

Historical and Legislative Foundations

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Each year, more than 3 million students graduate from high school in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). For many, graduation is a time of celebration—a rite of passage into independence and adult life. Unfortunately, this is often not the case for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For these students and their families, the transition from school to adult life may be a time of uncertainty and concern about the future (Bambara, Wilson, & McKenzie, 2007; Larkin & Turnbull, 2005). Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities lack the myriad opportunities and choices for postsecondary education, community living, and employment that are commonly available to their peers who are not disabled (Bambara et al., 2007; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, & Levine, 2005). They are often unable to participate in community employment and remain isolated from the community, lacking critical access to services and supports necessary for active participation in adult living (Houtenville, 2002; National Organization on Disability, Harris, & Associates, 2004).

Although 2 decades have passed since Congress mandated that transition planning be included in federal law and though new advances in instructional technology have taken place, access to meaningful transition programs is at best “inconsistent” within schools. As such, the intended outcomes of comprehensive transition planning and services for all students

with disabilities have yet to be fully realized. However, the critical goal of improving the quality of adult life for students with disabilities remains as important today as when the federal transition mandate was initially passed by Congress in 1990. Future opportunities for greater independence and full participation in the community remain highly dependent on the development and implementation of effective practices in transition planning and secondary programs.

This book examines the purpose, scope, content, and results of school-based transition planning and secondary programs for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To begin, several terms used throughout the text are defined below.

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are those who, because of the nature of their intellectual, physical, and/or sensory disabilities, require ongoing and intensive support from family, education, and community agencies in order to fully participate in adult life.

Transition refers to the passage from adolescence to adulthood, wherein each individual is faced with a number of life choices.

Transition planning is the process during which an individual, his or her parents, his or her educators, and adult service professionals come together to create an adaptive fit between the student's abilities, needs, and preferences and the requirements of the environment in which he or she will live as an adult. The process involves accommodating a change status from the interdependence of being a student to taking on more independent adult roles within and external to the family. These roles include employment, participation in postsecondary education, residential living, and developing personal relationships.

Transition services include a coordinated set of activities designed to facilitate disabled students' move out of school and into community living, employment, postschool education, or more independent living. A more in-depth definition of transition services as mandated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004, Public Law 108-446) will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

This book is written for those who are seeking careers in the fields of education and social services, as well as for professionals from many disciplines who want to know more about evidence-based transition services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Chapter 1 begins

with an overview of the history and scope of federal legislation and the impact of educational reform on secondary education and transition planning in America's schools. We conclude with a discussion of the evolution of transition models during the past 20 years.

The Federal Mandate for Transition Services

Focus Question 1

Identify the components of the transition amendments in IDEA.

The year 2010 marks the 35th anniversary of the passage of Public Law 94-142, now IDEA 2004. Since the law's original passage, Congress has made significant changes to the legislation five times, including the 1990 amendments, which mandated the provision of comprehensive transition planning for all adolescents with disabilities aged 16 years and older, and the 2004 amendments, which defined transition services as follows:

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

(A) is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;

(B) is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests; and

(C) includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. (Sec. 602[34])

IDEA 2004 states that transition planning services are to begin no later than the first Individualized Education Program (IEP) that is in effect when the child is 16 years of age and must be updated annually thereafter (Sec. 614[d] [VIII]). IEP teams, which include the student, his or her parents and educators, and other professionals as appropriate, have some discretion

if transition planning and services are needed at an earlier age. Although initiating transition services at age 16 may be appropriate for students with mild or moderate disabilities, the needs of most students with intellectual and developmental disabilities will necessitate the planning and implementation of services and supports at an earlier age (Steere, Rose, & Cavaiuolo, 2007).

The requirements of IDEA 2004 are intended to help students who are leaving school make a successful transition to living and working in the community. This mandate specifically requires state and local education agencies to

1. Provide transition services for every child with a disability.
2. Develop a “coordinated set of activities” for students with disabilities. These activities must be focused on achieving individualized postschool employment or vocational training and community living goals for each student.
3. Coordinate transition activities with community service agencies to make needed services more readily available to graduates.
4. Consider individual needs, strengths, preferences, and interests.

IDEA further requires schools to take an active role in preparing students for life after graduation. Schools can no longer assume that students, their families, and community service programs are solely responsible for graduates’ postschool adjustment. Achieving the goal of the transition mandate will have a far-reaching impact on the way secondary programs are designed and implemented (see Window 1.1).

