials, etc.). Information about the kinds of materials collected will be presented in narrative form in the final report as it connects to the themes from the interviews. Any information gleaned from the materials review to support the research questions will be shared. This may help reinforce themes developed from the interview results.

Reflective journal. Journal reflections will be organized around the same themes as the interviews. Information from the journal will be used in the final report to support interview responses as appropriate.

Validity and reliability of data analysis. The validity and reliability of the data analysis in this study is increased by the use of two specific strategies. According to Johnson (2005), triangulating data sources is a necessary step in action research and supports the validity of results. Triangulation is apparent in this study as there are multiple sources of data used. The second strategy is peer debriefing. Using peer debriefing to discuss interpretations of collected data increases validity (Johnson, 2005). The peer debriefer can provide alternative interpretations for the researcher and help to point out biases. Peer debriefing of observations and interpretations from the interviews and the researcher's journal will be used in this study. A peer debriefer will be used to independently review interview transcripts for themes and compare these with the research. This will supply evidence that the results of the study are accurate.

Timeline

After approval has been received from the ... Institutional Review Board (IRB) and administration at ..., the data collection process and analysis of data should take ten weeks. The following timeline for this investigation includes milestones and target dates for the project:

1. Obtain administrative and KSC IRB approval (February, 2009)
2. Determine the participants for onsite interviews of postsecondary service providers and administrators (February, 2009)
3. Begin bi-weekly entries in researcher's journal (February – April 2009)
4. Review interview script with ... Special Education Coordinator and colleagues (February, 2009)
5. Onsite visits with postsecondary service providers and administrators (February – March 6, 2009)
6. Organize and analyze data (March 6 – April 17, 2009)

Summary

In order to determine the transition needs of students with learning disabilities or ADHD from the perspective of the administrators and staff who provide disability services at the postsecondary level, multiple methods of data collection must be used. Synthesis of information and studies from the literature, the interviews with administrators and postsecondary service providers at their respective schools, and observations and reflections in the researcher's journal will provide the basis for developing effective transition services at

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this investigation is to collect information about the transition needs of students with learning disabilities and ADHD from the perspective of postsecondary disability service providers. By designing and implementing effective transition services, ... will better prepare students with learning disabilities or ADHD for the transition from high school to postsecondary education.

This literature review examines milestones in the law regarding transition services for students with disabilities and current issues in the transition to postsecondary education. The review also looks at research on improving transition to postsecondary education for students with learning disabilities or ADHD, as well as examples of approaches to transition planning. The following major areas of the literature will be reviewed: (1) *An Overview of Transition*; (2) *Transition to Postsecondary: Legal Foundations*; (3) *Current Issues and Trends in the Transition to Postsecondary Education*; and (4) *Improving the Transition to Postsecondary Education for Students with Learning Disabilities or ADHD*.

An Overview of Transition

Transition is a relatively new concept in special education for students with disabilities (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002; Hitchings, Retish & Horvath, 2005; Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009; Mellard, 2005). Prior to 1990, the goal of high school programs for students with disabilities was successful transition to employment (Mellard, 2005). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA, 1990) required IEPs to address the movement to postschool activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation (Mellard, 2005).

For an increasing number of students with disabilities, the transition from high school will be to postsecondary education.

This overview of transition reviews the history of transition, the IDEA legislation that mandates transition services in secondary education, and definitions of transition and transition services.

History of Transition

Over the past two decades, there have been major changes affecting the education of students with disabilities, with greater attention being given to long-range planning and the transition process (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw; Getzel, 2005; Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009). The successful transition of students with disabilities from high school is now regarded as an indicator of our educational system's ability to prepare young adults for independence (Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009). In order to fully understand the current emphasis on transition planning, it is important to review the legislation for people with disabilities that serves as the foundation for more recent mandates for transition services for students with disabilities.

In reviewing federal legislation prior to 1990, Rusch (2008) summarized the changes that have occurred for people with disabilities as a movement from a focus on training and rehabilitation through the 1960s, to a focus on access and accommodations in the 1970s. In 1975, P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, was passed. This piece of legislation was later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It included regulations and guidelines for special education services (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002). It provided some federal funding to states and required the development of an individualized education program (IEP) for every child with a disability. Under this law, if the

IEP team determines that it is appropriate, the IEP can include vocational objectives (Rusch, 2008).

During the early 1980s, transition planning for youth with disabilities became a focus of federal policy. Newman (2005) and Rusch (2008) both identify Madeliene Will, assistant secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) as a key figure in the transition initiative for youth with disabilities during this period. In 1983, P.L. 94-142 was amended to add a section which authorized federal funds for programs assisting students with disabilities in the transition from high school to postsecondary education, vocational training or community services (Rusch, 2008). OSERS offered a transition model to states and local agencies which recommended employment and independent living as the goal of secondary school transition services. Further research resulted in refinement of this model, and an expansion of the definition of transition services, leading to the policies and legislation of the 1990s and beyond.

General Mandates for Transition

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is federal legislation supported by federal funds. It guarantees that all children with disabilities are entitled to a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. It is important for students, parents and high school transition teams to note that for most students with disabilities, public education ends with high school graduation (Rothstein, 2002). This means that upon graduation from high school, students with disabilities are no longer covered by the IDEA. The IDEA reauthorizations of 1990, 1997 and 2004 provide the legal foundation for transition services for students with disabilities.

IDEA 1990. In 1990, P.L. 94-142 was reauthorized as P.L.101-476 Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). According to Hitchings, Retish and Horvath (2005), the passage of this act, mandating transition services for students with disabilities, led to the improvement in services at the secondary level. It mandated that students' IEPs include a statement of transition services by age 16, with needed services and participating agencies, as appropriate (Rusch, 2008). The IEP should also include a statement if services are not required in a specific area. Transition services in IDEA 1990 were defined 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 postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities must: (a) be based on the individual student's needs; (b) take into account student preferences and interests; and (c) must include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living skills, and functional vocational evaluation. (P.L. 101-476, 34 CFR, Section 300.18)

As summarized in Rusch (2008), "By defining transition services, and by requiring a statement of such services in the student's IEP, the 1990 reauthorization of the IDEA did more than any of the previous amendments to promote the development of educational programs focused on postschool goals" (p. 36).

IDEA 1997. Before 1997, IDEA was a civil rights statute with the purpose of ensuring equal opportunity for children with disabilities (Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009). The reauthorization of IDEA in 1997 (P.L.105-17) sought to improve student outcomes in independent living and economic self-sufficiency through transition planning. Rusch (2008) outlined the changes in IDEA 1997 as follows:

- Self-determination in transition planning (students and families), although not directly mandated

- Short- and long-range goals rather than objectives in IEP
- Student planning and participation in general education curriculum
- Starting at age 14, integrate transition planning within educational planning
- Base educational planning on postschool results.

IDEA also added a requirement for a statement regarding the transfer of rights to the student at the age of majority (18).

IDEA 2004. The most current reauthorization, IDEA 2004, reinforced the civil rights of students with disabilities and clarified the roles and responsibilities of students, their parents, teachers, administrators and school districts (Rusch, 2008). Transition was defined as a process with a goal of improving students' academic and functional achievement; a results-oriented process. IDEA 2004 raised the age of transition planning to no later than age 16. The IEP must have measurable postsecondary goals and the transition services and courses needed to reach the student's goals. Measurable postsecondary goals must be provided for postsecondary education and training as well as employment. At the end of a student's eligibility for special education services, IDEA 2004 mandated the provision for a summary of the student's academic achievement and functional performance, including recommendations for assisting the student in meeting his/her postsecondary goals (Madaus & Shaw, 2006). Madaus and Shaw (2006) suggested that a comprehensive summary of performance document may provide the student and a postsecondary school with a better understanding of the student's strengths, needs, and goals for postsecondary education.

It is evident from the progression in federal legislation that postsecondary education is now recognized as a viable option for students with disabilities. Effective transition planning is a core strategy for achieving this goal (Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009).

Transition Defined

The Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Career Development and Transition developed the following definition of transition in 1994 (as cited in Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009). It reflected advances in transition practices; including the concept of transition as a continuous process through high school, the need for transition to be student-centered, and the inclusion of multiple life activities. The definition is as follows:

Transition refers to a change in status from behaving primarily as a student to assuming emergent adult roles in the community. These roles include employment, participation in postsecondary education, maintaining a home, becoming appropriately involved in the community and experiencing satisfactory personal and social relationships. The process of enhancing transition involves the participation and coordination of school programs, adult agency services, and natural supports within the community. The foundations for transition should be laid during the elementary and middle school years, guided by the broad concept of career development. Transition planning should begin no later than age 14, and students should be encouraged to the full extent of their capabilities, to assume a maximum amount of responsibility for such planning (p. 75).

The IDEA of 1990 emphasized that transition should be addressed in a student's IEP by the age of 16, but as early as the age of 14 if the IEP team thought it was appropriate. In the reauthorization of IDEA 2004, there was a change from transition being addressed as early as the age of 14 to beginning not later than the first IEP when the child turns 16, or younger if the IEP team deemed it was appropriate (IDEA, 2004). The complete definition of transition services from IDEA 2004 is as follows:

The term "transition services" means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that:

- Is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment); continuing adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;
- Is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests; and

- Includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

[34 CFR 300.43 (a)] [20 U.S.C. 1401(34)]

The phrases from the above definition, “coordinated set of activities” and “to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education” are the keys to effective transition planning from high school to postsecondary education.

This overview of transition reviewed the history of transition prior to 1990, the IDEA special education legislation that mandates transition services for students with disabilities in public schools through high school graduation, and the definition of transition and transition services. The goal of transition services through high school is to prepare students for post-school activities, which may include postsecondary education.

The Transition to Postsecondary Education: Legal Foundations

Even when students with disabilities have been prepared for the transition to postsecondary education, they may experience challenges due to the change in the laws that apply after high school (Newman, 2005). When students leave high school, they are no longer covered by the IDEA. Their civil rights are outlined in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities in postsecondary schools no longer have IEPs, and they are no longer entitled to a free appropriate public education. Understanding what rights they do have and how to qualify for disability services in college is important information for transitioning students (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002).

This section of the literature review looks at Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which are the primary pieces of civil

rights legislation that protect the rights of students with disabilities in postsecondary education. Following that is a review of several prominent court cases which have impacted postsecondary education and students with disabilities.

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504

The first civil rights legislation designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities was Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rothstein, 2002). This statute applied to both children and adults with disabilities participating in any program or activity receiving federal funds. This included elementary and secondary schools, as well as colleges and universities. According to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, “No otherwise qualified individual with a disability...shall, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance...”

(29 U.S.C. 794). Under Section 504, anyone with a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities is protected (Rothstein, 2002). Some of the major life activities given include caring for oneself, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning or working. Documentation of a disability could be a history of a disability or the appearance of a disability.

