

Rowan University

Rowan Digital Works

Theses and Dissertations

4-14-2005

The preparation of special needs students for transition from high school to a post-secondary college setting

Christine M. Saputo
Rowan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd>



Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Saputo, Christine M., "The preparation of special needs students for transition from high school to a post-secondary college setting" (2005). *Theses and Dissertations*. 1074.
<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/1074>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact graduateresearch@rowan.edu.

THE PREPARATION OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS FOR TRANSITION FROM
HIGH SCHOOL TO A POST-SECONDARY COLLEGE SETTING

by
Christine Saputo

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
April 21, 2005

Approved by
Professor

Date Approved 4-14-05

© 2005 Christine Saputo

ABSTRACT

Christine M. Saputo
THE PREPARATION OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS FOR TRANSITION FROM
HIGH SCHOOL TO A POST-SECONDARY COLLEGE SETTING
2004-2005
Dr. Moyer
Master of Arts in Educational Leadership

The purpose of the study was to review the curricula, programs, and supports offered at Washington Township High School for the purpose of determining, if the necessary transition skills are being taught to prepare special needs students for a successful transition to college. The participants included teachers, guidance counselors, principals, child study team members, a “504” Officer, and a Supervisor of special education.

Data was collected through a survey that was developed by the intern and approved by the IRB. The intern was also able to gather information through discussions held with the staff at WTHS and a “504” Officer. The findings suggested that the necessary transition skills are taught at the high school level which address student transition to a college setting. A study skills curriculum was added for use in the 2005-2006 school year. Further curricula will be reviewed to teach self-advocacy and self-determination skills to students. The study will be continued as a longitudinal study in the future. Additional data and information will be gathered from parents and students, as future participants and stakeholders at Washington Township High School.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank:

...my graduate advisor, Dr. Ronald Capasso, for his passion for preparing future educational leaders

...my former teacher in graduate school for research, Dr. Coaxum, who once told me, if I ever needed him to call him for support. I thank him for reviewing and editing my projects for the administrative internship

...the Principal of WTHS, Rosemarie Farrow, who I have observed as being the role model of a passionate leader, who believes in the education of all students and instructing them to reach their maximum potential

...Anne Moore, the Executive Principal of the 9/10 wing, who has always supported me in my position and whom I have observed as being passionate about the education of all of our students

...my field mentor, Mr. Joseph Bollendorf, Washington Township High School Executive Principal, for his believing in me and acting as an administrative role model

...Paul Jacques, the Director of Secondary Special Education, for his believing in me and supporting me, whenever I needed him as a staff member and offering me good advice whenever I needed to speak with him

...Susan Preston, the Assistant Superintendent for Special Education, for her believing in me and supporting me in my endeavors

...Tom Flemming, our Superintendent, for believing in me, as a teacher, Learning Consultant and Team Leader and supporting my projects

... my University Mentor, Dr. Moyer, for sharing his years of experience with me, as a Superintendent and for believing in me as a future administrator

...Mr. Edward Fields and Al Dempsey, Assistant Principals in WTHS, a special thanks filled with gratitude for being role models, always supportive of my educational endeavors, and for believing in me and supporting me professionally in my positions at WTHS

...the Lord my God, for giving me the patience and strength to endure all and continue to reach my goals, when times became tough and the end seemed so far

...my parents, Rose and Tony LaRocca, who have always supported me in my endeavors and promoted my education, believed in me. They are my pillars of strength and love. My parents taught me that anything is possible, if you work hard enough towards your goals with a burning passion in your heart

...my husband, Philip Saputo, for his love, patience, and support of my life-long commitment to education and everything that I do in life, always there for me

...my children, Michele, Michael, Vincent, and Denise for the love, patience, and understanding offered to me and their support at home, during my years of studies

....my brothers, Vincent and Nicholas LaRocca, for always believing in me and being there for me

...all former Professors in the Educational Leadership Department at Rowan University, who were instrumental in giving me support

...my former Professor, Dr. Jerome Rosenberg, for believing in me as an undergraduate and graduate student for the past 24 years

...to all of my colleagues, the teachers, who are the heart of the organization for assisting
in this project and supporting and believing in me in all my projects and positions
...the students of WTHS, who make it possible for me to continue to love my profession,
to bring about change to support them to be productive citizens
...the parents of our students, who have always been supportive of me, as a teacher, CST
member, and administrative intern
... the Director of Guidance, Sue Schirmer and the guidance counselors, who has always
supported me and worked collaboratively for the improvement of programs and
instruction for all our students
... my colleagues, CST members, who believed in me and supported me while during the
internship
...the Department Supervisors, who have supported me in my professional endeavors
...the Blessed Mother for watching over me and answering my prayers for everything
...my colleague, Cheryl Barnett, the Supervisor of special education programs, for
believing in me and working collaboratively with me to support change for the
improvement of programs and instruction at WTHS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Focus of Study.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	2
Definitions.....	3
Limitations of the Study.....	8
Setting of the Study.....	8
Significance of the Study.....	11
Relationship to the ISLLC Standards.....	12
Organization of the Study.....	18
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature.....	19
Review of the Problem.....	19
Review of Major Concepts Related to the Problem.....	22
Conclusion.....	27
Chapter 3: Design of the Study.....	28
Sample Population.....	28
Description of Sampling and Sampling Techniques.....	29
Description of Data Collection Approach.....	30
Description and Design of the Research Instrument.....	31
Description of the Data Analysis Plan.....	32

Chapter 4: Presentation of Research Findings.....	34
Presentation of Data.....	34
Interpretation of Data.....	61
Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Further Study.....	64
Conclusions and Implications.....	64
Organizational Change.....	74
Leadership Growth and the ISLLC Standards.....	81
Further Study.....	82
Reference List.....	84
Appendix: The Preparation of Special Needs Students for Transition from High School to a Post-Secondary College Setting.....	85

Chapter 1

Introduction

Focus of the Study

The number of special needs students with learning disabilities entering post-secondary education has increased over the past years. Research suggests that many of these students are having difficulty staying in and completing post-secondary programs at colleges and universities (Durlak, 1994). One of the major problems is that the curricula and programs at the high school may or may not be adequately preparing students for success in higher education. Although curricula issues and programming are not the sole variables for the lack of student success in these settings, they are certainly two of the more key elements to review concerning student success. Students must develop identified specific transition skills and be involved in programs at the high school level that will prepare them for successful transition into colleges and universities. The study will explore the specific transition skills necessary for students to be successful and the programs and services available at Washington Township High School that students should be required to participate in to support student success in post-secondary college programs. The study will further review the special needs curricula, programs, and instructional supports offered to special needs students at WTHS and report on how well the special needs students in WTHS are prepared to meet the expectations held in higher education institutions.

Our education community views the lack of preparation of special needs students, as a major concern and recognizes the need to bridge the gap in communication between Higher education institutions and high schools in working together to prepare these students to be successful in college. High schools have different governance structures, organizational cultures, and assessments, than colleges. Lack of coordination between these educational sectors impedes successful student transition (Schuetz, 2000).

The solution to solve the problem will begin by making the stakeholders aware of how the special needs curricula and programs in WTHS do or do not prepare students for success in higher education. Through the collaborative efforts and ideas and information gathered and shared in this study within the education community at WTHS and between a local community College, this study will ensure that students are receiving effective instruction and programs. The communication gap between higher education institutions and high schools will be further explored by extending an invitation to a representative from higher education institution to discuss the expectations that higher education institutions have for students with learning disabilities in preparing them for college at the high school level.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is related to the transition of special needs students. Curricula, programs, and supports offered at Washington Township High School will be reviewed for the purpose of determining, if the necessary specific transition skills are being taught to prepare special needs students for a successful transition into college. A Qualitative based action research design will be used for the purpose of this study. This

project will result in a study to inform all stakeholders of the adequacy of the present programs and the need for further curriculum development targeting the development of specific transition skills for student preparation for success at the college level. The intern will create a structural bridge between WTHS staff and the Special Needs Director at Gloucester County College for the purpose of preparing WTHS special needs students for transition from high school to college settings.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study the following terms were defined as follows:

Transition – Preparation of special needs students from WTHS to college

Transition – Definition defined by IDEA of 1990 states, “The term “transition services: means a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an out-come-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing an adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities described in paragraph (a) of this section must be based on the student’s needs, taking into account the student’s preferences and interests, and shall include (i) instruction, (ii) community experiences, (ii) the development of employment and other post-school objectives, and (iv) when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation (20 U.S.C. 1401 (19)).

Transition Skills – Skills necessary for students to obtain for successful transition to college and the workplace which must be developed at the high school level

Post-Secondary College settings – Community Colleges, State Colleges and Universities

Special Needs Students – Students covered under IDEA and ADA

Programs – Mainstreamed, Mainstreamed with (In-Class-Support (Resource Center Model), Resource Center (Pull-Out Replacement), Self-Contained program (instruction is through the regular education curriculums)

Staff – Instructional/Teachers (regular and special education), Instructional Assistants (Special Education, Academic Counselors, SAC counselors, CST members (Psychologist, Social Worker, Learning Consultant), Support Service Staff (Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists, one-on-one assistants)

Regular education students (non-classified students)

Special education students (classified students under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act)

Learning Disabilities - Definition as described under IDEA

Curricula – Courses in the WTHS Curriculum Guide, both regular and special education which prepare students to develop transition skills for entering into College

NCLB – *The No Child Left behind Act of 2002*, signed by President Bush based on Stronger Accountability Results, More Freedom for States and Communities, Encourages Proven Methods, and More Choice for Parents

FAPE - A *Free and Appropriate Education* for all students

IDEA - *Individual with Disabilities Act*, covers students with disabilities that was

Amended in 1997, which strengthens academic expectations and accountability for the Nation's 5.8 million children with disabilities and attempts to bridge the gap that has too often existed between that which children with disabilities learn and what is required in the regular education curriculum

IEP - Individualized Education Program developed by an IEP team with a transition statement and plan included in the IEP. Transition as defined by IDEA of 1997 in the IEP states, " Beginning at age 14, and updated annually, a statement of the transition service needs of the child... that focuses on the child's courses of study (such as participation in advanced-placement courses or a vocational education program); (ii) beginning at age 16 (or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP Team), a statement of needed transition services for the child, including, when appropriate, a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages; (iii) beginning at least one year before the child reaches the age of a majority under State law, a statement that the child has been informed of his or her rights under this title that will transfer to the child....on reaching the age of majority under 615(m) Section 614 (d).

ADA – *The American Disabilities Act* enables students with disabilities to have a "504" plan in college and high school

"504" Plan - Plan of action for Students with disabilities developed in high school and at the college level under the *American Disabilities Act*

Assessments – Testing for the purpose of preparation for college entrance, skill acquisition and accountability *ESPA, GEPA, "S" TEST, HSPA, SAT, PSAT*

Basic Skills Test- Tests administered to students before entering the college in Mathematics, Reading and Written Expression used to determine whether or not students need additional instruction in those areas tested, before entering into college level courses

Collaborative Efforts – Efforts of all members of the education community to work together to prepare our students at WTHS for successful transition

Higher Education Institutions – Schools students enter into after successful completion of high school requirements

Communication Gap – Lack of communication between the high school and post-secondary college setting staff to prepare special needs students for successful transition collaboratively

ISLLC Standards – *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium* which is a nationwide organization composed of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five extra state jurisdictions.

Stakeholders – Members of the learning community, who have a vested interest in the outcome of special needs students at WTHS. These members include parents, students, teachers, child study team members, guidance counselors, nurses, instructional assistants, administrators, service providers, outside consultants and community members and businesses.

Self-Determination- A combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-oriented, self –regulated, autonomous behavior. An

understanding of one's strengths and limitations together with a belief in oneself as capable and effective are essential to self-determination. When acting on the basis of these skills and attitudes, individuals have greater ability to take control of their lives and assume the role of successful adults (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998).

Inclusion Education – As defined by the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE, 1995):

“At its core, inclusion means that students attend their home school along with their age and grade peers. A truly inclusive schooling environments is one in which students with the full range of abilities and disabilities receive their in-school educational services in the general education classroom with appropriate.”
In - class- support.

Seamless Transition –Describes the use of resources from school and post-school systems (e.g., Department of Rehabilitation, Department of Developmental Disabilities) to share costs of supporting a student-driven approach to choice making and transition planning related to developing careers, community living skills or opportunities, and post secondary education for students about to age-out of their local public school system (Certo & Sax,, 1999; Sax, 2000).

LEAs- Local Education Agencies

LAL – Language Arts Literacy portion of the High School Proficiency Test

HSPA – *High School Proficiency Test* that students must pass for graduation from high school. Students are tested in the areas of Language Arts (Reading and Writing), Mathematics, and Science.

Limitations of the Study

The project involves the study of high school programs, supports, and curricula available to the special needs population in grades 9-12 at Washington Township High School, which address the development of transition skills for college. The project also involves the study of the expectations required of special needs students by the colleges and universities for successful transition from high school to college. The limitations of this study related to the transition of special needs students from high school to a post-secondary college includes time constraints for completion of the study for the intern and the participants at the high school and college levels. All stakeholders are working with schedules for their own positions; therefore time is limited during the day to the school schedule. Additional time outside of the school day must be utilized for the study to occur.