Window 1-1

Eric

Before I graduated from high school, I was very nervous. I had questions in my head: What will my future hold? What will I be doing in 5 years? I was nervous because I was leaving high school and moving to a new transition school, South Valley. I was very sad to leave all my friends behind, but I knew I would make new friends. All of my friends were going to a different college. I was staying behind and was sad that my friends were leaving.

While at South Valley, I have learned to ride the UTA bus. I have had lots of job sites at South Valley. My first jobs were at elementary schools. I cleaned tables, vacuumed carpets, put books away, and dusted shelves. I also worked at Sam’s Club where I put cardboard in the crusher and put go-backs away. This year, I have worked at a car dealership,

a bookstore, and a movie theater. I put order forms in numerical order, clean, and take tickets. I have two volunteer jobs. I put books away at the library, and I file papers and get folders out for the next day at the Neurobehavior HOME Program at the University of Utah.

I had questions about the life design program I would move to in South Valley: What will my job be like? Who will help me? What will my future hold? My dreams for the future are becoming a basketball manager for the university and working at the movie theater. My fears are being in a bus wreck and being late for work.

—Eric

Transitions are difficult for each one of us as we move through life, but as a parent of a child with autism, my angst over transitions was sometimes greater than my son's. Educators in both the middle school and the high school had been trying to prepare us for the transition after high school for many years. The question that would have jolted me into reality was "What will Eric do all day long each day when you are at work and the school bus doesn't stop to pick him up each morning?"

The year after Eric left high school, he saw several of his friends at the grocery store. When he came home, he told me he was a "little embarrassed." When I asked why, he said, "Everyone else was going to college, and I was embarrassed to tell my friends where I was going to school." It was then that I fully realized what people had been trying to guide me toward for several years—Eric needed to have meaningful experiences that he could take pride in, and to a greater degree these experiences needed to more closely mirror the experiences of his peers.

My initial thoughts about building a plan of activities for Eric centered on activities for a person with autism (although, to this day, I am not certain what those activities are). I have transitioned my thinking to ensure that his life will provide the same activities that each of us see in our daily lives to provide a feeling of self-worth: independence, community service, social activities, continuing education, religious activities, employment, and family. It is also important that Eric takes an active part in the decision-making process and, just like any other individual at the age of 20 years, believes that the world holds numerous possibilities, choices, and opportunities. This is not the last transition we face; my hope for the future is that, as we continue along the way, we will continue to have guides for the journey.

—Karla, Eric's mom

Successful implementation of this mandate raises several important issues for schools. For example, how does the development of transition services for students with disabilities fit within the broader context of educational reform? What outcomes should be used to evaluate the ultimate effectiveness of these services?

Transition Services in Secondary Schools and Educational Reform

Focus Question 2

Identify the major elements of educational reform in schools and their impact on transition planning for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

In today's schools, improved student performance—*results*—has become the critical indicator in determining the effectiveness of an educational program. Although federal mandates over the past 35 years have been successful in ensuring students with disabilities *access* to a free and appropriate education, Congress noted in 1997 and in 2004 that the implementation of federal legislation had been impeded by low expectations and an insufficient focus on applying research on proven methods of teaching and learning for children with disabilities. Follow-up studies of special education graduates in the 1990s (e.g., Hasazi, Furney, & Destefano, 1999; Wagner & Blackorby, 1996) suggested high levels of unemployment rates, low access rates for postsecondary education, and few comprehensive support networks. However, in 2005, the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 reported improvement in such areas as high school completion, employment rates, postschool education, social involvement, and living accommodations (Wagner et al., 2005). Yet, in spite of this improvement, the National Organization on Disability suggests that the educational possibilities granted by federal legislation have not been fully realized by many special education graduates as they participate in the social and economic mainstream of their local communities (National Organization on Disability et al., 2004).

Window 1-2

A Snapshot of Young Adults With Disabilities: 1985 and 2001

Two studies commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education have documented changes experienced by young adults with disabilities 2 years after they exited high school. The 1987 National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) followed up on students with disabilities who had been receiving special education services in 1985, and the 2003 National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) assessed the status of young adults with disabilities who exited high school in 2001. Below are some highlights of the results of comparing these two studies.

