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Christine Georgallis

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

Transition Programming for Students with Learning Disabilities

From High School to College

by

K. Christine H. Georgallis

MA, University of North Florida, 1976

BS, University of Iowa, 1972

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Special Education

Walden University

June 2015

Abstract

Researchers have shown the importance of effective transition services for students with learning disabilities entering college. Few studies, however, have explored the perceptions of students with learning disabilities going through the transition process while pursuing postsecondary options. To address that gap, this study analyzed how students with learning disabilities perceive the effectiveness of their secondary transition services and preparedness for college. The conceptual framework was based on Rogers's theories of learning, which suggest learning includes feelings and emotions as well as cognitive development. Education should promote the type of learning that leads to this personal growth and development. A phenomenological approach was chosen, and a research protocol was developed for the participants. Nine students with learning disabilities who completed at least 1 year of college were interviewed about their perceptions of the effectiveness of their secondary transition services and their perceptions of their preparedness for college. These interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The data was hand coded, analyzed, and organized to discover emerging themes. The data revealed the majority of the participants had not perceived their transition plans and services to have prepared them for college. The participants' role was minimal in their individualized education program meetings and in the development of their transition plans. The implication for positive social change is to develop the resources required for school districts, administrators, and teachers to better prepare postsecondary students with learning disabilities for the rigors of higher education.

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Dedication

To my daughter Stavroula and my son Elias, who encouraged me to go back to school and fulfill one of my life's goals.

To my husband, Bill, who so patiently read through my papers and spent much time by himself while I worked towards my goal.

To my parents, Father John and Lula Hondras, who gave me the foundation I needed to pursue my goals.

To my sister Ann and my brother Nick, who were so supportive through this time.

And, finally, to the students with disabilities who inspired me to try to find a way to give them access to a higher education.

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So many people have helped in my journey. Those who have helped me make this research a reality are my committee members, Dr. Linda Crawford, my URR, Dr. Lorraine Cleeton, my chair, and Dr. Sheri Anderson, who stayed up with me and talked me through my many questions. All have been an invaluable source of knowledge, guidance, and support.

Though all faculty members I have come in contact with through these last 6 years have been supportive, I want to thank Dr. Douglas Eicher for his knowledge, guidance, and, eventually, his friendship. I also want to thank Jeff Zuckerman for helping me through the editing with such humor.

Finally there is my friend, Robin. We started our journey together and will finish very close together. We assisted each other, vented to each other, cried and laughed together, and will celebrate the end of this journey together.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

This chapter presents a brief background of the literature and the gap in research on the effectiveness of transition services from high school to postsecondary institutions from the perspective of students with disabilities. The problem statement and purpose of the study will be discussed and the research questions presented. The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the literature and will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The nature of the study section will explain the importance and the relevance of the research for students with disabilities entering college. Operational definitions, assumptions of the study, the scope and delineations, limitations, and the significance of the study will be presented. The key strategies to successful transition services will be discussed as a further introduction to this study.

Background of the Problem

An increasing number of students with learning disabilities (LD) are continuing their education by entering into vocational schools, career schools, and 2- and 4-year colleges and universities (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center [EPERC], 2008). Connor (2012) reported the number of students with LD has tripled in the last 30 years. This includes students enrolling in 2-year community college programs as well as 4-year college and university programs. In June 2011, the National Education for Education Statistics reported that 88% of 2- and 4-year colleges had enrolled students with LD in the years 2008–2009. Although the transition from high school to postsecondary education is a challenge for any student, for students with LD the change

can be daunting (Bangsor, 2008). Despite legislation mandating transition services for students with LD, Hawbaker (2007) argued a contradiction exists between the rhetoric and action. To be more explicit, the gap in the literature is how effectively these transition programs prepare students with LD for college. The effectiveness of the transition programs is exemplified by the lack of skills students with LD demonstrate when entering college (Wehman, 2013). High school experiences often fail to prepare students for the challenges they will face upon entering postsecondary institutions (Cobb et al., 2013; SREB, 2010; Wehman, 2013). These challenges are more pronounced with students who have LD (Bangsor, 2008).

History of Legislation Related to Students with Learning Disabilities

The original special education laws were signed by President Ford in 1975 (Davis, 2007) and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA) in 1997. Transition services for students with LD and other addenda supplemented the IDEA in 2004. These updates have increased school districts' responsibilities to ensure students with LD are prepared to transition into a postsecondary education setting (United States Department of Education, 2007). A LD is defined by Federal Law 34 CFR 300.8 as follows:

A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury,

minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2007)

Several federal policies mandated support for students with LD, including the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, IDEA 1997, IDEA 2004, No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB), the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) and, more recently, the Core Standards. These acts, particularly IDEA 1997, were passed to improve transition services to promote postsecondary goals of students with LD. In December 2004, President Bush signed H.R. 1350 (IDEA 2004), which had noteworthy language differences from IDEA 1997. IDEA 2004 brought about some specificity (e.g., setting clear goals for life after school and agency involvement in transition planning), which was missing in IDEA 1997 (NCSET, 2007). Section 602 of the definitions illustrated one difference between the 1997 and 2004. IDEA 2004 included academic and functional achievement of the student, expanding the definition of transition services to include not only academic skills but functional skills as well (NCSET, 2007).

Once the federal mandates were in place, the states were required to draft a plan specifying how the local school districts were to implement transition services. These plans were to include how to write individualized education plans (IEPs) and connect these services to the Common Core Standards and college and career readiness skills (NCSET, 2007). According to IDEA 2004, the college readiness curriculum should include the differences between the entitlements of IDEA and the Civil Rights of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Amendments (ADA-AA). The transition

services should include the information regarding how students with learning disabilities can access their accommodations through ADA-AA in college.

With the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, Congress required that by the age of 16 a student's IEP must include measureable postsecondary goals, which would include training, education, employment, and independent living skills (IDEA, 2004). The IEP is required to include the transition plans that specify the individualized services needed for the students with LD to attain these goals.

Keys to Successful Transitions

According to IDEA, transition services are a set of coordinated activities designed as a results-oriented transition plan. The transition services should be based on the needs, strengths, preferences, and interests of the students with LD who should play an active role in the transition planning. Moreover, to further prepare students with LD for transitioning into postsecondary education or employment, individualized support services must address the skills needed to attain a student's goals and be successful in college (Connor, 2012). Yet a 2010 special report by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education and the Southern Regional Education Board suggested students with LD were largely underprepared for college. According to Connor, students with LD face daunting challenges in education when leaving high school to enter college. The nurturing educational environment changes into an academic environment that requires a greater amount of independence, self-determination, and personal decision making to navigate successfully. Students who had been diagnosed with a LD and had attended remedial or special classes in high school now must attend classes with all

students, manage a larger load of academic work, become more socialized, and master collaboration skills, as well as learn how to study with professors who may or may not know how to support the accommodations necessary for their success (Bangsor, 2008).

These critical situations can be managed by the students if transition services in high school address the challenges the students with LD will face in college and prepare them with the skills necessary to be successful (Bangsor, 2008). The services included in the transition plans can be infused into the curriculum of all classes. Interweaving self-advocacy and self-determination skills, for example, into the lesson plans can benefit all students and help them overcome the upcoming challenges of college. Students with LD, in particular, might be better prepared with the necessary skills to be successful.

Research suggests implementing effective transition plans promotes further education and life skills, which can lead to a better future for students with LD. Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) studied two groups of students with LD. Students in one group had acquired self-determination skills and were well informed about the effects of their disability on the way they learned, their rights, and their responsibilities. Students in the other group had not acquired these skills or knowledge. Students with higher scores on classroom and standardized tests demonstrated a higher level of self-determination, which led to a greater number of positive outcomes than those who had not developed self-determination skills. Wehmeyer and Schwartz also found that those students with LD who were more informed about the effects their disability had on their learning, their rights, and their responsibilities had a more positive postsecondary experience.

Another component of transition planning is aligning the high school curriculum of students with LD with the identified needs, strengths, preferences, and interests so that they are prepared for postsecondary education. To help schools balance the students' current academic needs and prepare them with the skills and knowledge needed within the more demanding environments they will enter after high school, Connor (2012) suggested enabling students to understand their disability, acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses, and practice making decisions. However, coursework in which the students with LD must develop self-determination skills can be challenging (Bangsor, 2008). These skills, which include setting goals, making choices and decisions, problem solving, self-awareness, and self-advocacy, are needed for all students to have the capability of living autonomously. Parents and teachers make the choices and goals for the majority of students with LD with little input from the students (Connor, 2012).

Key to transitioning successfully for students with LD is transition services that promote positive outcomes (Davis, Denney, Baer, & Flexer, 2011). The federal Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) has stressed the importance of implementing effective transition services (NCSET, 2004). Researchers in education have developed several effective transition strategies for developing plans that satisfy the legal requirements. However, best practices are not always implemented when developing transition services. One obstacle to implementing the required transition services, however, is the lack of time and resources available to teachers and schools (Kaehne & Beyer, 2009). Finn and Kohler (2009) reported the additional obstacles of the lack of training to implement aspects of transition services and the poor understanding of

the federal laws. Teaching professionals need to be aware of how the legislation for students with LD changes from the entitlement program of IDEA to an eligibility and civil rights program of ADA (Salter, 2009). Chapter 2 will include a more in-depth discussion of the differences between the entitlements of IDEA and ADA-AA civil rights.

At the state level, many state education offices have issued guidelines for the implementation of these services in compliance with the federal mandates. The state reports compiled from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in 2012 showed several positive notes for students with LD transitioning to college, but there are several noncompliance issues included in the report. Many schools do not have the guidelines of how to implement an effective and efficient transition plan (Connor, 2012). To provide a comprehensive plan, teachers, school guidance counselors, parents, students, community members, and college representatives should be involved in selecting and administering the appropriate services to be included in transition plans for students with LD to successfully transition to college (Connor, 2012). Moreover, according to Cobb and Alwell (2009), important outcomes are found in a student-focused planning model.

Several studies have suggested the area within the IEP where transition goals are to be entered are either unaddressed or the details are inadequate (Collet-Klingenberg & Kolb, 2011; Dutta, Kundu, & Schiro-Geist, 2009; Powers et al., 2005). There are also a lack of collaboration between schools and outside agencies and insufficient resources to implement effective transition services (Klingenberg & Kolb, 2011). Powers et al. (2005) found that self-determination skills, career planning, and post education plans

were not incorporated into the services, and students with LD were often left on their own to carry out the action plans decided within their IEP.

A few transition service models have been developed to assist schools and special education teachers create an IEP for their students; however, the amount of time required to record the data and lack of resources to implement these services make their usefulness unrealistic (Gartin & Murdick, 2005). The 2004 reauthorization was designed to bring IDEA into alignment with NCLB of 2001 and reduce the amount of paperwork, but its implementation actually increased the amount of paperwork involved (Gartin & Murdick, 2005).

Researchers have analyzed and reviewed studies conducted to determine what components are needed for an effective transition plan (Cobb et al., 2013; Wehman, 2013). Findings from these studies are showing that students with LD are ill prepared for college and postsecondary employment. More studies were recommended to examine the effectiveness of the implementation of the transition services.

Particular skills, in both academic and social realms, are needed to develop effective transition services. Effective transition planning and implementing of these plans could lead to students with LD successfully transitioning from high school to college (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). Yet there are continuing gaps between the progress of students with LD and their peers (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). The barriers to successful postsecondary outcomes include the lack of transition services and the actual implementation of these services as mandated by IDEA. Several program components (e.g., goal setting, life skills, and student involvement in the IEP process) are

necessary for a transition plan to be successful (Daviso et al., 2011; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997; Woods et al., 2010). The findings from the research of Daviso's et al, Wehmeyer's and Schwartz's, and Woods' study explored the knowledge stakeholders require to make recommendations for best practices of effective implementation of transition services that comprise the total transition plans. Landmark, Ju, and Zhang (2010), who followed up on best practices in transition, discussed general education inclusion, family involvement, self-determination, and daily living training, along with social training as only a few examples of the components necessary for an effective transition plan.

Problem Statement

The literature has suggested that students with LD are underprepared to enter postsecondary education (Cobb et al., 2013; SREB, 2010; Wehmann, 2013). There is also a scarcity of literature supporting the effectiveness of transition services for students with LD who are entering college. Understanding the effectiveness of transition experiences may serve as a basis for developing and implementing activities that contribute to postsecondary academic success. To date, however, researchers have insufficiently explored the perceptions of students with LD on how effectively transition services are implemented in high school. An understanding of students' perceptions of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of transition services could reveal the reason for the evident lack of necessary skills (i.e., self-determination and self-advocacy) to transition to postsecondary education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to analyze how students with LD perceive the effectiveness of their secondary transition services and preparedness for college. Findings from this study add to the current literature on the challenges faced by students who are planning to attend college or are currently enrolled in college.

The research design was a phenomenological approach with the intent of (a) examining the skills that are lacking once the students with LD enter college, (b) gathering the reflections of the students with LD on skills attained and skills they lacked upon leaving high school to enter college, and (c) documenting the experiences of students with LD when developing their transition services. From this information, the components that compose effective transition services can be ascertained, along with the resources and skills needed to implement these services.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed.

Main question: How do students with LD perceive their readiness for college, especially regarding information needed and transition services provided in their high school IEP?

Subquestion : What role do students with LD have in developing their transition services?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was to identify how, or if, needed skills are being taught and if students with LD perceive strategies are being used to prepare

them to transition to higher education. Through interviews, this study explored the students' perceptions of how effective their transition plan taught them these skills and prepared them for higher education. The conceptual framework of this study was based on several theorists and researchers. The theorist whose work parallels the mandates of IDEA (2004) the closest was Rogers (1969). According to Rogers, the highest levels of significant learning include personal involvement at both the affective and cognitive levels. Learning is self-initiated and can change the attitudes and behaviors of the learners.

Many studies have been conducted on how students learn and how to assist students with LD successfully complete high school (Bangsor, 2008). Decisions are made for the students from the time they enter school. The importance of the IDEA mandates for including transition services in the students' IEP is to address the skills needed for students with LD to become self-sufficient, be able to self-advocate, and enable them to make their own decisions regarding their future. Although there are federal mandates to include transition services in IEPs, there is a gap in the transition literature regarding how students with LD view the effectiveness of these necessary services for education beyond high school (Wehmeyer, 2002). The premises of Wehmeyer's and Bangsor's research on transition services for students with LD included the lack of necessary skills, the stakeholders involved in the students' preparation, the challenges students and teachers face in implementing the transition services, and the need for students to take a more active role.

According to Bangsor (2008), high school experiences for all students more often than not fail to prepare them for postsecondary education. Because of their lack of skills, students with LD have an even larger challenge making the necessary decisions for their future. The mandates of IDEA addressed the necessity of transition services from high school to postsecondary schools but did not address methods or how teachers will be trained so these transition services could be developed or implemented. According to the current literature, one important component of transition services is teaching self-determination skills (Wehmeyer & Schalock, 2001).

Wehmeyer (2002) reported that IDEA requires outcome-oriented transition services. Though self-determination skills are not explicitly addressed, there has been a focus on these skills made by funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education (OSEP). Self-determination skills include the ability to make choices and decisions, solve problems, identify alternatives, recognize consequences, set goals, and foster self-awareness and self-advocacy skills. Self-determination skills enable students to act autonomously and become self-regulating (Wehmeyer & Schalock, 2001).

These skills cannot be fully realized in school curricula alone. Parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and students need to work together to bring about opportunities for students with LD to successfully acquire these skills (Wehmeyer, 1995). Based on their research, Milsom and Hartley (2005) argued school guidance counselors should play a larger role and be more involved in developing and implementing transition services for students with LD who have the goal of postsecondary education. Milsom and Hartley found that only some guidance counselors are involved, and many more counselors have

no knowledge of the transition process for students with LD. School counselors are in a position to educate and guide students with LD to learn how to communicate with the community, prepare and navigate the admissions process of colleges, and find schools that provide the necessary accommodations. School counselors are also in the position to gather the necessary information for parents so they can assist their students with the important decisions they face (Milsom & Hartley, 2005).

Students with LD face multiple challenges in the learning process, their social skills, and self-esteem. To achieve the goal of earning the college degree they have set for themselves, students with LD need to develop their self-determination, self-advocacy, social skills, and several other skills imperative to their success. Students with LD also need to have a true understanding of their disability, how it impacts their learning, and knowledge of the differences between IDEA accommodations and ADA accommodations (Bangsor, 2008).

Nature of the Study

The mandates of IDEA require transition services be included within a section of the annual IEP and be adhered to during the school year. IDEA introduced these requirements in 1997 with changes in language and specifics in 2004 (e.g., setting clear goals for life after school and agency participation). Despite considerable research on the ideal model of implementing these services, students with LD continue to be underprepared for the rigors of postsecondary education (Daviso et al., 2011, Wehmeyer et al., 2012).

The qualitative research method chosen for this study was a phenomenological approach. To fully understand the current practices of transition services and what improvements are needed to benefit students with LD, I conducted interviews with a purposive sampling of students who had just completed their first year of college. According to Merriam (1988), purposive sampling allows the researcher to gain insight, understand, and discover from a specific sample of participants. The purpose of these interviews was to gain the participants' perceptions and understanding of the effectiveness of the transition services provided in high school.

Boundaries for this study include special education transition services and how they are used in various school districts to prepare the students with LD for transition into postsecondary education. Participants had attended high schools in several states. The boundaries also include how the students with LD perceived the effectiveness of these services in preparing them for postsecondary education.

