Transition Coordinators: A Needed Change in Special Education

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by

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Keywords: Transition Coordinator, Special Education, Transition Plan, High School, Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

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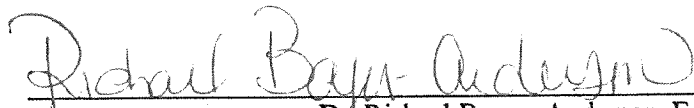
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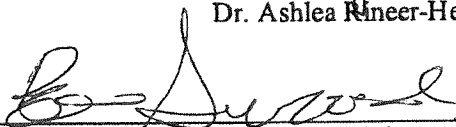
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## ABSTRACT

Graduating from high school is a pivotal milestone in a young person's life, symbolizing independence and the promise of future opportunities. However, for students with disabilities, this experience can differ significantly due to the unique challenges they face when transitioning into adulthood. A key component of their special education programming is preparing them for life beyond high school. However, challenges arise when special education teachers lack the knowledge or confidence to effectively write and implement a transition plan that addresses the individual needs of their students. This study explores the perspectives and experiences of special education team members regarding the implementation of a transition coordinator and its impact on special education programming.

## DEDICATION

During the darkest days of dissertation writing, my husband and daughter stood by my side and said, "Just keep swimming." Without them, this dream would have had a different ending. I dedicate this to them: my rock, my world, my everything. I love you both, always, always.

To my parents, their years of guidance and support have led me down many paths but have always led me to be my best self. To never give up. To never give in. To always keep going. No matter what the challenges are, this too shall pass.

To my village, my Mackes Family. As a high school student, I sat in my biology class, hating school. It was without a doubt that without Mrs. Shannon Mackes, I would not be here today. Her family has become my family, my village, and I am forever grateful. She stood by my side through all the tough times, telling me, you got this; you can do anything you put your mind to. Sometimes, I didn't believe her, but here we are, on the homestretch of a significant milestone that I didn't think could ever happen. A special thank you to Logan; while stationed in Poland serving in the US Army, he would send his "get it done" messages as I sent him pictures of the dissertation table. Thank you, Logan, for always being my hero.

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Angela, thank you for being there for Blair when I couldn't be. We wouldn't have made it through the ups and downs without you. The lessons you have taught her on and off the ice

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will be with her forever. Thank you for being her coach, mentor, and massive part of our family.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Graduating from high school is a pivotal milestone in a young person's life, symbolizing independence and the promise of future opportunities. However, this experience can differ significantly for students with disabilities, who often face challenges as they transition into adulthood. Research indicates that individuals with disabilities tend to experience poorer post-school outcomes compared to their peers without disabilities, including lower rates of college attendance and a greater likelihood of continuing to reside with their parents (McGrew et al., 2019). This stresses the urgent need for effective transition planning that equips these students with the necessary skills and support needed to navigate life after high school (IRIS, 2021). This study aims to gather the perspectives of special education teachers, secondary administrators, and a transition coordinator on the impact of a transition coordinator position in writing and implementing transition plans for high school students. This information could help develop an implementation guide for the role of a transition coordinator as a new position within schools or even help define it as a best practice.

**Background of the Problem**

The transition period, when students with disabilities prepare for life beyond high school, presents unique challenges. These students often face barriers not encountered by their peers without disabilities. Research highlights the significant struggles students with disabilities face in making a successful transition (Oertle & Seader, 2015). While the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) emphasizes early transition planning, many students with disabilities still experience poor post-school outcomes, including lower college attendance rates and a higher likelihood of living with their parents (McGrew et al., 2019). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) mandates that transition planning begin by age 14 (or earlier in some states) to ensure that students with disabilities are ready for life after high school. However,

despite this legal requirement, the effectiveness of transition planning often depends on the capacity of educators and administrators to implement these plans effectively (Morgan & Riesen, 2016). Successful transition planning is not just a formality; it is essential for facilitating meaningful employment and access to higher education, which ultimately improves the quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

The responsibility of creating and executing individualized transition plans often falls on special education teachers, who face the challenge of balancing their instructional duties with the complexities of transition planning. A primary challenge is the lack of training and expertise among educators. Research shows that many teachers and administrators have not received adequate preparation for the complexity of transition planning (Cobb & Alwell, 2009), which can lead to poorly developed goals and insufficient support services for students (Wehman, 2020).

In addition to insufficient training, collaboration between schools, families, and community organizations is often lacking. Successful transition planning requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including vocational rehabilitation services and community-based organizations (Schutz & Carter, 2021). Many schools struggle to engage these external partners effectively, resulting in splintered or incomplete student services.

Inconsistent implementation of transition plans can present another barrier. While IDEA mandates transition planning, the quality and consistency of these plans can vary significantly across schools. This inconsistency can be explained by the differences in resources, leadership, and staff commitment to the transition process. Some schools may have robust transition services, while others may lack the resources to develop meaningful plans for students with disabilities, leading to suboptimal outcomes (Oertle & Seader, 2015).

One potential solution to these challenges is the implementation of a transition coordinator within schools. Transition coordinators are specifically trained special education teachers who guide students through the complexities of transition, ensuring coordinated efforts between educators, families, and community resources (Wehman, 2020). They play a central role in bridging gaps, ensuring all stakeholders are involved, and tailoring transition plans to meet individual student needs. A transition coordinator can also help create a structured, consistent approach to transition planning across schools, ensuring that all students receive the necessary support for successful postsecondary outcomes.

Understanding the perspectives of special education teachers, administrators, and transition coordinators is a vital component to refining the role of transition coordinators and developing best practices for transition planning. This study explores how a dedicated transition coordinator can enhance the planning and implementation of transition plans, ultimately improving postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities.

Having outlined the significant challenges faced by students with disabilities during the transition period, it is now necessary to focus on the aspect of this issue, the role of special education teachers in creating and implementing effective transition plans. The following section will delve into the problem of insufficient training for educators and the implications for student success.

**Statement of the Problem**

The relationship between special education teachers' understanding of transition planning and the effective implementation of transition plans for students with disabilities is a critical area of concern. Many special education teachers enter their roles without formal training in writing and implementing transition plans (Rineer-Hershey, 2018). This lack of preparation can affect

the quality and success of transition plans, hindering students' preparation for life after high school.

Transitioning from secondary education to adulthood is a significant milestone for all students, but students with disabilities often face additional challenges. These challenges may include navigating postsecondary education application processes, acquiring essential job skillsets, defining a career path, or deciding on future living arrangements. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), transition planning must begin no later than age 16, though some states, such as Pennsylvania, begin transition planning at age 14. Transition plans must address postsecondary education, employment, and independent living (if applicable) (IDEA, 2004). These components must be developed into measurable annual goals, with appropriate services and activities designed to help students achieve these goals.

For transition plans to be effective, they must incorporate services and activities that directly support the student's goals. However, many newly hired special education teachers may not fully understand the specific requirements mandated by IDEA (2004). The IEP team, which includes the special education teacher, regular education teacher, parents, student, related service providers (if applicable), community-based providers (if applicable) and others members of the student's educational team, must collaborate to create appropriate transition goals that reflect the student's interests, aspirations, and those of their parents. Teachers conduct interest surveys with students and parents and individual interviews with the students to gather information about postsecondary plans. These processes repeat annually to refine the student's goals as they approach graduation.

The incorporation of transition planning into the IEP process became a requirement with the passage of IDEA in 2004. However, this shift left many school districts unprepared to meet

the new mandates. Special education teachers were tasked to write and implement formal transition plans, with little to no formal training.

This study examines the success of transition plans for students with disabilities. According to Papay et al. (2015), students with disabilities often experience lower rates of success in postsecondary education, employment, and independent living compared to their peers without disabilities. Special education teachers play an integral role in the planning and success of transition plans. If these plans are not adequately implemented, school districts may fail to meet their responsibilities and could be held accountable. By investigating the challenges special education teachers face in understanding and implementing transition plans, this study will provide insights that can help school districts plan targeted professional development and training opportunities for educators. These initiatives will ultimately support teachers' professional growth and help students with disabilities achieve successful postsecondary outcomes.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to gather in-depth perspectives from special education team members about the role of a transition coordinator and its potential impact on implementing effective transition plans. A transition coordinator is a staff member specifically trained to facilitate transition planning for students with disabilities, ensuring coordinated efforts between educators, families, and external support agencies (Lillis & Kutscher, 2022). According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), a special education team includes key professionals and the student's family to ensure a comprehensive approach to educational planning.

1.  What are high school special education team members' perspectives and experiences

    regarding the implementation of a transition coordinator as part of the IEP team for

    special education students?

2.  How has the implementation of the transition coordinator as part of the IEP team changed

    the team's practices in writing and implementing transition plans for special education

    students?

To achieve this objective, it is essential to understand how the perspectives of educators and administrators shape the implementation of transition plans. The following section will describe the methodology used to gather insights from these key stakeholders, focusing on their experiences and practices related to transition coordination.

**Nature of Study**

This study sought to explore the perspectives of special education teachers, a secondary-level administrator, and the transition coordinator regarding their training and understanding of transition plans. A qualitative case study approach was chosen to gather detailed insights into the experiences of those directly involved in the transition planning process. The study focuses on Pennsylvania-certified special education teachers employed within the district under investigation. A transition coordinator, a secondary-level administrator, and six special education teachers have provided valuable information on educators' challenges and practices in ensuring a successful transition for students with disabilities through semi-formal interviews.

According to Tracy et al. (2019), qualitative research incorporates various methods, such as interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. A case study design within this framework enables a deep exploration of participants' unique experiences and perspectives (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of how those

directly involved in transition planning perceive their roles, their challenges, and how they

implement transition practices (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018).

The selection of participants will be through a random sampling process. Upon receiving

permission from the participating school district and approval from the Institutional Review

Board (IRB), secondary special education teachers (grades 6-12), secondary administrators, and

the transition coordinator received an email from the researcher inviting them to participate in

the study. To reduce the potential for bias, the researcher chose participants based on how they

respond to the email, on a first come basis. Once participants were confirmed, in-person, semi-

structured interviews were arranged at a time convenient for both the researcher and the

participant. Before the interviews, all participants signed a consent form acknowledging their

voluntary participation, their agreement to the audio recording of the interviews, and a review of

the study's purpose and procedure.

Otter.ai (Otter.at, n.d.) was used to record and transcribe the interviews. Participants were

asked to review their interview transcripts to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the data; their

personal experiences lead to the study's findings. After the interviews were completed, the data

analysis process began. The first analysis phase focused on individual questions, identifying

commonalities or themes. These emergent themes were then cross-checked with field notes to

ensure consistency and reliability across the data sources. Finally, the themes identified during

the analysis were interpreted as research questions and linked to the existing literature on

transition planning. The researcher analyzed the results to understand the practical implications

of the role of the transition coordinator and how this role might influence transition practices

within the school district.

**Delimitations**

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2019), delimitations define the conceptual boundaries of research, helping clarify its scope. In this study, one key delimitation is the researcher's position as a building administrator during the research. Although the researcher served in this role, they did not directly supervise any participants, mitigating potential biases. However, the researcher's administrative position could still influence the interpretation of findings or the study's design, as the researcher was familiar with the school district's policies and practices.

Additionally, this study was limited to one school district, which confines the findings to the participants' perspectives within this school district. This school district is a small rural district with approximately 4,000 students located in eastern Pennsylvania. The sample consisted of 6 special education teachers, a secondary-level administrator, and a transition coordinator, which provides valuable insight into the school district's practices but may not fully represent the experiences of special education professionals in other school districts or regions. While the focus on one school district narrows the scope of the study, it provides an in-depth look at the specific challenges and opportunities within this school district, allowing for a targeted investigation into transition planning practices.

**Limitations**

Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) describe limitations as factors within the design or methodology of a study that may affect the interpretation of the findings. One limitation of this study is the researcher's previous role as a high school assistant principal within the participating school district. While the researcher did not directly supervise the study participants, the researcher's prior position may still influence the findings due to familiarity with school district operations and staff.

Another limitation is the lack of formal training in transition planning among the school district's special education staff and administrators. This gap in training could have affected the quality and depth of the data collected, as participants may have been less informed or skilled in transition planning practices. This limitation may restrict the conclusions drawn about the effectiveness of transition planning practices in this school district.