Subpart E of Section 504 applied to postsecondary programs that receive federal funding, stating that a qualified individual with a disability may not be excluded from any course, education program or activity (Rothstein, 2002). Students should also be provided academic adjustments to compensate for learning disabilities. Section 504 covered academic courses, physical facilities and all aspects of student life; including admissions, recruitment,

treatment of students, and nonacademic services. Rothstein (2002) outlined the extensive impact of Section 504 on postsecondary settings as follows:

A college or university may not:

- (1) limit the number of students with disabilities admitted;
- (2) make preadmission inquiries as to whether or not an applicant has a disability;
- (3) use admission tests or criteria that inadequately measure the academic level of applicants with disabilities;
- (4) give students with disabilities access to examinations at a different frequency than nondisabled students;
- (5) give tests and examinations that do not accurately reflect the applicant's aptitude and achievement levels without disability-related factors;
- (6) limit access or excuse a student with a disability who is otherwise qualified from any course of study solely on the basis of his or her disability;
- (7) counsel students with disabilities toward more restrictive careers than are recommended for nondisabled students;
- (8) institute prohibitive rules that may adversely affect students with disabilities, such as prohibiting tape recorders, laptop computers or tape recorders;
- (9) refuse to modify academic requirements that would afford qualified students with disabilities an opportunity for full educational participation;
- (10) provide less financial assistance to students with disabilities than nondisabled students;
- (11) provide housing to students with disabilities that is not equivalent, accessible, and at the same cost as comparable housing for nondisabled students;
- (12) prohibit full participation in campus services or nonacademic activities, such as physical education, athletics, or social organizations (pp. 77-78).

A college may deny accommodations that fundamentally alter the program or are unduly costly or administratively burdensome (Rothstein, 2002). The provision of accommodations for college students with disabilities affords them an equal opportunity, but it does not guarantee equal achievement.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) signed in 1990 did not replace the Rehabilitation Act, but it extended the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act to the private sector and to all state and local government activities (Reilly & Davis, 2005). The definition of an individual with a disability is the same under ADA and Section 504. A student with a learning

disability would be considered to have an impairment of a major life activity (Rothstein, 2002). A student with ADHD may have difficulty concentrating; and that is also identified as a major life activity (Reilly & Davis, 2005). It is important for transitioning students to realize that the ADA and IDEA have different definitions of disabilities. A student who received special education services in high school may not qualify for accommodations in college; but a student who received services under a 504 plan in high school, or a student who did not meet IDEA qualifications for special education, may be covered under the ADA and receive services in college.

Kochhar-Bryant in Kochhar-Bryant and Greene (2009) explained the role of the ADA in transition planning as including preparation for college interviews, knowledge of reasonable accommodations in the programs, and assistance with applications and supporting documentation. Under the ADA, postsecondary schools are required to provide reasonable accommodations. Students often have support service plans, similar to 504 plans. Typical accommodations that can be requested in postsecondary education are testing accommodations, physical accommodations, technology adaptations, note takers, tutors, time extensions for papers and homework, and group support services.

In postsecondary education, services and accommodations are available for students with disabilities. However, unlike in high school, it is up to the individual to advocate for his or her needs in college (Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009). Postsecondary institutions do not have a legal obligation to identify students with disabilities. Students must make a formal request for academic adjustments. Students must also supply documentation of their disabilities. These, and other issues of federal laws impacting postsecondary education and students with disabilities, have resulted in several major court decisions.

Case Law Related to Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities

The following is a review of several major Supreme Court cases impacting students with learning disabilities and ADHD in postsecondary education. The issues addressed by these decisions include admissions qualifications, reasonable accommodations, and determination and documentation of eligibility for disability services.

Southeastern Community College v. Davis (1979). In reviewing the decision in this case, Reilly and Davis (2005) underscored the importance of students checking the admissions requirements of the colleges or programs to which they apply. In this case, the Supreme Court upheld a nursing program's rejection of a student with a hearing impairment because, under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, she was not "otherwise qualified." The court interpreted "otherwise qualified" to mean, "in spite of the individual's disability, along with accommodations that do not impose undue financial or administrative burdens" (Reilly & Davis, 2005, p. 33). Colleges cannot ask students about a disability in the application process. Once a student is accepted and requests accommodations, the school needs to provide accommodations in a timely manner; but, only if they are not financially or administratively burdensome.

Guckenberger v. Boston University (1997). Under federal law, a disability is "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities..." (as quoted in Reilly & Davis, 2005, p. 35). Documentation of a disability allows an individual protection from discrimination. It also describes the impact of the disability so that accommodations can be identified (Reilly & Davis, 2005).

In the case of *Guckenberger v. Boston University*, the court determined that the evaluators of learning disabilities do not have to have doctoral degrees, as long as the

evaluators are trained in the area of learning disabilities (Rothstein, 2002). Evaluations for ADD and ADHD, however, must be diagnosed by an evaluator with a PhD or an MD. The court also held that documentation of a learning disability does not have to be within the past three years, if qualified professionals determine that retesting is not necessary (Rothstein, 2002). The court was also asked to consider the issue of course substitution. In this case, the court found that Boston University was justified in its determination that waiving foreign language requirements would fundamentally alter the program in question (Rothstein, 2002).

Bartlett v. New York State Board of Bar Examiners (1998). Rothstein (2002) and Reilly and Davis (2005) presented this case dealing with the ADA and qualifications for accommodations. Dr. Marilyn Bartlett had a well-documented learning disability, but she was denied accommodations for the bar exam. The New York State bar examiners maintained that her documentation of disability was too old and her scores on two standardized reading tests were too high to reflect a learning impairment (Rothstein, 2002). The court determined that the diagnosis of a learning disability must be identified by clinical judgment, taking into consideration the individual's processing difficulties (Rothstein, 2002).

The Supreme Court ruled in Dr. Bartlett's favor, allowing her extra time on the bar exam, confirming that an individual with a learning disability may be intelligent, but be limited by the disability and require accommodations. The fact that she had self-accommodated through law school did not prevent her from being covered by the ADA.

The Sutton decision (1999). These were actually three separate cases ruled on by the Supreme Court, and involved the ADA. Although these cases involved employment settings, Reilly and Davis (2005) credited these cases with changing the way of determining eligibility for accommodations in postsecondary education. The court found that the Sutton sisters did

not qualify as people having a disability because their vision was corrected with glasses. Prior to this decision, a disability was determined based upon the condition alone, not taking into consideration any mitigating measures.

Reilly and Davis (2005) stated that after this decision some colleges used the Sutton decision more strictly than others. A student with ADHD who is taking medication to control the condition could be determined not to have a limitation of a major life activity, such as learning or concentrating. A service provider may also determine that a student qualifies for services because the ADHD medication is limiting a major life activity, such as sleeping. Students have to be strong advocates for accommodations and be able to present supporting documentation as required by disability service providers.

Rothstein (2002) recommended that service providers use these court cases as a background when making judgments about admissions, accommodations and service delivery for students with learning disabilities. Rothstein (2002) further predicted that there will likely be more litigation before these controversial issues are resolved.

The transition from high school to postsecondary education represents a movement toward adulthood. Students with disabilities have to make many of the same decisions and preparations as their nondisabled peers (Getzel, 2005). High school students with disabilities must also be informed of and understand the change in the regulatory environment for college students with disabilities (Reilly & Davis, 2005). Services and accommodations are available in college for students who provide documentation of their disability, but these services will not be provided unless students formally advocate for them (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002; Getzel, 2005; Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009; Reilly & Davis, 2005).

This review of legal foundations examined the differences in the regulatory environment for students with disabilities in postsecondary education. The ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act are civil rights legislation, and not special education laws. The examples from case law highlighted some of the issues that impact college students with disabilities. The examples from case law highlighted some of the issues that impact college students with disabilities.

Current Issues and Trends in the Transition to Postsecondary Education

Students with disabilities are continuing their education beyond high school at an increasing rate. Currently, one out of every ten students enrolled in a postsecondary school has a disability (Hitchings, Retish & Horvath, 2005; Newman, 2005). Transition services for these students has been a focus of policymakers and practitioners for decades, yet there is still a disparity between students' goals and their actual outcomes (Kato, Nulty, Olszewski, Doolittle & Flannery, 2006; Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009; Newman, 2005). Compared to their nondisabled peers, students with disabilities are less likely to complete high school, and they enroll in and complete postsecondary education programs at half the rate (Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009; Newman, 2005).

Babbitt and White (2002) attributed the disparity between students' goals and their outcomes regarding postsecondary education to the complexities in dealing with their disabilities. Students with disabilities often lack the social and daily functional skills that they need in college. They lack self advocacy skills, knowledge about their disabilities, and their rights regarding academic accommodations in college (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002; Getzel, 2005; Hitchings, Retish & Horvath, 2005). Students with learning disabilities enter

college with poorer academic preparation than their peers, and they lack the study skills necessary to be a successful student in college.

As in high school, students with learning disabilities represent the largest disability group in college (Hitchings, Retish & Horvath, 2005; Newman, 2005). Students with learning disabilities present additional transition issues, such as the determination and documentation of this disability category, as there are differences between the regulations governing high school and postsecondary education (Madaus & Shaw, 2006).

The current issues and trends in the transition to postsecondary education that will be reviewed in this section of the literature review are self advocacy skills and knowledge of rights, documentation of disabilities, academic preparation and study skills, and self determination, as these are the major issues that impact students with learning disabilities. *Self Advocacy Skills and Knowledge of Rights*

Students with disabilities need to self advocate for disability services and academic accommodations in college. They are often unprepared, however, to disclose their disability (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002; Getzel & Thoma, 2008). Some students decide not to self-disclose for various reasons, including the desire for a fresh start and not being labeled as a student with a disability (Getzel & Thoma, 2008).

In the findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 (NLTS2), more than half (52%) of students who received special education services in high school did not consider themselves to have a disability when they transitioned to postsecondary education (Newman, 2005). Only 40% of students with disabilities enrolled in postsecondary education identified themselves as having a disability and self-disclosed that disability. In high school, more than 90% of students with disabilities received some type of accommodation, support or learning

aid in general education academic classes; while only 35% of students with disabilities in postsecondary schools receive services, accommodations or learning aids (88% of those who asked for services) (Newman, 2005).

In a survey of 74 colleges in New York State, coordinators of special services were asked to assess high schools' transition preparation for students with learning disabilities (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). Respondents were least satisfied with students' advocacy skills, and many believed that there were a large number of students with learning disabilities who failed to seek assistance. The coordinators were also concerned that students do not have an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and the accommodations that are most effective for them. Janiga and Costenbader (2002) concluded that high school teachers may not be aware of the needs of students with learning disabilities as they transition to postsecondary education. They need to be able to teach self-advocacy skills, explain the laws that affect students with disabilities in college, and provide direct instruction on how to access support services in college.

Documentation of Disability

In the New York State survey by Janiga and Costenbader (2002), disability service coordinators expressed the most satisfaction with students' documentation of their disability, providing a current assessment (within the past three years) conducted by their high school. This survey was, however, prior to the passage of the IDEA of 2004, which included new criteria for the diagnosis of learning disabilities (Madaus & Shaw, 2006).

As in IDEA (1997), IEP teams are allowed to forgo complete re-evaluations every three years, and districts are not required to conduct exit assessments. The IDEA (1997) required that, for the determination of a learning disability, there must be a severe discrepancy between the

student's intelligence and achievement. In the IDEA of 2004, the use of this discrepancy model may be reduced or eliminated in some states (Madaus & Shaw, 2006).