School Completion

- The school completion rate of young adults with disabilities increased and the dropout rate decreased by 17% between 1987 and 2003. With these changes, 70% of the young adults with disabilities from the 2003 study completed high school.

Community Living and Social Activities

- The living arrangement of young adults with disabilities has been stable over time. Two years after exiting high school, approximately 75% of young adults with disabilities from both studies lived with their parents; 1 in 8 lived independently; and 3% lived in a residential facility or institution.
- Ninety percent of young adults with disabilities from the 1987 and 2003 studies were single. However, membership in organized community groups (e.g., hobby clubs, community sports, performing groups) more than doubled so that 28% of young adults with disabilities from the 2003 study belonged to a group.
- There was a large increase in adults with disabilities ever having been subject to disciplinary action at school, fired from a job, or arrested between 1987 and 2003. More than 50% of the young adults with disabilities from the 2003 study had negative consequences for their behavior, compared with 33% from the 1987 study.

Engagement in School, Work, or Preparation for Work

- Overall engagement in school, work, and job training increased only slightly (70% to 75%) from 1987 to 2003. Although disabled students' overall rate of engagement in these activities did not increase markedly over time, the modes of engagement did change.
- Engagement in the combination of postsecondary education and paid employment nearly quadrupled to 22% for students in the 2003 study.
- There was a significant increase in employment (11%) from 1987 to 2003, and 44% of the young adults in the 2003 study had been employed since high school.

Employment

- In 2003, 70% of young adults with disabilities who had been out of school up to 2 years had worked for pay at some time since leaving high school; only 55% had done so in 1987. However, 18% of young adults in the 2003 study were less likely than those in the 1987 study to be working full-time in their current job. Approximately 39% of the young adults in the 2003 study were employed full-time.
- Over time, considerably more young adults with disabilities earned above the federal minimum wage (70% in 1987 vs. 85% in 2003). Yet the average hourly wage did not increase when adjusted for inflation; earning averaged \$7.30 per hour in 2003.

Note. From "Transition from High School to Work or College: How Special Education Students Fare," by M. Wagner and J. Blackorby, 1996, *Special Education for Students with Disabilities*, 6(1), pp. 103–120, and *Changes Over Time in the Early Postschool Outcomes of Youth with Disabilities, a report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) and the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2)*, Menlo Park, CA: SRI International. Adapted with permission.

Historically, federal legislation has been the driving force behind changes in special education services in the United States. The original tenets of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHCA) in 1975 were strengthened in IDEA 2004 to ensure that students with disabilities are provided opportunities for academic growth and long-term success. EHCA did not include specific provisions for transition services but did state that all children with disabilities must have access to the same programs and services that are available to children without disabilities. The initial federal mandate and subsequent parent and professional advocacy initiatives on behalf of students with disabilities expanded the national discussion from accessing education to ensuring results and accountability for all students in public schools (Hardman & Mulder, 2003).

In the next section, we examine the federal role in public education reform over the past 2 decades and its impact on transition planning education of students with disabilities. Federal reform initiatives are addressed in the context of the standards movement, high-stakes accountability, and the eventual passage of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2001 (renamed the No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB]). The evolution of IDEA is addressed in light of general education reform and its proposed alignment with NCLB.

A Nation at Risk

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued a report card on the status of America's schools titled *A Nation at Risk*. The phrase "needs improvement" was written on nearly every page of the document. Using strong and sometimes provocative language, the report sparked national debate and set forth recommendations that focused on the need to "fix" America's schools, including the need for more subject matter content, high standards and expectations for student learning, increased time for learning, quality teaching, and more effective leadership and fiscal support. The recommendations were based on the premise that everyone can learn and that public education is responsible for providing students with the requisite skills for postsecondary education, future careers, and civic engagement. Six years after the release of *A Nation at Risk*, governors from across the country met in a national summit to transform the commission's recommendations into the National Education Goals and establish a framework for educational reform (Vinovskis, 1999). However, it took another decade for the educational needs of students with disabilities to be specifically addressed within the educational reform movement and eventually within federal legislation.