Collected data included transcriptions of audio recordings of the open-ended interviews. The interviewees were chosen from a private university in a southern state. As discussed in Chapter 3, triangulation of information was done using an additional investigator to review samplings of data collected from the students with LD after their first year of college. According to Patton (2002), combining the data of the researcher and an additional investigator strengthens a study, thus providing a richer data set. I interviewed participants to discover if there were patterns and themes within the data to determine if the necessary skills and information are being offered within the transition services provided in high school. From the patterns and themes, I analyzed similarities

and differences to determine consistencies within the datasets. Research questions focused on the students' perceptions of the extent to which they had acquired the skills and knowledge necessary to successfully transition to postsecondary education. The information gathered through the interviews of the students was intended to lead to a deeper understanding of which transition services help students with LD successfully transition to postsecondary education.

Operational Definitions

Specific learning disability: Groups of varying disabilities that are lifelong and cannot be cured. These disorders have a negative impact on learning and can affect one's ability to speak, listen, think, read, write, spell, and perform mathematical computations. The disorders affect the brain's ability to receive, process, store, respond to, and communicate information (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2011).

Americans With Disabilities Act: Civil rights protections for individuals with disabilities. The act ensures individuals with disabilities have equal opportunities in employment, federal, state, and local government services, public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications (ADA, 2008).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: Entitles all students, regardless of disabilities, race, and gender, the right to a free and public education. It includes mandates for schools to ensure students with LD receive appropriate planning and transition services (IDEA, 2004).

Individual Educational Plan: A program developed by an IEP team to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law receives specialized instruction and

related services. These students are attending an elementary or secondary educational institution.

Section 504: A section of the IDEA that defines a person with a disability as anyone who has a substantial limitation in one or more of life's daily activities, including, but not limited to, walking, sleeping, eating, breathing, and learning. The students who are on a Section 504 plan do not qualify for an IEP (IDEA, 2004).

Self-determination: A combination of skills that enables individuals to set goals, become self-regulated, understand their strengths and weaknesses, and improve their decision-making skills. Self-determined people are those who make things happen in their lives. They are goal-oriented and apply problem solving skills in order to take charge of their lives (Wehmeyer, 2002).

Self-efficacy: An individual's beliefs that he or she can accomplish a task set (IDEA, 2004).

Self-advocacy: The ability of an individual to ask and, if need be, demand what is needed for his or her success and for their civil rights to be implemented (NCSET, 2004).

Transition services as mandated by IDEA 2004: Required that, beginning no later than age 16, a student's IEP must include measurable postsecondary goals related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills. The IEP must specify the transition services needed to assist the students to meet these goals. Under IDEA, transition services are defined as a coordinated set of activities that (a) are designed to be within a results-oriented process focused on improving the academic and functional achievement a student with disabilities to ease the transition from school to

post school activities; (b) are based on the individual's student's needs, strengths, preferences, and interests; and (c) include 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 vocation comprise evaluation (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2009).

Assumptions

There were five assumptions of participating students who have completed their first year of college: (a) Participants were truthful and forthcoming in interviews; (b) participants remembered, with clarity, experiences of the services offered to transition to college; (c) high school students with LD may or may not have been taught the necessary skills to transition from high school to college successfully; (d) students with LD did not understand the difference between entitlements of IDEA and the civil rights of ADA; and (e) all schools are in compliance with the state and federal mandates.

Scope and Delimitations

I interviewed students with LD who have entered college, had an IEP in high school, and participated in transition services. This study did not include students from private schools because public school services are addressed by the mandates of IDEA, but private schools are not required to follow these laws.

Limitations

In this qualitative study, the sample size was small, and participants were from one postsecondary institution but had originated from various states. Limitations included the amount of time spent in the field, the memory of the participants, and the

cooperation of the students. I was the primary interviewer and data collector with a secondary investigator to review the data for corroboration.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study provide insights into the appropriate strategies needed to implement effective transition services for those students who desire to go to college. The perceptions of the student participants may uncover the necessary skills for students with LD to master and be incorporated into the high school curriculum. Although there are federal mandates in place regarding the inclusion of transition services for all students with LD, students with LD are still entering college underprepared. Wehmeyer et al. (2001) argued the current educational process does not prepare these students for life after school. Direction and resources are lacking that would to enable schools to implement the individualized services for students to prepare for education beyond high school. Implications for positive social change are empowering postsecondary students with LD in becoming more proactive in creating their transition goals and services.

Summary

The purpose of this research study was to analyze how students with LD perceive the effectiveness of their secondary transition services and preparedness for college. Through the data collected, the necessary components of effective transition services for students with LD to successfully transition from high school to college can be explored. The data also identified the perceptions of students with LD of the transition services they did or did not receive in high school.

In Chapter 1, I gave a brief overview of the study along with the purpose of the study, the statement of the problem, the significance of the study, the definitions of terms used, the nature of the study, and the limitations of the study. A discussion and review of the current and related literature will ensue in Chapter 2 to lay the groundwork for this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to analyze how students with LD perceived the effectiveness of their secondary transition services and preparedness for college. This chapter reviews the literature regarding transition plans, the services these plans comprise, and the implementation of these plans from high school to postsecondary education for students with LD. The literature review outlines the conceptual framework. The first topic is a discussion of the laws that affect students with LD and that led to the foundation of transition services. The subsequent topics include a description of transition services, the identified skills needed for a successful transition, and the role of the various stakeholders.

Although the mandates of IDEA were originally intended to assist students with disabilities in transitioning from secondary education to postsecondary education or employment, the mandates are not explicit in the type of skills that should be included in these transition services or how to implement such services. At the state level, many states lack clear guidelines or policies for implementing transition services (Neubert & Leconte, 2013). In sum, this chapter summarizes the current literature on the topic of transition services for students with LD to prepare for postsecondary education.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature in this review includes peer-reviewed articles from professional journals found from the following databases: Academic Search Complete, ERIC, EBSCO, Education Research Complete, and SAGE Research Methods Online, as well as

SAGE Publications. In addition, dissertations from Walden Dissertations and through ProQuest were researched. These databases were accessed from the Walden University Library, libraries from other universities, and Google Scholar. Professional organization websites, such as the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), Transition Coalition, National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET), and the National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASSET), were also sources of the literature reviewed.

There is a significant amount of literature regarding transition services from high school to postsecondary education. Historical documents were reviewed to lay the foundation of the ongoing concerns of transition services. The literature on transition services and the importance of the skills students with LD require for successful transition to college began in the late 1980s but expanded in earnest in 1994. From then until about 2008, the literature was rich with studies, experimental programs, and theories. Since 2008, the research has abated somewhat, but the skills students with LD require to make the transition continue to be studied. Even though studies continue on this important subject, researchers have not uncovered new information.

The search included such keywords as *self-determination skills, transition services, student attitudes, IDEA mandates, IEP transition plans, college preparation, goal planning, self-advocacy skills, postsecondary education, federal education policies, students with learning disabilities, disability support services, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and ADA-AA laws.*

Explanation of Laws Protecting Students With Disabilities

In 1975, President Ford signed into legislation the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), which significantly impacted the education for students with disabilities (Davis, 2007). The EAHCA was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990. Legislated mandates of IDEA 1997 and 2004 required transition services to be a part of the IEP for students with LD. Once a student who has been identified with a LD reaches high school, the IEP identifies current services and the students' postsecondary goals (Cawthone & Cole, 2010). The IEP should include a plan for each student to transition from high school to employment or postsecondary education (IDEA, 2004).

The results of several studies suggested too many students with LD are still leaving high school without the necessary skills, support, and knowledge to achieve their goals of attaining a postsecondary education (Chiba & Low, 2007; Hughes & Carter, 2011, Test, Fowler, Cease-Cook, & Bartholomew, 2012; Wehman, 2013; Wehmeyer, Palmer, Lee, Williams-Diehm, & Shorgren, 2011; Wehmeyer, 2002). Turnbull, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, and Park (2003) discussed the intent of IDEA was to fulfill the following goals: (a) equal opportunity and antidiscrimination to education; (b) full participation, including inclusion in the general education curriculum as much as possible; (c) independent living skills; and (d) economic self-sufficiency and productivity. Turnbull et al. concluded the quality of life components, such as independent living skills, self-advocacy skills, and the ability to be self-sufficient, have not been given the proper amount of attention.

These quality of life components are to be included in the IEP transition provisions of all students with disabilities. Adding to academics and skills, Bjornebekk (2008) suggested that the role of emotions and the application of achievement goal theory be considered as part of the education for the successful transition into college. Hildreth's (2013) later review of the literature on transition supported the earlier findings of the aforementioned researchers. Hildreth grouped her findings into four main areas: academic, social, emotional and self-esteem, and self-help and survival. Knowledge of these skills could foster more successful experiences and outcomes for students with learning disabilities who desire to go to college.

IDEA is designed to be fulfilled through the transition portions of the IEP. Morningstar, Lattin, and Sarkesian (2004) reported that IDEA 1997 included five major requirements: (a) Include a preliminary statement of services by age 14; (b) include transition services and goals by age 16; (c) describe the implementation of these transition services; (d) the IEP team will include parents, teachers, service agencies, school staff (such as guidance counselors) and students; and (e) the transition plan will focus on the postsecondary outcomes that are in line with the students' needs, interests, and goals and the student have reevaluations conducted every 3 years.

In IDEA 1997, school districts were allowed to avoid reevaluations for students every 3 years, which would allow students with LD to graduate high school without a recent psycho-educational evaluation. This could be detrimental to students entering college, as many higher educational institutions require an evaluation within the last 3 years.

In 2004, IDEA mandated that age-appropriate transition assessments be used to identify students' postsecondary goals (Woods, Sylvester, & Martin, 2010). According to an explanation of the more current mandates of IDEA 2004 by Madaus and Shaw (2006), a summary of performance (SOP) is to be provided upon leaving high school. This requirement would better define transition services and stress the importance of directly teaching transition skills (Woods et al., 2010). The regulations, at best, only vaguely state what is required within the SOP; instead, states are left to develop their own versions of the SOP.

Several professional organizations have developed comprehensive documents that could be adopted by all states as a universal template and provide a consistent form of measurement. According to Madaus et al. (2006), some of the leading professional organizations regarding students with LD include the Learning Disabilities Association of America, the Council for Exceptional Children, and its Division for Learning Disabilities. These documents, according to Madaus and Shaw, also offer the opportunity to promote self-determination during the transition process by requiring active student participation. The use of these documents and outlines is, however, completely voluntary; thus, a universal guide is not being used.

The laws of IDEA apply to students with LD while they attend kindergarten and until graduation from high school. The schools are responsible for providing evaluations and services during this time. Once students graduate high school, the protection of IDEA no longer exists. Other laws exist to support the education of students with disabilities and prohibit discrimination against students with LD. One of these laws is

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, usually referred to as Section 504. This law prohibits educational institutions receiving federal funds from discrimination on the basis of disability against otherwise qualified individuals (Cawthone & Cole, 2010).

Students with LD who do not qualify for an IEP are still entitled to certain accommodations under Section 504 guidelines. Section 504, as explained by Cawthone and Cole (2010), requires all elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools that receive federal funding to provide necessary accommodations for students with disabilities.

Another antidiscrimination law is the ADA-AA, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by public institutions, including public and private schools. Students with LD have the option to seek protection under ADA-AA once they reach 18 years old, considered the age of majority. The entitlements of IDEA are automatically given to students identified with LD. Students must self-advocate and self-disclose with appropriate documentation to be eligible for their rights to accommodations (ADA). Students with disabilities and their families are often surprised to learn that the IEP and related diagnostic information, or a Section 504 plan developed in high school, may not serve as sufficient documentation for accommodations in college (Shaw & Dukes, 2013).

The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET, 2007) indicated the rights of students with LD are addressed through the civil rights laws of Section 504 and ADA. According to these laws, students with LD have the right to equal access to educational opportunities through reasonable accommodations. The students, however, must initiate the process of attaining accommodations. This is a key difference

between IDEA and ADA and something that should be addressed in the transition services of the IEP.

The mandates of IDEA address individualized education entitlements while the civil rights laws of Section 504 and ADA/ADA-AA address access to education. This means that postsecondary institutions are not required to modify their programs, only to give reasonable accommodations that would increase access to the existing programs. For students with disabilities to be entitled to protection and services, they must inform the Office of Disability Services in their college. This means the students must have certain skills, such as self-advocacy skills and knowledge of their disability and how it impacts their learning. These are some of the skills needed to be addressed in the transition services stated in the IEP while in high school. To create an effective individualized transition plan for the student with LD, there should be a clear understanding of the purpose, the stakeholders, and the ideal transition services.

Transition Services: An Overview

The purpose of a transition plan in high school for students with LD is to provide a type of road map for students to follow from their first year of high school through graduation and on to college (Connor, 2012). Rumberger (2009), suggested transition services are expected to prepare students with skills and knowledge to successfully enter postsecondary education or the workforce. Connor (2012) stated an effective transition plan would include the student, parents, teachers, school guidance counselors, administrators, and community members. Each stakeholder plays an important role in the transition of the student into college. The key member of this team, however, is the

student, who is expected to create a mental image of his or her future and collaborate with the adult members of their transition team, all of whom work toward a shared vision of the students' success (Senge, 2000).

Beginning in the mid-1980s, the transition of students with LD became a national priority (Johnson, 2002; Will, 1986). The legal definition of transition services was amended in IDEA 1997 and was defined as

(a) *coordinated set of activities* for a student with a disability that is designed within an *outcome-oriented process*...which promotes *movement from school to post-school activities* including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; (b) is based upon the individual *student's needs*...taking into account the *student's 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. (PL 105-17 under Part A {General Provisions}, Section 602, {30})

Transition services must be explained to establish which services are included in the students' IEP goals and transition plans. The transition services, according to IDEA, were designed to build a bridge between high school and adult life (Morningstar et al., 2012; Will, 1986). To fulfill the intent of IDEA, transition planning is followed to design the students' educational program. The National Center for Learning Disabilities (2013) reported the benefits of the standards-based IEP being used in some states. Standards-

based IEPs are linked to the grade level curriculum and are intended to increase expectations and achievements for students with LD. The standards-based IEP is also intended to encourage collaboration and awareness amongst educators. This program would be to assist the students make a successful transition towards their goals for life after high school.

The intent of IDEA was to apply transition skills to academics, independent living, self-determination, and self-advocacy skills (Turnbull et al., 2003). IDEA also mandated that students should take an active role in their transition planning. The role of students in the transition process has evolved from being a passive recipient to a youth-guided process (Morningstar et al., 2012). The students' role in their IEP meetings becomes increasingly important as the transition portion of the meeting addresses the students' goals for their future (Bolt, Decker, Lloyd, & Morlock, 2011). Test et al. (2012) discussed which college readiness skills would be necessary to be included in transition planning, such as life skills, self-determination skills, and academic skills.

Students' Role in Transition Decisions

Wehmeyer (2002) reviewed the literature on the importance of transition services for students with disabilities to attain their goal of a higher education. The research discussed the skills students with LD would need to take control of their futures, including setting personal goals, problem solving, making appropriate choices, advocating for themselves, creating action plans to achieve their goals, and most importantly, participating in the decisions which will impact their future goals. These skills can be put under the umbrella of self-determination skills. The decisions for the

individualized transition services are made by an IEP team. This team is typically led by the special education teacher and consists of the student's parents, a general education teacher, a district representative, an individual qualified to interpret evaluation results, and the student (Thew, 2011). The team evaluates and makes decisions in consultation with the student regarding transition services and which services should be included in these plans. The students' participation, according to Wehmeyer, assists them in mastering the skills they need to accomplish their goals.

Part of the IDEA mandates requires the students to take an active role in these meetings by expressing their goals and interests for their future (Trainor, 2010). Trainor observed 873 students' participation during their IEP meetings in a southwestern school district. All were all male, diagnosed with LD, and students in Grades 9 through 12. During the interviews, the majority of participants were not actively taking part in the discussions. Although an active role in the transition planning process implies meaningful participation by the student (Agran & Hughes, 2008; Bolt, et al., 2011; Cawthon & Cole, 2010; Kaehne & Beyer, 2009; Martin & Williams-Diehm, 2013), Trainor found the teachers and administrators conversed more with the parents than with the students. Unfortunately, according to Trainor, students with LD are seldom given the opportunity to take an active part in their IEP meetings or transition planning. Trainor (2010) further reported that teachers and other school staff need to improve their efforts to encourage students with LD to practice self-determination skills within their classes. Most teachers report there is little time for direct instruction in the areas related to transition (i.e., self-determination, self-advocacy, and interpersonal relationships). This

is due to the increased pressure of teaching the subjects of math and reading (Trainor, 2010).

Opportunities to practice these skills within the context of the IEP meetings and setting goals for their own future are often missing or lacking for students with LD. Too many high school students with IEPs are not taught basic skills or given the opportunity to actively participate or lead their IEP meetings or planning process (Lee et al., 2009; Martin & Williams-Diehm, 2013; Rusch, Hughes, Agran, Martin, & Johnson, 2009; Solberg, Howard, Gresham, & Carter, 2012). The Rusch et al. (2009) findings aligned with Field and Hoffman's (2002) study conducted using a system of supports known as the *Steps to Self-Determination* curriculum. The *Steps* curriculum is experientially based and can be included in the existing courses or taught in a separate class. Using a treatment group and a control group, Rusch et al. studied the ability to lead an IEP meeting using the skills developed was measured. Setting and achieving goals is a key component to self-determination skills and is an important area to be addressed in school settings. The treatment group was more successful at leading their IEP meetings, understanding their strengths and weaknesses, and having a greater understanding of self. Rusch et al., however, concluded that implementing a new curriculum focus in the classroom can be difficult due to lack of resources, support systems, and growing demands for instructional time.

Test et al. (2009) found that self-determination, parental involvement, and self-advocacy skills have a positive impact on students' autonomy and transition outcomes. Rehfeldt, Clark, and Lee (2012) studied transition planning within the IEP and found that

effective planning relies on student involvement and identification of postsecondary goals. Daviso et al. (2011) studied post school goals and transition services in secondary schools and found students were more engaged in those activities they viewed as relevant to their future goals. However, students participating in this study were only moderately satisfied with the planning and transition services for postsecondary education. The students reported being unsatisfied with the transition services they received regarding any of the self-determination skills and independent living skills. This dissatisfaction was based on the students' limited input into the services and practices that would affect their futures.