A report from the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD, 2007) outlined the concerns about documentation issues related to students with disabilities as they transition to postsecondary education. The three major issues that the NJCLD identified were the lack of consistency in the documentation requirements in secondary and postsecondary schools; the disconnect between the laws that govern secondary and postsecondary education; and, various other forces, such as testing agencies and educational decisions by postsecondary personnel, that complicate matters (NJCLD, 2007).

The NJCLD offered some recommendations to help to bridge the gap between secondary and postsecondary documentation requirements. Secondary school personnel should recognize the information and documentation that postsecondary schools will need. Parents and students should be advised to contact prospective postsecondary schools early in the selection process to determine the documentation required, and they should be informed about Section 504 and ADA. Postsecondary personnel should encourage students to disclose their disability and submit documentation once they are accepted. If requested by the student, review submitted documentation once the student is accepted rather than wait until the student has agreed to matriculate (NJCLD, 2007).

Determination and documentation of disabilities is an issue that students with disabilities and their parents need to understand well before the student's senior year in high school as a part of the transition planning process (Madaus & Shaw, 2006).

Academic Preparation and Study Skills

For students with disabilities who plan to continue on to postsecondary education, academic preparation begins with taking appropriate college-preparatory classes in high school (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002; Getzel, 2005; Hitchings, Retish & Horvath, 2005). They must be able to demonstrate that they have met the academic requirements to enter college and have the academic preparedness to remain in college (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002; Getzel, 2005).

Hitchings, Retish and Horvath (2005) assessed the academic preparation of 110 high school students with disabilities from grades 10 through 12, and found that these students were not enrolled in college preparatory classes or were transferred from college preparatory classes despite their expressed interest in postsecondary education. Their interest in attending postsecondary education declined from 77% to 47% over a 3-year period. Hitchings, Retish and Horvath (2005) suggested that success in general education classes, with accommodations that do not change the content knowledge or skills to be acquired, may determine a student's ability to be successful in postsecondary education.

When students and their parents are researching postsecondary schools, they should also check to see if there is a foreign language requirement for entry into (and graduation from) these schools (Getzel, 2005). Students with disabilities need to be aware of policies concerning course substitutions, as these may be different for various programs of studies (Getzel, 2005; Joyce & Rossen, 2006).

Even very successful high school students with disabilities need to be prepared for the differences between high school and college (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002). In high school, students typically are in class for about six hours a day, and they have daily contact with their teachers. They spend a limited amount of time on homework. In college,

students spend about 12 hours a week in class, but spend three to four hours per day studying (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002). Students with learning disabilities may experience difficulties in this new learning environment as they may take longer to complete reading assignments; they may have difficulty working independently; and they may have difficulty planning long-range assignments. Brinckerhoff, McGuire and Shaw (2002) stressed the point that time management and personal freedom are the greatest problems that college students face.

Self Determination

Field and Hoffman (1994) defined self-determination as “one’s ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself” (p. 164). In order to foster self-determination skills in students with learning disabilities, they need to be informed about what it means to have a learning disability, and know that it is an intrinsic part of them which will not go away (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002). In order to successfully transition to, adjust to, and stay in college, students with disabilities need to accept their disability and know how it affects learning (Getzel & Thoma, 2008). They need to know what supports are needed and how to describe their disability to service providers.

High school students with learning disabilities should be taught self-determination skills by assisting them with setting goals for themselves and letting them implement a plan, allowing them to monitor their progress (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw). They should take an active role in their IEP meetings and in planning for their future.

Getzel and Thoma (2008) reviewed a study of 34 students with disabilities in two and four year colleges to identify the importance of self-determination in remaining and persisting in college. All students had self-disclosed that they had a disability and had requested support

services. When the focus groups were asked to identify the self-determination skills that are essential to staying in college, the themes that emerged were (a) seeking services from the DSS office and using services available to all students; (b) forming relationships with professors and instructors; (c) developing support systems on campus; and (d) gaining a self-awareness and understanding of themselves in order to persevere (Getzel & Thoma, 2008).

The self-determination study above was described as only an initial step to understanding self-determination skills and the relationship to the retention rate of students with disabilities in postsecondary education programs (Getzel & Thomas, 2008). High school special educators are beginning to work with students to foster self-determination as a part of their transition to postsecondary education. The disconnect between the determination and documentation of disabilities in high school and college is still ongoing.

Special educators and guidance counselors can advise students and their parents about the issue of documentation so that they can begin the college search process early enough.

This review of current issues and trends in the transition to postsecondary education noted the trend of more students with disabilities continuing their education beyond high school. Some of the major issues in the transition to postsecondary education include the knowledge of legal rights and the required documentation of disabilities. Other transition issues identified in this review are academic preparation and study skills, self advocacy skills, and self determination.

*Improving the Transition to Postsecondary Education
for Students with Learning Disabilities or ADHD*

Although students with disabilities are entering college in increasing numbers, these students are still less likely to pursue postsecondary education when compared to their nondisabled peers (Getzel & Thoma, 2008). About 25% of students with disabilities

participate in some type of postsecondary education after high school (Getzel & Thomas, 2008). Improving the transition process from high school to postsecondary education will enable more students with learning disabilities or ADHD to access higher education and complete their programs.

There have been numerous articles and studies on the subject of improving transition services in high school. In this section of the literature review, several transition tools and approaches, transition models, and studies on the transition to postsecondary education will be reviewed. The section will conclude with a review of a study of college service coordinators and their recommendations for improving the transition from high school to postsecondary education.

Transition Tools and Approaches

The first transition tool that students with disabilities, by age 16, and their parents should be aware of is the transition-planning portion of the IEP (Roffman, 2007). This section of the IEP includes the present level of performance, and the student's vision for the future, in the areas of training and learning opportunities, job skills and future employment, independent living skills, community participation, and adult services required. Projected courses and transition services are also included (Roffman, 2007). The ideal scenario is for the student to lead his or her own meeting, or at least actively participate in the meeting, in order to practice self advocacy and self determination (Hitchings, Retish & Horvath, 2005; Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009; Mellard, 2005; Roffman, 2007). The IEP transition plan and annual meeting is insufficient, however, for addressing all of the issues related to transition to postsecondary education.

Prior to the termination of a student's eligibility for special education due to graduation or exceeding the age eligibility, the IDEA 2004 mandated the provision of a Summary of Performance (SOP) (Madaus, Bigaj, Chafouleas & Simonsen, 2006; Madaus & Shaw, 2006; NJCLD, 2007). The SOP must summarize the student's academic achievement and functional performance, and include recommendations for assisting the student with postsecondary goals. The regulations about the components of the SOP are ambiguous, and various states have proposed their own templates for the SOP (Madaus & Shaw, 2006). According to Madaus et al. (2006), this document provides an opportunity to present to postsecondary personnel an analysis of data that has been accumulated throughout a student's high school career. It might also be used as a teaching tool to enhance students' self determination if students participate in the development of their SOPs.

Transition literature on best practices in planning for postsecondary education points to the importance of person-centered or student-focused planning (Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009). Brinckerhoff, McGuire and Shaw (2002) and others recommended developing a college planning timetable that begins in eighth grade and concludes with high school graduation. This timetable approach allows the student to gradually take on greater responsibility and prepares parents for the transfer of control and responsibility to their child (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002).

In addition to the structure given with the IEP transition-planning process, multiple types of resources are available for high school special educators, students with disabilities, and their parents to support the transition to postsecondary education. Babbitt and White (2002) provided a student questionnaire to be used as tool for assessing students' readiness for postsecondary education. This assessment tool addresses the areas of social skills, self-

awareness and self-advocacy, daily functional skills, knowledge of academic accommodations, preparedness, and support considerations. The results of the data can assist special educators in developing a systematic approach to the specific areas of need.

One method of presenting a transition planning materials with a coordinated, comprehensive approach is through the use of a transition curriculum products and programs. Brinckerhoff, McGuire and Shaw (2002) reviewed several of these products, which are available for purchase, and suggested that high school resource room teachers should consider using one of these programs to instruct their students about transition.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction developed an “Opening Doors” handbook to assist students, counselors and IEP teams with planning for postsecondary education. While some of the information in this handbook is only applicable to the State of Wisconsin, much of the material presented in useful for students in all states. The key areas included in this handbook are a timeline for planning, the differences between high school and postsecondary schools, planning and preparing for college, a postsecondary exploration worksheet, and definitions of terms (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2007).

Books, such as Paquette and Tuttle (2003) and Roffman (2007), are resources that may be recommended by special educators to students and their parents to help them with the transition to postsecondary education process. Paquette and Tuttle (2003) was written specifically for students with learning disabilities and ADHD. It offered extensive definitions of various types of learning disabilities and coping strategies, as well as lists of further resources for each type of learning disability. Roffman (2007) was written specifically for parents of teenagers with learning disabilities. In addition to a discussion of all of the issues related to teenagers with learning disabilities and transition, it also provided lists of

recommended websites and programs to support students with learning disabilities in the transition to postsecondary education and independent living.

Transition Models

Transition planning may occur one-to-one between a special educator and a student, at the IEP transition meetings, or in a resource room using a set curriculum. In addition to these methods, other transition models have been proposed and implemented. The following is a description of two other proposed transition models.

Kato et al. (2006) described “postsecondary academies” that were hosted by three community colleges in Oregon. The postsecondary academies were described as one-day conference-style events for high school juniors and seniors with a wide range of disabilities. Parents and teachers were also invited. College officials and a panel of college students with disabilities addressed the full group. Breakout sessions, such as career options, improving note-taking skills, assistive technology, learning styles, and thriving in college took place in college classrooms. There were also campus tours to familiarize students with various departments, including the disability services offices and where to find tutoring, counseling, and advising services. A total of 545 participants attended these three postsecondary academies. In follow-up phone interviews, about half of the students who attended mentioned that they liked the tours. They also said that the panel of college students with disabilities was very effective. Panel members described the importance of self advocacy, self awareness, and actively seeking assistance to access information and services. Many students said that they also enjoyed having study skills sessions in college classrooms with college instructors. Kato et al. (2006) concluded that postsecondary academies are a worthwhile transition activity for expanding awareness of postsecondary educational opportunities.

Another approach for preparing students with disabilities for the transition to postsecondary education is transition groups. Both McEachern and Kenny (2007) and Milsom, Akos and Thompson (2004) proposed psychoeducational group models, with school counselors as leaders, or co-leaders with special educators. The closed groups should be limited to no more than eight to ten students. The groups should be homogeneous and should consist of students with the same disability. Scheduling was recognized as an issue for both models, so the sessions were planned to be 45 to 50 minutes each in order to coincide with typical school schedules. Both models proposed a total of eight sessions.

Although the topics for the sessions were similar in both models, there were some differences. The transition group model presented in McEachern and Kenny (2007) was applicable for students with different types of disabilities and was designed to be led by a school counselor. Although sessions included role playing and discussions about understanding disabilities, self-advocacy and self-determination, and legal rights; there was more of an emphasis on the college admissions and application process.

The transition group model presented in Milsom, Akos and Thompson (2004), however, was specifically designed for students with learning disabilities, with school counselors and special educators as co-leaders. These sessions included disability awareness and personal assessment forms, a discussion of the differences between high school and college, and more time devoted to legal rights, locating and accessing support services, and self-advocacy. The Milsom, Akos and Thompson (2004) model also included a pre- and post-group evaluation of disability knowledge and self-efficacy. The pilot group reported a significant increase in their ability to self advocate.