## Assumptions

For this study, the researcher assumed that all participants answered the questions truthfully. The researcher also assumed that the participants took this matter seriously and were open and honest during the interview. Participants also were told they could withdraw from the study at any time.

## Terms and Acronyms

The following terms and acronyms are essential for understanding the study's focus on transition planning for students with disabilities.

**General Education Teacher:** In this study, an educator refers to certified general education teachers in Pennsylvania (IRIS, 2016).

**Family Involvement:** Family involvement occurs when a student's family supports their education, as well as their physical, emotional, and career growth (National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition, 2010).

**Individualized Education Program (IEP):** A written statement of a child's current level of educational performance and their plan of instruction, including goals, specific services to be received, staff members who will carry out the progress, the standards and timelines for

evaluating progress, and the amount and degree to which the child will participate with typically developing peers (PaTTAN, n.d.).

**Individual Transition Plan (ITP):** A plan designed to assist a student with a disability in transitioning to life after high school. An ITP may include job training, attending a college or university, entering the workforce, living independently (with or without support), or entering an adult group home (IRIS, 2016).

**Interagency Collaboration**: Occurs when multiple agencies collaborate for the benefit of the family (National Center for System Care, 2010).

**Postsecondary Success:** Achieving high quality of life standards as individuals transition into adulthood, including securing meaningful employment, engaging in community activities, and pursuing further education (Gothberg et al., 2015).

**Self-Determination:** Refers to students with disabilities who can make personal decisions or advocate for themselves without external influences (Power, 2013).

**Special Education Teacher**: A certified teaching professional who provides support and services to students with disabilities (PaTTAN, n.d.).

**Student Development:** Refers to when a student improves life skills, employment skills, social skills, and recreation skills. Students also develop self-advocacy skills (Kohler et al., 2016).

**Student-Focused Planning:** A process that emphasizes student goals and assessments. The student is actively involved in the planning process (Kohler et al., 2016).

**Sustainability:** The school district's responsibility is to ensure that students with disabilities can transition into adulthood by implementing their transition plans (S. Franklin, 2014).

**Transition:** According to IDEA (2004), secondary transition refers to activities designed to improve the child's education and functional achievement from school to postsecondary, training, employment, and independent living arrangements.

**Acronyms**

FAPE: Free and Appropriate Public Education

IEP: Individualized Education Program

ITP: Individual Transition Plan

IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

LEA: Local Education Agency

LRE: Least Restrictive Environment

NCLB: No Child Left Behind, Amendment to the ESEA of 1965

SDI: Specially Designed Instruction

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter introduced the significance of transition planning for students with disabilities and the challenges educators face in effectively supporting this process. It has highlighted the disparities in postsecondary outcomes between students with and without disabilities, underscoring the critical need for improved transition services. The legal framework provided by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates early transition planning. However, the ineffectiveness of transition plans shines through due to the lack of educator training and inconsistent implementation.

This study explored how implementing a dedicated transition coordinator within schools could improve the development and execution of transition plans, ensuring better outcomes for students with disabilities. The research questions focus on understanding the perspectives of special education team members and assessing how the inclusion of a transition coordinator can influence their practices and support the transition process.

The next chapter will provide a detailed literature review, examining existing research on the challenges of transition planning, the role of transition coordinators, and the effectiveness of such roles in improving postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities. This review will lay the foundation for understanding the context of the study and help identify gaps in the current literature that this research seeks to address.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

**Introduction**

Graduating from high school marks a significant milestone for all students, but for those with disabilities, the transition to adulthood presents unique challenges. Research consistently indicates that students with disabilities experience poorer post-school outcomes than their peers without disabilities, including lower rates of college attendance, competitive employment, and independent living (Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009). These disparities highlight the necessity of effective transition services that prepare students with disabilities for postsecondary education, employment, and independent living.

One emerging role in transition planning is the transition coordinator, a specialized professional responsible for guiding students, teachers, and families through the transition process (Lillis & Kutscher, 2022). Transition coordinators ensure that students with disabilities access essential community-based resources while developing school-based programs focusing on life skills, career training, and independent living. Noonan and Morningstar (2012) emphasized the importance of transition coordinators in fostering collaboration between schools and community agencies, a critical factor in improving postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities.

A comprehensive understanding of effective transition planning requires an exploration of both theoretical foundations and legislative mandates. The following sections examine the legal framework governing transition planning, the theoretical foundations that support best practices, and the evolving role of transition coordinators. By analyzing these key areas, this literature review will provide an in-depth understanding of the essential components of transition

planning and the strategies necessary to support students with disabilities in their journey beyond high school.

**Theoretical Framework**

Effective transition planning is rooted in established theoretical frameworks that guide best practices and ensure comprehensive support for students with disabilities. One foundational element of transition planning is the Individualized Education Program (IEP), which serves as the cornerstone for addressing students' unique needs as they progress from high school to adulthood. The IEP outlines specific transition services and goals to facilitate a student's successful movement into postsecondary education, employment, and independent living (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 2004).

A widely recognized framework supporting transition planning is the Taxonomy for Transition Programming (Morningstar, Liss, & O'Neill, 2015), which builds upon earlier models such as Kohler's (1996) framework. This taxonomy provides a structured approach to developing comprehensive transition plans, identifying five essential components: program structure, student-focused planning, student development, family engagement, and interagency involvement. These elements ensure that transition supports extend far beyond the classroom and into real-world settings, fostering independence and long-term success for students with disabilities.

*Student-Focused Planning*

Student-focused planning places students at the center of the transition process, ensuring that their goals, strengths, and preferences drive decision-making (Kohler et al., 2016). This approach promotes self-determination, allowing students to actively participate in goal setting, decision-making, and advocacy for their future. Research has consistently shown that students

who engage in self-determination activities experience improved post-school outcomes in areas such as employment and independent living (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). IDEA (2004) reinforced this approach by mandating age-appropriate transition assessments that inform students' transition goals based on their strengths, interests, and needs.

### *Student Development*

Student development focuses on building the skills necessary for a successful transition, encompassing academic preparation, vocational training, social-emotional development, and independent living skills (Kohler et al., 2016). This component highlights the need for targeted instruction in career readiness, financial literacy, problem-solving, and self-advocacy. IDEA (2004) requires transition services to include these elements, ensuring that students are prepared academically and equipped with the life skills needed for post-school success. Research indicates that students who receive comprehensive transition education are more likely to achieve stable employment and independent living outcomes (Test et al., 2009).

### *Interagency Collaboration*

A successful transition from school to adulthood requires coordination among multiple stakeholders, including schools, vocational rehabilitation agencies, community organizations, and employers (Noonan et al., 2008). Interagency collaboration ensures that students and their families access external services such as job coaching, assistive technology, transportation, and postsecondary support. IDEA (2004) mandates that IEP teams involve outside agencies when appropriate, fostering continuity of services beyond high school. Studies have shown that strong interagency partnerships significantly improve post-school employment rates and independent living opportunities for students with disabilities (Test et al., 2009).

### *Family Engagement*

Families play an essential role in the transition planning process, providing advocacy, guidance, and long-term support (Trainor, 2010). Family involvement led to higher student engagement and improved post-school employment and independent living outcomes. Schools are encouraged to actively involve families in transition planning by offering training, workshops, and informational resources to help them support their child's future (Thoma & Wehman, 2010). Encouraging family participation ensures that transition planning is holistic and responsive to the student's long-term goals and needs.

### *Program Structure*

Program structure refers to the organizational policies and practices supporting effective transition planning, including dedicated transition personnel, educator professional development, and structured transition curricula (Kohler et al., 2016). Schools with designated transition coordinators and well-developed transition programs tend to demonstrate better student outcomes, as they provide individualized transition supports and facilitate connections with community resources (Morningstar et al., 2012). Federal and state policies continue to evolve to enhance program structure, emphasizing evidence-based transition practices and accountability measures for schools.

These five components align with existing transition planning models, including the Self Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI) and the Life-Centered Education (LCE) approach. The SDLMI emphasizes student autonomy, self-regulation, and goal setting, aligning with the student-focused planning component. The LCE approach integrates academic, vocational, and social-emotional learning, closely reflecting student development and program structure elements (Wehmeyer et al., 2013). These models reinforce the importance of a holistic, student-centered, and evidence-based approach to transition planning. Educators, transition

coordinators, and policymakers can develop comprehensive and evidence-based transition programs that prioritize student agencies, family collaboration, and interagency partnerships by utilizing these theoretical frameworks. However, despite these well-established models and federal mandates supporting transition services, significant challenges remain in implementing effective transition planning. The following section will examine these barriers, including poor post-school outcomes, gaps in teacher preparation, and systemic obstacles that continue to hinder the success of students with disabilities.

**Historical Context to Transition Planning**

The evolution of transition planning for students with disabilities is rooted in legislative milestones that have shaped the educational landscape over the past several decades. One of the earliest and most significant legislative efforts was the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EACHA) of 1975, which established the principle of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2007). While EACHA guaranteed access to educational services, it did not specifically address the transition needs of students as they prepared to enter adulthood. This gap remained unaddressed until the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, which introduced formal requirements for transition planning as part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process.

The 1990 IDEA marked a pivotal shift in the education of students with disabilities by mandating that transition services become a part of the IEP for students aged 16 and older (IDEA, 1990). These services help facilitate movement from high school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, and independent living. Transition services were defined as a coordinated set of activities tailored to

a student's strengths, preferences, and needs, emphasizing a collaborative approach involving students, families, and educational professionals (IDEA, 1990). This shift recognized that successful post-school outcomes required more than academic instruction—they necessitated comprehensive planning that incorporated vocational skills, career counseling, and independent living support.

Building upon these foundational changes, the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA reinforced the importance of student participation in transition planning. This version of IDEA required students to be actively involved in identifying their post-school goals, ensuring that their aspirations were central to the transition process (IDEA, 2004). Furthermore, it introduced transition assessments as a key component of the IEP process. These assessments, which included student and parent surveys, formal evaluations, and interviews, allowed educators to gather critical data on a student's strengths, interests, and support needs. By embedding these assessments into transition planning, IDEA 2004 ensured that transition services were data-driven and personalized to support each student's long-term success better.

The 2004 reauthorization also defined secondary transition as a set of coordinated activities to enhance a student's academic and functional achievement, thereby improving their movement from school to adulthood. The transition plan required within the IEP included data-driven goals related to employment, postsecondary education, and independent living. If an IEP team determines that a student does not require an independent living goal, this must be justified and documented. Additionally, each IEP had to specify the services and activities necessary to support the student's transition, including community-based support such as job coaching, vocational training, and connections to local service agencies.

Through these legislative changes, IDEA 2004 cemented the importance of structured, student-centered transition planning, ensuring that students with disabilities had the skills, resources, and opportunities necessary to successfully navigate the transition into adulthood. However, despite these advances in policy, the implementation of transition services continues to face significant challenges. Insufficient teacher preparation, inconsistent service delivery, and a lack of interagency collaboration have contributed to persistent barriers to effective transition planning. The following section will explore these challenges in depth, examining how they impact the post-school outcomes of students with disabilities and highlighting areas for continued improvement.

**Challenges in Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities**

Despite federal mandates and established transition frameworks, students with disabilities continue to experience poor post-school outcomes compared to their non-disabled peers. Research has consistently highlighted that students with disabilities face lower rates of postsecondary education enrollment, lower employment rates, and higher levels of dependency on public assistance after exiting high school (Swiader, 2025). These challenges arise due to systemic barriers, ineffective implementation of transition plans, and inadequate teacher preparation, all of which hinder the ability of students with disabilities to achieve successful adult outcomes. This section examines the three primary challenges in transition planning poor post-school outcomes, barriers to effective transition planning, and lack of teacher preparation and training.

**Poor Post-School Outcomes for Students with Disabilities**

One of the most significant concerns in transition planning is the persistent gap in post-school outcomes between students with disabilities and their peers. Studies indicate that only

about 19% of young adults with disabilities enroll in a four-year college, compared to 63% of their non-disabled peers (Sanford et al., 2011). Similarly, employment rates for individuals with disabilities remain disproportionately low, with many unable to secure stable, competitive jobs (Carter et al., 2012).