A second limitation is that the focus on transition is limited to the special needs population only and not regular education students. A third limitation is that the discussions held with the college "504" Officer will be limited to one college. A fourth limitation to the study is that the study is limited to preparation of special needs students from high school to post-secondary college and does not explore the preparation of students from school to work in the community. The school to work study will be addressed further in an extended future study. A school to work study is an important piece of the study which must be completed to ensure student success, also.

Setting of the Study

The study is being conducted at Washington Township High School located in Gloucester County, New Jersey. The Township is approximately 29.37 square miles.

The community is comprised of middle to upper middle class community members. There are approximately 47,114 people in the community. The projected population in the community by the year 2010 is estimated to be 51,800 people. The median household income was \$66,546 in the Township. The median value of a home in the community is \$140,700.

Washington Township is governed by a Mayor and a five member municipal council. The Mayor is elected by Township voters and is the Chief Executive in charge of the administrative functions of the town. The Council in the Township is elected at-large by the entire community. The elected officials serve a four year term.

The Washington Township School District is served by the Board of Education. The board is elected by Township voters. The School District has: One Pre-School/Kindergarten Center, Six Elementary Schools (grades 1-5), three Middle Schools (grades 6-8), and one High School Complex (grades 9-12).

The Washington Township proposed school budget for the 2004-2005 school years' total revised expenditures were \$114,172,578. The final approved budget for the 2003-2004 school year was \$111,297,102. There was a budget increase of \$2,875,476 which calculates to a 2.58% budget increase from the 2003-2004 school year to the present 2004-2005 school year. The budget maintains the existing level of services Washington Township. It maintains the services for students with special needs. The monies continue to support opportunities for the gifted and talented students.

Washington Township Public Schools is the 20th largest district in the State of New Jersey. It is the 11th largest non-Abbott school district. The pupil/administrator ratio

is 186.6:1 in comparison to other districts K-12 with a ration of 166.7: 1; the faculty/administrator ration is 16.3:1 in comparison.

Washington Township's Mission Statement is to provide an educational environment for all students to attain the skills necessary for full participation in our global society as responsible, self-directed, and civic-minded citizens. The members of our school believe that all students should learn to set realistic attainable goals for themselves through the direction and guidance of the members of the school community.

The Washington Township High School complex is divided into three areas consisting of the 9/10 and 11/12 wing connected by the core facility. The core facility houses technology labs and home economic, business, and art classrooms. The 9/10 and 11/12 wings house students receiving core content curriculum instruction.

The length of the school day is 6 hours and 54 minutes. The amount of time per day that students are engaged in instruction is 5 hours and 25 minutes. The overall average class size in grades 9-12 is 18.7 students per class.

WTHS has a combined student population of approximately 3,200 students in grades 9-12. There are approximately 400 special education students in the school. There are 11 principals, 10 department supervisors, 7 child study team members (2 teams), 14 guidance counselors, 1 director of guidance, 3 student assistant counselors (SAC), 2 athletic trainers, 2 internal suspension coordinators, 13 members of the technology crew, 1 Center for the Performing Arts manager, 4 childcare workers, 21 custodians, 2 maintenance men, 6 security guards, 21 food service workers, 1 athletic director, 1 accountant, 2 nurses, 23 secretaries, 73 instructional assistants, 3 librarians, 1 A.V. coordinator, 1 physical therapist, and 2 athletic trainers.

The high school proficiency scores in WTHS for the 2002-2003 school year indicated that 10.1% of the total number of students who took the HSPA were “Partially” proficient in Language Arts Literary. A greater number of students received a “Proficient” score of 71.4% in LAL and 18.5% of the total number of students received an “Advanced” proficiency score in the LAL section of the High School Proficiency Assessment. The total number of students taking the LAL section of the HSPA was 725. In the area of Mathematics, 34.2% of the students were “Advanced” proficient. The total number of students tested in Mathematics was 722.

For the purpose of this project, focus group discussions will be conducted with members of the high school staff. Discussions will be held with Special Needs Director from a local community college. Special and regular education teachers, guidance counselors, supervisors/administrators, and child study team members will be surveyed to gather information related to the study for the purpose of this project. Curricula and support programs will be reviewed. The sample size for the survey will include approximately 5 regular and special education teachers, 5 guidance counselors, 2 supervisors/administrators, 5 child study team members, and 1 Director of Special Needs from a local community college.

Significance of the Study

This study is being completed, because Washington Township High School has a need to continuously evaluate and study its curricula and the instruction of specific transition skills taught to special education students at the high school level, particularly in light of meeting the NCLB requirements. The second need is to develop effective programs for instruction which include the development of specific transition skills in

order to adequately prepare the special needs student for successful transition into the post-secondary setting. The final need is to create a bridge between one of the local community colleges and WTHS to prepare our special needs students for successful transition.

Members of the education community at Washington Township High School, such as child study team members have observed special needs students dropping out of post-secondary college programs, through discussion with former students. By targeting our programs and curricula and connecting with the local community college, teachers can instruct students in the specific skills necessary to increase student achievement and preparation for college success. Parents and students also play a vital important role in this process. This study is necessary to ensure that all students are fully instructed and prepared for success and that “No Child is Left Behind”.

Relationship to the ISLLC Standards

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) models standards are supported by a framework of Knowledge, Dispositions, and Performances for each standard for school leaders (Ubben, Hughes, Norris, 2001). This study conducted related to the *Preparation of Special Needs to Students for Transition to a Post-Secondary Education Setting* has a relationship with all of the ISLLC standards noted below.

Standard One states that the school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community. In order for the intern to complete this study, the intern has knowledge of and will apply the principles of developing and implementing strategic

plans; information sources, data collection, data analysis strategies; and effective communication. The intern believes in, values, and is committed to the educability of all; a school vision of high standards of learning; continuous school improvement; the inclusion of all members of the learning community; and will ensure that all students have the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become successful adults. For the purposes of this study the intern will facilitate processes and engage in activities which ensure that the vision and mission of the school are effectively communicated to the staff, parents, students, and community members; the core beliefs of the school vision are modeled for all stakeholders, the vision is developed with and among stakeholder; progress toward the vision and mission is communicated to all stakeholders; the school community is involved in school improvement efforts; assessment data related to student learning are used to develop the school vision and goals; relevant demographic data pertaining to students and their families are used in developing the school mission and goals; barriers to achieving the vision are identified, clarified, and addressed; needed resources are sought and obtained to support the implementation of the school mission.

Standard Two states that the school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. In order for the intern to complete this study, the intern has knowledge and will apply an understanding of student growth and development; applied learning theories; curriculum design, implementation, evaluation, and refinement, principles of effective instruction, adult learning and professional development models, the change process for systems, organizations, and individuals, and school cultures. The intern believes in,

values, and is committed to student learning as the fundamental purpose of schooling, the proposition that all students can learn, the variety of ways in which students can learn, life long learning for self and others, professional development as an integral part of school improvement, the benefits that diversity brings to the school community, a safe and supportive learning environment, and preparing students to be contributing members of society. For the purposes of this study the intern will facilitate processes and engage in activities ensuring that all individuals are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect; professional development will promote a focus on student learning consistent with the school vision and goals; students and staff will feel valued and important; barriers to student learning are identified, clarified, and addressed; diversity is considered in developing learning experiences; life long learning is encouraged and modeled; there is a culture of high expectations for self, students, and staff; multiple opportunities to learn are available to all students; the school is organized and aligned for success; curriculum decisions are based on research, expertise of teachers, and the recommendations of learned societies; a variety of sources of information are used to make decisions; and student learning is assessed using a variety of techniques.

The Third Standard states that a school administrator is an educational leader who projects the success of all students by ensuring the management of the organization, operations, and resources for safe, efficient, and effective learning environments. In order for the intern to complete this study, the intern has a knowledge and understanding of theories and models of organizations and the principles of organizational development; operational procedures at the school and district level; principles and issues relating to school safety and security; legal issues impacting school operations; and current

technologies that support management functions. The intern believes in, values, and is committed to making decisions to enhance learning and teaching; trusting people and their judgments; accepting responsibility; promoting high-quality standards, expectations, and performances; involving stakeholders in management processes; and a safe environment. For the purposes of this study, the intern will facilitate processes and engage in activities ensuring that knowledge of learning, teaching, and student development is used to inform management decisions; emerging trends are recognized, studied and applied as appropriate; time is managed to maximize attainment of organizational goals; the school acts as an entrepreneur to support continuous improvement; stakeholders are involved in decisions affecting the school; responsibility is shared to maximize ownership and accountability; effective problem-framing and problem-solving skills are used; effective communication skills are used; and confidentiality and privacy of school records are maintained.

The Fourth Standard states that a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources. In order for the intern to complete this study, the intern has knowledge and an understanding of emerging issues and trends that potentially impact the school community; the conditions and dynamics of the diverse school community; community resources; community relations and marketing strategies and processes; successful models of school, family, business, community, government; and higher education partnerships. The intern believes in, values, and is committed to schools operating as an integral part of the larger community; collaboration and communication

with families; involvement of families and other stakeholders in school decision making processes; the proposition that diversity enriches the school; families as partners in the education of their children; resources of the family and community needing to be brought to bear on the education of students; and an informed public. For the purpose of this project the intern will facilitate processes and engage in activities ensuring that the school and the community serve one another as resources; available community resources are secured to help the school solve problems and achieve goals; partnerships are established with area businesses, institutions of higher education, and community groups to strengthen programs and support school goals; diversity is recognized and valued; community relations are established; and community collaboration is modeled for staff.

The Fifth Standard indicates that a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner. In order to successfully complete this project, the intern has knowledge and an understanding of the purpose of education and the role of leadership in society; various ethical frameworks and perspectives on ethics; the values of a diverse school community; professional codes of ethics; and the philosophy and history of education. The intern believes in, values, and is committed to the ideal of the common good; the principles of the Bill of Rights; the right of every student to a free, quality education; bringing ethical principles to the decision-making process; subordinating one's own interest to the good of the school community; accepting the consequences for upholding one's principles and actions; using the influence of one's office constructively and productively in the service of all students and families; and the development of a caring school community. For the purposes of this study, the intern will examine personal and

professional values; demonstrate a personal and professional code of ethics; demonstrate values, beliefs, and attitudes that inspire others to higher levels of performance; serve as a role model; consider the impact of one's practices on others; treat people fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect; protect the rights and confidentiality of students and staff; demonstrate appreciation for and sensitivity to the diversity in the school community; and apply laws and procedures fairly, wisely, and considerately.

The Sixth Standard indicates that a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, and cultural context. In order to complete this study, the intern has knowledge and an understanding of principles of representative governance that under gird the system of American schools; the role of public education in developing and renewing a democratic society and an economically productive nation; the law as related to education and schooling; the political, social, cultural and economic systems and process that impact schools; global issues and forces affecting teaching and learning; the dynamics of policy development and advocacy under our democratic political system; and the importance of equity and diversity in a democratic society. The intern believes in, values, and is committed to education as a key to opportunity and social mobility; recognizing a variety of ideas, values, and cultures; and the importance of a continuing dialogue with other decision makers affecting education. For the purposes of this study, the intern will facilitate processes and engage in activities ensuring that the communication occurs among the school community concerning trends, issues, and potential changes in the environment in which schools operate; the school community works within the framework of policies, laws, and

regulations enacted by local, state, and federal authorities; public policy is shaped to provide quality education for students; and lines of communication are developed with decision makers outside the school community.

Organization of the Study

Additional chapters of this study will include: a Review of the Literature in Chapter 2; a Description of the Design of the Study in Chapter 3; a Presentation of Findings in Chapter 4; and Conclusions, Further Study, and Implications in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Review of the Problem

The number of special needs students with learning disabilities entering post-secondary education has increased over the past years. Hehir (1998) reported that “High school graduation rates of students with disabilities have increased from 67% to 74%, and the number of students going to college has tripled for students with disabilities.”

Additional research supports the findings that more students with disabilities are attending 2-year community colleges and 4-year universities (Henderson, 1992). Given the data that more students are entering post-secondary settings, it is appropriate for institutions to offer a wide range of accommodations (McAfee & Ofiesh, 1995).

According to the National Association for College Admissions, the fastest growing category of students in college with disabilities is learning disabilities. Research suggests that many of these students are having difficulty staying in and completing post-secondary programs at colleges and universities (Durlak, 94). In a study completed by Sittlington and Frank (1990), it was found that 6.5% of the learning disabled students, who had enrolled in a postsecondary setting, remained in school. In a study completed by Ellis and Cramer in 1995, 62% of learning disabled students were unemployed one year after high school graduation.

Three of the major issues facing schools in the preparation of special needs students are that the curricula, programs, and supports offered may not be addressing the

skills necessary to prepare them for success in higher education. Training for staff members must also be addressed and professional development plans implemented in order to allow for a seamless transition from high school to a post-secondary setting for students with a disability. Curricula issues, programming, supports and staff training are not the sole variables for the lack of student success in these settings, but they are certainly several of the more key elements to review. Other variables such as parental support and student motivation, skill development, achievement levels and cognitive abilities are important to be cognizant of for the preparation of students for successful transition. “Realistic goals for transition must also be set by students, parents and educators from the onset of entrance into high school and begins when students are transitioning from middle school to the high school level (Saputo, 2004)”. It must be understood that student preparation for transition does not begin at the high school level. Preparation for transition begins in the very early grades upon entrance into school. Special needs students must develop identified specific transition skills and be involved in programs at the high school level which support successful college entrance and their abilities to remain at the colleges. Staff at the secondary and post-secondary levels must be trained in order to prepare special needs students for successful transition into Community Colleges, and State and Private Colleges and Universities (Saputo, 2000).