Recommendations for Improving the Transition Process

In addition to the previous information from the literature about how the transition to postsecondary education can be improved through the use of various transition tools and transition models, transition studies have provided recommendations for improving the process.

A study of the self-determination perceptions of 15 culturally-diverse high school students with learning disabilities who planned to continue on to postsecondary education found that these students were largely uninvolved in their transition-planning process (Trainor, 2005). Their IEPs appeared to be process driven, rather than individualized to the students' needs and transition goals. In the case of these students, they tended to listen to their families, rather than to teachers or school counselors, when making educational decisions. The implications for practice from this study were that students should be engaged in the transition process, and self-determination should be embedded in course curricula. Programs should be aligned with students' postsecondary goals. Students and their parents should understand the implications of enrollment in programs, such as vocational education, on plans to continue on to postsecondary education.

Getzel and Thoma (2008) reviewed the importance of self-determination in a study of college students with disabilities. These students reported that self-determination skills were important to transition to, adjust to, and remain in college. As a group, these students did not feel that they were prepared enough in high school to understand their disability and how it affected their learning. Most students reported that they would have preferred to have self-determination strategies introduced earlier in high school. From their perspective, they felt that efforts to introduce strategies to learn to solve problems and identify resources were introduced too late to produce the desired result.

The previous studies pointed to the importance of involving students in transition planning, teaching self-determination, and promoting self advocacy, beginning early in their high school careers. Hitchings, Retish and Horvath (2005) reinforced these points in recommendations from a study of 110 high school students with disabilities. This study found that students were not academically prepared for postsecondary education. Transition planning needs to begin before tenth grade, so that students enroll in the courses they need to meet admissions requirements for college. Students need to determine if they can learn academic content and meet workload requirements without modifications to course content.

Hitchings, Retish and Horvath (2005) also recommended that student with disabilities need to actively engage in the career development process. Beginning at the elementary school level when students start to understand the relationship between school performance and career choices, this process should continue through high school with strategies for career exploration, career planning and preparation. The final recommendation from this study was that transition planning needs to be reintroduced to teachers and counselors through transition workshops, so that these professionals can provide effective transition planning for high school students with disabilities.

The most significant study in terms of this investigation was a survey of college service coordinators in New York State (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). In a mail survey, to which 74 service coordinators responded, they were asked about their satisfaction with transition services provided during high school for students with learning disabilities enrolled at their college or university. The survey also contained open-ended questions, asking what secondary schools could do better to prepare students and an estimate of the success/graduation rate of students

with learning disabilities at their institutions. Respondents were also given a space to comment on any areas not covered in the survey.

The respondents to the survey expressed the most satisfaction with students having current assessments (within three years) conducted by their high school prior to enrollment. They also agreed that students with learning disabilities were enrolled in programs in which they could be successful. The respondents were least satisfied with students' self-advocacy skills. They also expressed dissatisfaction with how well school staff informed students of the services available at the college level for students with disabilities, and they were dissatisfied with the documentation they received on specific accommodations needed for students with disabilities.

When these college service coordinators were asked to list three ways that high schools could improve transition services for students with learning disabilities, 68% suggested improving students' self-advocacy skills. The next most frequent suggestion was to increase students' understanding of their disability and their specific needs (39%). Other suggestions from the respondents were to improve students' study skills before college (32%) and to develop independent learners by encouraging teachers to limit student dependence and encourage parents to "let go" and allow their children to advocate for themselves (24%). Still other suggestions were adequate reading and writing skills; education on the laws; realistic expectations for parents and students; time management skills; more assistive technology in high school; encourage students to take higher level high school classes; and provide career orientation.

A number of respondents used the open space on the survey to suggest that better communication be established between high school and college service providers. According

to Janiga and Costenbader (2002), by sharing their needs and concerns, high school staff and college service providers will improve the quality of transition services provided to high school students with learning disabilities.

The transition tools and models reviewed in this section suggest several approaches for improving the transition to postsecondary education for students with disabilities. The recommendations from the studies included in this section provide additional information to be considered in the development of effective transition planning services.

Summary

The IDEA special education legislation mandates transition services for students with disabilities in public schools through high school graduation. The goal of transition services is to prepare students for post-school activities, which may include postsecondary education.

Transition from high school to postsecondary education is a major step for any student, but for students with learning disabilities or ADHD, there are many more considerations. Students with disabilities move from a relatively sheltered special education setting in high school to a much more demanding environment in college. Not only do they have to cope with the social, daily living and academic changes that other incoming freshmen face; they also have to understand their disability, the accommodations and services that are effective for them, and how to access these services in college. They need to understand the differences in the regulatory environment for students with disabilities in postsecondary education; and they need to present the appropriate documentation of their disability, which may differ from the documentation needed in high school for students with learning disabilities or ADHD, in order to qualify for services.

It is important that students, and not just their parents, understand all of the differences between high school and college because students with disabilities must self advocate in college. The transition planning process should begin much earlier than the age of 16, as required by the IDEA. Effective transition planning also includes self advocacy and self-determination skills, study skills, and enrollment in high school courses that meet college admissions requirements. Communication and collaboration between high school special educators and college disability service providers may help to improve the transition from high school to postsecondary education for students with learning disabilities or ADHD.

Results and Data Analysis

Introduction

The preceding review of the literature on transition examined the history and definition of transition, the general mandates that apply to students with disabilities through high school, and the civil rights legislation that applies to students with disabilities in postsecondary education. Current issues in the transition to postsecondary education and approaches for improving transition services in high school for students with learning disabilities and ADHD were also reviewed.

The purpose of this investigation is to research transition planning needs for students with learning disabilities and ADHD as identified by disability service providers at postsecondary schools. A review of transition practices as described in the current literature provides a foundation for interviewing postsecondary service providers in New Hampshire.

As stated previously, the following questions will guide this study:

- (1) What does the literature say about effective practices regarding the transition of students with learning disabilities and ADHD to postsecondary education? (See Literature Review.)
- (2) What do postsecondary service providers (administration and staff) identify as transition needs for students with learning disabilities and ADHD transitioning to college, and what preparation suggestions do they have for high school special education case managers?
- (3) What activities and supports do postsecondary schools provide for students with learning disabilities and ADHD to promote success and aid the transition process in the following areas:

- a) social/daily functioning
- b) academic
- c) technical/administrative (including financial aid and documentation of disability)?

The Results and Data Analysis section is divided into two major subsections and provides a framework for this section. The *Project Participants and Tools* subsection provides a profile of the participants in this study and a description of the tools that were used. The *Results and Data Analysis* subsection provides a report of the data that was collected, how the data was analyzed, and how validity and reliability issues were addressed.

Project Participants and Tools

The stated goal for participants of this investigation was to interview disability service providers to obtain information and recommendations that will be used to improve transition practices at The intention was to interview a total of eight disability service providers (administration and staff) from two community colleges and two four-year colleges in New Hampshire. Prospective participants were chosen based upon recommendations from their peers (other disability service providers) and former ... students who are now attending these schools.

Nine (9) disability service providers from five colleges actually participated in interviews; four from two community colleges, and five from three different four-year colleges. The interviews took place at each of the colleges' disability services offices and service delivery areas. This setting allowed the researcher to get verbal input from the participants, to observe the learning environment, and to collect sample materials being used with students. The researcher was also a participant in this study, writing ongoing reflections

in relation to the purpose and research questions for this study. The primary data collection tool for this study involved in depth interviews with postsecondary disability service providers during site visits. A materials review and a researcher's journal were other data collection tools used in this study.

Interviews

The interview script was divided into four parts (see Appendix A for Postsecondary Service Provider Interview Script). Part I: Transition Preparation and Part II: Recommendations for the Transition to Postsecondary Education addressed research question #2: What do postsecondary service providers (administrators and staff) identify as transition needs for students with learning disabilities and ADHD transitioning to college, and what preparation suggestions do they have for high school special education case managers? Part I of the interviews included a series of statements that the service providers were asked to rate using a range from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, and then provide comments. These statements were adapted from those in a written survey of postsecondary disability service coordinators in New York State by Janiga and Costenbader (2002). Part II included open-response questions with prompts asking participants for their recommendations for high school special educators to improve the transition to postsecondary education.

Parts III and IV also included open-response questions with prompts and addressed research question #3: What activities and supports do postsecondary schools provide for students with learning disabilities and ADHD to promote success and aid the transition process in the social/daily functioning, academic, and technical/administrative areas?

The interview script was reviewed and edited with a peer at ... to support the reliability of the interview tool. Based upon feedback from this peer, adjustments were made

to the interview script. Prospective participants for onsite interviews were contacted initially by telephone. Confirmation of the interview date and time was emailed to them, along with a copy of the draft of the interview script (see Appendix A for Postsecondary Service Provider Interview Script). This allowed participants to review the interview questions and the oral survey in advance.

Nine disability service providers were interviewed, but only seven participants completed the oral survey portion in Part I (rating and commenting on statements about transition preparation) as these statements were not applicable for two of the participants. All interviews were audio taped with the consent of the participants, and the researcher also used a notebook and pen to record notes during the interviews. The taped interviews were transcribed verbatim and the audio tapes were erased (see Appendix B for Transcription of Interviews).

Materials Review

Materials, such as sample accommodation plans, guidelines for accessing disability services and orientation pamphlets, documentation requirements, and aids to improve study skills were collected at each location. Because of the unanticipated time needed to analyze the large number of interview responses, a formal materials review as proposed will take place after the Capstone project. See *Next Steps*, and the *Summary and Conclusions* section for a complete description about how materials will be used in the future. The materials collected did help to shed light on responses from the interviews.

Reflective Journal

A researcher's journal was used to reflect on the research questions and research process for this study. It helped to document reflections from the site visits and what was

learned from spending time in the environment in the context of the research questions for this study (see Appendix C for Selected Excerpts from Researcher's Journal).

Results and Data Analysis

This study examined the perspectives of several postsecondary disability service providers in New Hampshire on transition services for students with learning disabilities or ADHD. The data collected in this study was primarily qualitative, rather than quantitative. The validity and reliability of the data analysis in this study was increased through the use of triangulation of data from multiple sources and peer debriefing of the data with another special educator. The results of this study in combination with the literature on transition will be used by the researcher to improve transition planning at the high school level. The interview transcriptions were independently reviewed by the peer debriefer to identify major themes, and these were compared with the themes identified by the researcher.

Following are the results and description of data analysis procedures used for each data collection tool.

Interviews

After the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed and then organized by the research questions and themes, consistent with the interview script (see Appendix A for Postsecondary Service Provider Interview Script). The results are compared with reflections in the researcher's journal, synthesizing the themes presented in the literature, including comparisons with the responses from the New York survey of postsecondary disability service coordinators (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002) in the *Summary and Conclusions* section of this study.

Transition preparation. In the first part of the interviews, participants were asked to rate and comment on six statements related to the transition preparation of students with learning disabilities or ADHD. Table 1 outlines the six statements that seven postsecondary disability service providers were asked to rate. Two other participants in this study did not complete this portion of the interview because of their job role. During the interview, participants were also asked to comment about each statement. The ratings and corresponding comments for each statement are described following Table 1.