Transition services for students with LD moving from high school to postsecondary education have not adequately prepared students for the challenges they face in college (Agran & Hughes, 2008; Bangsor, 2008; Bolt et al., 2011; Cawthon & Cole, 2010; Cobb et al., 2013; Daviso et al., 2011; Elkins & Sparkman, 2008; Test et al., 2012; Wehman, 2013). Some challenges shared by study participants were lack of self-advocacy skills, preparation of larger workloads, greater demands of professors, and any of the self-determination skills. Perhaps more effective transition services would address these challenges for such students and give them the opportunity to practice these skills prior to leaving high school.

To further support the studies conducted by Daviso et al. (2011) and Elkins et al. (2008), Solberg et al. (2012) conducted a path analytic study, a method that explores patterns of associations among multiple variables. Their findings revealed that students who were more involved in the teaching and learning process had developed higher self-

efficacy, were more likely to be engaged in goal setting, and were found to have higher grades than their peers. One recommendation made by Solberg et al. (2012) was to promote the teaching of self-determination skills to students with LD. According to Wehmeyer et al. (2012), the promotion of self-determination skills is an important practice for ensuring successful transition to college. Self-determination skills are a category of skills that allow the students to make choices regarding their futures.

Self-Determination Skills

According to Wehmeyer (1992a), self-determination refers to “the attitudes and abilities necessary to act as the primary causal agent in one’s life and to make choices and decisions regarding one’s quality of life” (p. 305). A causal agent implies that an individual plans and causes things to happen in his or her life. To teach self-determination skills is to teach students how to act autonomously and to self-regulate. These skills develop a set of attitudes and learned abilities that are associated with achieving the goals the students plan for their futures. Students who have developed self-determination skills are able to take appropriate actions to achieve the quality of life they desire without interference or influence of others (Prince, Katsiyannis, & Farmer, 2013; Wehmeyer et al., 2011).

Few students with LD achieve the ability to be self-sufficient adults. One of the reasons for this lack of self-sufficiency is that the educational process has failed to prepare students with LD to become self-determined people (Wehmeyer & Schalock, 2001). The requirements of IDEA 1997 and 2004 put a new emphasis on promoting skills that allow the students to advocate for themselves and have knowledge of their

disability and postsecondary support services. These skills fall under the category of self-determination skills. IDEA 2004 requires teachers to consider the students' strengths, needs, preferences, and interests, thus implying the importance of self-determination skills for students with LD (Konrad, Walker, Fowler, Test, & Wood, 2008). Self-determination is a multifaceted concept that includes goal setting, problem solving, self-advocacy, and more. Wehmeyer et al. (2012) advocated the best transition outcomes are more positive when this multifaceted practice is used. According to Hart and Brehm (2013) and Cho, Wehmeyer, and Kingston (2012), researchers have emphasized positive in-school and postschool outcomes by promoting the teaching of self-determination skills to students with LD. These skills can be included in the curriculum and do not necessarily need to be a separate class or program.

For students with LD to be self-determined, it is important for them to perceive themselves as having some control over transition outcomes. In addition, there is a need for them to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and to have a positive attitude about themselves (Wehmeyer, 1995). The ability to recognize and understand their disability, strengths, and weaknesses allow the students to develop plans for their future and achieve these goals (Madaus, Gerber, & Price, 2008). Several skills have been identified as being components of self-determination. According to Test et al. (2009), these skills include making choices and decisions, self-confidence, problem solving skills, goal setting and attainment behaviors, self-advocacy, self-regulation, self-awareness, and knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses. Acquiring these skills will assist the students to set their own goals and have the motivation to work towards their goals of entering college

(Howard, Ferrari, Nota, Solberg, & Soresi, 2009; Lee et al., 2009; Wehmeyer et al., 2011, Wehman, 2013).

Once the students have learned these skills, they need repeated opportunities to apply and practice them. To motivate and encourage self-determination, teachers should provide students with the opportunity to express their preferences, make choices, and experience the outcomes of those choices during their high school years. Self-determination skills can be encouraged by providing students a more active role in the IEP process by giving them an active voice in planning their goals for their future (Bremer, Kachgal, & Schoeloeer 2003). In their acquisition of self-advocacy skills, the students gradually have a more proactive role and greater say in their IEP (Sebag, 2010). Those students who have gained knowledge of their own strengths, needs, and interests, and the ability to communicate their decisions in their IEP meetings will be more successful in acquiring their goals of entering college (Kleinert, Harrison, Fisher, & Kleinert, 2010).

With the increasing numbers of students with LD desiring a postsecondary education, a number of self-determination skills have been identified as crucial to students' success. Durlak, Rose, and Bursuck (1994) studied how eight high school students used direct instruction and learning strategy instructional techniques. All of the participants were able to acquire self-determination skills as a result of direct instruction. The purpose of the Durlak et al. study was to develop a model training program to teach self-determination skills through direct instruction. Through collaboration with other

teachers and postsecondary officials, this model could begin to bridge the gap in skills required in both secondary and postsecondary education.

All school service providers and parents need to provide students with LD the opportunities to build their self-determination skills. Martin, Morehart, Lauzon, and Daviso (2013) found that many special education teachers did not include self-determination skills as a part of the IEP. Martin et al. found inconsistencies between the teachers' conceptions of self-determination and their implementation of strategies in the classroom. Several studies have reported the importance of schools to find ways to incorporate transition-related instruction for students with LD (Barnard-Brak, Sulak, Tate, & Lechtenberger, 2010; Belch, 2004; Getzel & Thoma, 2008; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Javitz, & Valdes, 2012). These same studies discuss the importance of providing opportunities for students with LD to learn and practice self-determination skills in all instructional settings. It is imperative to plan for teaching self-determination skills, providing opportunities for practicing these skills, and planning for the transition into college (Wagner et al., 2012).

Transition Planning and Teaching Skills

Transition planning is a process by which students and the IEP team develop a road map for future plans beyond high school. The skills that need to be taught ensure that students are prepared for postsecondary education. Many factors need to be taken into consideration when designing transition skills and planning a curriculum for students with LD. Such considerations include self-determination, self-advocacy skills, independent living and social skills. In their longitudinal study, Shogren et al. (2007)

found four factors that impact self-determination within individual students: (a) capacity, (b) opportunity, (c) supports and accommodations, and (d) perceptions and beliefs. Of these, the most significant impact on self-determination skills was the opportunity to make choices within the individual's perceptions and beliefs.

The factors that impact self-determination skills should be taught in the secondary educational setting (Power et al., 1996). Instruction promoting the components for self-determination should be integrated into all phases of the curriculum (Wehmeyer, 2002). For students with LD who want to further their education, the ability to achieve self-determination skills and self-advocacy skills could mean the difference between succeeding in college and dropping out. According to Hughes and Carter (2011), virtually all the indicators suggest that students with LD are not succeeding as they should. Their aspirations to achieve a college degree do not materialize for lack of skills and supports. Hughes and Carter suggested that in spite of the mandates of IDEA and the 2001 Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA), the results of transition services for students with LD are disappointing. They suggest these bleak outcomes are due to the failure of many schools not implementing the mandates of transition services with fidelity.

Hughes and Carter's (2011) findings were supported by Osterholt and Barratt (2011). Students with LD who had entered college were observed in college classrooms. Osterholt and Barratt hoped to learn how developed social skills could improve students' academic participation and success in college. Most students had little to no participation in class discussions or in collaborative activities when in high school. These skills could

lead to improved self-advocacy skills and those skills included in self-determination skills. The lack of these skills affected the success of the students and was found by the researchers to be a necessary component of effective transition services. The results of these two studies point to the need for effective transition services to include not only academic skills to be learned but social and collaborative skills as well.

These are only some of the skills and strategies to be included in effective transition services. Espiner and Guild (2011) introduced these skills using visual strategies. Transition practices literature has recognized that educators, parents, and service providers must help the students develop their skills and provide opportunities for students to apply these skills. Transition planning, by using a one-size-fits-all method, is not effective as not all students need the same supports. According to Kohler and Field (2003), there is a need to establish effective transition services flexible enough to meet individual student requirements. The first step in accomplishing this is to understand what comprises effective transition services. Shaw and Dukes (2013) reported that there is still not sufficient data to determine what types of services are critical and have a positive impact on the transition to postsecondary education. The question these authors suggest schools ask is which interventions and services would be the most effective to prepare students with disabilities to enter college.

Components to Effective Transition Programs

The Center for Change in Transition Services (2007) described six components in developing an effective transition plan for students with learning disabilities: age appropriate transition assessments, measurable postsecondary goals, transition services,

courses of study, coordination of services with adult agencies, and development of IEP goals. These components would fulfill indicator 13 in the IDEA 2004 (34.c.f.r.300.43). To reach the desired transition outcome, all six components must be completed.

Using an age-appropriate transition assessment provides the student and the IEP team information regarding the students' strengths and areas of need (Sitlington, 2003). This assessment would include not only academics but socialization, behaviors, daily living skills, self-advocacy skills, and increased motivation, among other skills needed to succeed. A student's preferences would be part of the transition assessment process. By analyzing the results of the assessments, the IEP team could guide the students into setting attainable goals for their futures. From this point, measurable postsecondary goals could be developed, and the transition services to achieve these goals be put into place (Kellems & Morningstar, 2009).

The role of the student is one of the most important components to the transition assessment and development of goals. Indicator 13 of IDEA 2004 states in part "there must also be evidence that the student was invited to the IEP team meeting where transition services are to be discussed" (20 U.S.C. 1416 (a) (3) (B)). According to Hawbaker (2007), the extent of the students taking an active role in their IEP meetings is not reality. Important decisions are made in the IEP meeting regarding the students' futures. If students are not a part of the development of their IEP, or have only a token role, then the students learn their opinions do not really matter and that all decisions are made for them and not by them (Hawbaker, 2007). This practice compromises the students' ability to apply the self-determination skills they will need post-high school.

Cawthone and Cole (2010) examined the perspectives of students in postsecondary education regarding accommodations, opportunities and barriers, and their knowledge of their disability and what, if any, programs were in place in high school to assist them to transition to college. There were many differences in the types of accommodations offered between secondary and postsecondary schools. Interactions between student and administration (disability services, instructors, dorm officials, etc.) were all below the 50% level. Most prominently, Cawthone and Cole found the students had little knowledge of their disability, their IEP, and their transition services. Of the students surveyed, 91% of the students were unaware of their IEP, and 71% of the students who could recall their IEP meetings, could not remember anything regarding basic transition skills or goals towards academic progress.

Researchers have found that teaching students to lead their IEP meeting promotes the self-determination and self-advocacy skills needed when they transition to postsecondary education (Hawbaker, 2007; Hughes & Carter, 2011; Wehmeyer, 2002). The plans developed in the IEP provide a type of road map which develops the goals of the student and plans the academic skills and other skills to be learned before leaving high school. If students with learning disabilities are to mature into responsible adults with the ability to make calculated decisions, they need to acquire the skills to accomplish their goals (deFur, 2002). By encouraging students to lead their IEP meetings, they will define their goals, personalize their learning by establishing a preparation course of study to enter college, and measure their college readiness. Self-

determination, leadership, and self-advocacy skills will be developed (Bangsor, 2008; deFur, 2002; Hong, Haefner, & Slekar, 2011).

Agran and Hughes (2008) examined students' perspective of transition services. Like other studies (Bangsor, 2008; deFur, 2002; Hong, Haefner, & Slekar, 2011), Agran and Hughes documented the students' noninvolvement in their IEP meetings and the lack of involvement opportunities with the planning of their transition goals. The students reported that they would have liked to have played a larger role in the planning of their futures, and complained they did not like parents and teachers planning their futures. Students stated they would like to lead their IEP meetings, make decisions regarding goals, and decisions regarding the planning of the transition services that would help them achieve these goals.

Agran and Hughes (2008) were among the first to focus on the students' perspectives. The purpose of the study was to pilot a tool which measured students' perceptions of their involvement in the development of their IEP and existing opportunities to learn and practice self-determination skills. Agran et al. developed a survey instrument asking questions regarding participation in IEP meetings, teaching of self-determination skills, and perceptions of the opportunity to make their own choices. The results suggested few of the students were prepared to lead their own IEP meetings. More students reported they received little instruction on self-determination skills. Though there were limitations to this study, such as evidence to corroborate the students' perceptions, the study gave an insight into how students perceive their roles in planning their futures. According to Agran and Hughes, denying students with learning disabilities

the opportunity to create a mental image of their future and monitor and evaluate the progress towards that image, negates their development, learning, and ability to function outside of high school. Students who envision a college education for themselves need to practice learned self-determination skills to problems which will arise in their future.

In their study of self-determination skills, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Shogren, Williams-Diehl, and Soukup (2010) used the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDMLI) and a variety of instructional methods to promote self-determination skills. The authors found a significantly more positive measure of growth in self-determination skills in those students exposed to the SDMLI model than those students who had not been given the same interventions. Students with learning disabilities who have practiced self-determination skills have a more positive academic performance and more active participation in class (McDougal, Evan, & Baldwin, 2010). However, this model of transition planning and teaching skills was found by teachers in the Wehmeyer et al. study to be very time consuming, and teachers could not keep the records required for this program to be effective.

Each of the studies discussed presented a different approach to the challenge of establishing effective transition services for students with learning disabilities to enter college. Connor (2012) discussed the difficulties and added challenges students with learning disabilities face as they transition from high school to college. Using the findings from numerous researched studies, Connor developed 21 strategies and tips to assist students with learning disabilities transition from high school to college. Connor

addressed the importance of guiding students through the decision-making process to improve their self-efficacy skills and practice making their own decisions.

Agran and Hughes's (2008) findings on students' perspectives mirrored Connor (2012) regarding the necessary skills needed for a successful transition from high school. The students wanted more autonomy in planning their futures and the ability to develop the services they would need to attain their goals. Agran and Hughes found that those students not involved in their IEP meetings did not have the opportunities to be involved with the planning of their transition goals or services. The major complaint of the students was the plans for their future were not in their hands, but in the hands of parents and teachers. Agran and Hughes (2008), Connor (2012), and Wehmeyer et al. (2010) all found a significant importance in the teaching and opportunities for practice of skills for students' successful transitions from high school.

Agran and Hughes (2008) reported the perspectives of the students in transition planning and Connor (2012) stressed the importance of building their self-determination skills. Hughes and Carter (2011) method was on a different level by their development of a transition support model. This model was developed to assist teachers and school staff integrate into the curriculum the skills students with learning disabilities needed to transition from high school to college. Hughes et al. confirmed through their model the importance of the implementation of transition services for students with learning disabilities. Agran and Hughes suggested a lag not only between research and practice, but also between understanding the mandates of IDEA and how to implement them into practice. Hughes et al. and Agran and Hughes addressed the importance of being

prepared for the next step in education. Transitioning from one educational level to another requires preparation. To ensure the preparation to meet the intent of IDEA, all stakeholders, students, teachers, and parents, need to be actively involved to ensure a successful transition to college. Each stakeholder plays an important role in the transition planning and process.

Stakeholders

Preparing students with disabilities requires more than developing goals in their IEP; it requires the support of parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and friends. Until recently, little research had been conducted to determine how self-determination could be shaped by the quality of the learning experiences (Carter, Lane, Crnabori, Bruhn, & Oakes, 2011; Cobb, Lehmann, Newman-Gonchar, & Alwel, 2009). A quality learning experience takes preparation. Preparation includes implementing the services designated within the IEP, such as the course of study, and the activities which promote self-determination and self-advocacy skills (Connor, 2012). This preparation can better be accomplished when all stakeholders work together. In the next three sections, the different stakeholders and their roles in the transition planning process will be described.

Students Own Involvement

Students' involvement is of paramount importance to transition planning (Connor, 2012; Hughes & Carter, 2011). The mandates of IDEA require the transition services of the IEP to be outcome-oriented. The student is the biggest stakeholder in the planning of services which is based on their interests and goals. The role of the students includes identifying their interests, their goals for the future, and the planning of achieving these

goals. Students with learning disabilities desiring to enter college must have the skills to engage in a discussion regarding their options as to the type of postsecondary school that would be in their best interest. Their awareness of their disability, their strengths and weaknesses, and what accommodations will be required to succeed must be an integral part of the discussions in their IEP meetings (Townsend, 1995). The ability of the students to make decisions about the future is a part of the services which must be included in the IEP goals.

According to Hildreth (2013), students with learning disabilities need many skills to help prepare for college. Hildreth grouped these skills into four categories: academic, social, emotional and self-esteem, and self-help. Once students with learning disabilities enter college, they must have the ability to utilize the skills in these four areas to successfully transition. Self-awareness becomes a critical foundation for self-advocacy and self-help skills. A primary focus should be on making students more aware of themselves and how their disability affects their learning (Hildreth, 2013; Pocock et al., 2002). Self-advocacy skills allow the students to explain to the Office of Disability Services in college the supports and accommodations they require to successfully navigate their courses (Wehmeyer, 1995). These self-advocacy skills and the awareness of how their disabilities affect their learning will assist them throughout college and future employment.

Parents' Involvement

Although students are the key to planning their futures, many still need the guidance and support of parents and family. Parents have been involved with their

child's educational goals since they entered school; however, the question of where parents see their child in the next few years is not often asked. This information can provide some direction during the transition meeting (Ankeny, Wilkins, & Spain, 2009). Families need to be encouraged to have conversations with their students to support their students' aspirations. Townsend (1995) stated that parents should help students evaluate their goals and the motivations behind these goals. Students who felt their parents were involved in their transition process were more likely to take a greater participatory role (Morningstar et al., 2010).