Several factors contribute to these poor outcomes, including limited exposure to work-based learning experiences, lack of self-advocacy skills, and insufficient preparation for independent living (Test et al., 2009). Students with disabilities often graduate without the necessary skills to navigate postsecondary education systems, employment settings, and community-based services. Furthermore, many lack access to vocational training programs, internship opportunities, and job coaching, all essential for securing meaningful employment. The absence of these supports results in lower economic self-sufficiency and increased reliance on social services (Mazzotti et al., 2016).

**Barriers to Effective Transition Planning**

In addition to poor outcomes, several barriers hinder the effective implementation of transition plans. One of the most pressing issues is the inconsistent quality of transition planning across school districts. Although IDEA (2004) mandates the inclusion of transition services in IEPs, studies have shown that many transition plans lack specificity, fail to include measurable goals, and do not adequately align with students' post-school aspirations (Johnson, Thurlow, Wu, LaVelle, & Davenport, 2020) In some cases, transition goals are generic and unrelated to the student's interests or abilities, making them ineffective in guiding meaningful progress.

A critical barrier is the lack of interagency collaboration to facilitate a smooth transition from high school to adult services (Noonan et al., 2008). Many students with disabilities require ongoing support from vocational rehabilitation agencies, community service providers, and

higher education disability services. However, breakdowns in communication between K-12 schools and these external agencies often result in gaps in services, leaving students and families without the resources they need (Kohler et al., 2016). Additionally, students who live in rural or underserved areas often face even more significant obstacles due to limited access to transition-related resources and employment opportunities (Francis et al., 2018).

Another significant barrier is the lack of student and family engagement in the transition process. While IDEA requires student participation in IEP meetings, many students are not actively involved in decision-making, often due to low self-confidence, limited understanding of their rights, or inadequate preparation for self-advocacy (Wehmeyer et al., 2013). Families play a crucial role in transition success, often feel overwhelmed by the complexity of the process and struggle to navigate the various agencies, funding sources, and eligibility requirements for post-school support (Trainor, 2010). Without structured guidance and effective family engagement strategies, students and their families may miss critical opportunities for postsecondary success.

**Lack of Teacher Preparation and Training**

Another major challenge in transition planning is the insufficient preparation and training of special education teachers. Many educators lack formal training in transition planning strategies, leaving them ill-equipped to develop high-quality transition plans and support students in achieving post-school goals (Miller et al., 2013). Studies have shown that many teacher preparation programs offer little to no coursework specifically focused on transition planning, resulting in educators who do not fully understand how to implement evidence-based transition practices (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2005).

Special education teachers often face high caseloads, time constraints, and competing responsibilities, making it difficult to devote adequate time to transition planning, interagency

coordination, and individualized student support (Cummings et al., 2021). In some school

districts, transition specialists or coordinators help address this gap. However, many schools lack

the funding to hire dedicated personnel, placing the burden of transition planning solely on

special education teachers (Morningstar & Mazzotti, 2020).

In addition, many teachers report feeling uncertain about assessing students' transition

needs effectively or aligning IEP transition goals with real-world employment and postsecondary

expectations (Shogren et al., 2018). This lack of training directly impacts the quality of transition

services, as students may not receive the career counseling, self-determination instruction, or

vocational experiences needed to succeed after high school. Research has shown that when

teachers receive professional development in transition planning, they are more likely to

implement evidence-based practices that improve post-school outcomes (Test et al., 2009).

While federal legislation and theoretical frameworks have established a strong foundation for

transition planning, persistent challenges continue to hinder the successful transition of students

with disabilities into adulthood. Addressing these challenges requires a systematic approach that

includes improving transition planning practices, enhancing teacher training, increasing

interagency collaboration, and strengthening student and family engagement. The following

section will examine the critical role of special education teachers in the transition planning

process, highlighting their responsibilities, challenges, and the impact of professional

development on transition planning effectiveness.

**Role of Special Education Teachers in Transition Planning**

Special education teachers are critical in facilitating successful transitions for students

with disabilities by developing and implementing transition-focused services within the

Individualized Education Program (IEP) (Lillis & Kutscher, 2022). When a dedicated transition

coordinator is unavailable, the burden of ensuring effective transition planning falls entirely on the special education teacher. Their responsibilities include providing transition instruction, setting and monitoring transition goals, administering transition assessments, coordinating community resources, and guiding students toward post-school pathways (Morningstar & Lattin, 2014). These responsibilities require a deep understanding of postsecondary education options, employment services, independent living supports, and available community-based resources. The level of expertise many teachers struggle to develop due to inadequate training and systemic constraints.

**Responsibilities of Special Education Teachers in Transition Planning**

Transition planning typically begins at age 14 in most states, which significantly emphasizes secondary special education teachers (Kohler & Field, 2003). However, the primary responsibilities of these educators often center around academic support and instruction, leaving limited time to focus on transition-related tasks. For instance, a typical high school special education teacher is responsible for providing in-class support, adapting curriculum, and managing behavior interventions—all of which can overshadow the individualized transition planning process (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). As a result, when the discussion of transition planning occurs, it may be completed as a procedural requirement rather than a comprehensive, forward-thinking strategy to support long-term student success.

In addition to developing student-centered transition plans, special education teachers must facilitate career exploration, vocational training, self-advocacy instruction, and community-based work experiences (Test et al., 2009). This planning requires collaboration with families, employers, service providers, and postsecondary institutions, yet many teachers receive minimal training to establish and maintain these connections (Miller et al., 2013). Without adequate

knowledge of available resources and interagency partnerships, the resulting transition plans may lack specificity and fail to prepare students for life beyond high school.

## Challenges Faced by Special Education Teachers

Despite their essential role, numerous challenges hinder special education teachers' effective implementation of transition plans. One of the most significant barriers is high caseloads, many teachers are responsible for dozens of students, each requiring an individualized and well-developed transition plan (Morningstar & Mazzotti, 2020). This workload and administrative responsibilities, such as IEP documentation, progress monitoring, and compliance reporting, limit one-on-one transition instruction and planning time.

Additionally, disparities in state and school district policies, funding, and available community resources contribute to inconsistencies in transition service delivery (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). In wealthier school districts, students may have access to vocational training programs, partnerships with local businesses, and work-based learning opportunities. In contrast, students in low-income or rural areas may have few to no transition support beyond the school environment (Francis et al., 2018). This disparity means that the quality of transition planning varies widely depending on geographic location and funding availability.

A further challenge is the lack of professional development and training in transition-specific practices. Research indicates that many teacher preparation programs provide little to no coursework on transition planning, leaving educators underprepared to facilitate adequate post-school transition support (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2005). When teachers receive training, it is often limited in scope and may not cover the latest evidence-based practices for improving post-school outcomes (Shogren et al., 2018). Studies have found that special education teachers who

participate in professional development focused on transition planning are significantly more likely to implement high-quality, student-centered transition plans (Test et al., 2009).

**Impact of Teacher Knowledge and Training on Transition Effectiveness**

Special education teachers are responsible for fostering positive outcomes for students with disabilities in three key areas: education, employment, and independent living skills (Morgan & Riesen, 2016). However, not all students will require transition goals in all three domains. For instance, some students may focus exclusively on postsecondary education and employment. In contrast, others may need a strong emphasis on independent living skills and daily functioning. The challenge arises when teachers lack sufficient knowledge of community or state-level services, leading to overly simplistic transition plans that fail to account for individualized student needs.

For example, suppose a teacher is unfamiliar with vocational rehabilitation programs, job coaching services, or disability support offices at local colleges. In that case, they may overlook crucial support that could benefit their students. This knowledge gap can lead to transition plans that fail to connect students with the necessary resources, leaving them underprepared for life after high school (Morningstar & Mazzotti, 2020). Conversely, when special education teachers receive ongoing training and professional development in transition planning, they are more likely to incorporate comprehensive, evidence-based strategies that improve student outcomes (Shogren et al., 2018).

Given the crucial role of special education teachers in transition planning, it is evident that additional training, reduced caseloads, and improved access to interagency resources are necessary to enhance post-school success for students with disabilities. However, the presence of dedicated transition coordinators has emerged as a promising solution to many of these

challenges. The following section will explore the role of transition coordinators, highlighting their potential benefits and examples of successful implementation in schools across the country.

## Transition Coordinators

Transition coordinators are specialized professionals trained to facilitate the transition planning process for students with disabilities. While they are typically certified special education teachers, their primary role extends beyond classroom instruction to focus on systemic coordination across multiple entities. These professionals ensure that transition plans are comprehensive, individualized, and well-integrated by bridging the efforts of educators, families, and external agencies such as vocational rehabilitation programs, job training services, and local community organizations (Test, Mazzotti, Mustian, & Fowler, 2021). Unlike general special education teachers, who balance multiple instructional and administrative duties, transition coordinators dedicate their efforts solely to transition-related tasks. Increasing the likelihood that students with disabilities will receive consistent and high-quality support in preparing for adulthood.

## Core Responsibilities of Transition Coordinators

The role of the transition coordinator is multifaceted, requiring expertise in interagency collaboration, career counseling, program development, and community engagement (Asselin et al., 1998). These responsibilities ensure that transition plans go beyond essential compliance with IDEA mandates and become dynamic, student-centered roadmaps for postsecondary success. In school districts where transition coordinators are available, they serve as centralized experts, ensuring that transition planning is systematic, well-supported, and responsive to each student's needs.

A critical function of transition coordinators is facilitating partnerships with external agencies that provide postsecondary services, employment training, and independent living support. Without such coordination, students and families may struggle to navigate the complex landscape of adult services, leading to missed opportunities and service gaps (Wehman, 2020). By acting as liaisons between schools and community organizations, transition coordinators ensure students access relevant programs before they leave high school.

Additionally, transition coordinators play a vital role in career exploration and vocational preparedness. They assist students in identifying postsecondary goals, securing internships or job placements, and accessing vocational rehabilitation services. These efforts align with the self-determination model, which emphasizes student agency in decision-making regarding future employment and independent living (Shogren et al., 2018).

**Professional Development and Capacity Building**

Another essential function of transition coordinators is enhancing the knowledge and capacity of special education teachers. Many general and special educators have limited formal training in transition planning, often lacking expertise in career readiness, vocational training, and disability-related postsecondary support (Miller et al., 2013). Transition coordinators address this gap by developing and delivering professional development workshops to ensure educators are well-equipped to guide students effectively.

Furthermore, transition coordinators stay informed about legislative updates, funding opportunities, and emerging best practices in transition planning (Wehman, 2020). By attending conferences, workshops, and networking events, they bring back up-to-date knowledge to share with teachers, families, and IEP teams. This continuous professional learning allows transition coordinators to serve as a critical resource in the transition planning process.

**Impact of Transition Coordinators on Student Outcomes**

Research suggests school districts employing transition coordinators see improved post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. Studies indicate that when transition coordinators are involved, students are more likely to secure employment, enroll in postsecondary education, and access independent living support than students whose transition planning was managed solely by special education teachers (Morningstar & Mazzotti, 2020). This is primarily due to the individualized attention and interagency collaboration that transition coordinators provide, which ensures that students' post-school goals are identified and actively pursued.

However, despite their effectiveness, many school districts do not employ dedicated transition coordinators due to budget constraints and policy limitations. In some cases, transition responsibilities are dispersed among multiple staff members, leading to inconsistent service delivery and gaps in support (Miller et al., 2013). The demand for trained transition coordinators continues to grow, highlighting the need for policy reforms and increased funding to ensure all students with disabilities have access to comprehensive, high-quality transition planning.

The presence of transition coordinators offers a structured, expert-driven approach to ensuring that students with disabilities successfully move from school to adulthood. However, transition planning is most effective when it is a collaborative effort involving educators, families, and community partners. The following section will explore the importance of collaboration in transition planning, focusing on interagency partnerships, family engagement, and community-based resources that contribute to positive post-school outcomes.

**Collaborative Approaches to Transition Planning**

Helen Keller once said, "Alone, we can do so little. Together, we can do so much." This philosophy directly applies to the collaborative nature of effective transition planning. Successful

post-school outcomes for students with disabilities rely heavily on interagency collaboration, which involves formal and informal partnerships between schools, service agencies, and community stakeholders. These collaborative efforts work toward a common goal- adequately preparing students for life beyond high school (Morgan & Riesen, 2016).