Table 1
Ratings from Postsecondary Disability Service Providers on the Transition Preparation of Students with LD/ADHD for Postsecondary Education (N=7)

Statement	Response				
	SD	D	A	SA	NA
1. Incoming freshmen seeking disability services have an educational evaluation which provides necessary information to determine accommodations.	-	-	6	-	1
2. Incoming students' IEPs provide appropriate accommodations and transition services to prepare students for the transition to postsecondary education.	-	2	-	-	5
3. Incoming freshmen know how to access support services in college.	-	4	2	-	1
4. Incoming freshmen are adequately prepared in high school to self-advocate for their needs in postsecondary settings.	1	4	1	-	1
5. Incoming freshmen with LD/ADHD are academically prepared for postsecondary education (e.g. high school courses, study skills).	-	-	2	-	5
6. Overall, incoming freshmen with LD/ADHD are adequately prepared in high school for the transition to college.	-	3	-	-	4

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree, NA = No Answer

Statement 1: Incoming freshmen seeking disability services have an educational evaluation which provides necessary information to determine accommodations. Six out of seven respondents agreed that most incoming freshmen seeking disability services

have an educational evaluation which provides necessary information to determine accommodations in college. In their comments, the postsecondary service providers said that a majority of students come with some type of documentation. The one respondent who did not agree with this statement said that she was between Agree and Disagree because, “More students than not come with something, but it may not quite meet the requirements.” She also stated, “With the changes in requirements for high schools to update ability evaluation, for some students the quality of the information they bring has started to decline over the years.” Another similar comment was, “(Re-evaluation) used to be every three years....I’ve seen some kids that have not had anything done since they were freshmen, or they’re using old testing.” All respondents commented on the importance of educational evaluations. “Those subtest scores in the educational evaluation are really helpful for us. You can really see where the disability impacts them in terms of processing speed, working memory – all of those issues in the ed eval provide a lot of helpful information about how it is that that student learns.”

Statement 2: Incoming students’ IEPs provide appropriate accommodations and transition services to prepare students for the transition to postsecondary education.

Two respondents disagreed with this statement and five had no answer. From the comments about this statement, it was fairly clear that IEPs are not useful for postsecondary disability service providers. Those who disagreed with this statement commented that, “They (IEPs) are not helpful for our purposes.” “If there’s a special ed service, that can’t be mimicked at the college level; so to us it’s just a laundry list of services and accommodations that they’ve got with no rationale.” Comments from those who were non-responsive included, “If I just had an IEP it would never be enough to support accommodations. It just supports the

documentation that I actually need. Sometimes the IEP has something in place that helps a student transition.”

Other comments that illustrate the above theme were, “It really varies.” “Some students who are high functioning, cognitively....and got good grades in high school, then yes, Strongly Agree. Those students who have borderline to low-average intelligence, and their IEPs say...they should check out the voc tech college, and what they don’t realize is that those hands-on programs have really faded away. They have to do core college courses...and some of these kids just can’t handle it. So, for those kids I would Disagree to Strongly Disagree.”

Statement 3: Incoming freshmen know how to access support services in college. Four out of seven respondents disagreed with this statement, two agreed, and one had no answer. Those who disagreed that incoming freshmen know how to access support services in college commented that they usually get calls from parents, and not the students themselves. “Some do, but mostly the parents are the ones who make the call.” “I get so excited when a student calls me up just to ask a question. I praise them up and down and really say this is how it’s going to be for you. You’re going to have to come in and request accommodations. If you don’t request, you don’t receive.” “They usually come with their parents, but we will talk directly to the student.” The two participants who agreed with this statement commented, “I think in general they know how to access; it’s just whether they actually do.” The participant who did not answer commented, “Sometimes, I would agree. It depends on the preparation they had in high school...whether or not they think that they need it or want accommodations, and their motivation level.”

Statement 4: Incoming freshmen are adequately prepared to self advocate for their needs in postsecondary settings. Four out of seven respondents disagreed with this statement, one strongly disagreed, one agreed, and one did not rate this statement. Most of the respondents who disagreed that students are adequately prepared to self advocate commented that some students are good self advocates, but most are not. “They (students) don’t know what their disability is...but they’ve just always had a plan.” The respondent who agreed with this statement commented, “Once they’re here, and the parents are gone, and they’ve established a relationship with me, then I would say I Agree.” The participant who had a non-responsive rating said, “Sometimes I would Agree. Sometimes they come in...after they’ve had a bad first semester and say, ‘Oh, I wanted to do it alone, I wanted to try it without.’ But if I don’t know if they have a disability, if they don’t come in and talk to me...I have no way of knowing. It’s not retroactive – it’s too little, too late.”

The respondent who strongly disagreed that students are prepared to self advocate commented:

Unless you (student) communicate your needs, they’re not going to be met. That’s a big thing for these folks, because what I find is that literally every aspect of these kids’ educational experience is micro-managed by someone else, whether it be a teacher, a special ed person, parent, guidance counselor - that whole team micro-manages their existence. They’ve had no opportunities to try and fail; they’ve had no opportunities to build autonomy in term of their learning. They’ve had no opportunities to learn self management, self determination, self advocacy; and those are the skills they need when they walk through the door on day one. They have to hit the ground running, and they don’t.

Statement 5: Incoming freshmen with LD/ADHD are academically prepared for postsecondary education (e.g. high school courses, study skills). Two out of seven respondents agreed with this statement and five had no rating. The two participants who agreed that students with LD/ADHD were academically prepared were from a four-year

college. One of these participants commented, “We’re not involved in the admissions process, so you have to assume the students being accepted have the proper college prep work at least.”

Another participant from a four-year college who did not rate this statement commented that incoming students had the appropriate courses, but “Study skills, not so much. Study skills, time management skills, those kinds of strategies” were found to be lacking for “a lot of students.” Others who did not rate this statement (one from a community college and one from a four-year college) said that they were between Disagree and Agree as to whether students have had the appropriate courses in high school. “Students who coast during their senior year, or who haven’t had math since their sophomore year, are really at a disadvantage.” “In high school, if they were exempt from taking some math courses or some foreign language requirements, and then they come in here and think that they are going to be exempt here; very, very rarely is that ever the case.”

One participant who was did not rate this statement also commented that she felt that some students were well prepared, but for some students, “It’s not that the high school is not preparing them; it’s just that they may not be college material. They’re never going to be able to comprehend the level of courses they need to take here.” Another respondent said that she saw a pattern with study skills that were taught in high school, but students “not transferring or generalizing those skills.”

The two individuals who agreed that students were academically prepared for college had extensive comments regarding other skills that some students with or without disabilities are lacking. “(Executive functioning) is probably the most disabling symptom, and that crosses disability categories. We have a lot of students that cannot self-manage, and they’ll

be held accountable here. A deadline is a deadline is a deadline. If you can't get it done, you get the consequence of an F or whatever.” “You can't accommodate for a lack of executive functioning skills.” “We've seen a lot of students who struggle with managing their personal skills. Their self-care issues are really tripping up these students that are coming because they've had Mom getting them up in the morning. Now they have none of that monitoring, and they can't self-regulate.”

Statement 6: Overall, incoming freshmen with LD/ADHD are adequately prepared in

high school for the transition to college. Three out of seven respondents disagreed that students with LD/ADHD were adequately prepared, and the other four participants did not rate this statement. The participants who did not give a rating for this statement expressed difficulty responding to this general statement. Their comments were very similar. “That just varies with the individual. Overall, they are not as prepared as I would like to see.”

“Yes, adequately – some of them; definitely no for some of them.” One respondent who disagreed commented, “I get a blank stare from a lot of students, so I don't ever really know. I think that a lot of them have been prepared, but probably more have not. Or were told, and it just didn't sink in. They come in, and they don't really understand how it's going to work.”

Two other respondents who disagreed provided extensive comments on the overall preparation for transition to college. These participants commented that both students with disabilities and their parents are not adequately prepared for the transition to college. One disability service provider commented:

It's less to do with academics, and more to do with changing the mind frame. K-12 is success oriented. And then it shifts to – we will give you access and you'll do what you want with it. We don't guarantee success here. It's up to you to build that on your own. That mind shift – the students have a hard

time with it, the parents have a hard time with it, and the high schools have a hard time talking about that with parents...we have a consistent message... and the expectation is you are held at the same standard as everyone else. Isn't that refreshing? So here are some things that you can access to be successful..."

Another participant said, "Maturity is a huge factor here. We talk to students about it's a privilege to come to college; it's not a right. You have to be ready to accept the responsibility that goes along with it."

Recommendations for the transition to postsecondary. After the participants rated and commented on the statements about transition preparation, they were asked to give their recommendations for the transition to postsecondary education. The open-response question posed was: *What suggestions do you have for improving the way high schools prepare students with LD/ADHD for the transition to postsecondary education?* The many points of agreement that emerged from these interviews are categorized as six major themes: Understanding of disability and needs, accessing disability services in college, knowledge of the differences between high school and college, self advocacy skills, study skills, and academic preparation. These themes and the service providers' suggestions are outlined in Table 2. Following Table 2 is a discussion of recommendations, including interview comments.

Table 2
Recommendations for the Transition to Postsecondary Education for Students with LD/ADHD

Theme	Recommendation
1. Understanding of disability and needs	<p>Teach students about their disability and how it impacts their learning. Have students practice articulating this information.</p> <p>Help students understand their learning style – what works for them.</p>
2. Accessing disability services in college	<p>Research schools/visit disability services offices in advance.</p> <p>Instruct students about what services and accommodations might be provided based upon documentation.</p>
3. Knowledge of the differences between high school and college	<p>Train high school transition staff.</p> <p>Inform students and parents of differences in law and expectations.</p>
4. Self advocacy skills	<p>Have students practice self advocacy in high school.</p> <p>Have students attend/run their own IEP meetings.</p>
5. Study skills	<p>Help students develop organization, time management, and study skills so that they will be prepared to use these strategies independently.</p>
6. Academic preparation	<p>Students should take appropriate college preparatory courses and research the requirements of prospective schools.</p> <p>Students should use more assistive technology.</p>

Theme 1: Understanding of disability and needs. The postsecondary disability service providers interviewed in this study identified a student's understanding of his/her disability and how it affects learning as fundamental recommendations to improve the transition process. According to one participant:

I think that before you can teach them to self-advocate, you need to teach them about what their disability means and how it affects them. What are their personal strengths and weaknesses...How is that different from how all other people might be learning? Have practice sessions where you have them explain to you their disability and how it affects them in the classroom. Have them articulate those things out loud to you, one-on-one, is very beneficial – making it easier for them to walk into my office the first day. Getting them to know what their disability is and how it impacts them is the most important thing.

Another service provider focused her remarks on understanding learning styles, rather than on learning disabilities. She recommended this advice to students, “Learn about your learning style. Discover what works for you. What is the best way you learn – the metacognition. Metacognition is so important – what accommodations are going to work.”

Theme 2: Accessing disability services in college. The postsecondary disability service providers that were interviewed had many suggestions for preparing high school students to access disability services at the postsecondary level. Most participants recommended that students do research and visit prospective schools' disability services offices in advance.