Parents have a supportive role in the transition process. The responsibility of keeping the past records of evaluations, passing on the value of these organizational skills, and giving their child opportunities to practice their self-determination skills will only enhance the students' progress. Until their confidence grows, in most instances, it is the parents the students turn to the most for guidance and support.

Teachers' Involvement

Other than with their parents, students have the most contact with their teachers. Teachers are responsible for teaching specific skills and knowledge. Their role in transition services, however, becomes a collaborative process between the students, parents, and guidance counselors. According to Townsend (1995), teachers are in the position to evaluate the students' knowledge, skills, and abilities in the areas of academic and social functioning. Highly qualified teachers look for the "individual potential of each student and maximize it" (Manilow, 2009, p. 216). The teachers use these evaluations to assist in the writing of the IEP and the academic goals for the students.

The necessary accommodations to be implemented to assist the students in breaking down the learning barriers brought about by their disability will be designated in the IEP plans.

Teachers are in the position of explaining to parents and students the differences in legislation the students will encounter once they progress to postsecondary education (Townsend, 1995). These differences in law are important pieces of information for students to understand. To have the ability to explain the effects and differences, teachers must first have this knowledge. According to Martin, Morehart, Lauzon, and Daviso (2013), many teachers have a limited understanding of special education and disability laws.

While special education teachers are the primary coordinators of the IEP, other school personnel could enhance the transition team. School counselors, according to Milsom and Hartley (2005), should be more involved in the transition services for students with learning disabilities, yet many school counselors were not involved in this process. Milsom and Hartley identified four components to effectively transitioning to college which could be accomplished through collaboration. The first of these components was students with learning disabilities benefiting from understanding their disability. School counselors are not necessarily experts on disabilities, but by collaborating with special education teachers, school counselors could meet with students with learning disabilities, either in small groups or individually, and assist them in recognizing their strengths, weaknesses, and how their disability impacts their learning.

Milsom and Hartley also reported that school counselors could assist the teachers and students to plan their course of study to achieve their IEP goals.

Other important components Milsom and Hartley (2005) identified were the knowledge of expectations once the students entered college. School counselors can be of great assistance in finding schools which could provide appropriate accommodations for the students. According to Milsom and Hartley, guiding students with learning disabilities to learn to ask questions regarding accommodations, to self-disclose to receive accommodations, and work with the students to self-advocate were important aspects for the roles of the school counselors.

Agran and Hughes (2008) found a lag between research and practice and how to understand the mandates of IDEA and implement these mandates. These findings were supported by the study conducted by Martin et al., (2013), as well as the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. Both federal and state audits are showing a very slow but upward movement in appropriations. The current trends are being monitored on both the federal and state levels.

Current Trends

Transition assessment and development of transition services are promoted through recent literature but are not defined by the federal mandates (Neubert & Leconte, 2013). The lack of clarity and definition brings about a lack of focus on teaching the laws and skills for students with disabilities to transition to college. Many school districts do not invite or involve their students in the IEP process (Martin & Williams-Diehl, 2013). According to Denney and Daviso (2012), special education teachers are

well aware of the importance of self-determination skills, academic skills, and social skills and the involvement of the students in their IEP meetings; yet these same teachers do not place a significant emphasis in these areas on their teaching practices or transition planning.

Neubert and Leconte (2013) showed that outcomes for transitioning high school students with disabilities have slightly improved but overall remain unacceptable. Transition planning, as mandated by federal law, is to assist students change from secondary education to postsecondary education or employment in a seamless manner. This would be accomplished by having all necessary supports and skills in place prior to high school graduation (Martin, et al., 2013). With these supports and learned skills, students can transition to college successfully.

According to deFur (2002), preparation for students with learning disabilities to transition to college takes planning. This transition plan should include assessments which identify needs, strengths, interests, and preferences for postsecondary education. Development of postsecondary options, which includes visiting campuses, talking with disability coordinators, preparation of academic supports are also included in the transition plans according to deFur.

To support deFur (2002), Connor (2012) discussed several tips for preparing to transition to college by aligning transition services with IDEA's definition of a coordinated set of activities that are designed to be results-oriented (20 U.S.C. § 1401[34]). According to Connor, the number of students entering college, either 2-year or 4-year colleges, has tripled in the last 30 years. Examples of tips to prepare students

with learning disabilities included striking a balance between the students' current academic needs and preparing them with the skills and knowledge needed within the more demanding environments of postsecondary education.

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) has stressed the importance of effective transition services throughout the United States (NCSET, 2004). Kaehne and Beyer (2009) conducted a follow-up to a previous study using professionals who had been part of a larger study and focused on policy matters. Kaehne and Beyer did not interview students, only teachers and administrators, who agreed with the policies of transition services and how beneficial they would be to students with disabilities. However, most participants stated there was a lack of time and resources to implement the types of services necessary for each student. Special education teachers have expressed the frustration of lacking specific training to promote the needed skills each of their students require (Shogren, 2011). Other impediments to implementing the practice of transition planning and teaching of skills are the lack of time for collaboration to plan outside of the classroom and knowledge and access to the required resources (Neubert & Leconte, 2013).

Reports from federal and state appropriation committees show a steady increase in appropriations to programs to promote postsecondary access. According to the FY 2012 Annual Performance Report, many of the students in the United States are ill prepared to succeed at postsecondary education. One category receiving appropriations is hiring highly qualified teachers. Although many other factors provide barriers, such as school violence, substance abuse, and poverty related barriers to learning, including

students in the IEP transition meetings can give those students a real part in making decisions for themselves.

The state reports compiled from OSEP show several positive notes for students with disabilities transitioning to college, but there are more noncompliance issues included in the OSEP report, including not inviting students to the IEP meetings or other agencies that could benefit the student's progress. In addition, parents are not always notified that transition services are the purpose of the IEP meeting. The most important noncompliance issue is secondary transition plans are not representing a coordinated set of activities with an outcome oriented process as this is an important part of the mandate of IDEA 2004.

In June 2011, the National Education for Education Statistics reported that 88% of 2- and 4-year colleges had enrolled students with disabilities in the years 2008—2009. The schools reported various disabilities, but the majority was students with learning disabilities. This report included several accommodations students with LD received once in college, such as note takers, extended time on exams, or exams in alternate formats. The differences between these accommodations and those received in high school were students in college were required to request those accommodations that were automatically given to them in high school.

With the introduction of Common Core Standards in the school districts, a standards-based IEP has been introduced that links the academic goals to the curriculum. The IEP raises the bar of expectations and achievements for students with disabilities and is to encourage collaboration between educators in special education and general

education. IDEA 2004 states transition services involve (a) student invitation, (b) measurable postsecondary goals, (c) age-appropriate transition assessments, (d) a coordinated set of activities, (e) outside agency invitation, (f) annual IEP goals, and (g) transfer of rights at age of majority (§300.320(b)). The standards-based IEP may raise legal questions with regard to the individualization of the transition services (Prince et al., 2013).

Summary

The study of transition services is relatively new, and this literature review presented an exhaustive search on the subject of transition planning and services for students with LD. The literature on transition services and the importance of the skills students with LD required for successful transition to college began in the late 1980s but expanded only in 1994 (Wehmeyer, 1995). From then until about 2008, the literature was rich with studies, experimental programs, and theories such as the steps to self-determination theory (Field & Hoffman, 2002). Since 2008, the research has abated somewhat, perhaps because of the concentration on Common Core Standards and the effects of this type of curriculum. Other explanations may include the lack of resources in spite of minimal growth in appropriations, and the lack of time teachers have to complete the growing amount of paperwork. Little research has been conducted on the perceptions of students with disabilities on the effectiveness of the transition services they experience in high school and that are designed to prepare them to enter college.

In this chapter I reviewed the current literature on the IDEA requirements for outcomes and introduced several challenges teachers and students face when planning the

transition goals. Though there are transition services in effect throughout the country, the fiscal year reports at the federal and state levels have indicated students are still underprepared for college. The Common Core Standards are embedding some of the skills students will need in college into the general education curriculum. One method of determining the effectiveness of the transition services within the IEP is to discover the perceptions students with LD have of the effectiveness of these services.

A detailed discussion of the methodology, data collection, and data analysis followed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to analyze how students with LD perceive the effectiveness of their secondary transition services and preparedness for college. With the increasing number of students with LD entering college, the challenges they face can be daunting. There is a need to focus on the importance of effective transition services for students with LD (Agran & Hughes, 2008; Daviso et al., 2011), especially those students who wish to attend college. This study focused on the perception students with LD have of their secondary transition services that comprise their entire transition plan.

IDEA mandates require transition services with outcome-oriented goals to be included in the IEP of students. According to IDEA (2004), these services are described as a coordinated, result-oriented set of activities for the student. The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) has stressed the importance of effective transition services throughout the United States (NCSET, 2004). An effective method to explore transition services and the influences they might have on students with disabilities is to conduct a qualitative study.

This chapter discussed the methodology of this research. The rationale for the selection of the research method, the process used to collect and analyze data, and the procedures for interviewing the participants were discussed. The researcher's role and the procedures for ensuring the confidentiality of the participants were also discussed.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Questions

This phenomenological approach included students with LD who have completed their first year of college. The research questions examined were as follows.

Main question: How do students with LD perceive their readiness for college, especially regarding information needed and transition services provided?

Subquestion: What role do students with LD have in developing their transition plans?

The central phenomenon under investigation was the perception of the students of the effectiveness of the implementation of transition services for high school students with LD and the academic and functional success in college for these students. Students with LD were interviewed to determine (a) if their transition services implemented while in high school prepared them with self-determination skills, (b) if the high school transition services were adequately implemented to develop self-advocacy skills, (c) if students were sufficiently prepared for the academic rigors of college, and (d) if they perceived their transition services developed in their high school IEP effectively prepared them for the differences between IDEA and ADA.

Qualitative data are usually in the form of words rather than numbers. Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that qualitative data can “preserve chronological flow, see precisely which events led to which consequences, and derive fruitful explanations” (p. 1). Qualitative research allows the researcher to focus on events in their natural settings over a sustained period of time and was appropriate for this study because it allowed me

to understand the lived experiences of students. Maxwell (2013) explained a key difference between quantitative and qualitative research is the way researchers view the world. Quantitative researchers tend to view the world in terms of variables and explain events in terms of statistical relationships. Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, tend to see the world in terms of people, events, and situations, and the explanation is based on an analysis of how these actions influence others (Maxwell, 2013).

Quantitative research was originally considered for this study but was rejected for several reasons. One reason was the level of control over the environment. This study focused on an understanding of the influences of the faculty, schools, parents, and students on transition services, which would make controlling the environment impossible. Another reason quantitative research would not have been suitable for this study is that a set of variables could not be established. All students with LD must have a transition plan, and these transition plans comprise individualized services (IDEA, 2004). The fact that school districts may have different services available was another limitation to the use of quantitative methods. Equal comparison groups would not be able to be established as well. One additional limitation was that not all states are using the standards-based IEP. For these reasons, most of the parameters that define a quantitative research study did not apply to this study.

Qualitative work tends to involve face-to-face interaction and is more attentive to human detail (Patton, 2002), in contrast to quantitative work, which focuses on numbers and percentages. Qualitative research is defined as a “systematic approach to understanding qualities, or the essential nature, of a phenomenon within a particular

context” (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klinger, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005, p. 197) and focuses on understanding the social setting. Several qualitative approaches were considered for this study. A narrative study focuses on a single individual or small group of individuals, collects stories related to their life’s experience, and develops a chronology connecting different phases or aspects of the story (Brantlinger et al., 2005). The narrative approach was rejected because it is intended to produce a chronological narrative about the experiences of the participants. This intent would not have fulfilled the goals of this research study.

Another approach considered was the ethnographic approach, but this approach was also rejected. An ethnographic approach focuses on describing or interpreting a shared culture. It requires the researcher to be present and have close interaction during observations and interviews (Patton, 2002). The purpose of the current study was to investigate the perceptions of students on the effectiveness of transition services and not the cultural aspects of special education. The ethnographic approach was deemed unsuitable.

Grounded theory was another approach considered and deemed unsuitable for this study. The focus of the grounded theory approach is to develop a theory grounded in the collected data (Brantlinger et al, 2005). This approach studies a process or actions of several individuals and analyzes the data through the coding of themes generated from the data. Though some of the parameters of this approach would seem suitable for this study, the outcome of the grounded theory approach is to generate a new theory. The

intent of this study was not to generate a theory but to discover what needs to be included in an effective transition plan from the perspective of students with LD.

The most suitable of all the qualitative methodologies for this study was a phenomenological approach, which focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding of an issue through lived experiences. The phenomenological study places importance on what participants in a study experience and how they interpret these experiences. In this case it is the perception of the students with LD through their lived experiences of the effectiveness of the transition services they had in high school to prepare them for higher education (Patton, 2002).

To produce an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of the effectiveness of current transition services, data was triangulated by another investigator who reviewed the findings of the researcher. This second investigator listened to the recordings of the interviews of sampling data sets, and the findings were compared to the original findings of this researcher. Analyst triangulation reviewed findings which could provide for a more robust data set and an opportunity to heighten the confidence in the results of this study. According to Patton (2002), the goal of using multiple analysts is to understand multiple ways of interpreting the data.

An interview guide was followed listing topics and questions. The interviews were conducted in a conversational manner, and, therefore, was not viewed as merely a gathering of information, but was conveyed more of an interest in what the participant had to say. Using probes and iterative questions rather than predetermined questions, this approach elicited unanticipated details from the participants and allowed me to revisit

questions which were rephrased to uncover any contradictions or falsehoods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In Chapter 5, I interpreted and explained any such contradictions.

Role of the Researcher

Interviews were conducted with the participants with the purpose of understanding the students' perspectives on their transition services in order to answer the research questions. I have taught in public schools in the state and currently hold the position of disability coordinator at a private university. I may or may not know students who were asked to participate, and they had the right to refuse to participate. This reduced any power positions I might have had with the participants. I personally transcribed the data from interviews.

In light of my past teaching experiences and my current position, I acknowledge that I am biased, given my belief that the intent of IDEA is not being fulfilled and transition services are minimally preparing students with learning disabilities for college. To address the issue of personal bias, as data collector and analyzer I took an inductive stance and intentionally strove to find meaning from all of the data collected. An additional investigator reviewed the transcripts from the interviews to further minimize my biases. According to Merriam (2009), seeking strong evidence for the truth of conclusions can minimize bias.

Methodology

Participants

The participants included nine high school graduates with LD who had received special education services while in high school and participated in the IEP process while

in high school and completed at least their first year of college. They have maintained the required standards to continue their education. The nine participants were from various high schools in the country and attending a college located in a southern state. Each will have taken part to some extent in planning their transition services and participating in these services. When these students entered college, they had reported their disability to a university disability coordinator. This was self-disclosed when agreeing to participate in this research.

Recruitment

After IRB approval from the university, I sought students who had received special education services while in high school, had successfully completed at least their first year of college. The students were recruited using a letter or flyer posted on announcement boards explaining the study and the participation criteria, and asking if they would like to participate. They were ensured of confidentiality and the freedom to withdraw from this study at any time.

Sampling Design

To provide an accurate view of implementation of transition services for high school students with LD, this research study targeted nine college students who received special education services while in high school and had a transition plan to attend college. Selecting students who have had an experience with transition services should assist in identifying those participants who are information rich and reduce suspicion about why they were chosen (Maxwell, 2013). Although strong generalizations cannot be made from the sample, using this qualitative sampling design was intended to produce rich

findings (Patton, 2002). The designated sampling size of nine was suitable for this study. Small samples have been used in the studies conducted by Durlak et al. (1994), Kleinart et al. (2010), and Solberg et al. (2012),.

A phenomenological design was chosen for this study with the intent of (a) examining the skills which are lacking once students with learning disabilities enter college, (b) seeking vital information from the reflections of the students with learning disabilities on what information they knew and still need to know to successfully enter college, and (c) examining the experiences students with learning disabilities had in high school to prepare them for college.

Phenomenological approaches enable the researcher to explore perceptions of lived experiences. In this study I examined the perceptions of the effectiveness of various transition services and answered research questions through multiple interviews. By examining these perceptions of effectiveness of transition services, a more in-depth view of how the intent of the laws is being implemented can be discovered. Data gleaned from the interviews will assist in identifying resources, training, and skills needed to develop effective transition services for students with learning disabilities who desire to attend college.

Instrumentation

I developed a set of protocols and field-tested them with graduate students in special education at a large, accredited university. In response, these graduate student researchers offered suggestions, which I adhered to as I deemed them appropriate. The design for each set of protocols was guided by Cawthone and Cole (2011), Agran and

Hughes (2008), and other researchers who studied students with LD. The protocols appear in Appendix F.

Data Collection

Data was collected through face-to-face interviews with an expected length of 1 to 2 hours. At the beginning of the interviews, I established the focus of the study, interviewees' perspectives of transition services offered and implemented in high school for students with LD who have the goal of entering college. This study gathered information from students with LD who had completed at least their first year of college regarding their perspectives of skills taught and transition services provided in high school. Data collection occurred by the interviews using the protocols developed by the researcher as listed in Appendix F. The interviews, which were conducted and recorded on a Sony recorder, were downloaded on both the computer and a flash drive. The audio document was transcribed for each session using the software program Dragon Naturally Speaking which is a speech to text software program.