Goals 2000 and the Improving America's Schools Act

In 1994, the National Education Goals were codified into federal law in Goals 2000: Educate America Act, and performance, content, and opportunity-to-learn standards were defined at the national level. At the core of Goals 2000 was the belief that *all* students, including those with disabilities, must achieve at higher academic levels. In order to receive federal financial assistance under Goals 2000, states had to describe how the lowest-performing students (including those with disabilities, those living in poverty, and English language learners) would gain access to instruction and a rigorous curriculum. The ultimate goal of this federal legislation was to develop “a broad national consensus for American education reform” (Sec. 2[4][A]). To make this objective a reality, the states were to voluntarily develop core curriculum standards and assessments (Table 1.1).

In 1994, Congress also reauthorized ESEA and renamed it the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA). IASA reiterated the premise that *all* children can achieve high standards and recommended that states voluntarily develop content and student performance standards. Students with disabilities were included under Title I of the act, which is the largest and most recognized program in federal education legislation, serving millions of disadvantaged children to ensure their “fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (Sec. 1001).

The government-mandated reforms under Goals 2000 and IASA proposed standardization in testing, teaching, and curriculum in response to declining academic performance in America's schools. These reforms eventually resulted in every student, including those with disabilities, taking more standardized tests than ever before; increased graduation requirements; and greater state accountability for student learning.

The No Child Left Behind Act

The era of standards-based reform and accountability at the federal level hit its peak in 2001 with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act. NCLB not only strengthened the standards approach to education; it also sent a clear message: *In spite of some state efforts to establish an accountability system, there is no confidence that student performance will be improved on a consistent basis without a stronger federal role.* As such, NCLB expanded the federal role from assisting states in setting standards and improving local performance to fiscal sanctions and corrective action for both states and schools that fail to meet set criteria.

Table 1.1 Initiatives Under the First Wave of Federal Education Reform

<i>A Nation at Risk Recommendations</i>	<i>The National Education Goals</i>	<i>Standards Definitions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen content requirements in high schools • Adopt rigorous and measurable state standards and higher expectations for student performance and conduct • Use school time more effectively and lengthen the school day • Increase leadership and fiscal support to reform public education • Improve teacher preparation • <i>Source:</i> National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every student will start school ready to learn • Graduation rates will be increased to at least 90% • Students will achieve in challenging subject matter • The United States will be first in the world in math and science • All adults will be literate with skills for a global economy • Teacher education and professional development will be strengthened • All schools will be free of drugs and violence • Parental participation will be increased • <i>Source:</i> Vinovskis (1999) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content standards: Broad descriptions of the knowledge and skills students should acquire in a particular subject area • Performance standards: Concrete examples and explicit definitions of what students have to know and be able to do to demonstrate that they are proficient in the skills and knowledge framed by content standards • Opportunity-to-learn standards are the criteria for, and the basis of, assessing the sufficiency or quality of the resources, practices, and conditions necessary at each level of the education system (schools, local educational agencies, and states) to provide all students with an opportunity to learn the material in voluntary national content standards or state content standards (Sec. 3[a]) • <i>Source:</i> Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994)

Continuing the theme of the past 2 decades that all students can learn, NCLB specifically addressed the need for states to be accountable for the reading, math, and science achievement of all students, including those with disabilities, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (English language learners), and those living in poverty. Whereas ESEA, when it was originally passed into law in 1965, emphasized the *opportunity*

for disadvantaged students to learn, NCLB *required* schools to be accountable for increased academic learning (Hardman & Mulder, 2003; Hunt & McDonnell, 2007). The premise for an increased emphasis on school accountability and inclusion of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities is “the promise for increased consideration of these students in school and state policy decisions, as well as enhanced educational expectations, greater access to the general education curriculum, and improved instructional programs for this population of students” (Hunt & McDonnell, 2007, p. 275).

The four principles of school accountability under NCLB are the following:

1. Focus on student achievement as the primary measure of school success.
2. Emphasis on challenging academic standards that specify the knowledge skills that students should achieve and the levels at which mastery of the knowledge should be demonstrated.
3. Expectation that all students can and will learn more if high expectations are required.
4. Heavy reliance on achievement testing to ensure compliance and monitoring of student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

These principles form the core of a standards-based system to ensure that schools make genuine progress in closing persistent achievement gaps between disabled and disadvantaged students and their peers. A standards-based education emphasizes prespecified mastery of the curriculum. School progress in closing this gap is measured by annual yearly progress in reading, math, and science and must be the same for all students regardless of academic ability, English language acquisition, or socioeconomic disadvantage. The unprecedented focus on accountability and a standards approach (one size fits all) to student achievement has created concern and many unanswered questions for educators, students with disabilities, and the students’ parents. For example, are the characteristics of evidence-based special education instruction compatible with a standards-based approach to education? Will the participation of students with disabilities in a standards-based curriculum result in higher academic achievement or inevitable failure? How should special and general education teachers be prepared to ensure adequate training in working with students in a standards-based educational system?