“We encourage them to not only do a tour, but meet with the disability services office to talk about what the expectation is at the college level... you are going to be the one. We don't go out after you.” “Every college has an office of disability services – it's mandated by law...that's the place you go to coordinate accommodations. Not all schools have academic support...and it's really important to do the research ahead of time...What would be the best fit for your particular learning needs?” “Does your student still need special services? If the

answer is yes, then you need to find a college with special services, and you have to research that because in general terms colleges don't have special services." "If a student has a lot of needs, that (office of disability services) should be the first office that a parent checks out."

Some participants talked specifically about transition practices at "Wouldn't it be great to take the Souhegan students to an ODS office and meet the people who work there, so that when they walk in the first day it's not scary." "Just the fact that Souhegan invited me to come down and speak to the students; that was wonderful. It was a great opportunity for me, too, to just meet with the students and answer their questions."

Participants offered many suggestions about instructing students on the differences between accommodations and modifications. They said that students should be made aware of the accommodations and services that might be available in college; and the fact that their documentation - their current evaluations – and not their IEPs will be used to determine accommodations and services. "We level the playing field. There are no modifications. It's just accommodations." "I open up the page on classroom modifications on the IEP and I go down the list, and I say we don't have this, we don't have this; instead we have accommodations which is an academic adjustment." "The words IEP and 504 Plan don't exist here." One disability service provider gave a more detailed description of how IEPs and 504 Plans are viewed at the postsecondary level:

Another thing is a lot of parents think that if the student is not on an IEP, that means they are not going to be eligible when they go to college. That is a myth. They mean something, but they're almost an afterthought because we're looking at the current documentation, what the current impact is and what would be reasonable within those functional limitations. Just because it's written in an IEP, it does not mean it's going to happen here unless there's a direct link. And 504 Plans...make...more sense when a kid is college-bound because that's more applicable to this kind of environment. Because that means they're being accommodated within the regular classroom. What they're accessing is reasonable. There's no need for pulling out and

getting specialized services. A lot of times it mimics more of what can be expected here.

Another disability service provider summarized the process of accessing services in college. “They’ll bring in the documentation, and then I go through the documentation and come up with a plan of accommodations for them. Then I’ll meet back with the student – I don’t usually have the parent there...it’s up to the student to give their accommodation plan to the instructor – I don’t do that.”

Theme 3: Knowledge of the differences between high school and college. Most interview participants strongly recommended that both high school students and their parents need to be informed about the differences between high school and college. Each college provided some type of chart or brochure outlining these differences for parents or students. In addition to providing parents and students with this hardcopy information, there were several other suggestions for high schools. “Maybe through a letter or a conversation with parents, let them know the differences in college.” “Send out a couple of pages of information because the special education system in high school is very different from the system in college.”

One disability service provider suggested that high school personnel need to understand the differences themselves in order to inform students and their parents. “Transition staff needs training in the differences between K-12 and postsecondary. We give out a chart, but that’s not something that someone is going to sit down and study. If you would like, one of...us would be glad to come to Souhegan. If we do it school by school, maybe some of the high school people will develop their own trainings.”

Another participant commented on students who may not be college material given the differences in services and lack of modifications at the postsecondary level. “It needs to

start at the K-12 level. You really know when this kid will not make it in college. Be honest with the parent and say, ‘You might want to do some career exploration with them and see what they are interested in and what they really want to do, and what is reasonable.’”

Postsecondary disability service providers also made the point that students with disabilities need to be told that they will be held to the same academic standards as other college students. “It’s not illegal to fail. So they can come here, but we do not have any obligation to pass students who are not doing the work.”

Theme 4: Self advocacy skills. The importance of self advocacy was commented on multiple times in each interview; and the participants had many suggestions for improving students’ skills in this area. The following are excerpts from some of the postsecondary service providers’ extensive comments on self advocacy. “Self advocacy continues to be the same problem it was ten years ago, and it has to be addressed in the high schools.” “If they are not ready to self advocate, then they are not ready to go to college. That would be my message.” “Just the idea that if a student has experience and confidence in doing this in high school, it becomes far easier at college to feel comfortable.”

Interview participants also had some recommendations about when students should begin to practice self advocacy skills. “If it was just worked on in high school, even if it was just that last year of high school.” One disability service provider commented:

Starting in 10th grade, if you know a student’s transition goal is to go to a college setting, the conversation needs to start with the families...how much are you doing in terms of the alarm clock, calling for renewing the prescription for the medication? Have him make the phone call. We recommend that students be managing their own medication for at least six months prior to getting here; managing in every respect.”

Another disability service provider added:

But, again, it’s shaping, so obviously you can’t expect the student to start

doing everything overnight. But if you take those 10, 11, 12th grade years. They have to understand the consequences...they have to understand that you might not end up transitioning to college because you weren't able to follow through with these pieces.”

Some specific suggestions were given about practicing self advocacy with high school students during the school hours. One suggestion was to do some role playing (as disability service provider and incoming college student), and ask the student the questions that will be asked of him or her. There was also a suggestion to have the student call or email college admissions offices:

The more you can get the student to make the calls on their own, and do it at school – the more you can get them to do without their parents involved – I think that is so important. They need to learn how to ask the questions themselves...When they're on the computer, let them struggle with it instead of giving them every word. Get them used to making phone calls or sending emails.

Another recommendation was for students to participate in their IEP meetings:

I think one of the big things is self advocacy, so students actually taking a part in their IEP meetings and understanding their disability information, their accommodations, again with the strengths and weaknesses, so that they can figure out what strategies work well. That seems to be a really big difference with the students that do well right from the start. If they've got those skills, if they've been a part of their meetings, if they're comfortable going and talking to people, saying, 'I learn better in this method.' So it would be nice to see schools do that.

Theme 5: Study skills. In general, the interview participants felt that many incoming college students were lacking in study skills. They recommended teaching students organizational skills, time management and study skills in high school, so that they will be prepared to use these strategies independently in college. Some of the participants remarks were: “Prepare them to do those things on their own. How are you going to organize your time? Just getting the point across that no one here is going to remind them.” “A lot of kids that come here will have part time jobs, too, and how do you organize your time? So just to

help them with time management, plan things out, organize.” “Especially being able to break down projects on their own. If they are not going through and chunking it out themselves, it’s the night before and they’re trying to pull an eight-page paper from nowhere.”

Two disability services providers commented that helping students improve their study skills has to begin with what works for a particular student. “So if someone has something that works for them, what to do when – very important.” “A student needs to be helped in building skills that are specific to his or her style.”

Theme 6: Academic preparation. While the disability service providers who were interviewed said that more students were academically prepared for college than those who were not academically prepared, they had several recommendations for better preparation. Many participants suggested that students with learning disabilities or ADHD should make sure they take appropriate college preparatory courses in high school and reduce or eliminate modifications in these courses by their senior year. “Do not enable students. Show them what they can do on their own. You should cut down on modifications in senior year for students who want to go to college.” “Other things that high schools can do is start setting some higher expectations for your college-bound folks. If there’s 100 algebra problems, they need to do all 100, not 50.” “Students get engaged in that process when you tell them, I’m helping you prepare for when you go to college. This is how it’s going to be. So the more you do now, the easier it’s going to be when you transition there.”

Some participants also recommended that students research prospective colleges’ course requirements for their intended major. One participant commented:

One of the biggest problems is with students who come...and haven’t read that list of requirements; and I’ll get to Public Speaking, and someone with a serious social phobia will say, ‘I can’t do that.’ Bring them to the school or talk to your parents about it. Don’t just say I’m applying to _____

because they have this major. You really have to look at what they require.

Another service provider added:

And then the same thing also applies with the writing and the math. We have specific math courses that you have to take, and based upon your program you have to work on building up those skills. Sometimes students will say, 'Well I just took the lower level math classes in high school because I didn't really think I'd have to take math in college.' If they really want to go to a school that has those requirements, working on some of those would be important. If math is not your strength, having a year off in high school can be hard.

The use of assistive technology in high school was a recurring recommendation for academic preparation in many of the interviews. Some representative comments on the use of assistive technology were: "Start weaning them off of some of these services that are human based." "They need some method for getting through all of this reading...but it can take them a year, or up to two years, to get used to assistive technology." "You need to get used to the voice...and you need to experiment with what helps you." "Books on tape has really gone by the wayside. It's about the newer technologies." "We tell students to take something fun. Listen to an audio book in the car. See if it helps you with your comprehension." "E-texts and audio recordings. The school can buy subscriptions and then you can order so many a year for your students. It's just too much of a struggle for some students without this technology."

Some of the disability service providers provided observations and recommendations in other areas, such as extracurricular activities, part-time employment, and career focus. The individual remarks are not included in this *Results and Data Analysis* section, but are included in the Transcriptions of Interviews (See Appendix B).

Nine (9) postsecondary service providers were interviewed for an average one hour per interview, resulting in over 100 pages of transcription (see Appendix B for Transcription

of Interviews). Because of the quality and richness of the comments on the statements regarding transition preparation, and the recommendations and information given by the postsecondary service providers in the interviews, the responses to Parts III and IV of the interviews (activities, supports and materials provided by colleges to support the transition process) as proposed will be delayed for use in the Capstone project. See *Next Steps*, and the *Summary and Conclusions* section for a description of how these portions of the interviews will be used in the future. In some instances, participants' recommendations and comments about transition preparation came from these portions of the interviews.

Reflective Journal

The researcher reflected periodically on the data collection process and the themes that emerged from the interviews (see Appendix C for Selected Excerpts from Researcher's Journal). Many of the observations that were reflected on in the journal are imbedded in the *Discussion of Results* section.

Summary of Results

Postsecondary disability service providers from five colleges in New Hampshire were asked to evaluate the transition preparation of high school students with learning disabilities and ADHD. Transition preparation needs have not changed very much in the last decade. Students with disabilities continue to lack adequate preparation for postsecondary education, particularly in the area of self advocacy skills. The disability service providers also gave their recommendations for improving the way high schools prepare students with learning disabilities or ADHD for the transition to postsecondary education. The six major themes that emerged were: Understanding of disability and needs, accessing disability services in

college, knowledge of the differences between high school and college, self advocacy skills, study skills, and academic preparation.

Summary and Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to research transition planning needs for high school students with learning disabilities and ADHD as identified by postsecondary disability service providers. This objective is accomplished in part by a review of the literature on transition, which included several other transition studies. In addition, nine postsecondary disability services providers in New Hampshire were interviewed to gain their perspective on the transition needs of these students. The intention is to utilize information gleaned from this study to design an effective approach to better prepare ... students with learning disabilities and ADHD for the transition to postsecondary education.

The Summary and Conclusion section is organized into three subsections which provide a framework for this section: *Discussion of Results*, *Considerations for Strengthening the Study*, and *Recommendations for Future Research and Next Steps*, followed by a *Final Summary and Conclusions*.

Discussion of Results

The preceding Results and Data Analysis section presented the data that was collected during the interviews with postsecondary disability service providers in New Hampshire. In this section, the results of this study are examined, comparing these results with the professional literature on transition and reflections from the researcher's journal. Following are the research questions that guided this study.

Research Question 1: What does the literature say about effective practices regarding the transition of students with learning disabilities and ADHD to postsecondary education?