The interviews were conducted in an environment that was intended to bring comfort to the participants. For instance, students were interviewed in a library, chat rooms, or student union lounges. A final interview was conducted as a summary of the participants' contributions to the study and an assurance of confidentiality was reiterated.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis has been described as organizing the collected data into manageable chunks, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding how to convey what is learned to others (Bogdan & Biklen,

1982). Each line of the transcription from each participant was read and notes made in the margins of the transcribed documents regarding bits of data that seemed relevant to the answers of the research questions. Using the process of finding information with no restrictions other than to discover some meaning from the data is referred to as open coding (Merriam, 2009). Open coding allowed me to read the data and develop coding categories. A start list of codes as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) was developed from the research questions prior to fieldwork. As the interviews were completed, the codes were assigned and then reexamined for fit. Codes were revised as unanticipated themes were revealed. The other investigator also used the start list and the two sets of findings were compared and codes revised as agreed between the researcher and investigator. The researcher and investigator completed the process of coding and grouped the transcribed coding categories with the notes in the margins and discovered themes. This process was used for each of the participants. The answers and coding for each of the participants were merged to find the similar patterns. Revising and refining was a continuous process. Triangulation of the data served to discover the recurring themes from the data as well as corroborating the data collected from the participants. Any discrepancies were answered within the corroboration of the data.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), coding entails dissecting the data meaningfully. Codes are used to retrieve, organize, and analyze data within chunks of information which will then allow the researcher to pull information relating to a specific research question. An open coding system was used to analyze the data set for each participant. The responses and coding for each of the participants were merged to find

the similar patterns. Revising and refining was a continuous process. Triangulation of the data between the analyst and researcher served to discover recurring themes. Any discrepancies within the data were addressed by comparing all data sets. The qualitative software DeDoose was to be used to ensure that themes were not overlooked and to assist in producing visual productions, if necessary. DeDoose was developed in the late 1990s and expanded in early 2000. This software was developed by researchers who used qualitative and mixed methods in their research and wanted a product that was both efficient and user friendly. DeDoose assists with analyzing the data from multiple perspectives and facilitates the identification of patterns and themes. This software will also assist in triangulating the data between the researcher and the investigator.

Issues of Trustworthiness

A challenge to qualitative researchers is establishing trust and confidence in the researcher's findings (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002; Bogden & Biklen, 1992). The findings must accurately reflect the perspectives of the study's participants and not the perceptions of the researcher. One way to establish credibility, or the ability of the findings to be believable and confidence in the "truth" of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), is through member checks. I invited the participants to recheck their feedback on the study. This invitation was included within the participant consent form (see Appendixes D and E). This invitation was not mandatory but left to the participants' choice. The participants were encouraged to review the findings to assist in minimizing any misrepresentations and researcher biases.

Transferability, or whether the findings can apply to other similar contexts (Patton, 2002), is not essential to qualitative research. However, qualitative researchers strive to understand how the findings would prove to be useful in other situations. Qualitative researchers strive to provide sufficient information so as to allow other researchers to replicate the study in similar contexts.

Dependability, which is related to the consistency of findings, was established through the use of the second investigator, who was used to review the findings and assess the study for fairness and accuracy. Confirmability was established by creating an audit trail with notes and memos that document how data were collected, how categories or themes were developed, and how the decisions throughout the process were made as well as through the coding of the data. Triangulation uses different sources of information to increase the validity of a study (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011). Data triangulation will be useful in demonstrating trustworthiness and confirmability in the data being gathered from the perspectives.

Protection of Rights

Before research began, IRB approval was obtained from Walden University. Once consent to participate in this study was obtained from the IRB and the college students, a letter of cooperation and data use agreements were obtained. Identity protection and confidentiality were assured in writing through the forms listed in Appendixes A, B, and C. Students were not identified by name or location. Within the consent form, each participant was given a description of the purpose of this study in general terms. The researcher protected their identity and assured that confidentiality

would be maintained throughout the study. Each participant was assigned a letter and number (e.g., S1, S2) as identification. My contact for any questions the participants may have had during the course of the study was provided. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Should a participant withdraw from the study prior to the interview process, that participant would have been replaced with another.

The students were recruited through a generated flyer/letter outlining the criteria for participation and posted in student lounges and other popular destinations on a university campus. All participants were asked questions to confirm they met the criteria for the study. Unofficial transcripts were requested from students to confirm they had successfully completed at least their first year of college.

During the interviews, no identifying notes or names linking the participants to the study were used. All interviews were recorded and stored on flash drives, and the researcher was the only one in contact with the participants. A duplicate of the audio recordings were locked in a filing cabinet to ensure no data would be lost and confidentiality was ensured. After all consent forms and approvals had been granted from dissertation committee members, university, and participants, the interviews were initiated.

A final interview was conducted as a summary of the participants' contributions to the study, and an assurance of confidentiality was reiterated. The researcher was the only person having access to the data as the study progressed. The data will be kept for 5 years as per Walden University's policies and will then be destroyed.

Summary

This chapter explained the research methodology to be used for this study. Participants and data collection techniques were described. Issues of trustworthiness were discussed, as were ethical issues and data analysis techniques.

The findings of the study are presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to analyze how students with LD perceive the effectiveness of their secondary transition services and preparedness for college. This study explored the students' perceptions of transition services received in high school and of how these services prepared them for college.

This phenomenological study presents the lived experiences of college students who graduated high school with an active IEP. Each participant entered college as a student who is identified as having an LD. One goal of the phenomenological research of this study was to provide the participants an opportunity to share their lived experiences in regards to their roles in their IEP meetings, how they perceived their transition services, and their perception if the skills they needed for college were taught in high school. Quotations provided an opportunity for participants to speak for themselves, thus providing perspectives from multiple viewpoints.

Key findings from in-depth interviews with the participants are shared in this chapter. The research questions established for this research were as follows: How do students with LD perceive their readiness for college, especially regarding information needed and transitions services provided in their high school IEP? What role did students with LD have in developing their transition services?

The results of this study bring an understanding of how little students know regarding a) the laws governing their entitlements and civil rights; b) the nature of their

disability and how it affects their learning; c) what transition services and self-determination skills mean; and d) how to receive appropriate accommodations in college.

This chapter explains the setting of this study, describes the demographics of the participants in order to better understand the participants, data collection, and analyses of this data. These procedures include discoveries of the emerging patterns and themes. Evidence of trustworthiness is presented along with the results of the study and a short summary.

Setting

This study was conducted on a private university campus located in a southern state. Students are originally from all over the United States and several other countries, such as South America, Saudi Arabia, and Mexico. The interviews took place in the lounge area of the student activities building. Interviews were conducted in small rooms where privacy could be maintained or quiet study could be conducted.

Demographics

Table 1, included below, provides further information on each participant regarding their major course of study, years in college, and grade point average.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Student designation	Gender	Major course of study	Year in college	Grade point average (GPA)
S1	Female	Psychology	Junior	3.1
S2	Female	Management	Sophomore	3.2
S3	Female	History	Senior	3.95
S4	Female	Sport business	Senior	3.4
S5	Female	International tourism & hospitality management	Sophomore	2.8
S6	Male	Sports business	Sophomore	1.9
S7	Female	Health care management	Senior	2.4
S8	Female	Biology	Senior	3.48
S9	Male	Health care management	Junior	3.5

After interviewing these nine participants and analyzing the data, two major themes and sub-themes emerged. The first theme was the gap in the participants' perceptions of their lived experiences and the federal laws governing the transition services they should have experienced. The sub-themes discuss the participants' perceptions of the most important aspects of transitioning to college. These subthemes included a lack of knowledge (a) in their learning; (b) the laws addressing their entitlements through high school and their civil rights after high school; (c) their role in their IEP meetings in high school; (d) transition services and self-determination skills;

and (e) how to obtain accommodations in college. The second theme emerged with the participants' perceptions of skills they lacked when they entered college.

Data Collection

A letter of invitation to participate in this study began the data collection process. The invitation to participate in this qualitative study was posted on the announcement board outside of the tutoring area and disability services office. This letter explained the criteria for participating, that participation is voluntary, and data collected would be confidential (Appendix A). Prior to beginning the interviews, the study was explained again, questions regarding the study were answered, and the participants were given a consent form to read and sign with a pseudonym (Appendix E). The interviews took place in a private room located on the university campus student activity center. Most interviews lasted between fifty and sixty minutes. The interview questions were designed by the researcher and listed topics or questions and suggested probes rather than pre-determined questions. These interviews were audio recorded and preliminarily transcribed using the program Dragon Naturally Speaking (a speech to text software program). The Dragon program is trained to one voice, in this case the researcher's voice. It transcribed the participants' voices, but the transcriptions needed to be verified and, in most cases, corrected for accuracy.

After all interviews were completed, the recordings were analyzed for correct transcription, reviewed, and stored on a flash drive used solely for this study and which was locked in a file cabinet. The software program, DeDoose, was originally going to be used to assist with discovering the themes. In attempting to feed the data into this

program, there were several technical problems which were unable to be resolved. For this reason, the researcher and transcriptionist hand coded the data and then compared and contrasted their individual findings to obtain the final themes discovered. The researcher spent approximately thirty hours transcribing the recordings and analyzing the collected data.

In comparing the themes discovered, the researcher and transcriptionist found one outlier participant who had a different experience and, therefore, a different perception of their transition services and how those services prepared them for college. The participant's perceptions and experiences perceived the transition services and their roles in the development of these services within their IEP to be helpful in preparing for college. The intent of the mandates of IDEA are to include students in the development of their services to prepare for college and this participant's experiences and perceptions were the most closely related to the mandates outlined in IDEA for transition plans.

Data Analysis

Using Hycner's (1999) phenomenological approach to analysis, the researcher closely read and analyzed the transcribed data for themes, concepts, and models to make interpretations (Groenewald, 2004). Unlike quantitative data analysis which follows a deductive method, qualitative research is inductive and free of preconceived notions (Creswell, 2009). The ideas that form the basis for a general inductive approach were condensed, identifying clear links between the data and the research idea, findings that were easy to explain and demonstrable, and showed a model of what the data indicated

(Groenewald, 2004). The central theme of phenomenological research is to describe the experience and still remain true to the view of the participant (Giorgi, 2002).

The steps Hycner (1999) outlined include: bracketing and phenomenological reduction, delineating units, forming themes by summarizing the interviews to make a complete picture of the themes and interactions. The interviews were then read and re-read by the researcher and analyst and patterns of comments, words, and phrases were discovered. The analysis began as the researcher started to group together the information found and searched for associations and emerging themes. Factors the researcher examined in this analysis were the actual words transcribed, specific word usage, an intonation from the recordings. The researcher began to note how frequently a possible theme occurred, how these themes interacted, and the emergence of sub-themes (themes which emerged from the main themes).

Two main themes emerged from this qualitative study. One of the themes was Lack of Student Knowledge with sub-themes which included the participants' lack of knowledge regarding their disabilities and its effects on their learning; the laws that affected their education; the terms of self-determination and transition services; and how to receive granted accommodations in college. The second main theme which emerged was Additional Information Needed When Entering College. This theme had subthemes which included academic skills, study skills, and social skills.

Lack of Student Knowledge

The first theme which emerged from this study were born from the questions regarding the participants' knowledge of transition services, self-determination skills, and what skills they needed when entering college. The themes discovered uncovered some of the strengths and weaknesses of the IEP transition process the participants had experienced.

Disability Knowledge

All participants were asked if they could describe their disability and how it affected their learning. A majority of the participants were able to describe some of the effects of their disability but could not explain their disability. A response from S9 captured the typical response:

Well, I have a learning disability, and so at times when I take tests I get nervous or I get distracted around the classroom. So I need a quiet place [this affects his learning] to take a test and just have extra time so I can really focus on the questions.

A second participant also named and described her perceptions, but was unable to describe the disability. "I have dyslexia, so I'm very slow at reading, and I have a hard time pronouncing certain words" (S8).

The nine participants spoke about their disability and their perceived effects. The participants used various strategies to assist them to overcome their barriers in the classroom. The majority of the participants rely on the teachers' assistance, class notes or power points given prior to the beginning of class, and repetition.

Well, probably just like reciting ... what the person has said because sometimes what they say sounds like something else. So now I have to write it down and read it out loud to myself to make sure it was really what they said. (S2)

A second typical response to what strategies are used in class to overcome their barriers was “It helps when teachers give me notes,” (S5), while another, “What helps is asking my teacher to help me; I tell her to read it over for me so I can understand it” (S6).

The subtheme regarding student knowledge of their own disability and how it affects their learning is consistent among the participants. They are aware of their disability or disabilities, how it affects them, but do not understand their disability. The participants are unable to explain their disability; “It just slows down my processing. Also creates some anxiety” (S4). The majority of the participants could describe strategies to be used within the classroom which assists them to overcome the barriers to their learning, such as notes, repetition, and specific accommodations.

Laws

The laws of the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA) are important for any student with disabilities and their parents to understand. These laws explain the entitlements of K-12 students who have disabilities. The mandates of IDEA produce a blueprint that allows students to be evaluated, placed in the least restrictive environment, plan what educational goals and how to achieve them while in school, and prepare students with LD for college or the working world. Beginning at age fourteen, inventories and interviews are given to students to determine their future desires. When they reach the age of sixteen, the students, according to the guidelines of IDEA, are to

take an active role in planning their transition services to prepare for college. Many students who attend high school reach the age of majority (eighteen) and are expected to make decisions regarding their transition programs without their parents, unless they give written consent to the school their parents can be involved in these decisions. Once the students have graduated high school, IDEA no longer applies, but their Section 504 plans and the ADA-AA now become the civil rights laws to protect those with disabilities. These laws are to ensure equal access to their education on a level playing field with those students without disabilities. Without the knowledge of these laws, understanding their civil rights becomes difficult at best.

When interviewed, the participants knew next to nothing about either set of laws which affected them and their education. Regarding if they were invited to participate in their IEP meetings, a typical response was:

I did a lot of research on IEP's last semester because I was doing a [report], I didn't even know...until last semester. They did the study and came up with what I needed...I had no involvement" (S 3).

Two of the participants stated they had no idea of IDEA until they took a college course which included an abbreviated explanation of these laws. The first student stated: "I did a lot of research on IEP's last semester because I was doing a [report] on it, so I know a lot more now than I used to know, still little hazy in that area but..." (S 3). The second participant stated: "Well, since I'm an HR minor, I did not know until this semester ...in my HR class. Then I kind of learned through that but not really before" (S 7).

Some participants attempted to guess the meaning of IDEA and ADA. The interviews revealed there was an overall lack of knowledge regarding either IDEA or ADA-AA laws, how and when they applied to the participants, the differences between the two sets of laws, and how these laws protected and assisted students with disabilities.

Additional statements made by two participants regarding the laws of IDEA, knew these laws supported students with disabilities; "... it helps those with disabilities and it supports them, what they might need and gives them a voice" (S 5). Another participant, "Yes, I know what that [IDEA] is and that people can't give out their information" (S 4).

The majority of participants had no knowledge at all regarding these very important laws and their affects. When asked if they knew what IDEA is, the comments were, "No, I have no idea" (S 6); "Do I have any knowledge? No, I do not" (S 9). Regarding any knowledge of ADA-AA laws, responses were, "No, I don't know about those laws" (S 2). The participants expressed their lack of knowledge regarding very important laws which are to prepare them, protect them, and ensure them of equal access to their education.

IEP Meetings

According to the guidelines of IDEA, an IEP meeting is composed of a committee consisting of the teachers, parents, and student. An invitation is sent to all parties by the lead teacher who has developed the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) and all

committee members are to express their input, add or change anything they feel will be in the best interest of the student. It is important, as well as mandated in IDEA, for the student to play an active role in developing their own transition plan. This includes the student's input into their own plan. The interviews revealed only three of the participants actually participated in their IEP meetings in some fashion. The participants were asked if they ever participated in the meetings. The majority responded they had not attended or played any role in the IEP meetings. Generally, the responses from the participants revealed their parents and teachers planned their futures. "I do not think I had any part of it [IEP meetings]" (S 8). Only three of the participants were invited and attended their IEP meetings.

I played a very big role. I was the one who said I need ... this accommodation added, or I don't need this accommodation any more in high school. And also coming here, I have actually subtracted a lot [of accommodations]. (S 4)

Another participant responded "I was the main person answering questions they asked" (S 5). The third participant to have a positive answer to being invited to their IEP meeting responded with:

Yes, each time before we had met, the information packets were sent to my home for my parents to review and in that packet, it allowed me the choice of going to the meetings with my parents' consent. And so my mom would always let me go with her, so that way I could know what they were doing. And then we just went to the meetings. (S 9)

During the IEP meetings, the adults were to listen and take into consideration the students' ideas regarding their own future. The majority of participants perceived their parents and the other adults in the meeting decided their futures with little input from the participants. "... everything that was a part of my IEP meetings was with my mother and father" (S 1). When asked who decided their future, S 8 responded "My mom." A second participant responded, "I think it was just my mom" (S 2). A third participant responded:

No, it was more of they thought they knew what was best for me and ... what type of setting I needed ..."(S 7).

One participant stated:

They did, they asked me if I was going to go to college, and I said yes. And they said do you know you can bring your accommodations to the University, and I said yes. And they explained a little bit more about it. (S 9)

Two other participants responded they felt the adults did listen to their ideas for their own futures, but the majority did not perceive they had the opportunity to play a more active role in their IEP meetings.

Transition Services and Skills

Another sub-theme of Lack of Student Knowledge is regarding what transition services and self-determination skills include and how these affect students' learning. Within the IEP is a section which outlines the transition plan for the student. These transition plans are to be developed with the student at the age of sixteen to prepare the student for post-high school. The majority of the participants did not know what

transition plans or services were nor did they play a role in their development in high school. Most of the participants tried to explain transition services by using their perception of the definition of the word “transition”. “I’m assuming it has something to do with the transition from high school to college. Probably helps with your accommodations and everything switching from your high school to college” (S 8). An additional participant guessed at the meaning of transition services: “I can make a guess out of it – I mean obviously saying it’s transitioning so you’re going through one phase to another phase. Before now I never really heard of it” (S 7).

A third participant explained transition services in this way: “I believe that means ... your ability to transfer from one place to another with having gained knowledge of how to do it and how to successfully complete that process” (S 9). The lack of knowledge by the participants regarding transition services from high school to college emerged to reveal academic and social skills needed to develop effective transition plans as mandated by IDEA were not being developed.