The study will explore the specific transition skills necessary for students to be successful and the programs available at Washington Township High School that students should be required to participate in at the high school to support success in post-secondary college programs. The study will further review the special needs curricula,

and programs, policies, and supports offered to special needs students at WTHS and report on how “well” the special needs students in WTHS are prepared to meet the expectations held in higher education institutions. Staff training in the area of transition will also be reviewed and recommendations given to the stakeholders in the community. The ultimate goal for our special needs students for the future at WTHS is to prepare our students to achieve financial and personal independence to be productive members of the society.

The members of the education community at WTHS view the lack of preparation of special needs students, as a major concern and recognize the need to bridge the gap in communication between higher education institutions and high schools in working together to prepare these students to be successful in college. High schools have different governance structures, organizational cultures, and assessments, than colleges. Lack of coordination between these educational sectors impedes successful student transition (Schuetz, 2000).

An article published in the ERIC Digest, by Pam Schuetz, entitled *Successful Collaborations between High Schools and Community Colleges*, describes five types of collaborations that support more successful student transitions. These include K-16 (Kindergarten through baccalaureate) partnerships; dual credit programs; tech prep programs; middle college high schools; and distance learning programs. The lessons learned from the review of these collaborations are as follows: (1) student transitions are enhanced by creating structural bridges between community colleges and secondary schools, aligning curriculum and testing requirements, and offering dual credit or

concurrent enrollment opportunities; (2) the social, political, and economic realities unique to each educational sector must be honored in order to develop effective partnerships; (3) it is possible, and important, to build and implement a common agenda for high schools and community colleges in support of changes that will improve students success at all levels (Palmer, Azinger, Watson).

Review of Major Concepts Related to the Problem

Members of the learning community who are stakeholders in our student's education in preparation for transition to post-secondary education settings must be aware of Federal Legislation which regulates the guidelines for the transition of special needs students from high school to post-secondary settings. These stakeholders, who must be made aware, include the parents, students, teachers, community members, child study team members, principals, superintendents and directors, supervisors, support staff, guidance counselors, special assistance counselors, support service staff and outside consultants to the child study team.

Federal legislation has a direct impact on special needs students and transition from high school. The *American Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)*, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 1992* and the *Individuals with disabilities Act of 1990 and 1997* had a direct impact on the transition of special needs students. Through the *American Disabilities Act of 1990*, students were able to receive "504" plans to support their college success (LaMorte, 2002).

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2002*, signed by President Bush calls for stronger accountability results, more freedom for states and communities, encourages proven methods, and provides more choice for parents. NCLB attempts to remove the

achievement gap that is displayed between regular and special education students that has been in existence for many years.

According to Flexer, Simmons, Luft, and Baer (2001), the *Kohler Model*, was an infusion-based education model for transition. This Kohler Model was termed a “transition perspective of education”. A broad view of what education is or should be and a description for transition planning and services were emphasized in this model.

A Second model of transition practices is the *Siegel Model*. This model included a heavy emphasis on integrating transition with school-to work programs. Students answered three questions in this model. The first question was, “Who am I?” the second question was, “What is community?”, and the third question was, “How do I engage in a meaningful way? (Flexer, Simmons, Luft, and Baer, 2001)

On June 4, 2000 the *Special Education News Bulletin Board* quoted U.S. Secretary of Education, Richard Riley. The Secretary believed that some high schools were, “Little more than way stations for young people who already know that life is very unfair”. The Secretary believed that the students most in need of transition assistance are students with disabilities. “Young people with disabilities still remain behind their peers in completed levels of education, in employment and in full participation in their communities”, Riley stated at the *National Transition Summit on Young People with Disabilities*, “Unfortunately, our Nations’ Policy on this transition has lacked the cohesion and coordination that young people with disabilities, as well as their non-disabled peers, need”. Riley believes that Local Education Agencies need to review their curricula to see what is being taught. The curriculum should be revamped to address different post-secondary transition paths (Riley, 2000).

Advocates, researchers, and policymakers support some common themes as principals of best practice in transition. The importance of social skills training (student self-determination) was one common theme supported for transition. A recent study on self-determination, *Putting Self-Determination into Practice*, was completed by Karvonen, Test, Wood, Browder, and Algozzine in 2004. Based on the information from the study described in the *Council for Exceptional Children Journal*, self-determination was a major topic in education. Qualitative data was gathered. Stakeholder's perceptions of SD outcomes were studied and barriers preventing SD practices from being implemented were described (Karvonen, Test, Wood, Browder, and Algozzine, 2004).

In a paper written through the Heath Resource Center in November of 1995 and published in *Learning Disabilities on line*, suggestions were made for student with learning disabilities planning to attend college. One of the recommendations in the article was for students to learn to be "self-advocates" while they were still in high school. They should learn to speak up in a logical and clear manner to communicate their needs. Another recommendation was for student's to develop their strengths and learn about areas of interest to them. Students should be aware of and understand their disabilities, strengths and weaknesses, ways to compensate and be able to communicate their needs to college staff. Another third recommendation was for students to develop their strengths and learn about areas of interest to them. Students could work in the community for experience and participate in extra curricular activities both at school and in the community to become "well-rounded". These experiences can be continued in the college community.

Students planning to attend college should also have an understanding of IDEA, Section 504, and ADA in order to understand the differences, as they transition from high school to post-secondary schools. IDEA does not apply to higher education, contrary to what most people believe. All stakeholders must be aware of FERPA which was enacted in 1974 and Amended with the *Buckley Act*. This law gives students certain right to record access and privacy, while in schools and post-secondary education settings (Saputo, 2004).

Transition plans are developed in the high schools. These plans are called the ITP or Individualized transition plans. Students' interests and preferences must be taken into account when developing these plans. Student transition planning should begin long before a student enters the high school, although it is not mandated before the age of 14, unless the IEP team decides that the plan is necessary.

Courses taken in the middle school by special needs students have a direct impact on the courses that students will be allowed to enter into when transitioning to the high school. If certain courses were not taken in the middle school in preparation for college in the future, students will not have the prerequisite skills necessary to enter directly into college courses which prepare them to enter into certain 4 year colleges and universities. The ITP page lists the courses taken by a student. In Washington Township High school, the ITP is located on pages 5 and 6 in the IEP. The IEP used in the Washington Township School District is modeled after the state approved IEP. The courses taken and listed on the IEP should reflect the goal of the student upon transition from high school.

The definition of transition as defined by IDEA, the Individual with Disability of 1990 states, "The term transition services: means a coordinated set of activities for a

student, designed within an out-come-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing an adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities described in paragraph (a) of this section must be based on the student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include (i) instruction, (ii) community experiences, (ii) the development of employment and other post-school objectives, and (iv) when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation (20 U.S.C. 1401 (19)).”

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA: Pub L. No. 101-476) mandated transition planning in response to studies that showed poor postsecondary outcomes for students graduating with IEPs (Hasazi, Gordon, & Roe, 1985 SRI International, 1990). IDEA of 1997 (P.L. 105-17) extended transition into a high school course of study related to students' individual career interest. It was mandated through IDEA that by no later than (1) beginning at age 14, and updated annually, a statement of the transition service needs of the child....that focuses on the child's courses of study (such as participation in advanced-placement courses or a vocational education program); (II) beginning at age 16 (or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP team), a statement of needed transition services for the child, including, when appropriate, a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages; (III) beginning at least one year before the child reaches the age of majority under state law, a statement that the child has been informed of his or her rights under this title that will transfer to the child...on reaching the age of majority under 615(m)(section 614 (d)).

The Individualized Education Plan addresses the area of standardized testing. When preparing special needs students for transition to post-secondary colleges, the standardized test scores are viewed by most post-secondary colleges as being instrumental to being accepted in 4 year state colleges and universities. Students with disabilities are given certain accommodations and modifications that are now determined by ETS (Educational Testing Service) panel members. There is a page in the IEP that is designated for the standardized testing that the student will receive while in school. The (ITP) Individualized Transition Plan for students, who consider college after graduation, must outline a course of study which includes courses that will prepare them to develop the skills necessary to be successful when measuring their knowledge on the standardized tests. The courses in school should reflect the students' long term goals for transition upon exit high school, whether the goals are vocational or post-secondary education oriented (Saputo, 2004).

Conclusion

By targeting and reviewing our high school programs; using curricula that reflects best practices and instruction; offering supports to our students for success through recommendations from the college staff; and offering professional development related to transition to WTHS staff, our students will develop the necessary skills to increase achievement and prepare for college success. This study is necessary to ensure that "No Child is Left Behind". Washington Township wants to prepare all students for transition.

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

Sample Population

The study was conducted at WTHS located in Gloucester County, New Jersey. The Washington Township High School complex is divided into three sections consisting of the 9/10 and 11/12 wings, which are connected by the core facility. The core facility houses technology labs, home economic, business, and art classrooms. The 9/10 and 11/12 wings house students receiving core content curriculum instruction.

WTHS had a combined student population of approximately 3,000 students in grades 9-12. There were approximately 400+ special education students in the school for grades 9-12. Approximately 120 of those students are assigned to out of district schools for placement. There are 11 Principals, 10 Department Supervisors (Administrators), 7 Child Study Team Members (LDT/Cs, Psychologists, Social Workers), 14 Guidance Counselors, 1 Director of Guidance (Administrator), 3 Student Assistant Counselors (SAC), 2 Athletic Trainers, 2 internal suspension coordinators, 13 members of the technology crew, 1 Center for the Performing Arts manager, 4 childcare workers, 21 custodians, 2 maintenance men, 6 security guards, 21 food service workers, 1 Athletic Director (Administrator), 1 accountant, 2 nurses, 23 secretaries, 73 instructional assistants, 3 librarians, 1 A.V. coordinator, 1 physical therapist (shared within the district), 1 occupational therapist (shared within the district), and 2 athletic trainers. There were 350 regular education teachers and 38 special education teachers.

All participants were gathered on a voluntary basis throughout several months. WTHS staff members and a “504” officer participated in the completion of a survey and focus group discussions were held with members of participants. Specific members of the staff participating in the study included child study team members, teachers (both regular and special education), supervisors (administrators), and guidance counselors. The staff was informed that this was a formal study being completed through the Rowan University Ed Leadership Department. A consent form was signed by all participants in the study making them aware of that which is required through the IRB committee for the protection of human participants in studies that are conducted.

Description of Sampling and Sampling Techniques

The questions to be answered in the study included the following: “What are the expectations held by higher education institutions for special needs students transitioning into local community colleges?”, “What curricula exist within WTHS that target instruction in the transition skills, necessary for students to learn in preparation for successful transition into college programs?”, and “What programs exist at WTHS that support the transition of special needs students from high school to post-secondary education settings?” The survey included both open and closed ended questions and was distributed to members of the learning community to target answers to the questions in the study. The survey was developed by the Intern.

The plan implemented included the gathering of data and material culture for the time period beginning from July 2004- February of 2005. Research was gathered and information collected through the use of the internet, books, and WTHS materials through the months of the study. These books included: “Transition Planning for

Secondary Students with Disabilities” and “Transition Assessment-Wise Practice for Quality Lives.”

Material culture was reviewed which included: Federal and State Laws (“FERPA, IDEA, “504” Plans and the ADA, local district policies), IRB requirements for surveys, a Co-teaching Workshop packet for ICS teachers (Marilyn Friend), the IEP protocol, a *Department of Special Services Manual* from a local community college, and the *WTHS Curriculum Guide*.

Discussions were held with a “504” Officer to bridge the gap between the college and the high school staff in meeting the needs of students for college preparation. A survey was completed by the participants which included opened and closed ended questions to assist in answering the questions asked in the study.

Description of Data Collection Approach

The project data collection began by asking questions to a “504” Officer. Discussion was held with a “504” Officer to gain a perspective of the collegial view, regarding the preparation of special needs students for college. A survey was used that was developed by the intern and approved by the IRB. The survey included both open and close ended questions. The questions used in the discussions were not planned. The information and responses were recorded through notes for discussions. Discussions were held for a duration of 1.5 to 3 hours each. Data was gathered and material culture collected, shared, recorded, and reviewed.

One of the goals of the project was to bridge the gap between a college and the high school, with regards to the improvement of communication between the two institutions. Discussions were held and information gathered related to the following:

the admissions of special needs students to college; basic skills testing; supports offered to students with disabilities at the college level; courses offered at the college level to address the needs of students with disabilities; skills recognized to be further developed at the high school level by the college; FERPA laws and the release of information; information needed by the college from the high school for documentation of a disability; self determination, self-advocacy, and study skills; curricula and course offerings at the high school and college level; differences between the IEP accommodations and modifications offered at the high school level and the “504” accommodations offered; parental expectations and the enabling of students; and setting realistic goals and expectations for students at the high school level for transition after graduation.