**Interagency Collaboration in Transition Planning**

Interagency collaboration is a cornerstone of effective transition planning, as it integrates multiple support systems to provide students with a continuum of services. Noonan and Morningstar (2012) developed a framework to identify key components of successful interagency collaboration, emphasizing the importance of shared responsibility, coordinated programming, and communication across agencies. This framework highlights how agencies such as vocational rehabilitation services, independent living centers, workforce development programs, and local education agencies can work together to streamline service delivery. When these organizations collaborate effectively, they reduce service gaps and ensure that students with disabilities receive holistic support tailored to their individual transition goals (Noonan & Morningstar, 2012).

One example of effective interagency collaboration is partnerships between schools and local vocational training centers. These partnerships provide students with real-world experience through internships, apprenticeships, and job-shadowing opportunities. By participating in such programs, students gain practical skills relevant to their career interests and develop important soft skills, such as communication, problem-solving, and professionalism, that are critical for workforce success (Noonan & Morningstar, 2012). Research has demonstrated that students with disabilities who engage in work-based learning experiences while still in high school are more likely to achieve successful employment outcomes after graduation (Test et al., 2009).

However, despite the benefits of interagency collaboration, challenges persist. Differences in organizational priorities, funding constraints, and communication barriers can create obstacles to seamless coordination between stakeholders. Schools and service agencies may operate under different regulations and funding streams, which can limit their ability to align transition services (Noonan & Morningstar, 2012). Addressing these barriers requires intentionally establishing clear communication channels, defining shared goals, and developing long-term partnerships prioritizing student success.

**The Role of Families in Transition Planning**

While interagency collaboration is essential, one of the most critical members of a student's transition team is their family. Families provide valuable insight into the student's interests, strengths, and challenges, making them key partners in developing meaningful transition plans (Test, 2009). Research indicates that family involvement in transition planning strongly correlates with positive post-school outcomes, particularly in employment and independent living (Morgan & Riesen, 2016).

Effective transition planning requires open and honest communication with families, particularly when discussing realistic postsecondary goals. For example, suppose a student desires to attend a highly competitive university like Harvard, but their academic performance and financial situation present challenges. In that case, the transition team must facilitate difficult yet constructive conversations. Exploring alternative pathways, such as two-year colleges, vocational training, or financial aid options, allows families and students to develop more attainable, well-informed postsecondary plans (Morgan & Riesen, 2016).

**Community Partnerships and Events**

Collaboration should not be limited to the IEP team, it should extend to community engagement efforts that bring together educators, families, and local organizations. One effective strategy for enhancing collaboration is hosting family engagement events and transition fairs.

This allows students and their families to connect with community resources, vocational programs, disability services, and higher education representatives (Kellems & Morningstar, 2010). These events allow special educators and transition coordinators to expand their knowledge of available resources while strengthening relationships with community partners.

Over time, these community connections become integral to the transition process, ensuring that students have direct access to essential services both during and after high school. As schools and community organizations continue to work together, they contribute to a more robust transition infrastructure, benefiting individual students and transition programs (Kellems & Morningstar, 2010).

Effective transition planning requires a collective effort among schools, families, agencies, and community organizations to create seamless pathways for students with disabilities. While collaboration strengthens transition planning, ensuring these partnerships translate into evidence-based, student-centered transition practices is equally important. The following section will examine best practices in transition planning, highlighting research-supported strategies that promote successful post-school outcomes.

**Best Practices in Implementing Transition Plans**

As previously discussed in the Taxonomy for Transition Programming (Morningstar, Liss, & O'Neill, 2015), student-focused planning and interagency collaboration are essential components of effective transition planning. Research has demonstrated that when these strategies are applied correctly, they improve postsecondary outcomes by ensuring that students'

goals meet their needs and that services are coordinated across schools, agencies, and community stakeholders (Morningstar et al., 2015).

One of the most critical best practices in transition planning is student-focused planning, which emphasizes active student involvement in the transition process. Students should have opportunities to develop self-determination skills, including self-advocacy, decision-making, and goal setting, which empower them to take ownership of their future (Wehmeyer, 2005). These strategies align directly with evidence-based practices that promote student agency, allowing students to make informed decisions about their educational, employment, and independent living goals.

Another essential best practice is using individualized approaches to transition planning, particularly concerning the program structure component of the Taxonomy for Transition Programming (Morningstar et al., 2015). Rather than relying on generic, one-size-fits-all approaches, transition plans must fit each student's unique strengths, needs, and aspirations. Effective transition planning includes career exploration opportunities, work-based learning experiences, and skill-building activities that prepare students for their postsecondary goals (Test et al., 2009). Schools implementing individualized, student-centered planning processes are more likely to see positive long-term outcomes for students with disabilities (McGrew et al., 2019).

**Implementation of Transition Plans**

While a transition plan should serve as a roadmap to guide students toward their goals, research indicates that these plans often become a procedural formality rather than an active and functional guide for postsecondary success (Miller-Warren, 2015). Transition plans often meet compliance requirements rather than create meaningful, structured activities that foster skill

development (Morgan & Openshaw, 2011). For transition planning to be effective, it must be a dynamic and ongoing process rather than a static document completed only for an IEP meeting.

One strategy to improve implementation is integrating transition-related instruction into students' daily learning experiences. For example, students should engage in work-based learning programs, job shadowing, vocational training, and independent living skills instruction as part of their high school curriculum (Test et al., 2009). Schools that embed real-world transition experiences into education help students gain practical skills that directly support their postsecondary goals.

Additionally, the role of a transition coordinator is critical in ensuring that transition plans are appropriately executed (Lillis & Kutscher, 2022). Without a dedicated professional overseeing the transition process, special education teachers have to manage transition planning on top of their other responsibilities, leading to inconsistent implementation (Morningstar & Lattin, 2014). Transition coordinators help bridge the gap by working with educators, families, and community organizations to ensure students can access services and opportunities aligned with their individualized goals (Lillis & Kutscher, 2022).

**Monitoring and Evaluating Transition Plans**

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of transition plans is key to ensuring they remain meaningful and effective. Transition planning is an ongoing process that should evolve alongside students as they move closer to adulthood (Morningstar et al., 2015). To ensure that students are making measurable progress toward their intended postsecondary outcomes, both short-term and long-term goals are monitored and adjusted as needed.

During IEP meetings, progress monitoring data reports highlight the students' postsecondary educational achievements, employment, and independent living domains. Data

from formal assessments, teacher observations, student self-reports, and parent feedback document progress and identify necessary adjustments (McGrew et al., 2019). By treating the transition plan as a living document, educators and stakeholders can ensure the transition plan remains relevant and responsive to the student's evolving wants and needs.

**Stakeholder Involvement in Transition Evaluation**

Effective transition planning requires collaboration among all stakeholders, including students, families, teachers, and external agencies (Noonan & Morningstar, 2012). Involving students in the evaluation process ensures they remain engaged in their transition journey. At the same time, family participation provides insight into home and community-based support that may impact postsecondary planning. Additionally, engaging external service providers, such as vocational rehabilitation agencies, postsecondary institutions, and independent living organization, ensures that transition plans align with real-world opportunities and resources (Test et al., 2009).

A key best practice in transition evaluation is formalized feedback mechanisms, such as student and family surveys, focus groups, and follow-up interviews after graduation. These tools allow schools to assess the effectiveness of transition services and make data-driven decisions to improve future planning efforts (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, & Levine, 2005).

**Program-Level Assessments**

Beyond individual student progress, transition programs should be evaluated at the school and school district levels to assess their overall effectiveness. Schools can use postsecondary outcome data, such as college enrollment rates, employment, and independent living success, to determine whether their transition services meet the needs of students with disabilities (Wagner et al., 2005).

For example, schools can track:

- Postsecondary education enrollment rates (e.g., percentage of students with disabilities who enroll in two- or four-year colleges).

- Employment outcomes (e.g., percentage of students employed within one year of graduation).

- Independent living success (e.g., percentage of students who live independently or with minimal support after high school)

Schools that regularly assess these outcomes can identify areas of strength and areas for improvement, allowing them to refine transition programs and implement best practices more effectively (Morningstar et al., 2015).

Ultimately, monitoring and evaluating transition plans aims to ensure that students receive meaningful support that leads to successful post-school outcomes. By adopting a dynamic, student-centered, and evidence-based approach, transition planning can evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of students with disabilities as they prepare for adulthood.

While research has established best practices in transition planning and implementation, gaps in the literature remain, particularly in areas such as the effectiveness of transition coordinators, the role of culturally responsive transition planning, and the long-term impact of specific evidence-based interventions. The following section will explore these gaps in the literature, highlighting areas where further research is needed to strengthen transition planning practices.

**Effectiveness of Transition Coordinators**

One of the most prominent gaps in the literature is the limited research on the direct impact of transition coordinators on student outcomes. While existing studies suggest that dedicated transition personnel improve interagency collaboration and access to community resources (Morningstar & Lattin, 2014), there is a lack of longitudinal research examining whether students in school districts with transition coordinators experience significantly better postsecondary outcomes compared to those without a transition coordinator. Further studies are needed to determine how transition coordinators enhance student success, reduce gaps in service delivery, and alleviate the workload on special education teachers.

Additionally, variability in the roles and responsibilities of transition coordinators across states and school districts creates challenges in assessing their effectiveness (Lillis & Kutscher, 2022). Some school districts employ full-time transition coordinators, while others assign these duties to special education teachers or administrators, resulting in inconsistencies in service delivery. Research exploring standardized best practices for transition coordinators could help define their role more clearly and promote uniform implementation across different educational settings.

## Culturally Responsive Transition Planning

Another critical gap in the literature is the lack of research on culturally responsive transition planning. Current transition planning models assume a one-size-fits-all approach, failing to account for students' and their families' diverse cultural backgrounds, values, and expectations (Trainor, 2010). Research indicates that family engagement is a key predictor of successful transition outcomes (Test, 2009). However, studies suggest that families from historically marginalized communities often experience barriers to participation due to language

differences, lack of trust in the educational system, or unfamiliarity with transition services (Geenen, Powers, & Lopez-Vasquez, 2005).

Further research is needed to explore how cultural differences influence postsecondary goals, particularly concerning employment, independent living, and higher education. Additionally, studies should investigate how schools can better integrate culturally relevant practices—such as bilingual transition planning materials, culturally competent training for educators, and outreach programs that address specific barriers diverse families face.

**Long-Term Impact of Evidence-Based Interventions**

While many studies support the use of evidence-based transition practices, such as self-determination training, work-based learning experiences, and interagency collaboration (Test et al., 2009), there is limited research on the long-term impact of these interventions. Most existing studies assess short-term outcomes, such as whether students secure jobs or enroll in postsecondary education within a year of high school graduation (Wagner et al., 2005). However, less is known about how transition services influence students' long-term career trajectories, financial independence, and overall quality of life.

Longitudinal studies tracking students five to ten years post-graduation would provide deeper insights into which transition interventions lead to sustained success in adulthood. Additionally, research should examine how different disability categories impact the effectiveness of transition planning, as students with intellectual disabilities, autism, and emotional/behavioral disorders may require differentiated approaches to transition programming (Carter, Austin, & Trainor, 2012).

**Impact of Policy and Funding on Transition Services**

Despite the legal mandates established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), transition services remain inconsistently funded and implemented across states (Morningstar et al., 2015). Research indicates that school districts with higher funding levels are more likely to provide robust transition services, such as dedicated transition coordinators, work-based learning programs, and postsecondary counseling (Kohler & Field, 2003). However, low-income school districts often lack the resources to implement comprehensive transition programs, leading to disparities in student outcomes (Lillis & Kutscher, 2022).

Further research is needed to explore how funding allocations influence transition services' availability and quality and determine whether specific policy reforms, such as increased federal funding or legislative mandates, could lead to more equitable outcomes. Additionally, studies should investigate how schools can maximize existing resources, such as public-private partnerships, grants, and interagency collaboration, to enhance transition services without relying solely on school district budgets.

**The Role of Technology in Transition Planning**

A final emerging area in transition research is the role of technology in facilitating transition planning. The increased use of assistive technology, virtual career exploration tools, and online self-advocacy training programs offers new opportunities to enhance student engagement in the transition process (Wehman, 2020). However, limited research exists on the effectiveness of technology-based transition interventions, particularly about students from low-income backgrounds who may have limited access to digital resources.

