

Introduction

The field of special education in America has adopted the term “transition” to specifically refer to a changing process for students with disabilities from secondary to post-secondary lives. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has since 1990 mandated the provision of transition services and described the transition outcomes for students with disabilities, including community and independent living, further education, employment and instruction, and mandatory linkage with vocational rehabilitation and other adult service agencies. Adjustments to the world beyond secondary school, students with disabilities need structured planning and substantial support to help them prepare needed skills. The planning process should be focused on the future, delivered consistently by both transition and school staff, and tracked and monitored in relation to the goals for positive-school results. Transition services, then, indicate a series of various dimensions and activities and increase the emphasis on post-school results.

A number of researchers examined the types of transition services for secondary school students with disabilities, as well as characteristics of the providers of transition services. Usually, two types of school personnel are involved with transition planning and service delivery. They include transition coordinators/specialists and secondary special education teachers (Morningstar & Clark, 2003). Research has suggested that consistent support from school personnel significantly contributes to students’ positive postschool outcomes (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000). A special educator is frequently identified as the individual who should provide transition related services such as vocational education instruction, coordinated work experiences, and contacts with the community (Asselin, Todd-Allen, & deFur, 1998; Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002; Knott, 1997; Knott & Asselin, 1999; Retzlaff, 1999). These findings indicate the importance of a special educator’s involvement in transition services, including collaborative activities, which will facilitate a student’s transition from school to post-school lives. To allow the successful postsecondary outcomes to become a reality,

secondary special educators play an influential role in this transition process (Benz et al., 2000; Fox, Wandry, Pruitt, & Anderson, 1998).

The ultimate goal of transition services is to insure successful community integration for students with disabilities. The community integration philosophy incorporates such concepts as “civil liberty,” “least restrictive environment,” “right to treatment and to refuse treatment,” “quality of life,” “engaging natural helpers,” and coordination among the system of services (Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009, p. 83). The value system of transition service coordination models is rooted in the principle of normalization (Wolfensberger & Thomas, 1983), which is relevant to human services in general, rather to a narrow specialty. Since the 1980s, there has been a remarkable increase in collaboration among human service agencies, government, and community organizations (Abramson & Rosenthal, 1995; Mattessich & Monsey, 1992). A major impetus for collaboration in the modern time is from the supporters of service integration for children and families (Bronstein, 2002). Service integration derives from the need of systematic efforts to solve problems of service fragmentation and fracture, in which services are usually developed and delivered in a disjointed and uneven way. When services are uncoordinated, resources are wasted and such lack of coordination is harmful to individuals or families with needs (Kahn & Kamerman, 1992).

Interdisciplinary/interagency communication is essential in systems of services for specialists from diverse fields. A special educator alone cannot accomplish the requisite desired transition outcomes for students with disabilities without collaborating with others (Eber, Nelson, & Millers, 1997; Wasburn-Moses, 2006). Inter-agency collaborations between special educators and other professionals will form when they share collective ownership of goals. Departments may need to pursue the resources of the other department; thus, encourages members’ participation in newly created professional activities (i.e., participants acknowledge their dependence on others’ expertise to reach their goals). In some situations, external mandates from legislation or regulatory agencies impose individuals to engage in collaborative activities (Abramson & Rosenthal, 1995; Farmakopoulou, 2002; Intriligator, 1992; Swan & Morgan,