Participation also occurred in monthly and eventually bi-weekly with focus group meetings which began in October for three months with the special education teachers, a CST member, and the District Transition Team. The purpose of the meetings was to consult, gatherer, and share information with members of the groups. The information was recorded through note-taking. There was an open exchange of ideas and concerns. Focus group discussions were held related to material culture from both the high school and the college with participants to gather information regarding supports, programs, and curricula at WTHS that support the development of skills necessary for special needs students to successfully transition from high school to a post-secondary college setting.

Description and Design of the Research Instrument

A survey was developed by the researcher, as the research instrument used in the study. It was distributed to the participants to gather information and feedback related to special needs supports, curricula and programs offered at the high school level in WTHS.

The survey design included both open and closed ended statements and questions. The close ended questions allowed data to be gathered which is qualitative related to issues and concerns. The open-ended questions were also used in the survey which allowed the respondents to have unlimited choices for their answers and allowed for a more accurate sense of what the respondents were actually thinking. The survey targeted members of the child study team, special and regular education teachers, supervisors, administrators, and guidance counselors. Specific information was gathered related to the colleges. The questions were developed to illicit information which would assist in answering the questions posed in the study in determining, whether or not special needs students were being prepared to successfully transition into a post-secondary education college setting.

Description of the Data Analysis Plan

An analysis of the material culture and data was conducted on an ongoing basis, throughout the action research study for materials, a survey, focus group discussions, and notes documented at meetings. A data analysis of the staff surveys was performed for the participants, who completed the survey, regarding the questions related to the transition of special needs students to a post-secondary college setting. Questions and statements were designed to address various groups which included, supervisors and administrators, teachers (regular and special education), guidance counselors, child study team members, and a “504” Officer. The answers given on the survey were analyzed. Information was gathered from more than one perspective related to the transition of special needs students to post-secondary college settings, providing greater depth and dimension to the study. Qualitative techniques were used to collect information and

were analyzed for the purpose of this study. The information was broken into component parts to be understood and answer the questions posed through the study.

Chapter 4

Presentation of Research Findings

Presentation of Data

A number of students at WTHS, classified and receiving special education services under IDEA, are preparing for transition from high school with a goal to attend college. The majority of special needs students begin their college experiences in local community colleges; however, some students enter directly into four-year colleges, upon graduation from high school. Several students are successful and complete their studies in a two-year college and then transfer to a four-year college. Others students are not successful and exit college within the first or second year of attendance.

The goal of WTHS is to adequately prepare special needs students, who have the ability to attend college, for transition to a post secondary college setting. A seamless transition is the goal for students. This goal will be reached through student preparation in our programs with the ultimate being mastery of curricula objectives offered at the high school which support their transition. The goal for successful transition of special needs students can only be attained through a team effort, which includes parents and students, as team members, as well as, professional staff. Realistic goals and expectations for transition must also be determined for students before graduation. A connective bridge must also be fostered with the colleges to ensure the success of these students. Students must be guided to take courses which prepare them for their paths chosen for transition, whether the students' goals are to prepare them to enter the

military; a college setting, complete vocational training, or enter directly into the workforce after graduation from high school.

The process to prepare students to enter college begins long before students complete the application process in junior or senior year of high school. Courses taken by students for college entrance must be outlined, upon entrance into high school from the middle school level. Skills must be developed in reading, writing, and mathematics and applied and mastered by students in high school, before entering college. These skills are not the only skills that must be developed. Skills such as, advocacy and self-determination must be developed and applied in the high school and transferred into the college setting. Students must be aware of their disabilities and strengths. They must be able to articulate them at the college level. The mastery of these skills and preparation of our students will assist in ensuring the success of a greater number of students at the post-secondary level of education in a college setting.

Through meetings held, it was mentioned that all students do not choose to declare their disability at the college level. The college application does not contain questions, regarding whether or not the student has special needs. All students are accepted at the community college level, regardless of their special needs. The student has to decide to make a choice whether or not to declare their special needs.

Special education students, who were supported under IDEA in high school, upon graduation, are no longer covered under IDEA and the Federal Law. Special education, as it was known by parents and students at the compulsory education level's door, is closed and a new door is opened under the ADA, American Disabilities Act, for those who choose to declare their disability. The college staff makes a decision together with the

student with proper documentation, regarding the services a student will receive at the college.

Through the Federal laws, *the American Disabilities Act of 1990* and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, colleges must offer supportive and assistive adaptive technology to students with disabilities and determine what services are needed, if any, for students, who have been previously classified under IDEA, the *Individual with Disabilities Education Act*, in high school or had a “504” plan. These students, who are identified, have a documented disability. The college staff requests proof of the disability from the LEA, when a student declares his or her special needs. Upon receipt of this information, an interview is scheduled between the student and college staff member for discussion regarding the student’s disability.

Students are protected under the *Family Education Rights and Privacy Act*, FERPA. All educational records are private, and cannot be shared with the college, unless the adult student signs a release form allowing the college representative to request records from the high school to document the disability. The documents requested may include, but not be limited to, a student’s IEP (Individualized Education Program), the most recent learning, psychological, psychiatric, and neurological evaluations, and or a social history, a prescription, an audiogram, a letter from a doctor, or other legal documents, which clearly state a diagnosis for the student. The psychological is often seen as the most important evaluation requested, documenting the student’s ability level. This information is needed by the college for use during the student interview. The college will have information to assist in the determination of the need for services for students at the college level. Once this information is obtained, discussion can be held,

along with an interview. A “504” plan can be determined, if deemed necessary, by the college professionals.

Those students, who do not declare their disability, may find themselves experiencing difficulty in a course, and it is only at that point, that the student may realize the need to declare his or her special needs at the college level. Often times, it is not the student, that declares his or her need for support, but a friend, who may speak in confidence to members of the staff to try to get the student to declare his or her disability with the hopes of assisting a friend. The “peer” with special needs may be encouraged to speak to his or her “friend” in order to assist the student in coming forward to receive support.

The teachers will also begin to see a pattern in the classroom of problems with students and their learning. This can lead to the opening of a discussion, which can lead a student to disclose his or her learning difficulties. The need for college assistance is declared at that point. The student will then complete several forms in with the “504” Officer and schedule an interview with the college staff in the special needs department.

In discussions held with a “504” Officer a great deal of information was gathered from a college perspective, regarding the preparation of special needs students for college. A strong connection does not exist for collaboration between the colleges and the high schools, regarding the special needs students in high school and college preparation programs. Each institution has its own set of rules, standards, and curricula. The two institutions at the post secondary and secondary level must continue to work in closer proximity to ensure that all special needs students are successful in their transition to college. There are several “strong” contacts made between the college and high

schools, but the majority of contacts are not “strong and steady”. Also, guidance plays an important role in preparing students for college. Some guidance counselors in high school are more involved with special education students than others. At times there may be a turnover of staff, such as counselors and CST members, which breaks the relationship connection between the two schools.

Recruitment and preparation for the colleges begins initially at the high school level. Many families and students have a totally unrealistic notion about what their sons’ and daughters’ abilities are and what options are available to them given their abilities. Some students do not have the ability to complete an academic curriculum and should be exploring other options at the high school level. There should be realistic transition plans and goals developed.

In order to prepare students for a successful college experience, high schools should observe the courses chosen by seniors and their activities, when planning for their last year at the high school. Some students are engaged in taking too many general electives in their senior year. Special needs students need to take more courses that prepare them for college senior year. There should also be basic skills reinforcement and remedial classes offered to students at the high school level for those, who have not mastered the basic skills throughout the first 3 years of high school. Even though students take the HSPA and make “Proficiency” levels, some students enter the colleges and fail one or more of the basic skills tests when taken for entrance into the college.

All students are required to take Basic Skills Tests in reading, writing, and math. The courses taken during senior year should be more intensive and academically oriented. High school staff should revisit skills that aren’t achieved at the high school

levels. These skills are some of the very basic skills that must be learned for success at the college level.

The majority of students have not developed advocacy skills by the time they graduate from high school. At the college level and high school level, the lack of advocacy skills becomes an issue and problem. Students need be aware of their strengths and weaknesses. They must be able to articulate this information to college personnel. If they don't have this knowledge in high school, it is highly unlikely that they have the knowledge at the college level.

Through information gathered, the majority of special needs students do not know what their strengths and weaknesses are when leaving high school. Parents often attempt to speak for students, when questions are asked at the college level in the interviews. If a student is asked a question, regarding his strengths and weaknesses, typically the parent of a special needs student will respond, not the student. These parents have been answering for their sons and daughters for a very long time. This behavior enables the student because they are not allowing them to become advocates for themselves. The college staff will be looking for the answer to questions from the student and not the parent. In situations where the parent is an enabler, a question will be posed again, directly to the student to assist the student in developing advocacy skills. An answer is expected from the student, not his or her parents, with regards to his strengths and weaknesses.

Students need to develop more responsibility and discipline at the high school level and at home. Some parents have been enabling students, which does not prepare them for success in college. At the college levels students can become lost "souls" at the

college level, if they have become enabled and were not given responsibility throughout their lives both at home and in school.

Students should plan to visit colleges, earlier than junior year of high school. They should begin to search for colleges that will meet their special needs. Students need to be made aware of exactly what services the college has to offer and how the college will be able to address their special needs.

Also, transition meetings should occur more often than one time per year at high schools. Generally the high school staff meets with students in grade 11 to prepare for college in the spring. This one time meeting for approximately 30 minutes is not enough time to thoroughly develop a sound transition plan. More time is necessary for developing sound transition plans at meetings.

Consideration must be given to the fact that transition begins long before students enter into the high school. The middle school plays a vital role in the preparation of students for transition to the high school setting. The courses taken in middle school set the student on a path in high school which can lead to either a two-year or four-year path for college. The preparation of students at the high school level in preparation for college should be a “fine tuning” and application of skills.

The process for special education needs to be demystified, so students can have a better understanding of their disability. Teachers, guidance counselors and CST members can assist student understanding of their disabilities, strengths and weaknesses, and ways to compensate for their disabilities. Support from members of these groups will assist students in developing advocacy skills and developing a true understanding of their disability when attempting to communicate this information at the college level.

Study skills are not sufficiently developed, when students enter into college, such as time-management and test taking skills. Students need to be more organized at the college level. They need to be able to prepare ahead of time for projects and assignments. They need to know how to set aside time to study in their daily schedules.

Special needs students in high schools need to be given additional homework in high school, especially if they are in Resource Centers. Much more homework is given to students at the college level. If students given small amounts of homework in high school, they will not be prepared to complete college assignments. When students enter into college, they should at least be at the stage of working independently. Through homework, students can monitor and review that which they were taught in school. They can also receive assistance at home from a family member or a friend. At the college level, a course is offered to students named, Introduction to College Studies. This course assists student success at the college level.

In reviewing and discussing Bloom's Taxonomy, students should be at the higher levels of the Taxonomy and be able to apply what they have learned, when they attend college. There should be a minimal level of understanding that is not one of remediation. Specific skill development should occur at all levels of education and be mastered by the student, then applied at the college level.

There are concerns that parents are placing too much emphasis on extra curricular activities at the high school level to the point where children have a lack of sleep. This directly affects their performance in high school and ability to learn. Students need to balance their time and activities between school and work at the high school level. Too much pressure is felt by some high school students with an emphasis on work and

earning money. Some students work too many hours, directly affecting their ability to concentrate in school. The focus in high school can not be on a student job. Their concentration and efforts must be on their academic performance in high school.

When entering into college, some students disclose their disabilities and others do not, until they experience difficulty at the college level. Often times these students are at critical points in the course and disclosure of their disability prior to the crisis point would have assisted them in being able to have a plan for their disability. The Professor would have also have had a better understanding on how to work with these students. The Professor would understand why they were having difficulty in the first place, if students declared their disability when entering into college. Child Study teams and other professional staff at the high school should speak with students, regarding this issue and encourage students to consider the pluses of disclosure of the disability, so that students understand what may happen should they choose not to disclose. The decision to disclose is, however, the decision of the adult student.

Once a plan is prepared for students at the college level, they may receive the following supportive services which include: Advisement, advocacy, note takers, readers, scribes, interpreters for the deaf, test taking with additional time, and test taking in separate areas. Assistive Technology may be used at the college level which includes: Alpha Smarts, Books on Tape, Braille printers on selected computers, Calculators that “talk”, Dragon Dictates, Electronic dictionaries, thesauruses, JAWS, Kurzweil Readers, large screens, tape recorders, teletypewriters for the Deaf, and voice synthesizers (Department of Special Services Student Manual). Students are offered support, through

the LRC Learning Resource Center, in an instructional center room for tutoring and report writing at some colleges.

It is important for parents and students to understand that they will not get all of the modifications and accommodations provided in the IEP, under IDEA, under a “504” Plan at the college. Students are expected to meet the same responsibilities, to enroll in the same classes, to use the same services, as any student at the colleges. The colleges do not provide a “program” or “segregated” special education classes. Curriculums are not modified and students are expected to complete the same requirements, as students without a disability (Department of Special Services Student Manual). The purpose of a “504” plan is to place the disabled student on an even playing field at the college with other students, who are not disabled.

Regarding discussions held regarding curricula at the college level, all students must take the Basic Skills Tests in reading, writing and mathematics, for placement in various levels of remediation, if necessary, based on their scores. The students are administered the COMPASS Test. This is an un-timed computer test. Students with a documented learning or physical disability, who are prevented from taking the test under standard conditions, may request a special administration schedule to meet their needs (Department of Special Services Student Manual). Students are placed in classes based on the results of their test. There are three levels of courses in reading and writing and two levels in mathematics. The majority of our special needs students have a non-pass rate in Elementary Algebra at one community college. Just because students pass the HSPA it doesn’t necessarily mean that the student will pass the Basic Skills Test in

college. Those disabled students, who do not make progress in the Basic Skills classes repeat remediation courses, do not generally remain at the college.