Students with disabilities are less likely than their nondisabled peer to pursue postsecondary education (Getzel & Thoma, 2008). Improving the transition process from

high school to postsecondary education will enable more students with learning disabilities and ADHD to access higher education and to complete their programs. The Literature Review identifies transition tools and approaches to improve the transition process.

In addition to preparing students academically, the literature says that the transition planning process should begin much earlier than the age of 16, as required by the IDEA (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002; Madaus & Shaw, 2006). Effective transition planning includes helping students understand their disabilities, the differences in the regulatory environment for students with disabilities in postsecondary education, and how disability services are accessed in college. Effective transition practices also include teaching self-advocacy skills and study skills. Communication and collaboration between high school special educators and college disability service providers may improve the transition from high school to postsecondary education for students with learning disabilities or ADHD (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002).

Research Question 2: What do postsecondary service providers (administration and staff) identify as transition needs for students with learning disabilities and ADHD transitioning to college, and what preparation suggestions do they have for high school special education case managers?

During interviews, seven postsecondary disability service providers in New Hampshire were asked to rate and comment on six statements about the transition preparation of students with learning disabilities or ADHD for postsecondary education. These statements were adapted from a written survey of disability service coordinators in New York State (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). While the Janiga and Costenbader study surveyed

74 disability service coordinators and in this Capstone study there were only seven respondents, the results were very similar.

In both studies respondents agreed most strongly with the statement about incoming students seeking services having a current disability assessment. Others in the field of postsecondary education and disability support this need (Madaus & Shaw, 2006; NJCLD, 2007). In the New York study this result was not unexpected, “given that IDEA requires the triennial reevaluation of all students with disabilities” (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). Although six out of seven respondents agreed that students have an educational evaluation upon entrance to college, two respondents commented that the quality assessment information has started to decline, and they are seeing more outdated (older than three years) information (see Appendix B for Transcription of Interviews). With the passage of the IDEA of 2004, which included new criteria for the diagnosis of learning disabilities (Madaus & Shaw, 2006), and the lack of consistency in the documentation requirements in secondary and postsecondary schools (NJCLD, 2007), colleges may expect this trend to continue.

Also similar to the Janiga and Costenbader (2002) study, respondents felt that students may not be well prepared to advocate for their own needs. Respondents in both studies, as well as other studies, emphasize that self advocacy skills need to be taught and practiced in high school (Trainor, 2005; Getzel & Thoma, 2008). It was clear in this study that students need to know how to access services in college, as in some cases they come unprepared in this area. This is also supported in the literature about preparation of students for the transition to postsecondary education (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw; Getzel, 2005; Hitchings, Retish & Horvath, 2005).

Generally, in both studies respondents disagreed that students were adequately prepared in high school for the transition to college, although a few of the respondents in this study commented that the degree of preparedness varied with the individual student. These results would indicate that transition preparation needs have not changed in a decade. High schools must improve their transition practices for students with disabilities.

In the Janiga and Costenbader (2002) written survey, respondents were asked to list three things that secondary schools could do better to prepare students with LD for college. Interview comments for this study were far more extensive than in the Janiga and Costenbader (2002) study, as each interview participant talked for approximately 15 – 20 minutes about their recommendations for transition preparation in high school. Often the recommendations were directed to the researcher, as the disability service providers were either familiar with the transition workshops that we have had at ..., or they were interested in hearing about what Souhegan is doing now and wanted to offer advice and/or assistance (see Appendix C for Selected Excerpts from Researcher's Journal).

For this Capstone study, the participants' recommendations for improving transition preparation were categorized by six major themes: Understanding of disability and needs, accessing disability services in college, knowledge of the differences between high school and college, self advocacy skills, study skills, and academic preparation. Helping students understand their disability and how it affects their learning was identified as a key element of transition preparation (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002; Getzel, 2005; Hitchings, Retish & Horvath, 2005). In the Janiga and Costenbader (2002) study, 39% of respondents listed this as a suggestion for improving transition services. Although "self-determination" was only mentioned once during this study's interviews, a student's understanding of his or

her disability and how it affects their learning is the foundation for self-determination. In a study of self-determination and college students with disabilities, Getzel and Thoma (2008) found that as a group these students did not feel that they were prepared in high school to understand their disability, and they would have preferred to have self-determination strategies introduced earlier in high school. Results from all of these studies indicate that understanding of disability and needs is an important component of transition preparation.

Understanding how to access disability services in college and knowledge of the differences between high school and college were two other themes identified from this study's interviews. The participants in this Capstone study suggested that parents and students need to know the differences between the regulations governing high schools and postsecondary education. Students with learning disabilities represent the largest disability group in college (Hitchings, Retish & Horvath, 2005; Newman, 2005). It is important that they, and their parents, understand the additional transition issues that these hidden disabilities present (Madaus & Shaw, 2006). Participants also had suggestions about researching schools, visiting disability services offices, and training high school transition staff. Several participants supplied or recommended materials, similar to the "Opening Doors" handbook developed by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2007).

Study skills and academic preparation were two other important theme areas for suggestions for transition preparation. Participants suggested that students need to be helped to develop their organization, time management and study skills, so that they will be prepared to use these strategies independently in college (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002). The suggestions given in this study were consistent with those given in the Janiga and Costenbader (2002) study, where a significant number of respondents suggested improving

students' study skills and teaching time management skills to prepare them for college (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002).

The suggestions for academic preparation in this Capstone study involve students taking the appropriate college preparatory classes, and students with disabilities using more assistive technology in high school (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002). There were a number of suggestions about coursework in the Janiga and Costenbader (2002) study as well, and 11% of their respondents mentioned use of more assistive technology in high school. Questions about the use of assistive technology were not highlighted during the interviews for this Capstone project, yet the disability service providers frequently mentioned this as an important area of development for high schools. This would suggest that assistive technology is becoming increasingly important at the postsecondary level, and high schools should prepare students with disabilities before they get to college (Kato et al., 2006).

In the Janiga and Costenbader (2002) study, 67% of respondents suggested that high schools help students improve their self-advocacy skills. The importance of self advocacy was commented on the most frequently of all of the major themes that were identified in this Capstone study. The statement that students were prepared to self advocate was also the statement that respondents most strongly disagreed with in both this study and the Janiga and Costenbader (2002) study. Much of the literature on transition stresses the importance of self advocacy skills because students with disabilities need to self advocate for disability services and academic accommodations in college (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002; Getzel & Thoma, 2008; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). Participants in this Capstone study recommended practicing self advocacy with students by their senior year of

high school; but the best approach is to begin self-advocacy training much earlier (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002).

The recommendation from postsecondary disability service providers to have students with learning disabilities or ADHD participate in their IEP meetings is an important recommendation because it is a forum for students to practice self advocacy, understand their disability and needs, and talk about their future goals. The ideal scenario would be for the student to lead his or her own meeting, or at least actively participate in the meeting in order to practice self advocacy and self determination (Hitchings, Retish & Horvath, 2005; Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009; Mellard, 2005; Roffman, 2007).

In addition to the identified themes, a number of interview participants asked about and commented on the transition workshops at ... that were mentioned earlier in the proposal. These workshops are similar to the transition group models outlined in McEachern and Kenny (2007) and Milsom, Akos and Thompson (2004), with school counselors or special educators as leaders. Participants said that they liked the idea of guest speakers for the students (postsecondary disability service coordinators and ... graduates who are now college students). They recommended more opportunities for students to practice skills and a group visit to a college's office of disability services (see Appendix B for Transcription of Interviews and Appendix C for Selected Excerpts from Researcher's Journal). These recommendations will be considered for next school year.

Summary of Discussion of Results

The transition preparation needs of students with learning disabilities and ADHD identified in the professional literature and by the postsecondary disability service providers interviewed indicate that high schools need to better prepare students. In addition to

improving students' self advocacy skills, study skills, understanding of disability and needs, recommendations from this study indicate other steps that high school special educators can take to improve the transition to college. In response to comments that the quality of assessment information has started to decline, they can recommend that all college-bound students with learning disabilities or ADHD have a complete educational assessment in high school when they are due for their triennial reevaluation.

Many disability service providers commented on the importance of assistive technology in college. High schools can teach students how to use assistive technology, preparing students for college when they will not have the human-based supports they may rely on to complete reading and writing assignments.

Postsecondary disability service providers also recommended that high schools could arrange for groups of students with disabilities to visit a college's office of disability services. There was also an offer by one disability service provider to come to ... to train high school personnel in the differences between high school and college (see Appendix B for Transcription of Interviews). Both of these recommendations will be considered for improving transition practices at ... in the next two years.

Considerations for Strengthening the Study

The stated purpose of this investigation was to collect information about the transition needs of students with learning disabilities and ADHD from the perspective of postsecondary disability service providers. While the study met this objective, there were barriers and

limitations to the study, several missing perspectives, and my own personal biases about the transition needs of students with learning disabilities and ADHD.

The most significant barrier in this study was time to formally review all of the data and materials collected during the interviews in response to research question #3: What activities and supports do postsecondary schools provide for students with learning disabilities and ADHD to promote success and aid the transition process (See Appendix B for Transcription of Interviews and Appendix C for Capstone Experience Log)? All of the disability service providers interviewed spoke at length about the activities and supports related to transition at their schools and provided me with a wealth of materials that I have already begun to use in my daily practice as a high school special educator.

A limitation in this study was the oral survey, as respondents expressed some difficulty with the rating scale used to evaluate the transition preparation statements. Table 1: Ratings from Postsecondary Disability Service Providers on the Transition Preparation of Students with LD/ADHD for Postsecondary Education illustrates the number of times respondents did not rate a particular statement. Many said that they could not respond on the scale from Strongly Agree to Strong Disagree, and that they would have preferred a “Sometimes” rating option. This limitation may have stimulated more comments, however, as respondents explained why they could not completely agree or disagree with a particular statement. Participants received the interview script in advance, and it was evident that they had prepared their responses.

Another limitation was the sample in this study, as only nine postsecondary disability service providers from five two and four-year colleges were interviewed. Interpretation of the results was limited to the perspectives to these participants.

There were perspectives missing from this study, most notably students and parents. It would be valuable to gain the perspectives of students with disabilities in high school who are transitioning to college and their parents, as well as the perspective of students with disabilities in college and their parents who have been through the transition process. Some transition studies that included these voices were mentioned in the Literature Review, but they were not a major focus of this study (Getzel & Thoma, 2008; Trainor, 2005; Hitchings, Retish & Horvath, 2005).

My own biases affected this study, as I have been working with students with learning disabilities and ADHD and writing their transition plans for several years. I see students who are overly reliant on IEP accommodations and modifications that will not be replicated in college. I know that students need to improve their self advocacy skills and their study skills. I have worked with other special educators and guidance counselors at ... to try to improve transition planning practices; but as I stated in the *Introduction* to this Capstone Proposal, there is currently no systematic approach at our school for helping students with learning disabilities or ADHD transition to high school.

If I could change and strengthen this study, I would not include the third research question, and I would change the statements in the oral survey. Trying to include all of the data and materials supplied by postsecondary disability service providers in response to the third research question was not possible due to time constraints. The statements in the oral survey were too general, and they need to be updated. I would do interviews again, however, as I found this method of data collection very effective.