Evolution of School-to-Work Transition Policy

Focus Question 3

How has federal legislation evolved to include individuals with disabilities in planning for the transition from school to the workplace and community?

A broad range of federal legislation has been enacted over the last 3 decades to support the long-term and complex nature of the transition from school to adult life. The purpose of these programs and services is to support young adults with disabilities as they transition to postsecondary school, employment, or community living. Anchoring employment transition, in addition to IDEA and NCLB, are five pieces of federal legislation: the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and subsequent amendments, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA) of 1999, and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) of 1994. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development stated in 1995 that school-to-work programs should help all students, especially those with disabilities, address the full range of issues they will confront as they leave school. Each of these acts addresses specific transition and employment needs of individuals with disabilities throughout the life span.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973

The Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 specifically prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities and provides funding and the opportunity to gain employment and living assistance as needed. Section 504 of the act “focuses on the needs of adults and youth transitioning into employment settings and ensures the development and implementation of a comprehensive and coordinated program of vocational assistance for individuals with disabilities thereby supporting independent living and maximizing employability and integration into the community” (Larkin & Turnbull, 2005, p. 68).

Key provisions of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act as amended in 1998 are “a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including:

- Postsecondary education
- Vocational training
- Integrated employment (including supported employment)
- Continuing and adult education
- Adult services

- Independent living
- Community participation” (Larkin & Turnbull, 2005, p. 68)

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

ADA is a civil rights act that mandates protections for people with disabilities in public- and private-sector employment, all public services and public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications. The U.S. Department of Justice is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that these provisions are enforced on behalf of all people with disabilities. The intent of ADA is to create a fair and level playing field by ending discrimination against citizens with disabilities by requiring reasonable accommodations. Reasonable accommodations take into account each person’s needs resulting from his or her disability. As defined in the act, the principal test for a reasonable accommodation is its effectiveness: Does the accommodation provide an opportunity for a person with a disability to achieve the same level of performance and to enjoy benefits equal to those of an average, similarly situated person without a disability? ADA federal regulations banned discrimination and ensured accessibility in workplaces, community facilities, public transportation, government services, and telecommunications.

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998

WIA consolidated a variety of federally funded programs as part of the first major reform of the nation’s job training and employment services for individuals with disabilities. Key elements of the WIA include

1. Streamlined service via a one-stop delivery system of information and job training services.
2. Universal access to essential services.
3. State and local requirements for a workforce investment system that fully includes and accommodates the needs of persons with disabilities.
4. Improved youth programs (Mank, 2007).

The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999

The purpose of TWWIIA is to support the employment of adults with disabilities without costing them Medicare or Medicaid coverage. Prior to this legislation, many individuals with disabilities faced the prospect of

losing federal benefits if they went to work. Persons with disabilities were then forced to choose between employment and access to medical care that was vital to sustain life. TWWIA provides health care support for people with severe disabilities by allowing states the option to establish a Medicaid state-plan buy-in option for those who are eligible, to offer premium-free extended Medicare coverage, to provide grants to states to develop state infrastructures to support working individuals with disabilities, and to offer statewide demonstrations to provide health care coverage to individuals with potentially disabling conditions who work to test the hypothesis that the provision of health care and related supports will prolong independence and employment and reduce dependency on disability income support programs (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2008).

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994

The major tenets of STWOA (Public Law 103–239) are based on several studies that criticized students’ lack of preparation for transitioning from school to competitive employment. A joint initiative between the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Labor, STWOA was part of a national initiative for comprehensive educational reform in 1994. The purpose of STWOA, similar to the Goals 2000 legislation, was to establish a national framework within which all states could create statewide school-to-work systems. The primary goal of this act was to “offer opportunities to all students to participate in a performance-based education and training programs that will enable them to earn portable credits, prepare for first jobs in high-skill high-wage careers and increase their opportunities for further education” (Sec. 3[a]). The result would be an expanded workforce. STWOA comprised a variety of school-based learning, work-based learning, and connected opportunities throughout high school to achieve this goal, including (a) career exploration and counseling, (b) academic and occupational instruction that was integrating and focused on high standards of achievement, and (c) various structured work experiences that taught broad transferable workplace skills.