A survey was administered to the “504” Officer to gather and share additional information on how we at the high school can support the successful transition of special needs students to college. The “504” Officer’s responses were as follows:

- Have the students plan an active role in the development of their IEP and any and all conferencing that occurs. Encourage students to state what their needs are and ask questions, regarding their general, as well as, special education programs that they have been involved in at the high school level. In some cases, parents will need to be counseled and or advised to not speak for their child.
- It has been our experience that most students, who come to us for services are not aware of their specific learning disability. They do not understand it, can’t articulate it, and many cases don’t even know the classification of the phrase “learning disability”, much less what type of learning disability and how it affects their learning and how they can best remediate and ameliorate its consequences. Parents also need to be orientated to the special needs of their child and significant parent training needs to occur, so that parents can facilitate best learning practices within their student-child.
- Students should be able to clearly express what their specific disability is, their strengths and weaknesses and how it may relate to their learning and what they can do to minimize any negative consequences and maximize

the inherent strengths which each of them possess. Additional time needs to be set aside to meet with students and families to discuss testing outcomes and their implications, and what it means in terms of their learning, as well as, other aspects of their life. We find that families also possess a lack of meaningful understanding and are unable to assist in their own child's personal understanding.

- The transition plan is not detailed adequately and students and families are not given a realistic understanding of the differences between the special education program (IEP plan), that they received in high school and how it differs with the type of services, which they will be eligible for in a post-secondary educational setting. In high school there is a full program of special education supports which occur automatically throughout the high school students' day or year, as opposed to a post-secondary setting, where no special education supports will be provided; unless the students disclose their disability, establish their eligibility, and become the primary participant in accessing a limited number of services.
- In improving the IEP transition plan, students and families need to be made aware that there are no academic and program exemptions given at the higher education level based upon disability. Students are going to be held to the same academic measures and standards as any other student. There is no special education college degree. There is much misunderstanding amongst students and families on this point. Realizing the new IDEA changes and requirements, we believe that the transition

plan development needs to begin early in the Sophomore year of high school with the development of an initial life vocational/post-secondary plan which will ensure that the student will be challenged to the best of their abilities-fully developing their potential for learning and future success. This plan needs to receive the full participation of both the student and family with at least semi-annual reviews, as to the progress (or lack of progress) towards the achievement of the plan's goals and objectives. Strategies must fully challenge each student and timely modifications must occur to take advantage of every opportunity for the student to realize their full potential.

- In order for the high school and staff to better prepare our special needs students for college entrance and success, there needs to be a better communication instrument between college and high school students to prepare them. Math is also not required in senior year and since they don't "use it"; they often "lose it". Senior year must be better utilized by requiring students to take college prep courses. There is an opportunity in the senior year of high school for colleges to provide instruction to seniors to be better prepared for college and to prepare for the Basic Skills Tests.
- Students need to improve their class listening and note taking skills; improve homework and study skills; better manage their time and prioritize tasks to be accomplished; instill in them independence and the ability to speak for themselves; have a realistic job development plan and the skills required to achieve it, prior to entering college; take remedial

classes in reading, writing and math, during their senior year and take the placement tests early in their senior year, while high school remediation is still possible.

- The expectations held by higher education institutions for students transitioning into the colleges includes: Students must have the ability to speak for themselves and to independently negotiate the enrollment and registration process to the best of their ability with minimum supports. Students need to understand that parents can no longer speak/advocate for them as the primary, but that they themselves must self-advocate. Parents can certainly be involved in a supportive role, however, federal law does not allow for college personnel to discuss a student with a parent without the student present.
- Students should have learned how to access all potential resource and support services, such as tutoring and should bring commitment and persistence to do so. Students should realize that higher education demands more time, effort and homework requirements for each hour of instruction than they were required to provide for an hour of instruction at the secondary level. Students coming to college need to be as directed and self-starting, as possible.
- The college needs certain information from the high school Child Study Teams. In addition to a full IEP document, the staff at the college needs the full evaluations that establish and document eligibility under ADA, such as a Psychological, Neurological, Psychiatric, etc. as deemed

appropriate. A full listing of all specific accommodations which the student has been receiving must be included in the documentation of the secondary educational agencies evaluations.

- Regarding testing services at the college, all testing services necessary to establish eligibility for a learning disability under ADA for higher education may be provided with a very minimum co-payment assessed to the student in the amount of \$125. Testing is not a mandated service at the higher education level and it is provided on an as-funding-allows basis. During recent years, funding has only allowed for a very minimum number of eligible applicants to be tested through this New Jersey State/College funding mechanism. Any and all medical evaluation costs associated with any type of disability must be funded exclusively by the student.

According to the survey responses, the communication between the high schools and the local community colleges must be expanded to bring together a continued working relationship, which will assist in expanding students' abilities to support their success in college. There is still a good deal of work to be completed by all professionals, as well as, the parents and students themselves in student preparation for a successful transition into a college setting.

Based on discussions, meetings held, review of materials, and a survey conducted at the high school information was gathered. At the high school level, all students are entitled to *FAPE*, A Free and Appropriate Education. Special needs students were placed in the Least Restrictive Environment, based on their individual needs. A greater number

of special needs students at the high school level participated within in-class-support classes, rather than RC (resource center), or SC (self-contained) classes. A greater number of classified students are choosing to attend college. All students were instructed in regular education curriculums, except students in the self-contained learning disabled classrooms. There are two teachers in the classroom involved in a co-teaching model to assist in meeting the needs of all students. One of these teachers is a certified regular education teacher in the content area subject. The other teacher is a certified special education teacher. Both teachers assist the regular and special education students with instruction for success through a co-teaching model. The instructional staff has also been trained in Differentiating Instruction, Learning Styles, and Multiple Intelligences in order to meet the learning needs of diversified students in the classroom.

Through the *No Child Left Behind Act*, and the reauthorization of Special Education, higher expectations were set for special needs students. Teachers are held accountable for the achievements of all students both regular and special education. In addressing this mandate, one of the delivery methods used at WTHS to reach all students is based on co-teaching, as an inclusive practice. Workshops were held for teachers on training for co-teaching principals, practices, and pragmatics with Marilyn Friend from the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. The goal of the workshop was to allow participants an opportunity to explore co-teaching, as an approach to the delivery of services in the classroom for all students, regardless of their needs to learn successfully.

In previous years, ICS support was offered five times per week for all ICS courses, which included even the College Prep Courses. Within the past two years, a new perspective had been discussed and implemented with regards to ICS courses. It was

believed that the continuance of ICS support through senior year would enable students, rather than teach them to be independent and responsible in developing compensatory strategies of their own to be successful when transitioning from the high school. In order to wean students from support given five times per week in an in-class-support, the staff implemented in-class-support two times per week to support successful transition for certain college prep courses. The discussion was held regarding the enabling of students, who continuously receive ICS support year after year, 5 times a week when entering into grade 9 and continuing through grade 12. The present belief is that students must be weaned from ICS to the point of extinction with support being offered by other means.

In the upcoming year, a CP Study Skills course will be reinstated to instruct students in study skills in preparation for transition to college for those students involved in CP "A" level or advanced level course. It will be a requirement for these students, if they need support. An after school class which supports students in being successful in the college bound courses is also offered but not required.

The fact remains, however, that the same support (ICS) will not be received in the college setting. Students will have one teacher in the classroom, as their instructor. Accommodations offered at the high school level will not be offered at the college level. While participating in annual review meetings, the perspective has been taken by the IEP team members, that it is in the best interest of students to gradually wean them from the ICS support and certain accommodations and modifications. The bottom line is that students will not receive the same accommodations at the college level. This information is shared with students and parents.

In reviewing the description of courses in the WTHS Curricula Guide, all content area subjects provide instruction in core-content curriculum standards to assist students in meeting academic goals in preparation for transition to college. The terms self-advocacy and self-determination skills were not specifically mentioned in the curriculum guides reviewed. In discussions held with professional staff, those skills are taught informally through the teachers and staff, as a natural part of student development.

A Spring Fair was organized in 2005 to expose students to various college personnel and programs, in order to assist in their choosing the college that matches their needs socially, emotionally, and academically. All students and parents were given the opportunity to attend this college fair. Through discussions held with a “504” Officer, the invitation was extended for the Officer to participate in the college fair. This invitation was extended, as an effort to assist in building a bridge for communication between the college officials and the high school with regards to special education students, who plan on attending college. The goal is for continued teamwork amongst all stakeholders to continue to open the lines of communication.

A survey was given to regular and special education teachers, guidance counselors, Child Study Team members and Supervisors to gather information regarding the preparation of special need students transitioning into college. Based on question number one and the total number of people surveyed (n=25), there were five guidance counselors surveyed. Three of them returned the survey. Five special education teachers were surveyed. Four of them returned and completed the survey. Six Child Study team members were surveyed. All six CST members returned and completed the survey. Four Department Supervisors were surveyed. Three returned and completed the survey. Five

regular education teachers were surveyed. Four of the teachers returned and completed the survey. The results of the survey for the participants, who returned the open and closed ended survey questions, were as follows:

- #2 Eleven participants checked that they attended workshops related to the preparation of special needs students for transition into a college setting. Nine of the participants reported that they hadn't participated in any workshops.
- #3 Five participants checked that they did not participate in the development of transition plans for special needs students. Fifteen participants had formally participated in the development of transition plans by participating in IEP meetings.
- #4 Five participants never discussed transition planning with students, five discussed student transition plans one time each year. Nine participants discussed the transition plans with students two or more times per year and one person wrote, "It depends on the age of the student."
- #5 Eleven participants checked that they were not familiar with books in the professional library related to transition planning. Nine of the participants wrote information stating, "There was a collection in the guidance department", "Used my own Books", "Books should be updated", and two participants mentioned the names of two of the books that they were familiar with in the library.
- #6 Six participants checked that they had been trained with regards to the modifications and accommodations allowed by ETS on standardized testing

for students with disabilities. Fourteen participants responded that they were never trained in this area.

- #7 Twelve participants were familiar with DVRS and DDD. Eight participants were not familiar with these state agencies.
- #8 Eight participants checked that they had participated in the in-service training, regarding information related to the state agencies DDD and DVRS.
- #9 Ten participants checked that the development of self-advocacy skills was supported through the curricula. Other participants wrote the following: “Involve students in real life situations”; “Personal guidance/skills are poorly developed”; “One-on-one conversations”; “In the classroom and at home, parents should encourage an active role”; “Through IEP collaboration”; “No formal training or programs”; and “We don’t develop these skills, the special education curricula does not prepare them”.
- #10 Seventeen participants checked that students were made aware of their strengths and weaknesses, regarding their disabilities at the formal IEP meetings. One person left the answer blank. Eleven participants checked the area in the classroom and overlapped with two checks for an answer. Eleven checked other and stated the following: “Through guidance sessions/parents/conferences/repeat, review, progress, communicate”; “Through family discussions/standardized tests/activities, clubs, hobbies”; “Through readings/brief side bars when returning tests and assignments”; and “One-on-one with an ICS teacher”.

- #11 Nineteen participants checked that students are made aware of strategies that they can learn to use in the classroom, despite their disabilities at formal IEP meetings. Thirteen participants checked “other” and the IEP meetings. One participant didn’t give a response. Several of those who responded “other” gave the following answers: “Assemblies and in-services”; “In the classroom”; “Through reminders during class”; “At counseling sessions”; “Teachers formal and informal observations”; “Conferencing in the classroom”; “Individual communication of strategies taught in the classroom/ICS”; “Evaluation of areas where students have found success and hone in on them”; “Families need to talk with students and parents need to evaluate, if college is an appropriate choice.”; “Use a variety of techniques that ensure success in the classroom, but I don’t make them aware of any strategies”; and “Usually in brief side bars, perhaps when returning tests or assignments at the desk-side or in the IMC.”
- #12 Six of the participants checked, that parents and students were educated about the law in IRT team meetings with respect to ADA and IDEA. Fourteen participants checked that they were educated through the Child Study Team. One participant didn’t give an answer. Three participants checked that they didn’t know. One person wrote that parents and students are educated, through SEPTO and SPAN.
- #13 Thirteen participants checked that they were involved in workshops within the past two years related to the ADA and IDEA. Seven participants checked that that had not been to any workshops related to ADA and IDEA.