Recommendations for Future Research and Next Steps

In this Capstone study of the transition needs of students with learning disabilities and ADHD, there was an extensive review of the current literature on transition and a significant amount of data and materials was collected from postsecondary disability service providers. There are a number of recommendations for future research that could be made, but I have selected the three areas where I would like to see more research. Following these recommendations for future research are the next steps that I plan to take after completion of this Capstone study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Postsecondary disability service providers who were interviewed recommended that high school students with learning disabilities and ADHD need to be taught and need to practice using more assistive technology in high school. While there was no specific research on assistive technology for this study, it was discussed in some of the literature (Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002; Kato et al., 2006). I would recommend more research in the area of assistive technology.

The role of parents of students with learning disabilities and ADHD in the transition process came up in every interview, and the disability service providers had several recommendations about parents. Their perspective on transition would be important information. A research question could be: What do parents need to know about the transition to postsecondary education?

I researched transition tools and approaches currently being used, but I did not research transition preparation in high schools in New Hampshire. However, extensive literature on tools and approaches to transition preparation does exist (Babbitt & White,

2002; Brinckerhoff, McGuire & Shaw, 2002; Hitchings, Retish & Horvath, 2005; Kato et al., 2006; Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009; McEachern & Kenny, 2007; Milsom, Akos & Thompson, 2004; Paquette & Tuttle, 2003; Roffman, 2007; Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2007). Researching the transition approaches being used in New Hampshire schools would not only provide information; it might also result in more collaboration among high school special educators in the area.

Next Steps

The obvious next step for me is to formally review all of the data and materials that were collected, but were deferred for this study due to time constraints (see Appendix B for Transcription of Interviews). I have begun to use some of the study skills worksheets, information about the differences between high school and college, postsecondary disability services information, and assistive technology information with students and parents during IEP meetings and in academic support classes with students. A library of the information given on the activities and supports in college by the postsecondary disability service providers will be developed to further inform my own practice and will be available to other special educators and guidance counselors at

I will also continue the transition workshops for students with disabilities, working with my special education colleagues to include some of the recommendations from the postsecondary disability service providers. I plan to arrange a visit with students to a college's office of disability services, so that they will be prepared for when they have to access services on their own.

I plan to continue to build collaboration with postsecondary disability service providers. I might modify the interview tool to use to interview other disability service

providers to gain insights into activities and supports from other colleges. I will follow through on the offer made by one disability service provider and arrange for time during a teacher in-service day for a transition planning session for special educators and guidance counselors.

The projected timeline for these next steps follows:

1. Review data and materials collected, but not reviewed for this study (May – August, 2009).
2. Continue transition workshops, adding visit of college office of disability services (September 2009 – May 2010).
3. Build collaboration with postsecondary disability service providers. Arrange transition planning training session for special educators and guidance counselors (September 2009 – June 2010).

Final Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to research transition planning needs of high school students with learning disabilities and ADHD to improve transition-planning practices at A review of transition practices as described in current literature provided a foundation for interviewing nine postsecondary disability service providers in New Hampshire. The service providers were asked to evaluate how well students with learning disabilities and ADHD had been prepared by high schools for postsecondary education, and they were asked what recommendations they would have for improving transition preparation. The service providers were also asked about the activities and supports provided at the college level to aid in the transition process. Their comments about college activities and supports were

included in the interview transcripts and the materials collected were listed, but these portions of the interview were not reviewed in this study.

Overall, postsecondary disability service providers said that students with learning disabilities and ADHD were not adequately prepared for college. Their responses were similar to another survey conducted a decade ago. Respondents identified self advocacy skills as the area of greatest deficit for students with LD and ADHD. They recommended teaching students about their disability and how it impacts learning, and encouraging them to practice self advocacy in high school. The disability service providers recommended teaching students about the differences between high school and college and how to access disability services in college. Improving students' study skills, organization and time management was emphasized. Adequate academic preparation for college, including the use of assistive technology in high school, was also recommended.

A high percentage of ... students, many of whom are students with learning disabilities and ADHD, transition to postsecondary education. The results from this Capstone study will be extremely beneficial in improving transition practices at this school. Information from the current literature on transition and the recommendations from postsecondary disability service providers will help us review what aspects of our current approach to transition planning should be continued and what needs to be added or modified to better prepare students with learning disabilities and ADHD for postsecondary education.

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Appendix A

Approval Letter to ... Administrators

Letter of Consent to Disability Service Administrator or Service Provider

Postsecondary Service Provider Interview Script

February 4, 2009

Mr. ..., Principal

...

...Road

..., NH

Dear Mr. Prescott and Administrative Team,

As you know, I am enrolled in a Masters Degree program in Special Education at As a part of my Capstone Project, I plan to collect information about the transition needs of students with learning disabilities and ADHD from the perspective of postsecondary disability service providers and administrators in the southern part of New Hampshire. This information, along with published research and literature, will be used to inform my own practice and to improve transition services at It is important for you to know that I will be seeking information as both a KSC student and an SHS employee.

I will be conducting several site visits and interviews with postsecondary disability service administrators and staff. During the interviews, I will be using a recording device, as well as a notepad, to gather information. At each site I will also collect materials that are being used by the college to support the transition of incoming students with disabilities that may be helpful at the high school level.

Enclosed is a copy of the letter of consent that will go to the college administrators and staff participating in the site visits, as well as a copy of the interview scripts. A copy of my research proposal is also available upon request. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this project.

Thank you for your support,

...

As administrative representative at ..., I approve this research project.

_____ Title: _____

February 9, 2009

Dear Disability Service Administrator or Service Provider,

I am enrolled in a Masters Degree program in Special Education at As a part of my Capstone Project, I plan to collect information about the transition needs of students with learning disabilities and ADHD from the perspective of postsecondary disability service providers and administrators in the southern part of New Hampshire. This information, along with published research and literature, will be used to design an effective approach for preparing ... students for transition to postsecondary education.

You are being asked to be a participant in this project because you are an administrator of a postsecondary disability services program or a direct service provider. During a site visit to your school, I would like to interview you. I would also like to collect samples of materials that are used by your college to support students with disabilities, which may also be helpful to students at the secondary level.

The information obtained from this site visit and interview will be shared with colleagues at ... in the form of a report, professional exhibition, and possible statewide conference presentation. I will also share my findings with ... staff as a transition program is being developed during the next two years. I plan to record each interview to insure the accuracy of my data and will destroy the recordings after the interview information is transcribed. I will take all measures to remove individual identifying information from my report, and information from all of the site visits will be reported in the form of themes.

Your input is valuable to this study as it will help to identify the strengths and weaknesses that you see in incoming students with disabilities and the recommendations you have for preparing students in high school for this important transition. With this information, I hope to better prepare students from ... for the transition to postsecondary education. You are being asked to be a voluntary participant in this study and are free to participate in this study or not without prejudice. You may withdraw your participation in the site visit activity at any time.

Please notify me if you would like a copy of my report. If I were to use information from this site visit in any other way not consistent with what has been previously stated, I will contact you to get your additional consent.

Sincerely,

...

Special Education Teacher
M.Ed. Candidate...

I _____ have read the above statement and agree to be a participant in this ... Capstone Project as described above.

Title: _____ School: _____

Introductions

Letter of Consent

Letter of Consent reviewed and signed.

Gift certificate given as thank you for participation in research investigation.

This interview will be audio taped so that the information you provide will be recorded accurately; and I will also be taking some notes. Your name will be kept confidential. Information that is not relevant to this study will not be included.

Background Information

The purpose of this investigation is to research transition-planning needs for students with learning disabilities and ADHD as identified by disability service providers at postsecondary schools. Your recommendations for high school special educators will be used to improve transition-planning practices at The guiding questions for this study are:

(Paraphrase these questions):

- 1) What do postsecondary service providers identify as transition needs for students with learning disabilities or ADHD transitioning to college, and what preparation suggestions do they have for high school special education case managers?
- 2) What activities and supports do postsecondary schools provide for students with learning disabilities or ADHD to promote success and aid the transition process in the following areas:
 - a) social/daily functioning
 - b) academic
 - c) technical/administrative (including financial aid and documentation of disability)?

Participant's and Institution's Information:

Job Title:

Job Description:

Number of years in this position:

Number of students with LD & ADHD served:

Students w/disabilities / Service Providers ratio:

Part I: Transition Preparation - Oral Survey for Administrators

Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about incoming freshmen with learning disabilities or ADHD. These questions were adapted from a survey of postsecondary disability service

coordinators in New York State a few years ago (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002), and I'd like to compare your responses with theirs.

I'm going to read a series of statements. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement as follows:

(SD) Strongly Disagree	(D) Disagree	(A) Agree	(SA) Strongly Agree	(NA) No Answer/ Not Applicable
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1. Incoming freshmen seeking disability services have an educational evaluation which provides necessary information to determine accommodations.

SD	D	A	SA	NA
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Comments:

2. Incoming students' IEPs provide appropriate accommodations and transition services to prepare students for the transition to postsecondary education.

SD	D	A	SA	NA
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Comments:

3. Incoming freshmen know how to access support services in college.

SD	D	A	SA	NA
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Comments:

4. Incoming freshmen are adequately prepared in high school to self-advocate for their needs in postsecondary settings.

SD	D	A	SA	NA
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Comments:

5. Incoming freshmen with learning disabilities/ADHD are academically prepared for postsecondary education (e.g., appropriate high school courses, study skills).

SD	D	A	SA	NA
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Comments:

6. Overall, incoming freshmen with learning disabilities/ADHD are adequately prepared in high school for the transition to college.

SD D A SA NA

Comments:*Part II: Recommendations for the Transition to Postsecondary Education*

What suggestions do you have for improving the way high schools prepare students with LD/ADHD for the transition to postsecondary education? (Describe in detail your suggestions).

Possible Areas to Prompt:

Knowledge of Services

Accommodations

Academic/Curriculum

Organization/Time Management/Study Skills

Self-Advocacy

Working with Families to Prepare

Social/Extracurricular Activities

Employment/Career Suggestions

Part III: Activities and Supports Provided by Postsecondary Schools

Could you give me an example of a successful scenario of a student accessing disability services at your school? (Why were they successful? What did the school do to support the student, family?)

Could you provide an example of an unsuccessful scenario? (Why were they unsuccessful? What factors appeared to impact their situation?)

What types of activities, supports does your office provide to students with LD/ADHD?

- a) Social/daily living
- b) Academic

How is a plan for academic adjustments/accommodations and services developed?

What does a typical plan for a student with a learning disability or ADHD include?

What are the most common academic adjustments?

Do you have an example of a typical plan or the template that you use?

How is the plan distributed to professors?

c) Technical/Administrative (including financial aid)

When should/do students first contact disabilities services?

What type of documentation of disability do you require for students with LD or ADHD?

Is it usually students or their parents who contact you? What is the parental component in the process of accessing services?

Does the disabilities services office follow up with students or professors?
Does this office act as an intermediary between students and professors?

d) What other types of activities, supports does your institution (outside of disability services) provide to students with LD/ADHD? (Services that many students with LD/ADHD utilize?)

Part IV: Material and Other Information

Are there materials (e.g., brochures, student handbooks, etc.) that are used for students with learning disabilities or ADHD that you would be willing to share?

Which materials could be helpful to high school students?

Thank you very much for your participation in this study. The information you provided and the recommendations you gave will help to improve transition services for students at