STWOA also made several specific references to students with disabilities. As further referenced within the statute, additional purposes of the act were “to motivate all youths, including low-achieving youths, school dropouts, and youth with disabilities, to stay in or return to school or a classroom setting and strive to succeed, by providing enriched learning experiences and assistance in obtaining good jobs and continuing their education in postsecondary educational institutions” and “to increase opportunities

for minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities, by enabling individuals to prepare for careers that are not traditional for their race, gender, or disability” (Sec. 3).

The Evolution of Models for Transition Planning and Services

Focus Question 4

What are the components of an effective transition planning system?

Since the mid-1980s, a number of transition planning and service models for students with disabilities have been developed and implemented. While each emphasizes different aspects of the transition process, there is general agreement that an effective system of transition services must include (a) education programs designed to prepare students to live and work in the community, (b) access to postsecondary education and/or adult services that will support a lifestyle that reflects the needs and preferences of each student, and (c) a coordinated system of planning that promotes opportunities for educational and community service agencies to work collaboratively in achieving desired postschool goals.

Bridges From School to Working Life

The Bridges From School to Working Life Model focuses primarily on successful transition from school to employment for students with disabilities (Will, 1985). Bridges emphasizes the importance of improving every student’s access to needed services and supports during the period of transition (ages 14 to 22) from school to competitive employment. The model is based on three underlying assumptions: (a) the complexity of postschool services and competition for those services, (b) a focus on students with disabilities and their needs rather than the type or severity of disability, and (c) the goal of sustained and paid employment either immediately after school or after a period of postschool training or vocational services.

In 1985, Madeleine Will, then assistant secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services and the parent of a child with a disability, first described transition as a bridge that “requires both a solid span and a secure foundation at either end” (p. 4). A transition planning system for students with disabilities is most effective when schools and adult service agencies work together in supporting students’ needs while they are in school.

Coordinated transition planning and services are grouped into five components that become the bridges reflecting the necessary level of support.

1. **High School Foundation:** The school security and structure forms this foundation. Curriculum content and instructional procedures in high school determine whether or not students leave school with entry-level job skills, social interaction skills, and academic skills.
2. **Transition Without Special Services:** This bridge is shared by many individuals with and without disabilities. The resources needed for a successful transition to working life are those that are available to all citizens in general modes.
3. **Transition With Time-Limited Services:** The second bridge comprises temporary services that lead to permanent employment. Some individuals may require time-limited specialized services like vocational rehabilitation, postschool education, or other job training before entering employment. Access to these services is generally restricted to individuals who will continue to be successful when the support or service is withdrawn.
4. **Transition With Ongoing Services:** The third bridge consists of sustained support that enables the individual to maintain employment. This bridge is designed for individuals with the most severe disabilities who will always need supportive assistance.
5. **Employment Foundation:** This foundation represents the work opportunities in adult life. Regardless of which bridge is used or the strength of the high school foundation, successful transition depends on available employment options. Work opportunities are influenced by family and neighborhood networks, the economy, perceptions about individuals with disabilities, business incentives, and cooperative relationships among educational and government agencies (Will, 1985).

The Halpern Model

The model proposed by Andrew Halpern (1985) is perhaps the most comprehensive of the various approaches to transition planning because it addresses the full range of services and supports necessary for students with disabilities. The model includes all three components that define a comprehensive transition planning program while simultaneously addressing the range of services and supports needed for a student to successfully move from school to adult life.

The first component of the model comprises the areas of adult life that are critical to community adjustment. These areas include employment, residential living, and social and interpersonal relationships. Halpern argues that schools must comprehensively address all three areas if they are to succeed in supporting a student's transition from school to community. As suggested by Halpern, the quality of our lives is multidimensional. We gain pleasure and satisfaction from our work, our homes, and our families and friends. Consequently, transition services must be designed to address all areas of community adjustment.

The school provides the foundation for a successful transition. Its role is to provide the training and support necessary to support students and their families in achieving their own postschool goals and objectives. These supports not only include instruction on critical goals and objectives but also may include education of the student and family about postschool options, development of linkages with local businesses and service vendors, and coordination of service delivery with state community service agencies.