- #14 Five participants believed that the present IEP's transition plan is an adequately written plan to prepare students for transition. Eleven participants believed that the transition plans in IEPs were not adequate plans. One participants wrote, "Yes and No." One participant wrote, "NA." Another participant was "Not sure". One participant left the answer blank.
- #15 Participants recommendations for the improvement of transition plans were as follow: "Be more specific about the steps necessary for transition"; "Spend more time periodically meeting for transition throughout the year"; "Have additional training"; and "On page five of the IEP transition plan, list the courses of study in transition tracks. Parents need to see it and plan for it"; and "Provide informational brochures, facts, for students to take with them in IEP meetings."
- #16 Fifteen participants believe that IEP accommodation and modifications listed on pages 10 and 11 do not adequately prepare students for transition from high school to a post secondary college setting. Four participants believe that the accommodations and modifications listed on those pages do prepare special needs students for transition to college. One participant checked both, "Yes and No."
- #17 Participants were asked to give recommendations for changes, regarding the IEP and the preparation of special needs students for success when transitioning to college. The following recommendations were made: "Some modifications with some students should be last rather than the first resort"; "When implemented....some strategies should be phased out, lest

they become permanent crutches.”; “Give suggestions to colleges about what would help students.”; “Have a more in depth plan”; “We need to have an IEP that builds responsibility in students, who want to go to college. Some of the accommodations and modifications used in high school will not work in a college setting”; Parents must be more realistic about where their child is transitioning to”; “Stress a more active role for parents.”; “More student interaction with guidance and teachers”; “If students plan on attending college, the IEP should have a check-off list of skills required for successful transition planning for college. Special education teachers should know from documentation in the IEP that the child is planning to attend college and prepare the students toward achieving the skills.”; “Let’s not mislead students that a 4 year college is an option without the academic unit requirements. The courses that carry academic units usually are not on the IEP.”; “Begin earlier to wean students from services, unless they are absolutely necessary.”; “Encourage more self-sufficiency.”; and “Changes need to be developed with college professionals input, so it prepares them better for services.”

- #18 Participants were asked if they believed that the IEP was seen as a “working document” for special needs students in transition. The following were several of the responses: “No, as it exists, it fulfills paper documentation requirements. True preparation comes with time and commitment/later sessions.”; “No, it is far too generic.”; “Yes, it’s used during counseling sessions and group conferences.”; “No, the IEP contains a minimum amount of information, regarding transitioning and is used to meet

the individual education needs for high school. It does not address the changing needs of college.”; “Yes, use information to focus on strengths that the student has demonstrated.”; “Yes, it must evolve and change, according to student’s progress.”; “It’s useful for opening up an ongoing discussion about a student’s future plans. Its also helpful to have DDD and DVRS introduced.”; “Yes, constant revisions are made to address their needs.”; “Yes, I read them at the beginning of each school year to make the necessary adjustments according to the plan.”; “No, again I feel that it is not realistic for a college setting and a student in transition.”; “No, work like everyone else for transition/no different than regular ed”; and “Yes, it describes a view of the student’s needs. The colleges need to take over at that point.”

- #19 Seventeen participants did not received any training related to FERPA. Three participants have been involved in training related to FERPA.
- #20 Fourteen of the participants developed “504” plans. Six of the participants never developed a “504” plan.
- #21 Eight participants were instructors in the ICS classroom. Twelve of the participants were not ICS instructors.
- #22 The group of participants checked that seven of them had experiences being ICS teachers, five of them were only teaching regular education. One person was not longer an ICS teacher but had been one in the past. Seven other participants were involved as guidance counselors and CST members.
- #23 Nine of the participants believed, that ICS classes prepare special needs students for college. Eight participants believed that the ICS classes did not

prepare these students for college. One participant wrote, “N/A.” Another participant left the answer blank, and yet another wrote, “Not able to answer.”

- #24 Ten participants checked that they had received training within the past two years, as an ICS teacher. They were trained through the following means: “In-services related to working with special education students”; “Received hand-on training on the job”; “Workshops on the roles of team teaching”; “Multiple Intelligence workshops”; “Co-teacher workshops”; and “BERC workshops”. Five participants wrote that this question was, “NA” for them. Two participants wrote that they received, “No.” training. One person wrote that they didn’t teach ICS any longer, because it was not offered at the college prep and advance placement level.
- #25 When asked if participants were familiar with specific courses and curricula at the high school, that prepares special needs students for a successful transition to college, six participants left the answer blank. One wrote a “?” mark. Another participant wrote, “N/A”. Four participants wrote that they were familiar with “None”. Eleven of the participants wrote the following: study skills, attending the ninth period course, CP courses and higher, lower level courses for two year colleges, Independent Living Skills, Consumerism, Co-op training at job sites, and SAT Prep courses.
- #26 When asked if the participants had ever been a member of a transition team at the high school level, 13 participants checked that they had not been a member of the team. Seven participants checked that they had participated on a transition team. One person left the answer blank.

- #27 When asked how the high school and staff can better prepare our special needs students for college entrance and success, the majority of the participants gave the following answers: “More independence and self-advocacy skills, learning to access resources”; “The high school and staff are limited due to the students’ disabilities. Continue with the basic skills that will make the students succeed”; “Don’t enable, give more responsibility, develop advocacy skills in students”; “Develop study skills”; “More communication with other staff members about the special needs students and their future plans”; “First set-up an Ad Hoc Committee that will survey the community colleges, as to what skills our graduates are weak in. Generally high schools can develop skills for special education students going into college by promoting and monitoring independent reading and writing and studying curricula.”; “Use the two-year college, as a stepping stone.”; “Any student regardless of his or her disability with a strong work ethic and the desire to attend college can be successful at the college level. For some, beginning at a two- year college, would be a better option.”; “Organization-time management”; “Less spoon feeding”; “How to be responsible for their own materials, how to say what they want and need”; “Study skills, test taking, time-management, reading and writing improvement”; and “Special needs or not-study skills, basic skills”. Two participants left the answer blank. 1 participant wrote, “NA”. Another participant wrote a, “?”.
- #28 Participants were asked, if they were aware of the accommodations that were allowed in the colleges for students, who had previously been

classified in high school. Thirteen participants were familiar with those accommodations allowed at the colleges. Five participants were not aware of the colleges' accommodations. One participant wrote, "Yes and No, depending on the school". Another participant wrote that the accommodations vary with each college.

- #29 When asked if the participants were familiar with workshops that were available for students and parents to assist in the preparation of special needs students, when transitioning to a college setting, five gave no answer. Three participants placed a question mark in the answer. Three participants wrote, "None". One participant wrote that he or she was, "Not privy to that information". Eight participants answered with the following: "Special-Needs parent night"; "Individual student parent conferences with counselors and or case managers, college fair in April"; "The workshops for admissions and financial aide are the same for all students."; "SEPTO addresses those needs, I believe. Child study team members' advice toward transitioning during exit IEP meetings."; financial aide, GCC presentation and college fair"; and "Roles at an IEP meeting, co-teaching with an ICS teacher".
- #30 Participants believed that the following skills needed to be developed at the high school level for our special needs students: "Independence, self-advocacy, learning to access resources that are available"; "Responsibility and accountability on the students' part. Part of going to college is becoming your own person and becoming independent."; "Organization, note-taking, writing and oral communication skills"; "Study skills, self advocacy,

responsibility and maturity”; “Able to function independently, study skills, on the job training skills, communication abilities to be improved”; “Independence, time-management, self-advocacy”; “Reading and writing skills need to be on level with college instruction. Life skills need to be taught, along with a mandatory study skills course.”; “More independent work habits”; “Writing skills, higher math skills, logic, reading, and note-taking, study skills, time-management”; “Organization, time-management, determination”; “Self-advocacy, personal learning style”; “Their parents need to be made aware that they cannot speak or advocate for their children. The student must do that for themselves.”; “How to do more for themselves, how to speak for themselves more.”; “Study skills, test-taking, time-management, reading and writing improvement”; and “A realistic assessment, self and otherwise, of suitable career goals”.

It is interesting to note that 20 out of 25 members of the WTHS staff, who were given the survey, completed and returned a 30 questions survey with both open ended and closed ended questions. The number returned, the time taken by each person to answer the survey, and the answers given, indicate the dedication of the WTHS staff and a college professional, to bring change for the improvement of instruction and programs at WTHS for all students.

Interpretation of Data

The study was designed to answer the following questions: “What are the expectations held by higher education institutions for special needs students transitioning into local community colleges?”, “What curricula exist or don’t exist within WTHS that

target instruction in the development of the transition skills, necessary for students to preparation for successful transition into college programs?”, and “What programs exist at the WTHS that support the transition of special needs students from high school to post-secondary education settings?” A survey was developed with both open and closed ended questions and distributed to members of the learning community to target answers to the questions in the study. As a result of this study, a bridge was created between a “504” Officer from with a community college staff member and a WTHS Child Study Team member, as a liaison between the high school and the community college. This bridge allowed an open line of communication and collaboration between a post-secondary institution representative and a high school representative of the special needs population. Ideas and information were shared to ensure student success and the development of those skills necessary for success in a post-secondary setting. This bridge of communication allowed the professionals to work together and not autonomously to create change. Meetings and discussions were held with the “504” Officer to gather information and share experiences related to preparing special needs students for success in the college setting. This information can now be shared and used by the high school staff for the improvement of teacher training and student instruction and programs. This information shared between the two parties was based on the college staff member’s experiences in working with special needs students for over 30 years and the Child Study team member’s experiences of 24 years in the Special Education profession from WTHS.

The data and findings from the study suggested that the Washington Township High School staff and the college officials are dedicated to ensuring the improvement of instruction and preparation for special needs students to a college setting. A bridge was

established which opened the lines of communications between the two institutions. One institution cannot work without when it comes to promoting the success of our students to be productive citizens in society. The final chapter of the thesis will discuss conclusions and recommendations based on the findings.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications, and Further Study

Conclusions and Implications

As more and more special needs students attend college after graduation, high school and college staff members view the need to bridge the communication gap between the two institutions. These collaborative efforts will enable the organizations to work together to preparing special needs students for success in post-secondary education college settings. The preparation of these students is a team effort that cannot be accomplished, if the two academic bodies work autonomously. A connective bridge must continue to be constructed between secondary and higher education personnel.

There are students, who are successful after their first year of college. There are also those students, who leave college after the first year, due to a lack of preparation and the development of the skills necessary to be successful at the college level. A large number of students are not prepared to meet the demands of the college curricula and setting. The result is a significant drop out rate for special needs students. Many of these students are also in need of additional preparation to be successful in the workforce. Realistic goals and expectations must be set for transition for all students based on their interests and abilities.

The preparation for transition does not begin at the high school level. The track taken in the middle school paves the wave for students to enter into either a 2 or 4 year college. Preparation for successful transition must be considered at all levels of a

student's education. Basic skills must be mastered in reading, writing, and mathematics, if students are to be successful in post-secondary education settings. Students must enter college with at least a minimal level of understanding. This level of understanding should not be one of remediation. The reality is that students are entering college at levels of remediation in basic skills. Based on the results of the basic skills tests, students were placed in remediation courses. These skills should have been addressed and mastered at the high school level. There are 2 math and 3 reading and writing remediation levels at one of the local community colleges. Students must register for additional courses geared toward the remediation of weaknesses in high school during their junior and senior year. Some students should elect to register for remediation courses to be taken in the last of high school before entering college.

The college special needs staff requires complete documentation of records for special needs students. At the college level, a participant stated that the psychological evaluation was one of the most important evaluations needed by the college. The psychological evaluation documented the student's cognitive ability level. IEPs are required to be sent to document the accommodations and modifications used by the student in high school courses. This is important information for the college.

The movement this year in high school was to "wean" students from IEP accommodation and modifications. Many of the accommodations offered at the high school level under IDEA cannot be offered at the college level in a "504" plan. Students were expected to complete everything that the non-disabled student completed. There were no modifications or changes made to curricula at the college level. In the past, curricula was modified to meet the needs of the students in high school. This practice has

hindered us when preparing students for college. Curricula are no longer modified in high school for special needs students attending college. Curricula modifications were approved on the IEP through the state but are reserved for very specific cases.

Some students had not developed self-advocacy skills and self determination skills. They were enabled by their disability. There was too much support offered to students with special needs in high schools to the point where students no longer were responsible for completing the work themselves. Self-advocacy skills must be developed and mastered by the time a student graduates from high school. Students must be aware of their strengths and weakness and use advocacy skills to successfully navigate the college maze. Enabled students are lost at the college level. Self-advocacy skills must be taught at the high school level, not as a matter of fact, but with a specifically designed curriculum for direct instruction.

Those students identified, as having a documented disability in college, are eligible to receive services through ADA, *the American Disabilities Act and Section 504*. All stakeholders must be made aware of the differences in services received. Accommodations and services may be different. Students receive more accommodations, modifications, and services at the high school level. It is important to understand, however, that all students do not qualify to receive a “504” plan in college. The determination for services is made at the college level between the student and the college “504” Officer. An interview with the student and a review of records is conducted for determination of services by college personnel.

Child Study Team members, include psychologists, learning consultants, social workers, and speech and language therapists at the high school level. These stakeholders

play a vital role in the preparation of special needs students for successful transition.

Case managers must educate and empower students and parents to be active members through collaboration with the IEP team to develop a student transition plan. The necessary reports must be sent to the colleges to allow personnel to have the documentation to establish a student's special needs.

Case managers must also collaborate with the college staff to assist in developing a successful "504" plan for students, if needed, at the college level. The IEP must list all accommodations and accommodations, which the student received at the high school. This information is necessary for the colleges to complete their documentation to determine the need for student services under the ADA in developing a "504" plan. A copy of the student's IEP will need to be sent with the other documentation.

Some participants believe that special needs students were enabled by the school system. NCLB sets high standards for all students. Special needs students are included in state testing in the spring. Stakeholders are held accountable for student success or lack of success. Students must strive for excellence and persevere diligently to reach their maximum potential.