Future studies should examine how virtual transition planning platforms, mobile applications, and artificial intelligence-driven career assessments can support students with

disabilities in making informed decisions about their postsecondary goals. Additional research should explore how schools can address digital equity concerns to ensure all students can access high-quality technology-based transition support regardless of socioeconomic status.

Addressing these gaps in the literature is critical to ensuring that transition planning evolves to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. By conducting longitudinal studies on transition outcomes, exploring culturally responsive approaches, assessing the effectiveness of transition coordinators, and evaluating the impact of policy and funding, researchers can provide valuable insights that lead to more substantial, more equitable transition services.

**Conclusions**

Transition planning is critical to special education, ensuring that students with disabilities receive the necessary support to succeed in postsecondary education, employment, and independent living. This literature review has examined key theoretical frameworks, historical developments, challenges, best practices, and the roles of educators and transition coordinators in facilitating effective transition planning. The research underscores the importance of student-centered planning, interagency collaboration, and evidence-based practices in improving postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities. However, despite legislative mandates and existing best practices, barriers such as inconsistent implementation, limited resources, and lack of teacher preparation continue to impact the effectiveness of transition planning.

A recurring theme throughout the literature is the necessity of structured, individualized, and well-implemented transition plans. The Taxonomy for Transition Programming (Morningstar, Liss, & O'Neill, 2015) provides a valuable framework for designing

comprehensive transition programs emphasizing student involvement, family engagement, and interagency cooperation.

Additionally, research highlights the pivotal role of special education teachers and transition coordinators in ensuring that transition services are meaningful and aligned with students' postsecondary aspirations. However, challenges such as insufficient training, high caseloads, and systemic barriers within school districts often hinder effective implementation.

Despite progress in transition planning research, gaps remain in understanding the long-term impact of transition services, the effectiveness of transition coordinators, the role of culturally responsive transition planning, and the influence of policy and funding on service delivery. Addressing these gaps through longitudinal studies, policy analysis, and culturally responsive research will be essential in ensuring that transition services evolve to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

The study seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice through this methodological approach, providing actionable recommendations for educators, policymakers, and researchers working to enhance transition services. The next chapter will provide a comprehensive overview of the research methods and justifications for their use in addressing the research questions guiding this study.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

**Introduction**

This qualitative case study explored how high school special education teams perceive the role of a transition coordinator in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. Special education teachers are responsible for developing and implementing transition plans for students with disabilities, essential for preparing them for adulthood. However, research suggests that many educators lack the necessary training and resources to create optimal transition plans for successful postsecondary outcomes (Chang & Rusher, 2018).

This study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What are high school special education team members' perspectives and experiences regarding the implementation of a transition coordinator as part of the IEP team for special education students?

2. How has the implementation of the transition coordinator as part of the IEP team changed the team's practices in writing and implementing transition plans for special education students?

The role of the transition coordinator varies across different school settings, but the core responsibilities generally include overseeing the development and implementation of transition plans for students with disabilities. Transition coordinators are experts in postsecondary transition, collaborating with students, families, and community agencies to connect students to necessary services and support. These specialists play a vital role in ensuring students with disabilities are equipped for life after high school by facilitating access to educational, vocational, and independent living resources. This research highlights the importance of having a specialized position to ensure successful outcomes for students with disabilities.

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to explore the effectiveness of transition planning practices. It will also detail the research design, participant selection, data collection methods, and analytical approach used in this study. Given the complex and multifaceted nature of transition planning, a qualitative case study research design allowed the researcher to gain deeper insights into the experiences of special education teachers, transition coordinators, and other key stakeholders involved in the transition process. By utilizing interviews, document analysis, and thematic coding, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of research by identifying best practices and areas for improvement in transition planning for students with disabilities.

This chapter begins with an overview of the research method, including the purpose of this study. The following sections address ethical considerations, data sources, data analysis techniques, trustworthiness, transparency, and limitations.

**Research Design and Rationale**

High school special education teachers play a pivotal role in students' transitions to adulthood. This qualitative case study seeks to understand the support systems special education teachers receive when developing transition plans, specifically focusing on how integrating a transition coordinator affects their understanding and execution of these plans.

Qualitative research was chosen for this study because it allows in-depth exploration of special education team members' perceptions and experiences. This approach is ideal for understanding the role of transition coordinators within the IEP process, as qualitative methods are particularly suited for examining how individuals make sense of their experiences and the meanings they attach to those experiences (Tracy, 2019). The study employs a case study design,

which allows for a detailed investigation of the role of transition coordinators within specific high school settings.

By interviewing various special education professionals, this study aimed to gain valuable insight into how these educators approach transition planning. The study explored whether teachers who had little formal education about transition plans before beginning their careers in special education could effectively implement transition plans. Moreover, it examined if hiring a transition coordinator and implementing relevant school district services had helped increase the teachers' understanding of the importance of transition planning. Analyzing the interviews provided important insights into special education professionals' challenges and successes in supporting students' transitions to adulthood.

**Case Study**

The case study method facilitates an in-depth examination of a specific individual, group, event, or community (Yin, 2003). A case study approach was selected to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Case study research is particularly effective for investigating phenomena within their real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are unclear (Yin, 2003). This design is beneficial in exploring complex educational issues like the transition coordinator role, which requires understanding the real-world application of policies and practices within specific school settings (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The case study will focus on a high school special education team within a specific school district. The participating school district was selected for recent efforts to improve transition planning for students with disabilities following an audit that revealed significant gaps in transition planning across Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This audit revealed that

many students with disabilities were not receiving comprehensive transition services, which are crucial for their postsecondary success (Shogren & Wehmeyer, 2017).

In response, the school district developed an action plan that included hiring a transition coordinator and prioritizing professional development for special education staff. Research suggests that this intervention supports a dedicated transition coordinator who can significantly enhance the quality of transition planning, increasing the likelihood of successful postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities (Test, Mazzotti, & Mustian, 2017). By selecting this school district as a case study, the research aimed to explore how the implementation of a transition coordinator role has impacted the development and execution of transition plans and how these changes may influence both educator practices and student outcomes.

**Participants**

The school district was chosen for its proactive efforts to improve transition planning for students with disabilities. After an audit revealed significant gaps in transition planning, the school district took steps to address these issues by hiring a transition coordinator and investing in professional development for special education staff.

Participants in this study included educators involved in implementing the transition coordinator role. With written permission from the school district and formal Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, all high school special education and secondary administration team members received an email inviting them to participate in the study. To mitigate potential selection bias, the first participants to respond were selected, ensuring a diverse representation of educators who have experienced the transition coordinator's implementation.

Participant selection was purposeful, ensuring a mix of perspectives based on years of experience, roles within the school district, and involvement in the transition planning process.

While the first respondents were selected to avoid bias, there is awareness to avoid overrepresentation from any perspective.

The study focused on six special education teachers, a secondary-level administrator, and a transition coordinator. No additional participants volunteered, the research did not need to maintain a waitlist and the participation selection was kept to selected amount.

**Instrument**

The researcher developed an interview protocol consisting of open-ended questions to explore participants' experiences and perspectives regarding the transition coordinator's role and the support this position provides for transition planning. The questions were aligned with the central research questions of the study and focused on themes such as training, educator confidence, changes in services, and impacts on students.

The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in the conversation manner, while ensuring that all core topics are covered. The researcher used a pre-established interview guide but remained flexible to follow up on issues that emerged during the discussion. To enhance the accuracy and efficiency of the interview transcriptions, Otter.ai (paid subscription) was used for real-time transcription, which will also aid in data analysis. Participants had the opportunity to review and verify the accuracy of their transcriptions to ensure reliability.

The following questions were used to guide the semi-structured interviews:

1. How many years have you been in the special education field?
2. What is your daily role and your responsibilities?
3. What is your role in the IEP process?
4. How confident do you feel when completing transition plans for your students?

5. Explain any formal training or courses you have taken specifically about transition plans.

6. Explain any school district-provided training related to transition plans.

7. What additional training or courses would benefit you in your work with transition plans?

8. Explain the roles and responsibilities of a transition coordinator.

9. How has the implementation of a transition coordinator helped you as an educator?

10. What services or resources have changed since the implementation of the transition coordinator?

11. How has the transition coordinator impacted students, including both special education and general education students?

12. Explain how having a transition coordinator has helped prepare your students for a successful transition to adulthood.

13. Is there anything else you feel is important regarding the benefits of implementing a transition coordinator as part of special education programming?

**Data Analysis**

After the interviews, the researcher reviewed the transcribed audio recordings and cross-checked the transcripts with the original recordings for accuracy. The researcher continued this process until the researcher was confident that each interview was accurately transcribed. The researcher also compared field notes taken during the interviews with the transcriptions to provide additional context or insight that the researcher may have missed during the review of the interviews.

The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, which allowed the researcher to identify patterns and themes across the interview data. The initial coding phase focused on surface-level elements, such as keywords, phrases, and recurring ideas, written in the margins of the field notes. These themes helped form the initial code categories.

Manual coding was employed throughout the analysis, allowing for a deeper connection with the data. The interview questions responses were grouped, and patterns examined for consistency and variation. If two or more participants provide similar responses, these were identified as emergent themes and further analyzed for relevance to the research questions.

After the initial coding, the researcher engaged in a second-level coding process to group related themes together and examine how they interconnect (Tracy, 2019). This step provided a more comprehensive understanding of how the transition coordinator impacts transition planning and how educators' perceptions and practices have evolved due to its implementation.

**Trustworthiness**

As a researcher, the research needs to be valid and believable. It is important to remain honest throughout the process. Through transparency, credibility, authenticity, and transferability, trustworthiness is a theme throughout.

**Transparency**

As the primary researcher for this study, the researcher recognizes the importance of maintaining transparency throughout the research process (Tracy, 2019). The researcher's previous roles within the participating school district, both as an administrator and a special education educational consultant, necessitate a clear disclosure of the researcher's position and potential influence on the study.

**Credibility**

To ensure accurate representation, Creswell (2007) and Tracy (2019) recommend engaging participants in the review process to verify their responses' accuracy and ensure their intentions. The participants' voices needed to be represented; they had the opportunity to review the transcript by otter.ai. The researcher provided each participant with a copy of the transcript; this allowed them to have the opportunity to review the interview for accuracy in a timely manner.

**Authenticity**

This study allowed the participants to share their experiences and perspectives on special education transition plans. As the laws require school districts to provide more support to students with disabilities through transition plans, the question arises: Are school districts also providing enough support for their staff to understand how to support their students best?

**Transferability**

This study aims to provide a safe and open space for participants to share their unique experiences and perspectives regarding transition planning in special education. Each participant brings a distinct educational background, which shapes their foundational knowledge of transition planning. Furthermore, the length of time each participant has spent within the school district may vary, potentially influencing their exposure to professional development opportunities related to transition planning. By conducting interviews in a supportive and confidential environment, this study uncovered areas of potential improvement in the preparation of special education professionals working in secondary education.

While the findings from this study offer valuable insights into the role of transition coordinators and their impact on special education practice, it is important to acknowledge that the specific context of this study limits the generalization of the results to other settings. The unique characteristics of the participating school district, including the recent implementation of a transition coordinator and the school district's history with transition planning, may not reflect the experiences of other schools or districts. Therefore, when applying the findings to other educational settings, readers should consider the similarities and differences between their context and the one described in this study. Careful consideration of local factors, such as school district resources, teacher training, and school district priorities, will be essential in determining the transferability of the study's findings to other contexts.

**Ethical Consideration**

This study follows ethical guidelines by having each participant submit a signed consent form that explains the purpose of the research, the potential benefits of the research, potential risks, and how their information will be protected and stored (Appendix A) along with a signed audio recording and transcription consent (Appendix B). Before participating in the study, the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence verbally were reviewed. Pseudonyms allow the researcher to maintain confidentiality, and data will be stored securely in a locked file cabinet. All data will be stored in a secure, encrypted file management system to prevent unauthorized access. Audio recordings will be stored separately from transcriptions, and both will be deleted after five years following institutional guidelines.

**Researcher Role**

The researcher served as the primary interviewer for this study. The researcher was a former employee of the participating school district at the time of data collection. However, the researcher did not directly supervise any participants in the study. All participants knew the researcher's role in the school district before agreeing to participate. In the analysis and publication phases, the researcher transitioned to a new position with a different organization, which allowed the researcher to take a more objective stance in interpreting the data.