The second component of Halpern's model is the type of support (or services) that will be needed for a student to move smoothly and successfully from school into community life in one of three possible avenues:

1. Students may enter community life with the assistance and support of the generic services available to all individuals. These services include, but are not limited to, counseling and advising services provided by the high school and adult service agencies available to individuals without disabilities (such as job agencies), as well as the natural supports that students receive from friends and family.

2. Students may enter community life with time-limited support. In this situation, a community agency may provide temporary support. Such services might include postsecondary vocational training programs designed to place the individual in an entry-level job or temporary support to assist the individual in obtaining residential living (such as an apartment or a home).

3. Finally, students may make the transition into community life with ongoing supports. In this situation, students receive "lifelong" support to facilitate their adjustment to community life. The intensity of this support will vary significantly based on the needs and desires of particular students.

It is important to understand that these three avenues are not mutually exclusive. Often, students must tap into all three levels of services and supports to make a successful transition to adult living.

Systematic planning that leads to valued transition outcomes is at the core of the Halpern model. Halpern argues that in order to effectively

prepare students for community life, schools must use IEPs as the vehicle to develop educational experiences that will meet each student's postschool needs and as a mechanism to promote collaboration between education and adult service programs. The decisions that students and their families face in the transition process include not only where the students will work and live but also how the students will be supported in achieving these outcomes.

POINT/COUNTERPOINT 1.1

NCLB, IDEA 2004, and Students With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Increased Academic Achievement or Inevitable Failure

Standards-based reform in the No Child Left Behind Act is based on the premise that improving student performance is highly correlated with standards system and high-stakes accountability. However, the issue has engendered considerable debate. In this Point/Counterpoint, we examine contrasting perspectives on including students with severe disabilities in a standards-driven system with high-stakes accountability.

POINT

Proponents of including students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in a standards-driven system argue that it will enable these students to experience a wider variety of subjects at a deeper level. This would give students with intellectual and developmental disabilities exposure to higher-order thinking skills, such as problem solving, and enable them to develop collaborative skills and engender a sense of responsibility and self-esteem (McLaughlin & Tilstone, 2000). A standards-driven system also promotes more collaboration among special and general educators, requiring them to develop more challenging learner goals and raise expectations for students with disabilities.

Traditionally, students with intellectual and developmental disabilities have not been held accountable for the achievement of IEP goals. This has resulted in a lowering of individual expectations and failure to learn essential skills. As a corollary, special educators

COUNTERPOINT

Opponents of the standards-based approach as espoused in NCLB and IDEA 2004 raise several concerns. First, failure is inevitable because there is insufficient instructional time and resources to meet the instructional needs of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Second, there is no evidence that a standards-driven system will actually lead to sustained higher levels of achievement among students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and “whether the skills gained through this curriculum are the ones that will prove necessary for successful transition from school” (McLaughlin & Tilstone, 2000, p. 62).

It can be argued that establishing content standards for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities at the state level is inconsistent with the concept of individualization and not in the best interests of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities or their peers

(Point continued)

were not held accountable for the poor performance of their students, and they largely regarded the IEP as paper compliance rather than an accountability tool (Sebba, Thurlow, & Goertz, 2000). Including students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in a standards-driven system forces teachers to use the IEP as an accountability blueprint, altering goals and objectives as necessary to ensure student progress in the general curriculum.

Some educators, while accepting the premise that standards-based reform should apply to all students, are uneasy about including students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the accountability system and its corresponding impact on teachers. Teachers and principals may become anxious about the consequences of published low scores. General education teachers may be concerned that students with intellectual and developmental disabilities will negatively affect publicly available scores and that schools would blame them.

(Counterpoint continued)

without disabilities. There is a fear that if all students are expected to reach the same standard, the bar will be lowered to accommodate those with less ability. If the bar isn't lowered, students with disabilities will routinely fail to meet the standard. Teachers may feel powerless because they believe it is not possible for all students to reach the required standards.