Self-determination skills are a group of skills which include the ability to make choices and decisions, problem solving skills, the ability to identify alternative solutions, set goals, and self-advocacy skills. These skills allow students to act autonomously. The participants were unable to identify or explain self-determination skills except as their perception of the meaning of the words. For example, S 5 stated “Well, believing in yourself, knowing that you can do the work” (S 5).

A second participant explained self-determination skills in this way:

Well, to be self-determined is to know your goal. ... to know your goal, and just go after it and not think and not care about what others say about that goal, no matter if they are for it or against it. (S 4)

Two other participants perceived self-determination skills to be “Just being ... respectful to yourself and knowing that you have to accomplish your goals, the duties you have to do, making sure you’re on a timely plan to do get ... things done” (S 9). The second response included, “Being self-motivated; you don’t just care about the grade...” (S 3).

A fifth participant had this perception of self-determination skills:

Self-determination – maybe your outlook on life, be like if you if you are determined enough. Really just your outlook and your confidence and how are you willing to go a mile. (S 2)

The majority of the participants did not know what comprised self-determination skills nor transition services and how they affected their educational planning. Self-determination skills were to be intertwined into the transition plans to prepare students for college. These skills could be taught in high school by integrating them into the general curriculum of classes. The participants did not perceive being taught self-determination skills in high school.

Even though the participants were not able to list self-determination skills and did not feel they were taught in high school, all participants felt they could demonstrate some self-determination skills. Regarding the self-determination skills they could demonstrate, one participant stated “I’m incredibly self-motivated” (S 3). A second participant responded:

Goal setting, I don't know exactly all the skills. Achieving certain things you know ... it's something like the Smart Plan – (specific, measurable), in essence so I was able to [set goals] ... but wasn't taught but [I can] definitely [demonstrate this skill]. (S 7)

The majority of participants knew the skill of goal setting was important but were unaware of the other aspects of self-determination skills which are important to their success.

Accommodations

When students are in high school, the laws of IDEA entitles students with disabilities accommodations and modifications to the curriculum. IDEA also writes in its mandates the IEP has a transition plan which is a coordinated set of activities for students sixteen years of age and older to prepare these students for college or post-secondary work. Once the students graduate high school, IDEA no longer applies to the students. Their Section 504 and ADA-AA laws now take the place of IDEA, not as an entitlement, but as a civil right to have equal access to their education. Their documentation of the disability will determine appropriate accommodations for college. When the students with disabilities were in high school, they did not have to request accommodations because they were given according to their IEP plans. In college, however, to receive accommodations, the students must self-advocate and request the appropriate accommodations. Few participants knew accommodations would be afforded to them in college. The majority of the participants credited their families for informing them of the ability to receive accommodations. One participant stated, "I'm not sure

how, but my mom was intensely involved with the process” (S 1). A second participant’s perception:

Well, my Momma told me about [accommodations] because I’ve always had [accommodations]. I’ve always been in those little classes where they try to help you with your speech impediment or dyslexia, so Mama told me that some colleges have [accommodations]. (S 2)

Very few participants knew they could receive accommodations in college. One participant knew he could receive accommodations in college because in his senior year in high school,

... I had talked to the person in charge of my IEP at my high school and they were informing me that I can talk to the director of disability services of the University and just provide them with the copies of my IEP. They should be able to recognize and process everything without any problems. (S 9)

Two other participants stated those who wrote their IEP’s were the people who told them colleges would grant accommodations. Transition services could include the teaching of self-advocacy skills and the information students would need to request their accommodations in college.

Additional Information Needed When Entering College

A second theme revealed during these interviews was the additional information the participants perceived they needed to have a smoother transition when entering college and assist them in being successful in college. Three sub-themes, the academic skills, study skills, and social skills, emerged through these interviews.

Academic Skills

Transition services within the IEP are to assist students to gain the skills which would prepare them for college. The perception of the participants were they were not prepared nor did they have all the skills they needed to make a smooth transition to college and attain success. One participant was specific about their lack of academic skills in a specific subject, “I had to work pretty hard at reading the textbook and understanding some of the words. I had a hard time with that” (S 8). A second participant was very adamant on their perceptions of skills that need to be taught to be prepared for college:

I have a lot of online courses ...we go from a lot of books [in high school] and completely go to online because those are the classes I've been struggling with and am still struggling with. So a lot of the e-learning because we had no e-learning in high school. And somebody with my disability, I was not prepared whatsoever and it definitely shows [in] my work. (S 7)

Several participants perceived their academic skills lacked because they had been placed in “...the very easiest [classes]” (S 4) and would have preferred to have been challenged more in higher level class.

The participants were asked to reflect on their high school years and share their perceptions regarding information they would have liked to have known prior to entering college. One participant had this advice as hindsight: “Probably how to prepare you better, what to expect academically in a university because the work load ... is very different; how to properly write papers...” (S 9). Another participant’s reflection:

I think I would tell them that it would've been more helpful if they taught me [in] different ways. ... I have teachers [in college] who not only put up a presentation but they'll give examples, my school wasn't very good at that. ... they didn't ... help all the learning types... [In college] we have Power Points that go with the lectures, and we have other resources available. [For example] notes that go with the books, teachers give me those. They'll explain [concepts] if you ask in class...(S 8)

A third participant had these suggestions for their high school teachers:

Definitely more e-learning., or online learning because everything was just old school: book, paper, pen, everything but nothing was done on the computers ... Also, I understand there's teachers for me for high school especially my English classes- they would assign so many reading assignments and [they stated] this is how college is going to be, but it's really not because in college, yes it's more intense in the subjects, but in the sense of staying on one topic ... In my [high school] English class I read 12 books, I don't really read because reading is difficult for me, but I was assigned 12 different books, chapter books, that I would have to finish in a semester. But in college, it's more like two or three [books] and you actually take time and understand what the material [is] it's not just read the book, take a test, and you're done with that. So I think actually doing assignments is different than [the] assignments are in college. (S 7)

One participant's perception of academic skills which were missed in high school:

“Writing and reading comprehension should be a bigger focus. I feel like once you get out of middle school [the focus on these skills is ignored]” (S 8).

Study Skills

To be successful in college, students need to know how to study effectively.

Having more effective study skills is the second sub-theme of the information the participants perceived as a skill lacking when they graduated high school. Several of the participants mentioned they did not have enough study or time management skills.

Study and time management skills were perceived by the participants as important skills to have when entering college. This was expressed by one participant:

And then, probably time management, that would have been helpful, knowing how to manage your time well to incorporate studying and hanging out with your friends and all extracurricular activities. So teaching us basic skills of how to prepare ourselves for everyday life in college which was a little different than high school. (S 9)

The majority of participants perceived study skills and time management skills as important skills they wished had been emphasized more in high school to prepare them for college.

Social and Life Skills

The third sub-theme that participants perceived as important to entering college included social skills and life skills. Social skills become important to prepare for after college, knowing how to treat people with respect, make new friends, and knowing how

to speak to their professors. When asked about their strengths and weaknesses, one participant stated: “The skills I needed were to stop being shy so I could make friends. Since I was leaving my old friends behind, I could have used that skill” (S 6).

Life skills include knowing how to manage money, keeping your surroundings organized and clean, and managing a job and school. For some participants, life skills are important because, for most, entering college would have been the first time away from family and friends. This was expressed by one participant

For me, I was very close to my family and so ... the transition was a lot harder for me because I knew my parents were not always going to be there which they had been in the past. They had been there for me, whereas now I have to stand on my own two feet. That was a very hard concept to roll around in my head. (S 1)

A second participant had a realistic and rational perception of life skills needed for students by integrating academics and life skills.

...How to properly write papers, especially emails, how to officially make a proper email because that's a big part of communication between your professors and you have to be official about it. And then the time management skills definitely should be part of teaching and basic life skills. How to manage a checkbook: because there's a lot of students who don't know how to do [that]. How to budget your expenses, the money that you make when you do get a job or part-time job. So basically, life skills that can prepare you for the future. (S 9)

Life skills and social skills were perceived by the majority of the participants as important and also lacking in training. Specific academic skills were also perceived as lacking when they entered college.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

One way to establish credibility, or the ability of the findings to be believable and confidence in the “truth” of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), is through member checks. The researcher invited the participants to re-check their feedback on the study. This invitation was included on the participant consent form. This invitation was not mandatory, but left to the participants’ choice. The participants were encouraged to review the findings to assist in minimizing any misrepresentations and researcher biases. Six of the nine participants reviewed their transcripts as well as the final analysis.

Transferability, or whether the findings can apply to other similar contexts (Patton, 2002), is not essential to qualitative research. However, qualitative researchers strive to understand how the findings would prove to be useful in other situations. Qualitative researchers could use the information gathered from the perspectives of the participants to strive to improve the transition services of students with LD to successfully progress to college. This can be transferred from one school district to another in various parts of the country.

Both the transcriptionist and researcher had coded the findings separately, and the researcher and transcriptionist then compared their analyses and allowed for consistency in the findings. These comparisons allowed the researcher to discover the main themes and their sub-themes. Dependability, which is related to the consistency of findings, was

established through the use of the second investigator who was used to triangulate the findings and assess the study for fairness and accuracy. Confirmability was established by creating an audit trail with notes and memos which document how data were collected as well as through the coding of the data. Triangulation uses different sources of information to increase the validity of a study (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011). Using data triangulation was useful in demonstrating trustworthiness and confirmability in the data gathered from the participants' perspectives.

Results

Nine college students with a learning disability were interviewed for this study. The interview data were coded to determine emerging themes. Two themes emerged, each with several sub-themes. The two main themes which were realized were:

1. Participant' lack of student knowledge. Sub-themes related to this theme included a lack of knowledge regarding their disability; a lack of taking an active role in their IEP meetings; a lack of knowledge regarding transition services and self-determination skills; a lack of knowledge regarding the laws which affect their education; and finally, a lack of knowing how to advocate for accommodations in college.
2. Additional information needed when entering college was the second theme which emerged. Sub-themes relating to this included more information and skills needed regarding academic skills; study skills needed to succeed academically; and social and life skills needed to take care of themselves and to have the ability to socialize and make friends.

The perceptions of the participants revealed inconsistent preparations for college using transition services. Information needed and the development of transition services were not perceived as preparing the participants for college.

There was one participant who perceived they were prepared for college. This participant perceived their success through their mindset and determination: “I can do it mindset that I can do it in my mind and hard work, dedication gets you a long way in life” (S 2).

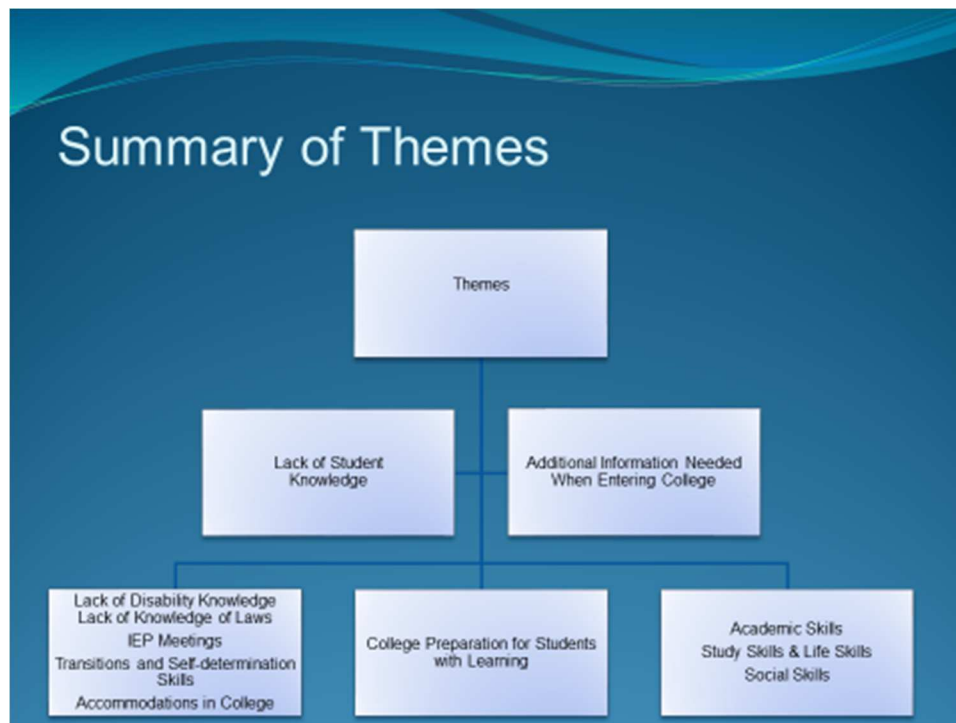


Figure 1. Summary of themes.

Summary

The participants were consistent in their perceptions of the lack of transition services in high schools to prepare them for college. Little was known about the laws of IDEA and ADA-AA which protect the participants, and most of the participants reported they had little to no participation in their IEP meetings when in high school. The participants were able to describe their disability but did not understand what their disability was and how it affected their learning.

In the following chapter, I discuss the interpretations of these results. I also discuss the limitations of the study, recommendations for future studies, and the implications of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussions, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to analyze how students with LD perceive the effectiveness of their secondary transition services and preparedness for college. This study explored students' perceptions of transition services received in high school and how these services prepared them for college.

A qualitative approach to this study presented descriptions of the students' lived experiences to accurately describe the phenomenon. Each participant had an LD and graduated high school with a working IEP that included a transition plan. Data were collected through audio-recorded interviews of each of the nine participants. The participants consisted of two males and seven females, and each student attended a private university located in a southern state. The participants were originally from various areas of the United States. The protocols utilized during these interviews with the participants are located in Appendix F, and the transcriptions of the interviews are located in Appendix G of this study.

I hand coded the data, analyzed them, and organized them to discover emerging themes. The study was based on the following two research questions:

How do students with LD perceive their readiness for college, especially regarding information needed and transition services provided in their high school IEP?

What role do students with LD have in developing their transition services?

Analyzing the data from these two research questions revealed two emerging themes and related subthemes. The first theme which emerged was a lack of student

knowledge. Related to this theme were subthemes regarding the participants' lack of knowledge of their disability, the laws which govern their education, the participants' role in their IEP meetings in high school, the participants' perceptions of transition skills and self-determination skills, and the knowledge that they can receive accommodations in college. This lack of knowledge expresses a gap between perceived and actual practices of transition services being given to the students with disabilities in high school as mandated by IDEA. The second theme which emerged was students did not know additional information was needed when entering college. This theme had related subthemes which addressed academic skills, study skills, and social and life skills. Each of these skills, according to IDEA, should have been addressed in the IEP and taught in high school to prepare the students for college.

Interpretation of the Findings

According to Cawthone and Cole (2010), once a student who has been identified with an LD reaches high school, the IEP plan is to include services which would facilitate those skills those students would need to transition to their postsecondary goals, which would include higher education. The mandates of IDEA (2004) are clear on these goals; the transition plans for services for student with disabilities are to include a coordinated set of activities to prepare the students for post high school. The perceptions of the participants in this study do not reflect the implementation of transition plans or services to prepare them for college.

Participants' Perceptions

The laws of IDEA apply to students with LD while they attend kindergarten until they graduate high school. The schools are responsible for providing the evaluations and the services/accommodations during this time period. Students, according to IDEA (2004), are to be invited to their IEP meetings and actively participate in these meetings. When asked if they were invited to their IEP meetings, the perception from the majority of students was they did not play an active role in their IEP meetings, nor did they assist in developing their transition plans. This aligns with the studies conducted by Trainor (2010) who found during her interviews the participants were not actively taking part in the discussions.

According to Morningstar, Lattin, and Sarkesian (2004), IDEA 1997 included five major requirements. These requirements included a) a preliminary statement of services by age 14; b) include transition services and goals by age 16; c) describe the implementation of these transitions services; d) the IEP team will include parents, teachers, service agencies, school staff, and students; e) the transition plan will focus on the postsecondary outcomes which are in line with the students' needs, interests, and goals. In 2004, IDEA mandated that age-appropriate transition assessments be used to identify students' postsecondary goals (Woods, Sylvester, & Martin, 2010).

During the interviews, the majority of the participants stated they did not take part in their IEP meetings, nor did they play a role in developing their transition plans. When asked if they had participated in their IEP meetings, one participant responded: "No, I didn't even know it was called an IEP...I had no involvement" (S 3). This was the

general perception among the participants which revealed the gap between the mandates of IDEA 2004 and the actual practices of the schools.

Once out of high school, the laws of the Americans with Disabilities Act and their Amendments (ADA-AA) take effect and they are the Civil Rights of the students. The ADA-AA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability which includes public and private universities. To receive appropriate accommodations when in college, students must self-advocate and self-disclose and submit appropriate documentation. According to ADA-AA laws, students with LD have the right to equal access to educational opportunities through reasonable accommodations. This is a key difference between IDEA and ADA and something that should be addressed in the transition services of the IEP. The mandates of IDEA address individualized education entitlements while the civil rights laws of Section 504 an ADA-AA address access to education. The participants were unaware of the difference in the laws which protected them and allowed them the accommodations they needed.

Hildreth (2013) reviewed current literature on transition and grouped her findings into four main areas: academic, social, emotional and self-esteem, and self-help and survival. In this study, two themes were revealed, lack of student knowledge and what additional information the students needed to know when entering college. Among the latter, three sub-themes came to light which align with Hildreth's groupings: the academic, the social and life skills, and study skills.

Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997), found effective transition services are the key to successfully transitioning from high school to college for students with LD. Though the

students may be able to be accepted into a college, their transition may not be successful without effective transition services. Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) also included skills these students would need to take control of their futures. These skills include setting personal goals, problem solving, making appropriate choices, advocating for themselves, and, most importantly, participating in the decisions which would impact their futures. This last skill begins with participation in their IEP meetings and developing their transition plans while in high school so they can successfully progress to college. Most of the participants in this study did not know what transition services were, what self-determination skills included, nor had any part in developing their transition plans while in high school.