**Limitations**

One limitation of this study is the researcher's role as an administrator for the participating school district, which could have limited the participants' responses. The role of the researcher may have impacted their willingness to discuss sensitive issues openly. Additionally, the sample size is limited to a small group of educators, which may reduce the generalizability of the findings. However, by limiting the number of participants, the study can achieve in-depth insights into implementing a transition coordinator, focusing on quality rather than quantity of interviews (Tracy, 2019).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach for this study, detailing the research design, participant selection process, data collection methods, and analytical strategies employed. The qualitative case study design was chosen to provide an in-depth exploration of how high school special education teams perceive the role of a transition coordinator within the special education program.

The next chapter will present the findings that emerged from this methodological approach. Chapter 4 will begin with a brief review of the research design and methods described here, serving as a reminder of the study's framework. It will then delve into the results,

presenting the key themes and patterns that emerged from the data analysis. These findings will be discussed in relation to the research questions, specifically focusing on how high school special education teams perceive the role of a transition coordinator as part of the special education program.

Chapter 4 will demonstrate how the carefully designed research process yielded meaningful insights into the perceptions and expectations surrounding the transition coordinator's role within high school special education teams. This analysis will contribute to a deeper understanding of the transition coordinator's function and impact in supporting students with disabilities as they prepare for post-secondary life.

# CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The qualitative case study aimed to explore how a high school special education team perceives the role of transition coordination in developing and implementing Individualized Education Programs (IEP) transition plans for students with disabilities. Special education teachers must create and execute these transition plans, which are critical in preparing students for adulthood. Despite the significance of these plans, research indicates that many educators struggle to develop effective transition strategies due to insufficient training and a lack of resources (Chang & Rusher, 2018).

This study employed semi-structured interviews with eight special education team members, including teachers, administrators, and support staff, in a rural school district with a total student population of about 4,000. The findings are particularly significant given the increasing emphasis on successful post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities and the potential for transition coordinators to address the training and resource gaps identified in previous research.

This study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What are high school special education team members' perspectives and experiences regarding the implementation of a transition coordinator as part of the IEP team for special education students?

2. How has the implementation of the transition coordinator as part of the IEP team changed the team's practices in writing and implementing transition plans for special education students?

The findings presented in this chapter center around six main themes that emerged from the data analysis. These themes provide insights into the perceived role of the transition

coordinator, changes in transition planning practices, and the impact on student outcomes. This study contributes to the growing knowledge of effective transition planning and offers practical implications for special education teams and policymakers by exploring these areas.

The following sections detail the study's findings, beginning with Theme 1: Roles and Responsibilities of a Transition Coordinator. Throughout the presentation of findings, we will explore how the implementation of a transition coordinator has influenced the development and execution of transition plans, addressing the challenges identified in previous research and highlighting new practices that have emerged due to this role.

**Setting**

The interviews took place in person at a private conference room within the high school to maintain confidentiality. Since the interviews were being recorded, the researcher had a sign on the door to keep them from being interpreted. Interviews were recorded using otter.ai, an online recording and transcription program.

*Table 1 Demographic*

Table 1 provides an overview of the participants in this study, including their roles, years of experience, and the settings in which they work.

| Identifier | Position | Years |
|---|---|---|
| **P1** | Director of Special Education | 19 years |
| **P2** | Special Edu Teacher | 12 years |
| **P3** | Transition Coordinator | 19 years |

| P4 | Special Edu Teacher | 19 years |
| P5 | Special Edu Teacher | 6 months |
| P6 | Special Edu Teacher (Edu Consultant) | 25 Years |
| P7 | Special Edu Teacher | 8 Years |
| P8 | Special Edu Teacher | 25 years |

**Selection of Participants**

Prior to the commencement of data collection, the researcher obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Additionally, written approval was secured from the participating school district. All secondary special education teachers (grades 6-12), secondary administrators, and the transition coordinator received an email inviting them to participate in the study (Appendix C). The email detailed the study and invited potential participants to respond if they wished to participate. The first six special education teachers who responded to the email were selected to participate. As well as the transition coordinator and secondary administrator. This allowed the researcher to maintain a bias-free selection process.

**Interviewing**

Once the participants were selected, they received an email confirming their participation. Participants scheduled the interview at a time that was most convenient for them. Upon arrival, each participant signed a consent form before the recording started. The length of the interviews varied, ranging from 11 minutes to 48 minutes. All interviews were recorded using Otter.ai, an online transcription tool, and subsequently transcribed. The transcriptions were transferred into a Word document for editing and coding. Once this process was complete, the

transcriptions were shared with the participants. This allowed them to review the data for accuracy and speak with the researcher if there were areas of disagreement.

The data analysis process employed a thematic approach, which is well-suited for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The chosen method allowed for flexibility and the ability to provide a rich, detailed, and complex data account.

The analysis was conducted manually, without software programs, to allow for a deep engagement with the data. The process began with organizing interview data into three categories: special education teachers, administrators, and transition coordinators. This initial categorization allowed for the exploration of role-specific perspectives.

The coding process involved several stages:

1. Familiarization: The researcher reviewed each transcript multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content.

2. Initial Coding: Open coding provided key concepts and ideas in each response to every interview question. These initial codes were documented in a spreadsheet, maintaining the role-based categorization.

3. Theme Development: Recurring patterns across the initial codes were identified and grouped into potential themes. These themes were then reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data.

4. Theme Review: The themes were checked against the original data to ensure they captured the essence of the participants' responses.

Data saturation was reached through a comprehensive coding process of all interview transcripts. As the analysis progressed, it became evident that no new codes or themes were

emerging from the data. Specifically, after coding the first six interviews, the subsequent two yielded no new significant codes or themes that were not already identified. This lack of new information suggested that data saturation had been achieved. This review confirmed that the existing codes and themes adequately captured the range of perspectives and experiences shared by participants. The consistency of themes across interviews, despite participants' varied roles and experiences, provided additional confidence that data saturation had been achieved.

Participant checking was employed to triangulate the findings. Participants reviewed the transcripts for accuracy prior to coding. Once coding was complete, participants were provided with a summary of the key themes and invited to provide feedback on the accuracy of the interpretation. They provided the researcher with accurate feedback if the interpretation was incorrect.

Throughout the analysis process, reflexive notes were maintained to acknowledge and mitigate potential researcher bias. Additionally, negative case analysis was conducted by actively searching for and discussing data that did not fit the emerging themes, ensuring a comprehensive representation of the findings.

The final themes were organized in relation to the research questions and were prominent based on the frequency and emphasis observed in the data. Direct quotes from participants are included to illustrate and support these themes, offering a comprehensive and detailed picture of participants' perspectives and experiences.

**Research Question 1: Perspectives and Experiences Regarding the Implementation of a Transition Coordinator**

*Theme 1: Roles and Responsibilities of a Transition Coordinator*

This theme emerged as a central aspect of the participants' perspectives on implementing a transition coordinator. The roles and responsibilities of the transition coordinator, as described by the participants, were primarily shaped by their experiences within the participating school district. The primary role of the transition coordinator is to act as a liaison between agencies, families, schools, and the community. The emergence of this theme aligns with the 'program structure' component of the Taxonomy for Transition Programming (Morningstar et al., 2015).

The transition coordinator's role as a liaison between agencies and families directly supports the framework's 'interagency collaboration' and 'family engagement' elements. Participant 1 (P1) noted, "We are working more collaboratively with OVR. They come into our school, pick up our kids, and take them to work for job coaching." Participant 8 (P8) added, "She started a transition fair where many community resources come out to present their services. They come from all over, so she coordinates with everyone to ensure they can participate that evening and then sets up the event. The families love it." Participant 3 (P3) explained, "I work with the liaison between the local agencies that provide services to our students, such as OVR and MHDS, and I am the point of contact for all IEP case managers."

As the interviews progressed, participants revealed that the role of the transition coordinator extended beyond simply acting as a liaison between the school and local agencies.

The transition coordinator also played a significant role in providing work-based experiences for students. These experiences, which included unpaid, paid, school-based, and community-based opportunities, prepared students for post-school life. One notable example was the creation of the "Bear Café," a school-based coffee shop run by the life skills classes. P8 highlighted its importance: "The Bear Café—everybody goes there in the morning. Even classes go down there, so it is kind of a big deal." P1 shared, "They are out in the Bear Café selling

coffee and treats in the morning, and they also host whole classes while they get their

instruction."

Having a transition coordinator allowed for the organic development of programs such as

the Bear Café as they evolved to meet the needs of students.

Over time, the roles and responsibilities of the transition coordinator evolved along with

the position itself. As the position grew, the responsibilities shifted and changed to better support

the needs of students, teachers, and the broader community. This ongoing transformation

continues to influence both secondary administration and special education teachers.

### *Theme 2: Value and Impact of Transition Coordinator*

This theme explores the various ways in which the implementation of a transition

coordinator has added value and impacted the special education process and outcomes. Both

special education teachers and secondary-level administrators overwhelmingly reported that the

impact of the transition coordinator has been highly beneficial. From an administrative

perspective, one of the primary motivations for creating this position was to address legal

concerns. Since the implementation of the transition coordinator, there has been a notable

decrease in transition-specific due process litigation.

Special education teachers also noted the significant positive impact, particularly

regarding increased knowledge and reduced workload. Teachers reported that having a transition

coordinator has enhanced their understanding of the transition process, providing much-needed

assistance. Notably, the transition coordinator has become integral to the IEP team, bringing

transition planning to the forefront of discussions. Transition planning is no longer an

afterthought but has become a priority during IEP meetings.

Participant 1 (P1) shared, "She has also helped me when we faced due process. Her documentation and specific transition plan were very, very detailed, which kept us from having to settle. She is definitely a great addition to our program." Participant 4 (P4) added, "She provides a lot more opportunities. The students are included in everything. They are out and about in the school."

The transition coordinator is described as a "valuable" and "irreplaceable" team member due to the expertise they bring to IEP meetings. This idea of having transition coordination has enabled the team to offer families more information and a broader range of choices for transition planning. Participant 7 (P7) emphasized the expanded opportunities for students, stating that "there are different work experiences" available for her students, along with mock interviews before actual job interviews facilitated by a job coach.

The impact of the transition coordinator is particularly evident during IEP meetings, where the conversation has shifted to prioritize transition. Participant 3 (P3) explained, "It has changed our mindset here, and we have had many conversations about the transition. It is the main 'beef' of the IEP sandwich here." For P3, transition has become the core of the IEP at the high school level as students begin planning their path to adulthood.

All participants thoroughly expressed the value and impact of the transition coordinator throughout the interviews.

### Theme 3: Confidence in Transition Planning

This theme highlights the shift in confidence and understanding among special education staff regarding transition planning since implementing a transition coordinator. Initially, the importance of transition plans was not well understood. Participant 3 (P3) explains, "Everything,

every goal that we are working towards, is part of the transition plan... they did not know of that; they still focused on, you know, reading, math, and writing goals."

When the transition coordinator first arrived in the school district, there was limited awareness about the significance of transition plans. However, as the program developed, the special education team began recognizing the value of integrating transition planning into the IEP process. Participant 7 (P7) shared, "Pretty confident unless a student does not know what they want to do." Here, the transition coordinator plays a pivotal role by conducting assessments and interviews to help students explore career options that align with their interests.

Student success also increased as the staff's confidence in transition planning grew. More students gained opportunities to participate in various work and training experiences. P7, who works with students in out-of-district placements, mentioned that the transition coordinator's involvement enabled out-of-district students to participate in experiences at "the technical school."

Implementing a transition coordinator has significantly boosted the confidence and competence of the special education team in crafting transition plans. This increased confidence has resulted in more comprehensive and individualized transition plans, offering students expanded opportunities, including those in out-of-district placements. The shift from a narrow focus on academic goals to a broader understanding of transition as a crucial component of the IEP process underscores the profound impact of the transition coordinator role. This change in perspective and practice aligns directly with the research questions, illustrating how the transition coordinator has transformed the team's approach to preparing students with disabilities for postsecondary success.

**Research Question 2: Changes in Writing and Implementing Transition Plans**

*Theme 1: Changes in Writing Transition Plans*

This emergent theme highlights the significant improvements in writing transition plans, ensuring that special education programming remains individualized and meaningful for each student. Before the transition coordinator, transition plans were often generic or, in some cases, non-existent. Participant 1 (P1) reflects on this, stating, "We were developing the same goals for everybody, and they were very generic," when describing how transition plans were written prior to the addition of the transition coordinator.