Some educators have concerns that inclusion in a standards-driven system will damage the self-esteem of students with disabilities if they do not perform well. Valuable instruction time would be spent teaching content in academic areas rather than concentrating on the acquisition of critical, functional life skills. In order to facilitate a student's mastery of academic skills, teachers could be forced to remove students from the general education class, thus compromising the inclusion of students with their same-aged peers. While there is no denying the need to improve results in both general and special education, students with disabilities will never catch up with their peers who are not disabled. In fact, they may fall even farther behind.

Note. Major portions of this debate forum are drawn from "Critical Issues in Public Education: Federal Reform and the Impact on Students With Disabilities," by M. Hardman and M. Mulder, in L. M. Bullock and R. A. Gable (Eds.), *Quality personnel preparation in emotional/behavior disorders* (pp. 12–36), Dallas, TX: Institute for Behavioral and Learning Differences. Adapted with permission.

Halpern's model highlights several important issues about the transition process. Secondary programs must comprehensively address the community adjustment needs of students. Schools can and do play a critical role in ensuring that these needs are met. Successful transition is a challenge not just for schools but also for family, friends, and education and community service agencies. Effective transition requires not only improving how students are prepared for community life but also ensuring that all possible

personal and public resources are focused on achieving students' postschool goals.

The Kohler Model

Paula Kohler's (1996) model, "A Taxonomy for Transition Programming," acknowledges that transition planning encompasses all aspects of education and includes a basis for planning transition, evaluating content, and program effectiveness. Based on the premise that all secondary schooling is education for transition, the taxonomy views transition planning as the foundation for education rather than as an additional activity or requirement. Operationally, this requires (a) identifying postschool goals based on student abilities, needs, interests, and preferences; (b) development of instructional activities and educational experiences to prepare students for postschool goals; and (c) collaboration and cooperation among the student, his or her family, and professionals to identify and develop the goals and activities (Kohler, 1996). Components of the taxonomy can be divided into five categories:

1. Student-focused planning, which consists of IEP development, student participation, and planning strategies.
2. Student development, which includes life skills instruction, career and vocational curricula, structured work experience, assessment, and support services.
3. Interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration made up of a collaborative framework and collaborative service delivery.
4. Family involvement, which includes family training, participation, and empowerment.
5. Program structure, including program philosophy, program policy, strategic planning, program evaluation, resource allocation, and human resource development (Kohler, Field, Izzo, & Johnson, 1999).

Summary

Federal legislative initiatives of the past 2 decades have laid the foundation for improved postschool outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities as they transition from school to adult life. The long-term effectiveness of the various pieces of federal legislation will be gauged by the success students and their families experience in achieving

these valued outcomes over time. From the high school transition years through adult life, the challenges of providing quality services and supports for people with disabilities are ever changing, varied, and complex. With the information in Chapter 1 providing the foundation, our discussion now moves into a more in-depth discussion of expected outcomes and emerging values in transition planning for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities for the 21st century.

Focus Question Review

Focus Question 1: Identify the components of the transition amendments in IDEA.

- Develop a “coordinated set of activities” for students that promotes successful movement from school to postschool activities. These activities must focus on achieving individualized postschool employment and community living goals for students.
- Coordinate transition activities with community service agencies to increase the availability of needed services to graduates after leaving school.
- Base specific services on transitions included in each student’s IEP.

Focus Question 2: Identify the major elements of educational reform in schools and their impact on transition planning for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

- NCLB and IDEA require that students with intellectual and developmental disabilities have access to the general curriculum and be included in the state’s accountability system for measuring student performance.
- During the past 2 decades, federal legislation has expanded its focus from access to public education for students with disabilities to improving student achievement within the general education curriculum.
- Schools must be accountable for the achievement of all students, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Focus Question 3: How has federal legislation evolved to include individuals with disabilities in planning for the transition from school to the workplace and community?

- Several federal initiatives (i.e., the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, ADA, TWWIIA, and STWOA) have focused specifically on meeting the transition needs of students with disabilities.

- Federal legislation seeks to protect individuals with severe disabilities from discrimination in employment, transportation, and communication and to ensure accessibility to facilities, government programs, and health care.

Focus Question 4: What are the components of an effective transition planning system?

- Education programs must be designed to prepare students to live and work in the community.
- Postsecondary services must be available to provide the opportunity for each individual to develop and achieve a lifestyle that reflects his or her own needs and preferences.
- A coordinated system of planning must be in place that requires education and community service agencies to work collaboratively in achieving valued postschool outcomes for each student with a disability.