Students must have realistic and attainable goals. Many students used their special needs, as a "crutch" in schools. This "crutch" was an excuse barring them from maximizing their potential. The enabled student will find himself "handicapped" in a college setting. Students are expected to be self-sufficient when entering the college setting. The student's special needs will not be an excuse for failure.

A good number of students have not developed the study skills necessary to be successful in college. Study skills must be further developed and taught directly to

students for success at all levels of education. This can be accomplished through a well developed curriculum and direct instruction. The curriculum skills taught must also be intertwined, throughout all courses. They must be required for all students. Students must continue to develop study skills, if they are to be successful in college.

Special needs students were not given challenging amounts of homework to complete “at home”, unless they were enrolled in CP courses or advanced courses. Some students complete homework in class or during study hall. The amount of homework given in high school is not equal to that which is given in college for some special needs students in resource centers. Many of these students begin college in 2 year schools, only to find out that they are ill prepared. Students must be given additional homework to reinforce classroom instruction. If students are not prepared for the amount of homework required at the college level, they will find college assignments difficult.

A great deal of emphasis was placed on participation in extracurricular activities at the high school level. Participants agree that it is important to be a “well-rounded” student. There are students that have jobs and work too many hours during the school week. This “work” time can interfere with study time at home. Students planning to attend college must prioritize and limit their activities. They must find a “balance” between work, play, and school. Students may appear more concerned about “getting the car”, rather than, “making the grade.” Student work hours, during the school week, should be set to a minimum. Students should self-monitor their hours at work and learn to recognize, whether or not their job hours are interfering with academic success. They should modify schedules, accordingly. In some cases, businesses have allowed students

to work additional hours, other than those permitted by the labor laws. This can have a detrimental affect on a student's education.

Many students do not reveal that they have special needs at the college level. If students do not reveal their needs in college, difficulties arise that manifest themselves in course-work and tests at the college level. College applications do not require students to document their special needs on the application. This makes it difficult for the college professors to be aware of the student's needs. Professors are unable to support special needs for student success. Additional discussions should be held at the high school level, regarding the benefits of having a student reveal his or her special needs. These discussions can be held with a teacher, CST member, guidance counselor, or parent. It is, however, the adult student's option to declare or not declare any special needs.

Many students and parents need to become more aware of the services offered at the colleges through a "504 plan". Students should begin to research colleges of interest very early in their junior year. This will allow time to discover the college which can best meet their special needs. Stakeholders must continue to be aware of the fact that colleges do not provide "special" programs or "segregated" special education classes. Students with disabilities are required to meet the same curricula demands. The services and accommodations offered at the college level are only given to afford the special needs student with the opportunity to be on an "even playing field" with the non-disabled student.

Some parents and students do not have a complete understanding of the laws governing students with a disability. All stakeholders must have knowledge of IDEA and

the ADA. It is important that these stakeholders realize the impact that these Federal laws have on a student's education with respect to the available services.

Special needs students are required to take the HSPA. Students are required to be involved in the SRA process at high school for math and english to ensure "Proficiency" in certain skills, if they do not pass this assessment. Fewer students are exempt from passing each year. In the past, students were not included in the accountability system of regular education students. It is interesting to note, that a good number of students who pass the HPSA, are not passing one or more of the basic skills tests offered at the college level. They must take remedial level courses, even though they have passed the proficiency assessment to exit high school. This should be addressed in a future study.

Students must play an active role in the development of their IEP, not only at the high school level, but at the middle school level. Middle school students are not presently actively involved in this process. Students are involved in this process at the high school level. Some middle school students enter the high school and are not aware that they have an IEP or classifications. They are not aware of the implications the classification has on their learning and instruction. Language related to the IEP and programs should be promoted with students at the middle school level. This will enable them to be more aware of their special needs in advocating for themselves at the high school. Families need to develop a better understanding of the student's disability in order to be able to assist their son or daughter to have a better understanding of strengths, and weaknesses.

Transition plans must be adequately detailed in the IEP. These plans are developed at the high school level and not the middle school level with students. These

plans must be written at the middle school level, as well. Some plans do not have realistic goals, based on the student's ability level. The track of courses taken at the middle school level sets the course for determining whether or not a student is headed toward a 2 or 4 year college. Parents must have a better understanding of the tracks chosen in the middle school and the effect on future high school courses taken. Parents and students must develop a better understanding of Carnegie units required for students to attend a 4 year college. Additional meetings must be held throughout the year to develop adequate plans, which truly reflect the student's ability. There must be more than one 45 minute period meeting to discuss transition. This is not sufficient enough time to develop and discuss an ITP. The plan must reflect the student's abilities and interests with realistic goals.

Students are taking too many electives senior year. Students should take less general education electives and more courses geared toward math, language and the sciences for better preparation for transition. Generally only three years of Math are required for high school graduation. There should be a requirement for students to take 4 years of math. All students should register for a business math or a math which prepares them for the real world. The skills taught in those courses prepare students who attend college with real-life skills.

Parents and students need to be more aware, that they are being held to the same academic measure and standards as other students without a disability at the colleges. There are no modified curricula and professors will not change the integrity of the course. There is a good deal of misunderstanding, regarding the purpose of a "504" plan and the

ADA requirement for colleges, with regards to students with disabilities. Parents must continue to be educated, as well as students, at IEP meetings and conferences.

Some students are intimidated by the campus size and cannot successfully navigate the college process, upon arrival. Students should be prepared to visit the college and participate in any freshmen orientations offered at the colleges throughout the school year and in the summer. There should also be a simulation in high school of what to expect at the college level on campus, so that students can successfully navigate processes such as financial aide and the registration. The college campus and environment can be intimidating for students upon arrival. Students need to be more aware of potential resources and location of those resources on campus.

Stakeholders are not aware that testing for documentation of a disability at the college level is available. The adult student must pay the additional cost, which is not provided for through federal and state funding. Testing is not a mandated service at the higher education level. Medical evaluations must be funded by the student. The amount of \$125.00 may be used towards testing for students to determine special needs, but the funds are limited. Parents and students must realize that education is compulsory at the high school level; however it is not compulsory at the college level. There is a different level of services offered at the college level and they may not be mandated.

A majority of special needs students are included in ICS programs, rather than pull out replacement (RC) or self-contained (SC) special needs classes in the high school. All students are instructed in the regular education curricula, except those in SCLD classes. Students in the self-contained special needs classes follow separate curricula. The

students in the self-contained classes may be required to take the *Alternate Proficiency Assessment* to graduate from high school.

Training and knowledge are the keys to the improvement of instruction for all students. Staff must continue to be trained in Learning Styles (Hunter), Multiple Intelligences (Garner), and Differentiated Instruction. Staff development in these areas will assist teachers in meeting the instructional needs of the diversified student body in the classroom.

Stakeholders believe that the accommodations and modifications allowed for special needs students through the IEP were hindering students from being held responsible for their own learning. Students had not developed the skills, necessary to be independent at the high school and college level. Students, who constantly received ICS support for 4 years in subject areas without any changes, were not being prepared for a successful transition to college. Students need to be weaned from the ICS support at the upper levels. They must not continue to receive the same support and accommodations year after year without being given the chance to be independent.

College and high school staff must collaborate, if students are to be successful at the college level. One cannot continue to work autonomously without the other. There should be a member of the staff, who is specifically hired to work with special needs students for transition at the high school level within the colleges, community, and businesses. An invitation was extended to a member of the community college staff to attend the high school college fair in April. This was an attempt to continue to bridge the gap between the high school and college staff for special needs students. The intern will continue to act, as the liaison between the colleges and the high school for the present.

Organizational Change

Change within an organization is necessary, if we are to have our students maximize their potential for learning. Stakeholders at WTHS have recognized that change must occur for the special needs population, if they are to be successful in college. In order to affect change, the high school stakeholders reviewed programs and curricula. These changes will assist in preparing students for a successful transition into post-secondary education settings.

A College Preparation study skills course was offered for the 2005-2006 school year. This course was offered previously, but had been dropped due to lack of enrollment. The stakeholders realized the need for this course to be “resurrected”. The change is being implemented for the upcoming 2005-2006 school year. The study skills curriculum is in the process of being revised for use in the CP Study skills course. This course will be required for all students taking college level “A” and honors level courses at WTHS in lieu of the traditional ICS support given at those levels.

A study skills course was made available for students after school, under the direction of a teacher. Students are not taught study skills in this course, but are offered support for any course work or tests. This course was offered to students anticipating that they will attend college. It was taken on an optional basis by students. Students do not receive credits for this course, however, it is no longer optional, but if recommended than mandatory. A contract can even be developed between the student and the 9th period instructor for support.

A bridge was created between a community college staff member and the intern. The intern acted, as a liaison, between the high school and the college. The college

perspective was noted regarding the preparation of special needs students for college.

Conversations were initiated at the IEP meetings, regarding the views of the college staff. Additional emphasis was placed on student preparation for college and the skills necessary to be determined for success. Discussions were held at IEP meetings, regarding the parent and student perspectives for college preparation, also.

A special Education liaison committee was created this year at the high school to discuss any issues and concerns regarding special needs students. This committee discussed the preparation of special needs students and raising the bar for our students, amongst other topics. A transition committee was resurrected this year. The committee members meet at the central administrative offices monthly to discuss the preparation of our students, programs, and curricula in preparation for transition.

Additional workshops were offered to teachers. Recent workshops held with teachers included information regarding learning styles. ICS workshops were held in the fall and spring. This collaborative time gave teachers the opportunity to discuss needs and concerns for the improvement of programs for transition.

The intern will be developing a workshop for students, parents, and staff regarding the preparation of special needs students for college. A workshop was held regarding the roles and responsibilities of the IEP team members by the intern for teachers on an in-service day in the fall. The purpose of the workshops was to make stakeholders aware of their roles and responsibilities in IEP meetings when preparing students for transition.

Collaboration amongst certain group members was expanded. There were discussions held more often than in the past to ensure that stakeholders at the high school

work together, as a team to support student success. These meetings allowed each group member to have a better understanding of each other's roles and positions, while working together within the building. Participants in meetings have included a CST member, the Director of Special Education, a Supervisor, and teachers. The goal of the group was to create a communication bridge amongst the WTHS groups to review programs and curricula to bring about change.

Changes occurred in the structure of offering ICS support to students. Students, who are able to attend College Level "A" and honors courses, are not recommended to receive ICS services; since they met the prerequisites necessary to be in these courses. They are required to take the CP Study Skills course that is offered during the 2005-2006 school year.

Another change, implemented this year was that students were "weaned" from using accommodations and modifications received through the IEP. Students no longer continue to receive the same accommodations and modifications every year. They are expected to be independent and responsible to monitor their own learning in preparing for transition.

There were detailed discussions held at IEP meetings, regarding IDEA and ADA. The differences between the services received at the high school and the colleges were discussed. The discussion allowed the parent and student to have a better understanding of the Federal laws and the impact on their education. Words such as, "case manager", "IEP" "transition plans", "advocacy skills", and "strengths and weakness" were discussed with students for the development of an understanding of these terms. Questions were directed toward the students at meetings. They were asked to advocate

for themselves to prepare for transition. Students were encouraged to meet with their counselors more frequently to discuss options regarding transition. Students were advised to visit the career center in the high school to gather information and resources related to transition goals.

In the past, students were “waived” into a course, even if they did not meet with prerequisite skills. Students are no longer waived into these courses. Students take courses that match their ability levels and interests. Courses were taken in sequence, based on the previous courses and student success in the previous courses. Following this procedure assisted in ensuring that students will were more successful in preparation for transition. Students were placed in courses that are appropriate for their ability levels.

Material in the staff library was updated and monies were allocated to purchase additional reference books for special education teachers. Videos and books were ordered by the intern for use within the Child Study Team. They will be added to the leadership library being created by the Intern and Special Education Supervisor. These materials will be utilized and shared by the intern for future workshops.

Many changes were promoted in the organization, not only as a result of this project, but in conjunction with the requirements of NCLB to raise the standards for all students. With accountability, as the “buzz” word for the 2004-2005 school year, students were included in state testing mandates to ensure that they have the skills necessary for transition preparation.

With IDEA reauthorization, the transition of special needs students will be closely monitored in the future. The intern intends to continue the study at WTHS, as a longitudinal study by gathering statistics related to the special needs population who

attending college. With a greater number of students placed in mainstreamed classes and less being placed in segregated settings, stakeholders are realizing that special needs students do have the ability to attend college. Stakeholders are also realizing that they have the ability to be successful in college. Deciding which track to take and whether or not a student should be encouraged to attend a 2 or 4 year college is being carefully reviewed and discussed at meetings.

Realistic transition plans were developed. Curricula and programs will continue to be reviewed, as a result of this project and the ongoing requirements for curricula cycles and changes to occur. Review of the skills taught in the curriculum and programs and changes made to the programs and curricula will ensure that students are being prepared for successful transition, whether it is to attend a 2 or 4 year college, or another goal for transition.

Information, regarding the skills that our students are lacking for success in college, was shared through the information gathered from a “504” Officer. This will help to ensure that our programs, supports, and curricula continue to be reviewed, added, changed, or deleted, based on the information provided by the colleges. The communication gap is growing smaller.