Several studies (Chiba & Low, 2007; Wehmeyer, 2002; Hughes & Carter, 2011; Test, Fowler, Cease-Cook, & Bartholomew, 2012, Wehmeyer, 2013) found too many students with LD are still leaving high school without the necessary skills, support, and knowledge. This is supported by the perceptions of the participants in this study. One participant's perceptions were stated as:

Probably how to prepare you better, what to expect academically in a University because the workload ... is very different; how to properly write papers, especially emails, how to officially make a proper email because that's a big part of communication between you and your professors and you have to be official about it. And then the time management skills definitely should be part of teaching and basic life skills. How to manage a checkbook because there's a lot of students who don't know how to do that. How to budget your expenses, the

money that you make when you do get a job or part time job. So basically, life skills that can prepare you for the future. (S 9)

The conceptual framework for this study was to identify how, or if, needed skills are taught and if strategies are perceived to be used to prepare students with learning disabilities to transition to higher education. According to Bangsor (2008), decisions are made for students from the time they entered school. This was confirmed through the interviews. “No, it was more of they [parents and teachers] thought they knew it was best for me and how and what type of setting I needed...”. (S 7)

Bangsor (2008) stated that students with LD will also need to have a true understanding of their disability, how it impacts their learning, and knowledge of the differences between IDEA accommodations and ADA-AA accommodations. The participants were able to describe their disabilities, but did not know what the disability was or how it affected their learning. They did not, however, have any knowledge of the laws or differences in the laws of IDEA or ADA-AA accommodations given in college.

The perceptions of the participants regarding their transition services in high school seem to agree with the studies conducted by Chiba & Low, 2007; Wehmeyer, 2002; Hughes & Carter, 2011; Test, Fowler, Cease-Cook, & Bartholomew, 2012, Wehmeyer, 2013 that too many students with LD are still leaving high school without the necessary skills, support, and knowledge. The participants expressed their perceptions of what teachers in high school should teach students with LD before entering college.

Probably teachers in high school should just let students know that you will be under stressful times when you're in college, but you should always continue and

step forward, try to conquer those fears, [and] any problems you have, because there's always support, no matter where you go and you can always talk to somebody about any problems that you have. So that we can get over that wall and keep going. So determination, how to seek help when needed. (S9)

The participants in this study were students in college who had a working IEP when in high school. Their overall perceptions of their transition services were they either did not receive the services, or the transition plans did not assist them in preparing for college. The majority of the participants reported not participating in their IEP meetings. Participants perceived their academic skills, life skills, social skills, and study skills were lacking when they entered college. The only participants who had any knowledge of the laws which entitled them to accommodations were those who had become acquainted with these laws in their college courses. The participants expressed their parents and teachers made the decisions for them while they were in high school. The knowledge the participants should have had prior to entering college was perceived as lacking.

Limitations of the Study

The sample size of nine participants was relatively small. All participants attended the same university in a southern state, but originated from various high schools located in different areas of the United States.

The participants were very cooperative. The limitations included the amount of time (fifty to sixty minutes) spent with each participant. Most of the participants remembered their high school years and how their IEP meetings were conducted. The

majority of the participants remembered not playing an active role in their IEP meetings, but some remembered attending these meetings. Using only the students' perceptions is a limitation in that more information could be gleaned from using all sources involved in the IEP process such as teachers, parents, and school staff.

Recommendations

For students with LD, research has shown the importance of effective transition plans for their futures. The strengths of this study were in the interviews. The study could be made stronger if the perceptions of the teachers, parents, and disability coordinators in colleges were included in this study. This is one limitation as only students' perceptions are evaluated.

An additional recommendation would be the ability to observe an IEP meeting and how, or if, the students actually participate or take an inactive role. Another observation to be made during these meetings is if the adults listen to the students' ideas of their futures and how to reach the goals they have made for their futures. The most effective methods to plan for student success is to include parents, teachers, and the students.

There is a need to design and implement a program model for transition plans. There should be more than one model, as the transition plans need to be individualized for each student. These models can include a focus on self-determination skills, academic skills, and life skills. According to the mandates of IDEA 2004, one way to assist students with LD to prepare for successful postsecondary education is through transition planning, which includes a coordinated set of activities. The transition to

college can be difficult and emotional. If the students are fully prepared academically and with the skills to self-advocate, they are then given a better opportunity to succeed.

Implications

Although there are federal mandates in place regarding the inclusion of transition services for all students with LD, students with LD are still entering college underprepared. There is a lack of direction and resources available to enable schools to implement the individualized services for students to prepare for education beyond high school.

The implications for positive Social Change are empowering secondary students with LD in becoming more proactive in creating their transition goals and services. This would enable the students with LD to develop the necessary self-determination skills to be successful, not only in college, but in their adult working life as well, thus becoming more productive citizens within their communities.

Conclusion

In this study, nine students with LD attending a southern university, but originating from high schools in various areas of the United States, were interviewed to gain their perspectives of the transition services in high school. The results were analyzed and discussed regarding their memories, lived experiences, and their roles in their transition plans, and their overall knowledge. IDEA 2004 mandates schools develop IEP plans including transition plans with students, parents, and teachers as a committee to develop transitioning services for students entering college.

The results of the interviews revealed the transition plans did not necessarily succeed in accomplishing all that IDEA 2004 mandated. Without a well-planned transition plan, which would include a coordinated set of activities, many students with LD will not achieve their goal of entering postsecondary education, or if they do, they may not have the skills to successfully complete their postsecondary goals.

Future studies are necessary to evaluate and monitor transition programs. Interviews with not only students, but teachers, parents, and disability coordinators in postsecondary institutions might prove beneficial to developing the most effective models of transition programs for students with LD and their future successes. Students with LD have challenges other students may not have. Providing them with the tools, skills, and knowledge they will need, will assist them in being successful not only in college, but as working members of their communities. The focus must continue to be on the students, keeping their personal goals in mind, and their success at the forefront of all transitional plans.

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Appendix A: Data Collection Coordination Request

Date

Dear Student,

My name is Christine Georgallis and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I have obtained IRB support to collect data for my research project entitled Transition Programming for Students with Learning Disabilities: From High School to College.

I am requesting your cooperation in the data collection process. I propose to collect data on March 1 through March 31, 2015. I will coordinate the exact times of data collection with you in order to minimize disruption to your instructional activities.

If you agree to be part of this research project, I would ask that you and I either meet or have a phone interview which should last no longer than two hours.

If you prefer not to be involved in this study, that is not a problem at all.

If circumstances change, please contact me via email: Christine.georgallis@waldenu.edu

Thank you for your consideration. I would be pleased to share the results of this study with you if you are interested.

I am requesting that you reply to this email with "I agree" to document that I have cleared this data collection with you.

Sincerely,
Christine Georgallis

Printed Name of Student

Date

Student's Written or Electronic* Signature

Researcher's Written or Electronic* Signature

Appendix B: Confidentiality Agreement

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: “Transitioning Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities: From High School to College” I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant’s name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I’m officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature:

Date:

Appendix C: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of transition services for students with learning disabilities who desire to go to college. The researcher is inviting Students in their first year of college to be in the study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named K.Christine H. Georgallis who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to determine what transition services are being offered to students with learning disabilities to prepare them for college. Furthermore, the components and effectiveness of these transition services will be explored.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in 2 interviews which would last 1-2 hours each
- Have these interviews recorded
- Have the option to review the findings of the researcher and the checklist for transition services

Here are some sample questions:

- 1) The transition section of the IEP is supposed to specify a transition plan for each student. Are you familiar with this section of the IEP?

- 2) Have you been invited and encouraged to attend your IEP meetings?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at your school will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits:

Participants in this type of study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing. This study has the potential benefits of assisting both teachers and students with learning disabilities to develop a transition plan which would meet the mandates of federal law and allow students to transition to college successfully.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept anonymous. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by storing all interviews on flash drives and the researcher named will be the only person in contact with the data and participants. A duplicate of the audio recordings will be locked in a safe filing cabinet to ensure no data is lost and confidentiality is ensured. The filing cabinet will be in a safe closet in the house of the researcher. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher, Christine Georgallis. To talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. You may also contact Dr. Lorraine Cleeton, the Chairperson of this study. Walden's approval number for this study is 02-04-15-0172763 and it expires on February 3, 2016.

Please keep this consent form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By replying to this email with the words, "I consent", I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Appendix D: Letter of Invitation to Participate

Dear Student,

I am currently planning a doctoral study addressing the perceptions of college students with learning disabilities regarding the transition services received in high school to progress to college. This would include the accommodations students have received in high school and college, and perceptions of their participation in the IEP meetings which determined these services. This study will be performed as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for my Ph.D. degree in Special Education at Walden University under the supervision of Dr. Lorraine Cleeton and Dr. Sheri Anderson.

Your participation in this study will provide insightful and useful information needed on this topic. You are eligible to participate in this study if:

- a) you are at least 18 years old
- b) have a diagnosed learning disability
- c) had a working IEP in high school
- d) presently receive accommodations at your university
- e) If you have successfully completed your first year of college

You will be asked to attend and participate in one personal interview which will last about 30-45 minutes.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. You have the option to drop out of the study at any time without penalty. There is no link between participation in this study and any class grade. All data collected for this study will remain private and will only be used for this doctoral study.

I hope you will agree to participate in this study. This is an opportunity for you to make a difference in the education process for years to come.

Thank you,
Christine Georgallis (researcher)

Appendix E: Letter of Consent

By signing this form, I agree to participate in the study regarding transition services from high school to college conducted by Christine Georgallis for her doctoral studies.

I agree that I am:

- f) at least 18 years old
- g) have a diagnosed learning disability
- h) had a working IEP in high school
- i) am presently receiving accommodations at my university
- j) have successfully completed my first year of college

I understand that participation in this study is strictly voluntary. I have the option to drop out of the study at any time without penalty. There is no link between participation in this study and any class grade. All data collected for this study will remain private and will only be used for this doctoral study.

Name (using my code for this study)

Date

Appendix F: Interview Protocols

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. As I explained, I am researching the types of transition services you might have had while in high school. I am particularly interested in what role you played in developing your IEP and your transition services and if you felt you were prepared for college.

I would like to assure you that your name, the name of your school or school district will not be disclosed in this study. I am recording this interview today to make sure I am getting all the information correctly. I will be glad to share a copy of the transcript with you to ensure my information is correct.

- 1) How did you disclose your disability prior to starting your first class in college?
- 2) Please describe your disability.
 - a) How does this disability affect your learning?
 - b) What helps you in the classroom to overcome this barrier in learning?
- 3) How did you know you could receive accommodations before you came to college?
- 4) Can you explain what the term transition services mean to you?
- 5) Were you ever invited to take part in your IEP meetings and if so, what role did you play?
- 6) Did you ever lead one of your IEP meetings?
 - a) What were some of the ideas you expressed?

- b) Did you feel the adults in the meeting (your parents, teachers, etc) take into consideration the suggestions you made for your future?
- 7) What type of accommodations did you receive in high school?
- a) Did you expect the same accommodations in college?
 - b) Have you received any different accommodations?
- 8) What knowledge do you have of the laws of the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA)?
- a) What do you know about when these laws apply?
- 9) Do you have any knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Amendments?
- a) What do you know about these laws?
- 10) Can you explain the differences between these laws and how they affect you?
- a) How did you come by the knowledge of these differences?
 - b) How did you know to come to the Office of Disability Services when you got to college to ask for accommodations?
- 11) What services did your transition plan include in high school?
- a) Do you feel this plan prepared you for college?
 - b) What skills do you feel you still needed when you entered college?
- 12) When you graduated high school, did you feel you were prepared to go to college?
- a) What were some of the skills you think you could have used more practice?
 - b) What were the skills you feel were your strengths?
- 13) Can you explain what you think self-determination skills include?

14) Were self-determination skills included in your IEP or taught in any of your classes in high school?

a) How were these skills taught – in the general education classes or in a special resource class?

15) Do you think you are able to demonstrate any of the self-determination skills?

16) If you could go back to your teachers in high school, what would you be able to tell them that would have assisted you more when you came to college?

17) Do you have anything you would like to add about the skills and knowledge you needed to enter college?

Thank you very much for your time and participation in this research study. I will be glad to send you a copy of the transcript for your review to ensure I have recorded our conversation accurately. If you think of something you would like to add, please feel free to contact me at the email address I sent to you.

Appendix G: Interview Transcripts

Student One

Interview with Student 1:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. As I explained, I'm researching the types of transition services you might have had while in high school. I am particularly interested in what role you played in developing your IEP and your transition services and if you felt you were prepared for college.

I would like to assure you that your name, the name of your school or school district will not be disclosed in this study. I am recording this interview today to make sure I am getting all the information correctly. I will be glad to share a copy of the transcript with you to ensure my information is correct.

How did you disclose your disability prior to starting your first class in college?

S1: I came to the disability services at the time and I came with my parents. I immediately sat down and told her that I had epilepsy and she said do I have an IEP and everything. She said that I need the transcript from school and everything and so we got all that information to her and then my IEP was calculated by what I had in high school from some of the disability services and high school to some of them that I currently needed for college.

R-Please describe your disability and how this disability affects your learning.

S1: I had epilepsy and I have anxiety and also recently depression. So my epilepsy doesn't necessarily affect my learning but at times I have struggled with concentration and I struggle with in classes. I have struggled with concentration and sometimes my anxiety, if it gets too high, I'll need to go elsewhere to seek out advice and counseling.

R- What helps you in the classroom to overcome this barrier in learning?

S1: I normally talk to the teachers or by talking to my counselor. Sometimes I don't even ask the question, the questions that need to be asked so I avoid it but other than that, that's pretty much it.

R- How did you know you could receive accommodations before you came to college?

S1: Actually that was when I went to the high school for disabilities and connected to a kindergarten school so it goes from K to high school, and I went there with one of my other friends and we found out through the high school I went to that it was inclined to

have some sort of aid through them - I'm not sure how but my mom was intensely involved with the process.

R-Can you explain what the term transition services means to you?

S1: Transition services means to me what it means to me is that from high school to college for example I first came here very insecure and intimidated and didn't have prior anxiety to back in high school. When I first came to the university immediate reaction was anxiety. That's how I developed my anxiety, because that whole transition phase from learning about classes, to where to go to learning tutoring services, to everything else was kind of overwhelming for me, and I didn't know that first semester was going to happen.

R- Were you ever invited to take part in your IEP meetings, and if so, what role did you play if any?

S1: I didn't play a part in my IEP. My IEP meeting I didn't play any part in high school. All, everything that was a part of my IEP meetings was with my mother and father.

R- Did you ever lead one of your IP meetings?

S1: No.

R- Did you feel the adults in the meeting ever take into consideration any of your suggestions that you may possibly for your future?

S1: Yes and no. The person who was in charge of my IEP was the assistant to the assistant principal, or the actual principal at the time. And what he did was I mean we had meetings and I'd be in there but I didn't have -normally I'd give my opinion but I wouldn't like advocate for myself, and the biggest thing he said back then was that I was going to run into problems in college not asking questions.

R- What type of accommodations did you receive in high school?

S1: I received extra time on tests, a calculator, tutoring which we paid for out of pocket, and speech therapy, I think or organize organizational therapy. And I received speech therapy, organizational therapy, counseling that's about it.

R-Did you expect the same accommodations in college?

S1: Actually I was quite surprised when I came to college how different it was the accommodation process. I felt like it was less of a hassle .I felt like there was more options for me. Back in high school I felt like there was less options. I didn't have very much say in my accommodations.

R- What knowledge, if any, do you have of the laws of the Individuals with Disabilities Act? What do you know about these laws?

S1: I do know that you're somebody whom is has a disability. I do know that if the person the individual the teacher that is not giving the student the appropriate help that they can be penalized.

R- Do you know when these laws, the IDEA laws are applied? IDEA is the acronym for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act- do you know when those laws are applied?

S1: No, not exactly.

R- Do you know anything about the Americans With Disabilities Act?

S1: No.

R- Can you explain the differences between these laws and how they affect you?

S1: No.

R- What services did your transition plan include in high school?

S1: I have no idea.

R-So do you feel this plan, whatever it was, prepared you for college?

S1: No.

R- What skills do you feel you still needed when you entered college?

S1: probably the biggest one is with English. I don't feel like there was – I used to get A's and B's in English and when I got here I got a big wake-up call the first semester and I got an F in English. I can remember.

R- What about being able to come acclimate yourself into college - did you have, were you taught any skills, did you feel like there were skills you should've been taught to ready you for all of this?

S1: Life skills I guess, and how to deal with the everyday precursors that pop up - like I know I have anxiety and depression so I would have liked to have been able to be more like I guess aware of what to do when I do when I did go through those days where okay well I'm feeling like this I should get out of my room- and I did I did have those services here on campus but I didn't- don't think a necessarily use them all the time.

R- Can you explain what you think self-determination skills are or what they include?

S1: Self-determination is when you are able to - I know what theory is -it's when you're able to advocate for yourselves to be able to like when you know advocate for yourself and be able to like- you have confidence in yourself and balance all that and it's in your happy with who you are, I think.

R- Were self-determination skills included in your IEP or taught many of your high school classes?

S1: No.

R- Do you think you are able to demonstrate any of the self-determination skills?

S1: In certain situations I think I am, but in others I'm not so familiar.

R- If you go back to your teachers in high school, what will you be able to tell them that would have assisted you more when you came to college?

S1: I would've –

R- What you like to tell that would have assisted you in transitioning from high school to college?