Since implementing the transition coordinator, participants have reported feeling more confident and better equipped to write comprehensive transition plans. Participant 7 (P7) expressed, "I feel pretty confident for the most part. I do better when the students know what they want to do when they graduate; that is my strong suit." On the other hand, Participant 5 (P5), a newer special education teacher, shared her initial uncertainty: "I was very unconfident; it is a new world for me. However, having a transition coordinator as my mentor has been a tremendous help. She helped me understand the importance of having a complete transition grid with goals, services, and activities. She also ensured I had the correct information included." With the support of the transition coordinator, P5 was able to learn on the job, much like the students she serves.

Transition plans are roadmaps to the student's future. They outline the necessary coursework, services, activities, and assessments that will help support the student's goals. These plans guide the student and their family through adulthood, whether they pursue post-secondary education, trade school, on-the-job training, or enter the workforce. Remarkably, the components of the transition plan must not be generic or included just to complete the paperwork; each element should meet the student's needs. Participant 3 (P3) emphasized, "I'm very confident in

the transition plans that we write here at our district because the most important thing I always tell our staff is: What you put in there, you have to monitor and make sure it is happening. That is our overall goal. We do not want to just put things in there to make it look good. Anybody can do that. We have to put in things that we, as a district, can actually do for the kids."

This emergent theme illustrates the foundational change in how special education teachers write transition plans. By understanding how to create effective transition plans, the team is better equipped to implement programmatic changes that support the evolving needs of students. With a solid plan, the team can then focus on tailoring the implementation process to ensure the plans truly benefit each student.

### Theme 2: Programming Changes Since Implementation of a Transition Coordinator

This theme explores the significant changes in special education programming since implementing a transition coordinator within the participating school district. Before the transition coordinator's arrival, the district lacked transitional programs for high school students. However, within the first year of the transition coordinator's employment, she secured $30,000 in grant funding, allowing the district to begin building a school-based transition program. Initially, these programs focused on unpaid work experiences, such as life skills students learning how to launder clothing. Participant 8 (P8) shared, "As the softball coach, the life skills kids wash some of our uniforms." Washing the uniforms allows the students to contribute to the athletic teams and helps them develop the essential life skills of washing, drying, and folding clothing. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some grant funds purchased online transition programs for students to engage with while learning from home.

As the transition program evolved, the work experiences expanded into community-based learning. Life skills students began assisting in elementary school lunchrooms and classrooms,

gaining valuable work experience in these settings. Additionally, paid work experiences were arranged with local stores and facilitated through partnerships with agencies such as OVR and Career Link. These partnerships provided a job coach, transportation, and payment at no cost to the district. The programs continued to expand, with the Bear Cafe growing to offer delivery services. As Participant 1 (P1) noted, "The cafe also delivers coffee and treats to two different classrooms."

Participant 2 (P2) highlighted another new program where life skills students can learn apartment living skills. A classroom is now a mini apartment where students learn essential daily living skills, such as making a bed, cleaning, and preparing simple meals. These programs have created opportunities for students to develop the skills necessary for successful transitions to adulthood before graduating high school. However, Participant 3 (P3) expressed concern about the limited opportunities available for students once they leave high school: "We only have one chance for students to learn the skills they need before graduation. Once they leave us, there are few programs to help them learn the skills they need to be successful community members. There are also not many day programs for them to go to for support."

Implementing the transition coordinator has allowed special education teachers to focus on academics while receiving the necessary assistance in the critical area of transition planning. This newfound understanding has opened up new possibilities for both students and teachers. The changes in programming reflect the profound impact of having a transition coordinator as part of the special education team.

### Theme 3: Training and Professional Development

This theme explores the training experiences undergone by participants, both through formal education (such as college courses) and professional development provided by the school

district. It examines how these opportunities have influenced the team's ability to write and implement effective transition plans. Additionally, it addresses how implementing a transition coordinator has shaped the nature and frequency of these training opportunities, contributing to changes in the team's practices.

Most participants have been in the education field for over 15 years. They reported that they did not take any courses focused solely on transition planning at the bachelor's level. Transition was not a prominent focus in their initial education programs. Participant 5 (P5), currently enrolled in a special education program at a local university, noted that one course on transition is currently offered. However, it is not part of the curriculum until their final semester. P5 remarked, "I think having a transition course at the beginning of the process [in college] as opposed to the end would make more sense since the transition is such a huge deal." Regarding their master's program, only one participant recalled having a course that touched on the topic.

Since the implementation of the transition coordinator, however, the school district has provided professional development and training opportunities to better educate the special education staff on the increasingly important topic of transition. As Participant 4 (P4) explained, "When administration started realizing we were not doing enough, and this could become a problem moving forward..." the need for training was recognized. Participant 7 (P7) found, "I have had a lot of professional development here," which helped deepen their understanding of transition planning. Participant 8 (P8) acknowledged that "professional development is not always like a big thing... it comes in little bits. It might be part of a faculty meeting or an email with updated information. There is not much time for professional development to devote to major updates or major training," underscoring the importance of the quality, rather than the

quantity, of time spent on training. Ensuring the dissemination of up-to-date, accurate information to staff has become a priority.

When discussing the ongoing need for training, all participants mentioned the changes in transition services over the past five years and the evolving nature of the field. P3 emphasized the necessity for continuous professional development: "I always look to see what education would benefit me. The George Washington University program was not financially worth it.

However, since I received the Transitions Discovery Grant, which is embedded within George Washington's Master's program, I have had the opportunity to work with professors and learn some of the material. It was a win-win." Participant 7 also highlighted the importance of specific training related to working with local technical schools to increase opportunities for students with disabilities.

The ongoing changes in education underscore the importance of lifelong learning. Staying ahead of new developments and strategies is equally crucial in transition planning. To support these ongoing changes, school districts must provide the most current information to staff, ensuring the implementation of up-to-date best practices. With specialized knowledge, the transition coordinator plays a key role in ensuring that the team is equipped with the most current practices, ultimately contributing to students' success as they move toward adulthood.

**Summary**

This study revealed that implementing a transition coordinator within the special education team led to significant improvements in transition planning practices, as reported by team members' personal experiences. Key improvements included the development of more structured and individualized transition plans, which directly contributed to student success.

The transition coordinator improved the quality of transition planning and bolstered educators' confidence in their skills. The special education staff gained expertise in transition planning through increased access to professional development opportunities and resources. However, the most notable impact came from the support provided by the transition coordinator. This individual played a pivotal role in transforming the program by creating community-based and school-based work experiences, securing job coaching, and facilitating access to vital community services. Before the transition coordinator's implementation, these services and opportunities were previously unavailable in the school district.

**Conclusion**

This qualitative case study explored the implementation of a transition coordinator within a special education team, yielding significant insights into the impact of this role on transition planning and practices. The findings highlight several key areas:

1. Roles and Responsibilities: The transition coordinator emerged as a crucial liaison between agencies, families, schools, and the community while also spearheading the development of work-based experiences for students.

2. Value and Impact: Implementing a transition coordinator led to decreased transition-specific due process litigation, increased knowledge among special education teachers, and a shift towards prioritizing transition planning in IEP meetings.

3. Confidence in Transition Planning: Special education staff reported increased confidence and competence in crafting transition plans, resulting in more comprehensive and individualized approaches.

4. Changes in Writing Transition Plans: The quality of transition plans improved significantly, moving from generic to tailored, goal-oriented documents.

5. Programming Changes: The transition coordinator facilitated the development of new programs, including school-based and community-based work experiences, enhancing students' preparation for post-secondary life.

6. Training and Professional Development: Implementing a transition coordinator increased staff training opportunities and addressed a gap in formal education on transition planning.

These findings align with previous research emphasizing the importance of specialized roles in improving post-school outcomes for students with disabilities (Lillis & Kutscher, 2022). The shift towards more individualized, goal-oriented transition processes suggests a positive trend in preparing students for adulthood.

The ongoing changes in education underscore the importance of lifelong learning. Staying ahead of new developments and strategies is equally crucial in transition planning. To support these ongoing changes, school districts must provide the most current information to While this study offers valuable insights, it is limited by its small sample size and focuses on a single school district. Future research could benefit from examining a more extensive sample across multiple school districts to assess the generalizability of these findings. Additionally, longitudinal studies exploring the long-term impact of transition coordinators on students' post-school outcomes would provide valuable data on the effectiveness of this role.

As we move into Chapter 5, these findings will be analyzed within the broader context of transition theory and special education practices. The following chapter will discuss the implications of these results with current literature, present recommendations for improving transition planning practices, and suggest directions for future research. This analysis will

TRANSITION COORDINATORS

contribute to the ongoing dialogue on how best to support students with disabilities in their

transition to adulthood.

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## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a comprehensive analysis of the findings from our qualitative case study, which explored how a high school special education team perceives the role of a transition coordinator in developing and implementing Individualized Education Program (IEP) transition plans for students with disabilities. This chapter synthesizes the key outcomes of the study. It reflects on how the school district integrated the role of the transition coordinator into their special education program. The following sections will discuss the study's findings related to our research questions, acknowledge its limitations, offer practice recommendations, and suggest directions for future research. Finally, the chapter will conclude with an overarching summary of the study's implications for enhancing transition planning and coordination for students with disabilities.

**Interpretation of Findings**

The findings of this study strongly support the critical role of a transition coordinator within special education programs. Specifically, the results indicate that the transition coordinator has a multifaceted impact on the transition planning, implementation, and execution processes, ultimately facilitating better outcomes as students with disabilities transition to adulthood. These impacts are evident across several key areas, including the roles and responsibilities of the transition coordinator, their influence on the special education team's practices, and the overall confidence in transition planning.

In addressing our first research question, what are high school special education team members' perspectives and experiences regarding the implementation of a transition coordinator as part of the IEP team for special education students, the findings reveal that the roles and responsibilities of the transition coordinator vary depending on the school district and specific

program. In this study, the roles and responsibilities developed over time. Since the position was new, there was no clear definition of expectations at the outset, allowing the transition coordinator to shape the position based on their own experiences. This flexibility enabled the transition coordinator to assess the school district's needs before implementing changes. The findings also revealed that the teachers' confidence increased as the transition coordinator position grew. Transition planning became a regular conversation rather than an avoided topic.

Another significant finding is the value and impact of the transition coordinator. The transition coordinator brought valuable knowledge and resources to the special education team, which had been lacking before. A transition coordinator creates new programs, more structured transition plans, less litigation, and greater access to resources, supporting their value to a special education program. These results align with the research by Morningstar and Mazzotti (2020), who emphasized the importance of hiring transition coordinators to fill gaps that case managers cannot address. Given high caseload numbers and ever-growing demands, having a specialist in transition planning should be a primary focus for high school IEPs. This aligns with the study's findings on the importance of implementing a transition coordinator.

First, the study shows how special education teachers write transition plans. Before implementing a transition coordinator, transition plans were often generic or, in some cases, non-existent. Participant 1 explained, "We were developing the same goals for everybody, which were very generic." However, with the transition coordinator's guidance, plans became more individualized and comprehensive. The findings related to the transition coordinator's impact on writing transition plans align with the *student-focused planning* component of the Taxonomy for Transition Programming. The shift from generic to individualized plans demonstrates a move toward the student-centered approach advocated by this theoretical framework. Participants

reported feeling more confident in their ability to write effective transition plans. For instance, Participant 7 stated, "I feel pretty confident for the most part. I do better when the students know what they want to do when they graduate." This increase in confidence and competence aligns with Rosenberg and Sindelar's (2005) research, emphasizing the importance of specialized knowledge in creating effective transition plans.

Secondly, implementing a transition coordinator led to significant changes in programming. The study found that new programs were developed, including community-based learning experiences and school-based enterprises like the "Bear Café." These programs provided students with practical, real-world experiences crucial for successful transitions to adulthood. This expansion of programming aligns with best practices in transition planning, as outlined by Kohler (2016), who stressed the importance of varied and authentic learning experiences for students with disabilities.

Lastly, the findings indicate a shift in professional development and training practices. With the transition coordinator's expertise, there was an increase in targeted training opportunities for special education staff. The professional development provided keeps the team updated on best practices and legal requirements in transition planning. Participant 3 noted, "I always look to see what education would benefit me." This emphasis on continuous learning and improvement is consistent with Test's (2009) research on the importance of ongoing professional development in special education.