The word “enabling” students, who are in the “Average” to “Above- average” range intellectually in the schools, will be a word used in the past. Students are held responsible for their actions and decisions. They are encouraged to work to their “potential”. With stakeholders having a better understanding of students and their special needs and the potential they can reach, students will no longer be able to use their special needs as a crutch for not “performing”.

Participants reviewed the methodology used to teach special needs students in the classroom in finding ways to meet the needs of all students in the classroom.

Professional development workshops were conducted in the district to train teachers to work with a diverse student population. Workshops were held for professional development to educate teachers in addressing the learning styles of students to assist in meeting individual needs in the classroom. Teachers were trained in using the *Marilyn Friend Co-teaching Model* in the classroom to better prepare students for transition through a workshop conducted in the summer of 2004.

Transition plans were and are more focused on the ability levels of students and interests. Courses taken by students are those that meet the students' needs and ability levels. These procedures will support successful transition for students.

Discussions were held at the IEP table with emphasis placed on students entering into courses that will take them to either a 2 year or 4 year program. Stakeholders in the district are standing firm on their recommendations, as the professionals in the field in setting students on realistic transition goals.

Middle school transition plans were reviewed for the courses students take which places the students on track to meet the requirements for either a 4 or 2 year college. Workshops have been held with grade 8 teachers to develop a better understanding of the course requirements and procedures at the high school level. All stakeholders are raising the standards for special needs students realizing the majority of these students are of "Average" to "Above- average" intelligence.

Stakeholders are held accountable for special needs students and their learning. Student progress is being monitored closely through state testing. All special needs

students are included in state mandated testing. Most self-contained students participate in the *Alternate Proficiency Assessment*.

A bridge was constructed between one of the local community college staff members, who directly worked with special needs students and the CST at WTHS. The purpose for the collaboration was to open the lines of communication regarding student needs. The “504” Officer attended the WTHS college fair, as a result of this project. The intern is looking forward to having a continued relationship with the “504” Officer in preparing special needs students for college. There intern was a better informed participant , as a result of this study, with respect to understanding the college perspective and view on the skills students are lacking and need to be successful at college.

The first question in this study was related to discovering what the expectations are that are held by higher education institutions for special needs students transitioning into colleges. The expectations are that students be prepared in high school with all the skills necessary to allow them to be successful at the college level. The high school should target instruction in study skills, self-advocacy, and self-determination. Students should be empowered at the high school level to be prepared for college.

The second question was related to the curricula and programs that existed and whether or not they addressed the skills that should be developed. Students are prepared for college through our curricula. They need to take the correct track for courses in deciding their transition goal. All curricula follow the Core Content Curriculum Standards, whether they choose to enter into a 2 or 4 year college. Students are offered the opportunity to take CP courses, as well as, other courses. Changes were made regarding the delivery of programs and services. Students were “weaned” from ICS

courses in preparation for transition and placed in a required study skills course. Students were also “weaned” from continuously receiving modifications and accommodations. Curricula were revisited regarding study skills. The guides are in the process of being revised to support the preparation of special needs students. Programs are in place that support the student needs. The stakeholders at the high school are “well” aware of the needs of our students in preparation for success at the college level.

Leadership Growth and the ISLLC Standards

The vision for our special needs students to be prepared for college and transition is a shared vision. This vision was communicated within the school community at Washington Township High School, through the collaborative efforts of all of the stakeholders for this project. High expectations were set for instruction within a diverse school population and community. As a leader for this action research project, the intern valued and was committed to reflective practice on the meaning of leadership throughout the project activities. The importance of communication among the stakeholders was highlighted throughout this project. Staff development and organizational performance and improvement were continuously promoted. The mission, goals, and objectives of Washington Township High School’s vision for students were identified and the barriers which banned us from achieving our mission were removed. The barriers will continue to be removed and changes will continue to occur for instruction. The Intern views education as the key to opportunity and social mobility for students. A further understanding of current research and schooling developed for the intern, related to educating our students. Collaboration and communication improved between a community college staff member and the high school, as a result of this project. There is

a commitment to involve the college staff in a continued partnership with shared decision making in preparing our students to successfully attend college. Through the changes implemented and future changes contemplated, all students will be better prepared to reach their full potential and goals for success in the post-secondary college setting.

Further Study

The intern will continue the study, as a longitudinal study in the future. Data will be gathered and analyzed related to the number of special education students, who attend college after graduation from WTHS. The researcher will maintain a record with the names and classifications of students continuing their education in 2 and 4 year colleges. Material culture which includes files from students, who have graduated, should remain available for review. These files contain previous CST evaluations, IEPs, transcripts and testing data. A list of names of the special needs students involved in extracurricular activities will be maintained. Discussion and interviews will be held with students (permission given), prior to graduation at the senior special education exit meetings to obtain permission from the student to track him or her during their college experiences. The information gathered will enable the researcher to develop a better understanding of the successes and failures of the student through college. The additional information will be used to continuously improve programs and instruction at the high school.

Parents and students were not included in the survey. They are stakeholders and their perspectives must be included in the future study. Surveys will be completed at the high school level and developed by the researcher. The intern will follow the course of approval for implementation of these surveys. Questions will be developed to determine the parent and student views of their roles and responsibilities in the education process.

An in depth study will be completed by the researcher in one of the local universities to gain a perspectives from the college staff's point of view, as to whether or not students are prepared to enter into colleges. The involvement of college staff is important to the continuation of the study in gaining knowledge to improve high school programs, supports, and curricula.

A further study will be completed on the impact of "weaning" students from the modifications and accommodations offered at the high school level in preparation for transition through an IEP. The impact of removing ICS supports from students at the high school level should be monitored. This will enable the stakeholders to view whether or not the students are developing the skills necessary to be independent.

In conclusion, the Washington Township High school staff is dedicated to supporting the improvement of instruction and preparation for special needs students entering into a college setting. They are committed to the continuation of the study in the future, since time was limited. Positive changes have occurred in our programs and curricula, which have enable our students to be better prepared for their experiences in college. A communication bridge was established with a college staff member. Groups have collaborated together with a shared vision for our students. The intern believes that one educational institution cannot be successful without the other, when preparing our students for successful transition from high school to a post secondary education setting.

Reference List

- Council of Chief School Administrators. (1996). *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISSLLC) Standards for School Leaders*. Washington, D.C: Author.
- Durlak, C.M., Rose E., & Bursuck, W.D. (1994). Preparing high school students with learning disabilities for the transition to postsecondary education: Teaching the skills of self-determination. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 27, 51-59
- Ellis, W., & Cramer, S.C. (1995). *Learning Disabilities: A national responsibility*. Washington, D.C: National Center for Learning Disabilities
- Flexer, R.W., Simmons, T.J., Luft, P., & Baer, R.M.(2001). Transition Planning for Secondary Students with Disabilities. Columbus, OH: Merrill Prentice Hall. 48-53
- Harris, R., & Robertson, R. (2001). *Preventing School Failure*. Vol 45, No.3, Spring 2001., pp.125-131. Retrieved April 4, 2004, from the Learning Disabilities OnLine: LD In-Depth Database
- Heath Resource Center (1995). *Getting students ready for college: Advising high school students with Learning disabilities*. Retrieved June 27, 2004, from <http://www.ldonline.org/ldindepth/postsecondary/hrcgettingready.html>
- Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), P.L. 101-476* (1991).
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997, P.L. - 17 (1997).
- Karovonen, M., Test, W.D., Wood, W.M., Browder, D., & Algozzine, B.(2004). Putting Self-Determination Into Practice. *Council for Exceptional Children*, 71, 1, 23-39
- LaMorte, Michael W. (1999). *School law: Cases and concepts*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon. 307,329,345
- NJ Administrative Code Title 6A Chapter 14 Special Education*. July 6, 1998
- Sittlington, P.L., & Frank, A.R. (1990). Are Adolescents with learning disabilities successfully crossing the bridge into adult life? *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 13, 97-111
- Special Education News.(2000).*Riley: High school transition plans not making the grade*. Retrieved April 4, 2004, from <http://www.specialednews.com/transition/transnews/transitionriley062400.html>
- Washington Township High School. *Mission statement*. Retrieved June 15, 2004, from wtps.org/wths/mission.htm

Appendix

Survey-The preparation of Special Needs Students for Transition from High School to a Post-Secondary Education College Setting

Washington Township High School
529 Hurfville Cross Keys Road
Sewell, NJ 08080

*THE PREPARATION OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS FOR TRANSITION FROM HIGH
SCHOOL TO A POST-SECONDARY COLLEGE SETTING*

***Survey/ Questions*

Participation in the survey/questions is voluntary. This research is being conducted for a Master's Thesis. The purpose of this survey and questions is to improve instruction and programs related to the preparation of special needs students for success in post-secondary college settings. All responses are confidential and anonymous. You need not respond to all questions on the survey or answer all of the questions, as several may not pertain to your discipline. The investigator is Christine Saputo. She can be reached at 589-8500 at extension 7397. The sponsor from Rowan University is Dr. Moyer in the Education Leadership Department.

1. *What is your role in the preparation of special needs students for transition from high school to a post-secondary education college setting?*

Guidance Counselor _____
CST member _____
Regular Education Teacher _____
Special Education Teacher _____
Supervisor _____

2. *Have you attended any workshops within the past 2 years related to the preparation of special needs students for transition to a college setting, upon graduation from high school?*

Yes _____
No _____

Comment:

3. *When are you involved in the development of the transition plans (5 and 6 of the IEP) for special needs students at WTHS?*

Not a participant _____
When formal IEP meetings are held _____
Other _____

Comment:

4. How often do you discuss a student's transition plan with him or her throughout the school year?

0 X _____
1X _____
2 or more times a year _____

Comment: _____

5. What books are you familiar with that are available in the professional library or in the guidance office at the high school to guide you, as a professional in the area of transition planning for special needs student in preparation for college?

6. Have you ever been trained with regards to the modifications and accommodations that are allowed by the Educational Testing Service for Standardized testing for students with learning disabilities?

Yes _____
No _____

7. Are you familiar with the Division of Vocational and Rehabilitative Services and the Division of Development Disabilities and the services they offer special needs students in preparation for transition?

Yes _____
No _____

8. Have you ever attended an in-service with DVRS and DDD to learn about the services offered in preparing students for transition?

Yes _____
No _____

9. How do we, as educators, support the development of self-advocacy skills in special needs students at the high school level in preparation for transition?

Through curricula _____
Other _____

Comments: _____

10. How do we, as educators make students aware of their strengths and weaknesses, regarding their disabilities?

At formal IEP meetings _____
In the classroom _____
Other _____

Comment: _____

11. How do we make students aware of strategies that they can learn to use in the classroom, despite their disabilities, which will help them to succeed in college?

At formal IEP meetings _____

Other _____

Comment: _____

12. How do we, as professionals address the education of parents and students at the high school level in order to allow them to have a better understanding, regarding the American Disabilities Act and the Individual with Disabilities Education Act?

Through the IRT Team _____

Through the CST Team _____

Other _____

Comments:

13. Have you participated in workshops within the past two years to assist in gaining a better understanding regarding the American Disabilities Act and IDEA Federal Laws?

Yes (within the past year/2 years) _____

No _____

Comments:

14. Do you believe that the present Individualized Education Plan's (IEP) transition plan is an adequate written plan in preparing special needs students for transition? If so, why is it? If not, why isn't it?

Yes _____

No _____

Comment:

15. What are your recommendations for the improvement of the IEP transition plan? (5 and 6 enclosed)?

Comments:

16. Do you believe that the accommodations and modifications listed in the IEP (page 10 and 11 enclosed) in the IEP adequately prepares students for transition from high school to a post secondary college setting? If yes, how does it prepare them? If not, why doesn't the modification and accommodations listed in the IEP assist in preparing them?

Yes _____ No _____

Why not?

Comments

17. What changes, if any, would you recommend, regarding the IEP and the preparation of special needs for success when transitioning to college?

18. Do you see the IEP as a working document in preparing our student's for transition? If yes, how do you use it, if no, why not?

19. Have you received training related to FERPA?

Yes _____

No _____

20. Have you ever been involved in developing a "504" plan for a student?

Yes _____

No _____

21. Are you an instructor in the ICS classroom?

Yes _____

No _____

22. Are you an ICS teacher or the regular education teacher in a classroom?

ICS (Special Ed) _____

Regular Ed _____

Previously an ICS teacher _____

23. Do you believe that our ICS classes presently prepare our special needs students for college?

Yes _____

No _____

Comments:

24. What training have you received within the past two years, as an ICS teacher?

25. What specific courses and curricula are you aware of at the high school level that prepare special needs students for a successful transition to college?

26. Have you ever been a member of a transition team at the high school level?

Yes _____

No _____

27. How can our high school and staff better prepare our special needs students for college entrance and success? What skills need to be further developed?

28. Are you aware of the accommodations that are allowed in the colleges for students, who had previously been classified in high school?

Yes _____

No _____

29. What workshops are available for our students and our parents at Washington Township to assist in the preparation of our special needs students when transitioning to a college setting, through the high school and or through the colleges?

30. What skills do you believe the special needs students need to develop in high school, in order for them to be prepared to successfully transition into the college setting?

The Principal Investigator is Christine Saputo. I can be reached at 589-8500 at extension 7397. The sponsor from Rowan University is Dr. Moyer in the Education Leadership Department. He may be reached at (856) 256-5441.

This survey was developed by Christine Saputo and approved by the IRB at Rowan University.