These changes, based on the participants perspectives and experiences, in writing practices, programming, and professional development collectively represent a significant shift in how the special education team approaches transition planning and implementation. The transition coordinator has acted as a catalyst for these changes, bringing specialized knowledge

and resources that have elevated the quality and effectiveness of transition services for students with disabilities.

Addressing our second research question, how has the implementation of the transition coordinator as part of the IEP team changed the team's practices in writing and implementing transition plans for special education students, the findings reveal significant shifts in several key areas. The role of the transition coordinator led to increased collaboration among team members, more individualized transition plans, and an overall improvement in confidence and competence in transition planning.

First, based on the participants perspective and experiences, the implementation of the transition coordinator has also brought Taxonomy for Transition Programming (Morningstar, Liss, & O'Neill, 2015), full circle. Aligning student focused planning, student development, interagency collaboration, family engagement, and program structure. These key components are the backbone of a successful transition program when used in conjunction with the knowledge and expertise of a transition coordinator.

Prior to the transition coordinator, participants reported their lack of understanding of transition, post transition coordinator, there became a clear understanding of the importance of transition. A high school IEP should center around the student and their goals post-secondary. This new understanding was developed from professional development that was provided at the district level. Most of which was just acclimating the staff to the general requirements of the transition grid and simple terminology such as "service" or "activity". These terms are used within the transition grid to assist students in meeting their transition goals, a service is linked to their measurable annual goal the activity is something that can be done to support the goal such

as research a college with for a specific program of interest. The idea of each transition plan being individualized to meet the student's post-secondary goals.

Secondly, with the knowledge and support the special education program began to shift away from strictly academics. The focus was moving, while at times slowly, to what can we do to assist our students to be productive members of our community when they graduate? The biggest changes came with the implementation of work-based learning. Students now had the opportunity to work within the school and community to learn various job skills that would then allow them the opportunity to apply for jobs, with or without the support of a job coach. The transition program went from nonexistent to a fully inclusive transition program.

As stated by the participants of this study, these changes could not have been possible without having the expertise of the transition coordinator. The focus and drive allowed for major change to benefit the students and will for years to come. While funding may become an issue, having the knowledge will allow the transition coordinator to continue to apply for federal, state, and local grants to help offset the cost of running this program. No matter the cost, the benefits it brings to the students it outweighs the cost.

**Limitations**

While this study produced valuable information, it also had limitations. Two main limitations could have impacted the findings: the limited number of participants and the focus on a single school district. The first limitation is the limited number of participants, which constrains the breadth of perspectives when collecting data. Increasing the number of participants would have allowed more diverse data to support or challenge the findings. The second limitation is the focus on one school district. While this school district was chosen for its experience implementing a transition coordinator, focusing on a single school district limits the

range of experiences and perspectives. It may not fully represent the challenges and outcomes faced by other school districts.

## Gaps in Literature

While significant research on transition planning for students with disabilities, several gaps warrant further investigation. These gaps include the effectiveness of transition coordinators, culturally responsive transition planning, the long-term impact of evidence-based interventions, and the influence of policy and funding on transition services. Addressing these areas through future research can contribute to more equitable and effective transition planning practices.

## Recommendations for Practice

Where do we go from here? Implementing a transition coordinator is a critical component missing from many special education programs. Once this role is in place, the bigger picture becomes more apparent. Transition planning sparks the conversation needed to implement programming, support, and services that help students with disabilities transition to adulthood.

This conversation opens the door to further discussions that were often overlooked or never initiated before the transition coordinator's introduction.

The future success of our students with disabilities depends on the effectiveness of their transition plans. Whether they are heading to college, trade school, or entering the workforce, the skills they develop in high school will directly impact their ability to achieve their goals. By having a specialist dedicated to transition planning, we bridge the gap between high school and the successful implementation of transition plans, setting the stage for long-term success in postsecondary environments.

Based on the findings of this study, I recommend the following actions to enhance transition planning and outcomes for students with disabilities:

1. **Implement the Role of Transition Coordinator**: This study found that introducing a transition coordinator to a special education program significantly improved the understanding of transition plans, reduced litigation, led to program changes, and enhanced the ability to write and implement effective transition plans.

2. **Provide Ongoing Professional Development**: Participants reported a lack of formal training in transition planning during their undergraduate programs, and only two participants had taken a transition-specific course in their master's program. However, they noted that the presence of the transition coordinator allowed for continuous, on-the-job training, keeping staff updated on current best practices and legal requirements.

3. **Develop Community Partnerships**: The success of school-based and community-based work programs has allowed students to gain on-the-job training with job coaches. Some experiences can be paid for, while others are unpaid, but as these programs expand, there is hope that more opportunities will become paid. Additionally, partnerships have grown into creating an annual transition fair, where community resources come together to showcase their support and services for students with disabilities.

## Suggestions for Future Research

The recommendations for future research are based on the study's findings and its design constraints. Future studies should include a larger sample of participants across multiple school districts. This approach would offer a broader range of experiences and perspectives, potentially leading to more generalizable findings. A quantitative or mixed-methods design could be

beneficial in capturing a wider variety of data, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the transition coordinator's impact.

Another important area for future research is the long-term impact of a transition coordinator, which could be explored through longitudinal studies. These studies could track student outcomes over several years post-graduation, assessing the effectiveness of transition planning and implementation regarding students' postsecondary success. Such research could offer valuable insights into the sustained benefits of having a transition coordinator and the lasting effects of well-executed transition plans.

Additionally, comparative studies between school districts with and without transition coordinators could provide more explicit evidence of the role's impact. This approach would help identify best practices for implementing the transition coordinator role and offer concrete data on its effectiveness in improving transition outcomes for students with disabilities.

Finally, more targeted research on specific aspects of transition planning could be beneficial. For example, studies focusing on the quality of individualized transition plans, student engagement in the planning process, or postsecondary success rates help isolate the most impactful elements of a transition coordinator's role. Such studies could contribute to refining the transition planning process and ensure that it meets the diverse needs of students.

These suggested avenues for future research have the potential to significantly enhance our understanding of the role and impact of transition coordinators in special education. Furthermore, they could provide valuable evidence to inform policy decisions regarding implementing transition coordinator roles across school districts, ultimately contributing to improved transition outcomes for students with disabilities.

**Conclusion**

As students with disabilities progress through high school, comprehensive transition planning becomes increasingly critical. This study has demonstrated that implementing a transition coordinator can significantly enhance the quality and effectiveness of transition planning and execution for students with disabilities.

The findings reveal that transition coordinators play a multifaceted role, improving the writing and implementation of transition plans, increasing staff confidence, and facilitating the development of valuable community partnerships. The impact extends beyond compliance with legal requirements; it fundamentally transforms the approach to preparing students with disabilities for postsecondary life.

While school districts often face budget constraints that make adding specialized positions challenging, this study suggests that the benefits of a transition coordinator outweigh the costs. A transition coordinator can reduce litigation risks and contribute to a more knowledgeable and confident special education team, ultimately leading to better student outcomes.

Implementing a transition coordinator represents an investment in both students and staff. It provides specialized support that allows teachers to focus on their core responsibilities while ensuring students receive comprehensive, individualized transition planning. This dual benefit underscores the value of the role in the broader context of special education services.

This study's findings support and extend the *Taxonomy for Transition Programming* (Morningstar et al., 2015). The transition coordinator's role aligns closely with the framework's emphasis on program structure and interagency collaboration. However, our findings suggest that the transition coordinator also catalyzes enhancing other components of the framework, particularly student-focused planning and family engagement. This indicates that the role of a

TRANSITION COORDINATORS

transition coordinator might be a critical factor in effectively implementing all aspects of the

theoretical framework.

In conclusion, this study calls for reevaluating how we approach transition planning in

special education. By recognizing the vital role of transition coordinators and implementing this

position more widely, we can better equip our students with disabilities with the skills,

knowledge, and support they need to successfully transition into adulthood and become active,

contributing members of society. The investment in transition coordination is, ultimately, an

investment in the future of our students and our communities.

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**APPENDIX A**

SlipperyRock
University
of Pennsylvania

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## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Transition Coordinator: A need change for Special Education

Jamie L. Rockwell, jxr1096@sru.edu, Cell: 484-707-3978

Invitation to be part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a current secondary special education teacher within the Pleasant Valley School District. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Important Information about the Research Study

Things you should know:

The study aims to analyze the impact of a transition coordinator within the special education department of a secondary public-school setting. You will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview if you choose to participate. This will take approximately one hour.

Risks or discomforts from this research include a breach of confidentiality.

The study will benefit the general population will have the opportunity to learn about the effects that a transition coordinator has on a special education program within a public school setting

Taking part in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time.

Please read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research project.

**What is the Study About and Why Are We Doing it?**

 The purpose of the study is to review the impact of a transition coordinator from an administrator and teacher perspective. The research will also include an interview with the current transition coordinator to include her perspective on the position.

TRANSITION COORDINATORS

## What Will Happen if You Take Part in This Study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent letter and participate in an audio-recorded interview. We expect this to take about one hour.

## How Could You Benefit From This Study?

Although you will not directly benefit from being in this study, others might benefit because the research will analyze the impact a transition coordination has on a secondary special education program and the impact it has on their students.

## What Risks Might Result From Being in This Study?

We do not believe there are any risks from participating in this research.

## How Will We Protect Your Information?

I plan to publish the results of this study. To protect your privacy, I will not include information that could directly identify you.

 I will protect the confidentiality of your research records by keeping all data in a locked filing cabinet. Your name and any other information that can directly identify you will be stored separately from the data collected as part of the project.

## What Will Happen to the Information We Collect About You After the Study is Over?

I/We will not keep your research data to use for future research or other purposes. Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be kept secure and stored separately from the research data collected as part of the project.

## What Other Choices do I Have if I Don't Take Part in this Study?

If you choose not to participate, there are no alternatives.

Your Participation in this Research is Voluntary

It is totally up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you decide to withdraw before this study is completed, all the data will be shredded and deleted.

Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research

If you have questions about this research, you may contact Dr. Barger-Anderson, 724-738-2873

TRANSITION COORDINATORS

Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following:

Institutional Review Board

Slippery Rock University

104 Maltby, Suite 302

Slippery Rock, PA 16057

Phone: (724)738-4846

Email: irb@sru.edu

TRANSITION COORDINATORS

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you agree to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. I will give you a copy of this document for your records. I will keep a copy of the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. A copy of this signed Consent Form has been given to me.

_____  _____  _____

Printed Participant Name              Signature of Participant                    Date

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and to the best of my knowledge understands the details contained in this document and have been given a copy.

_____  _____  _____

Printed Name of Investigator          Signature of Investigator                  Date

**APPENDIX B**

CONSENT TO AUDIO RECORDING AND TRANSCRIPTION

Transition Coordinator: A Needed Change for Special Education

Jamie Rockwell, Slippery Rock University

This study involves the audio recording of your interview with the researcher. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audio recording or the transcription. Only the research team will be able to listen (view) the recordings.

The tapes will be transcribed by the researcher and erased once the transcriptions are checked for accuracy. The transcription of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this study. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice or picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study.

By signing this form, I am allowing the researcher to audio record me as a part of this research. I also understand that this consent for recording is effective until the following date: May 31, 2024. On or before that date, the recordings will be destroyed.

Participant's Signature:

_____ Date: _____

Participant's Name (Print)

_____

Researchers Signature:

_____ Date: _____

Slippery Rock University

College of Education

TRANSITION COORDINATORS

## APPENDIX C

Good afternoon, Secondary Special Education Professionals,

I hope this email finds you well. You are receiving this email as an invitation to participate in a voluntary student as part of my doctoral program through Slippery Rock University. My study is titled, *Transition Coordinator: A Needed Change in Special Education,* required semi-formal interviews of secondary special education teachers, administrators and a transition coordinator. Participants will be selected by the order of response to this email. In the event more potential participants respond a waitlist will be created in case anyone is unable to continue with the study or chooses not to participate. Once all participants are selected, a date and time will be arranged for the interview, which will take place in a mutually agreed upon location.

If you are interested in participating, please respond to this email. I will confirm your interest and selection to participate.

Thank you in advance for you time and assistance,


Jamie Rockwell