S1: How I'm not sure, I think at the time when I look back, it's more the fact that I didn't have any help earlier on, and that because I didn't have any help early on way before high school, that when I finally did get to high school where there was a school with disabilities and I didn't know about the IEP it was almost like it was kinda too late. So therefore even though I was like they gave me the able tools to succeed I guess is what you could say, they didn't actually did the best they could at that time when I was developing because in 11 to 12th grade I was I didn't have the anxiety that much, didn't have the depression, and I only had epilepsy. Anxiety was still there a little bit, but it wasn't until I went to my internship that I finally which was at the public defender's office, that I finally did develop anxiety And so at the time they knew about the math disability but they didn't nothing was set in stone and if I could go back I would say well, hey I know you did the best he could buy it to realize I have a math disability and you know I have anxiety and depression but I mean there's nothing I regret from 11 to 12 that I feel like they helped me in the best way possible

R- But did they help you transition out of the high school environment into a college environment?

S1: I don't know how they could've.

R- Do you have anything else you would like to add about the skills and knowledge you needed to enter college?

S1: Yeah, knowing from what I know about myself and first coming the University, it's very hard for somebody with disabilities to be, to get acclimated to a new environment. For me I was very close to my family and like, so therefore the transition was a lot harder for me because I knew my parents were not always which they had been in the past, they had been there for me, whereas now I have to stand on my own 2 feet. And that was a very hard concept to roll around in my head, and that's how the anxiety got worse is because I worried about it, and so yeah.

R- Thank you very much for your time and participation in this research. I'll be glad to send you a copy of the transcript for your review to ensure I have recorded our conversation accurately if you think of something you'd like to add please feel free to contact me at the email address I sent you.

Student Two

Interview Student 2:

R- Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. As I explained, I'm researching the types of transition services you might have had while in high school. I'm particularly interested in what role you played in developing your IEP and your transition services and if you felt you were prepared for college.

I would like to assure you that your name the name of your school or school district will not be disclosed in the study. I am recording this interview to make sure I am getting all the information correctly. I will be glad to share a copy of the transcript with you to ensure my information is correct.

How did you disclose your disability prior to starting your first class in college? How did you know to come up to the disability office to say I have a disability?

S2: Oh yeah, my mom told me about it.

R- Can you describe your disability and how it affects your learning?

S2: Dyslexia - it's more when I see things my brain sees it differently or worded differently doing what it is or where the numbers or how I say things but sound right to me but my ears hear differently, but is not always sounds like.

R- Okay. What helps you when you're in the classroom to overcome this learning barrier?

S2: Well, probably just like reciting it- reciting what the person has said because sometimes what they say sounds like something else. So now I have to write it down and read it out loud to myself to make sure it was really what they said.

R- Okay. How did you know you could receive accommodations before you came to college?

S2: Well, my Momma told me about because I've always had it. I've always been in those little classes where they try to help you with your speech impediment or dyslexia, so Mama told me that some colleges have it, all I have to do is come up to the LRC.

R- Did your school ever tell you anything about it?

S2: No, they didn't. Actually, yes yes the counselor told me about it to help me.

R- Can you explain what the term transition services means to you?

S2: It means -transition services- how you from one school to college - how you how you settled in, how have you done since high school to college - how was move to college - what you done basically.

R- Were you ever invited to take part in your IEP meetings and, if so, what was your role? Did you ever go to your IEP meetings?

S2: Not that I remember. I haven't done it in a long time, so even at my high school, it was my mama talking to the counselor, I think, or telling me that I need to be doing it, but I don't really remember if I did before because I was really young. So my Mamma just did it for me.

R- So did you ever lead one of your IEP meetings or ever take control of your IEP meeting and say this is what I want this, this is what I don't want?

S2: Actually there was one time, with my English teacher we were talking about it- because we had this paper and what I saw and what she saw were two different things, so I feel like that was one of my things was on my paper and stuff.

R- Did you feel like in the meetings did you ever go to any of your IEP meetings at all, or was it just your mom or what?

S2: I think it was just my mom.

R- Okay, so you never really attended an IEP meeting?

S2: Yeah.

R- What accommodations did you receive in high school?

S2: Extra time that's all.

R- Did you expect the same accommodations in college?

S2: Yeah once I found out that they had them, that you had accommodations.

R- Have you received anything different in college than you had in high school?

S2: No, the same thing.

R- Do you know what the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is and where they apply?

S2: Well it sounds like it's to help those who have disabilities who are somewhat, I don't know, struggling or something with some parts of their education, it's a little harder for them.

R-Do you know when that those laws are applied, what part of your educational career they applied to?

S2: Well from my experience it was when I was in elementary school, so probably from pre-K to whenever, maybe.

R- What about the Americans with Disabilities Act, have you ever heard of that?

S2: No.

R- Okay, so you don't know much about those laws?

S2: No, I don't know about those laws.

R- How did you know to come to the Office of Disability Services when you got to college to ask for accommodations?

S2: Well my counselor said that you have disability thing at school I was going to and my mama checked in on she told me where and it was in the LRC.

R- What services did your transition plan include in high school, did you feel like they prepared you for college or not?

S2: Yes, somewhat didn't do a little bit, it was just me a little bit of help most of it was me and my mindset. Mom helped me transition.

R- What skills do you feel you still needed when you entered college?

S2: What skills? What do you mean by that, skills?

R- Okay, so you're leaving high school and you're coming to college and get to college and go, gee I wish I knew this or I wish I knew that, did you feel like you were prepared for college, did you feel like you had all the skills you needed to be successful in college, were there things that were missing?

S2: I thought like I was well rounded. I was prepared, I was skilled for it.

R- When you graduated high school did you feel you were prepared to go to college?

S2: Yeah, I was prepared.

R- You were prepared?

S2: Yeah.

R- What were the skills you feel were your strengths?

S2: Well, I come with my mindset – that was really what it was, I was ready to prepare for college, the that I can do mindset, that I can do it in my mind and hard work, dedication gets you a long way in life.

R- Do you know what, or can you explain what you think self-determination-skills include?

S2: Self-determination - maybe your outlook on life, be like if you if you are determined enough. Really just your outlook and your confidence and how hard are you willing to go a mile.

R- Were self-determination skills included in your IEP or taught in any of your classes in high school?

S2: No, not really.

R- Do you think you are able to demonstrate any of the self-determination skills?

S2: Yes, I think I have.

R- If you could go back to your teachers in high school, what would you be able to tell them that would have assisted you more when you came to college?

S2: Well, there was only one teacher that she usually helped me with some things.

R- So what would you say to the others?

S2: They really didn't do much. To do a good job.

R- What would you say to them to help you be more prepared for college?

S2: Only do things differently, communication lessons or something.

R- Do you have anything you would like to add about the skills and knowledge you needed to have to enter college? What do you feel students need to know when they come out of high school going into college?

S2: They need to know that it is not all fun and games. The survival of the fittest, you can't really do what you did in high school and expect to the pass. You can't just goof around and not show up in class or fail class- you have to pay for it if you do go take it again. It's not like you can fail and just take it as a summer class in high school, and then, Bam, you can finish it. So just take it seriously, don't fail.

R- Thank you very much for your time and participation in this research study. I'll be glad to send you a copy of the transcript for your review to ensure I have recorded our conversation accurately. If you think of something you would like to add, please feel free to contact me at the email address I sent.

Student Three

Interview Student 3:

R- Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. As I explained, I am researching the types of transition services you might have had while in high school. I'm particularly interested in what role you played in developing your IEP and your transition services and if you felt you were prepared for college.

I would like to assure you that your name, the name of your school, or school district will not be disclosed in the study. I'm recording this interview today to make sure I'm getting all the information correctly. I will be glad to share a copy of the transcript with you to ensure my information is correct.

First of all, how did you disclose your disability prior to starting your first day college?

S3: I told the professors.

R- So did you come up to the disability office at all or did you just..

S3: They didn't have one.

R- You didn't have one.

S3: Private school.

R- In college when you left high school and you came to college.

S3: Oh.

R- How did you disclose your disability?

S3: I contacted this office. I think that was second semester, we didn't know about the disability office the first semester.

R- Please describe your disability and how it affects your learning.

S3: It's called a visual-spatial processing disability. It really just means with me learning math I take longer to learn basic concepts than most other people do.

R- What helps you in the classroom to overcome this barrier of learning?

S3: One-on-one instruction always helped. Extended time was always very important, and also a teacher who was willing to take the time to explain things and then didn't get frustrated that I wasn't learning at the same speed the rest of the class was.

R- How did you receive and know you could receive accommodations before you came to college? Did you know you could receive accommodations?

S3: Yeah, I did because my parents told me.

R- Did anybody from high school tell you?

S3: I don't believe so, but my understanding was, - didn't know what an IEP was until the last semester in my education class.

R- Can you explain what the term transition services means to you?

S3: Transitioning from one's level of education to another and eventually from education to a career.

R- Were you ever invited to take part in your IEP meetings and if so what role did you play?

S3: No, they were for the school through an evaluation service.

R- So you never lead one of your IEP meetings or...

S3: No, I didn't even know it was called an IEP until last semester. It was pretty much a study done by evaluation service which was a private affiliation. They did the study and they came up with what I needed. They gave paperwork to my parents. My parents gave it to the school. I had no involvement.

R- They never had a meeting, did they ever have a meeting at all?

S3: If they did I was in my third grade. I can't remember. I do know they did testing on me though.

R- Okay. What about in high school did you receive accommodations in high school?

S3: I did, that was going off of more testing I did in sixth grade and extended through high school.

R- Did you expect the same accommodations in college?

S3: Yes.

R- Have you received any different types of accommodations in college than you did in high school?

S3: I have housing accommodations now, not just learning accommodations.

R- What knowledge do you have of the laws that are covered under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA?

S3: I did a lot of research on IEP's last semester because I was doing a renovation on it, so I know a lot more now than I used to know, still little hazy in that area but...

R- Did you know when these laws apply?

S3: When as in like elementary through college?

R- Yeah is it elementary- what do you understand the laws under IDEA and the difference in laws under ADA? What applies where?

S3: Yeah, I didn't know there was a difference.

R- How did you know to come to the office of disability services when you got to college?

S3: I think it was my academic advisor or my admissions advisor who told me.

R- What services did your transition plan include in high school?

S3: No Scantron, extended time, and I think that was it.

R- Okay, but your transition services when you transition from high school to college, did you have any services that would cover how to prepare for college?

S3: I had what everyone else had which we to the college preparatory class was required.

R- When you graduated high school, did you feel you were prepared to go to college?

S3: More prepared than more people here once I got here because everything is really easy the first year or so.

R- What were some of the skills you think you could've used more practice on?

S3: More social related skills and academic skills.

R- What were the skills you feel were your strengths?

S3: Definitely study skills and academic.

R- Do you know and can you explain what you think self-determination skills include?

S3: Being self-motivated you don't just care about the grade or if anyone is going to actually care about what you're learning.

R- Were self-determination skills included in your IEP or taught in any of your classes in high school?

S3: No.

R- Do you think you are able to demonstrate any of the self-determination skills?

S3: Yes.

R-Which ones do you think you can demonstrate the most effectively?

S3: I'm incredibly self-motivated.

R- If you could go back to your teachers in high school - now looking backwards -what would you be able to tell them that would've assisted you more when you came to college?

S3: It depends on which professor in which level. With my higher-level classes, everything is fine, it's my lower level classes were a little bit...

R- How could they have assisted you better, to be better prepared for college? What would you tell them now?

S3: Special classes, lower-level, have a better learning environment. Because classroom management was not very strong. The lower-level classes which this should probably be the strongest.

R- Do you have anything you'd like to add about the skills and knowledge you needed to enter college?

S3: I think I pretty much figured everything out, cause I spent a lot of time away from home at extracurricular programs over the summers in high school. My parents sent me to these on purpose so that I would develop these skills before going college.

R- And that helped you?

S3: Yes.

R- Thank you very much for your time and participation in this research study. I'll be glad to send you a copy of the transcript for your review to ensure I have recorded our conversation accurately. If you think of something you would like to add, please feel free to contact me at the email address and I sent to you.

Student 4

Interview Student 4:

R- Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. As I explained, I'm researching the types of transition services you might have had while in high school. I'm particularly interested in what role you played in developing your IEP and your transition services and if you felt you were prepared for college.

I would like to ensure you that your name, the name of your school, or school district will not be disclosed in this study. I am recording this interview today to make sure I am getting all the information correctly. I will be glad to share a copy of the transcript with you to ensure my information is correct.

How did you disclose your disability prior to starting your first class in college?

S4: I wasn't really asked about my disability during my first year here.

R- How did you come to disclose it though here?

S4: I think because I've had it for so long, I've learned to deal with it.

R- Okay but you had to come up to the disability office at some point. How did you come about doing that?

S4: Well by a very stone calls and various emails.

R- Can you describe your disability and how it affects your learning?

S4: It just slows down my processing. Also creates some anxiety.

R- What helps you in the classroom to overcome this barrier in learning?

S4: Learning the teacher's style, having been given presentation, the PowerPoints beforehand, which most of the teachers here do give students present the PowerPoint before so you can have them to write out so that makes transcribing a little less hectic, which allows me to be able to focus more on what the teacher saying and get what their main focuses are so I can underline those and be like this is major for the tests.

R- How did you know you could receive accommodations before you came to college?

S4: I've had accommodations before in high school and elementary school so I've had it actually my whole life.

R- So how did you know you could receive them in college?

S4: I just strive for it. I didn't have - I wanted to - I was just asking about it because I knew extra time, especially, was one thing I would like to keep an ongoing thing.

R- Can you explain what the term transition services means to you?

S4: Helping you prepare for something on broader, or something after your done schooling. Something for more like your professional life.

R- Were you ever invited to take part in your IEP meetings, and if so what role did you play?

S4: I played a very big role. I was the one who said I need this one - this accommodation added, or any I don't need this accommodation any more in high school. And also coming here, I have actually subtracted a lot.

R- Did you ever lead one of your IEP meetings in high school?

S4: No.

R- What were some of the ideas that you had expressed during these meetings?

S4: Just things I had noticed that I could do without. And also things that I started to learn like just learning how I work and learning like the areas that I'm around.

R- Did you feel the adults in the meeting, your parents or teachers, took into consideration the suggestions you made for your future?

S4: Absolutely.

R- What type of accommodations did you receive in high school?

S4: Extra time, preferential seating, so that means more front and center seating, PowerPoints and I can't really remember all of them. Those were the three or four big ones I actually used while in high school.

R- Did you expect the same accommodations in college and did you receive anything different?

S4: I definitely expected the same ones that I had, but I also was going to be okay for a few that maybe had to get subtracted from, but I didn't get to have any subtracted.

R- What knowledge do you have of the laws of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act? Do you know what that is?

S4: Yes, I know what that is and that people can't give out their information.

R- Okay, Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act, or IDEA, do you know when those are applied and then I'm going to ask you the next question would be do you have any knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities act the ADA?

S4: I know that one.

R- Okay, so do you know IDEA and so you know ADA.

S4: I know ADA.

R- What do you know about these laws?

S4: I mean I don't know them like the back of my hand.

R- No, but basically what do they say? What do they do for you?

S4: They protect me.

R- How?

S4: By making sure that I get what I need, and making sure I strive.

R- Can you well you don't know the difference between IDEA and you don't know IDEA, so to answer what the differences, you are not able to answer that question. What services did your transition plan include in high school? Just the transition part of the IEP.

S4: I honestly really didn't have too much of a transitioning from high school to here.

R- Did you feel like you were prepared to come to college when you came? Did you feel that high school prepared you for college?

S4: No, honestly I did not feel my high school prepared me. I feel like now being where I am I my schooling, I feel it might have helped me a little bit, but not as much as...

R- What skills do you feel you still needed when you entered college?

S4: I feel like I needed more attention to like certain subjects because they had me always in the general like CP one courses - like the very easiest. They didn't push me to do my absolute best, which I feel I could've done more with like a higher class.

R- Okay, so you wanted to be challenged.

S4: I did want to be challenged much more, and I felt like I wasn't being, I mean I was being challenged in the classes, but I wasn't - there were certain classes that I knew all were taking I was wondering why I was in those classes.

R- Can you explain what you think self-determination skills include?

S4: Well, to be self-determined is to know your goal. I guess and to know your goal, and just go after it and not think and not care about what others say about that goal, no matter if they are for it or against it.

R- Were self-determination skills included in your IEP or taught in any of your high school classes?

S4: No, I learned those all on my own.

R- So you didn't learn them in the general education classes or in a special resource class, or anyplace else?

S4: No.

R- Do you think you were able to demonstrate any of the self-determination skills?

S4: Could you repeat?

R- Do you think you are able to demonstrate any of the self-determination skills?

S4: Absolutely.

R- If you could go back to your teachers in high school, what would you be able to tell them that would have assisted you more when you came to college to be prepared for college?

S4: To push me more, to make myself like push my boundaries. Don't just stay within them, what you think I'm going to be comfortable with, push me out of the box was pushed outside of my box at all. I was always in this little box, No one pushed me out of this box.

R- Do you have anything you'd like to add about the skills and knowledge you needed to enter college?

S4: No.

R- Thank you very much for your time and participation in this research study. I will be glad to send you a copy of the transcript for your review to ensure I have recorded our conversation accurately. If you think of something you would like to add, please feel free to contact me at the email address I sent to you.

Interview Student 5:

R- Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. As I explained I am researching the types of transition services you might have had while in high school. I am particularly interested in what role you played in developing your IEP and your transition services and if you felt you were prepared for college.

I would like to assure you that your name, the name of your school, or school district will not be disclosed in the study. I am recording this interview today to make sure I'm getting all the information correctly. I will be glad to share a copy of the transcript with you to ensure my information is correct.

How did you disclose your disability prior to starting your first class in college?

S5: I have an IEP.

R- Okay, but when you came to college what did you do?

S5: They looked at my IEP, what I currently used in high school for my disability with the accommodations in the, and accommodated me by those what I told them I needed.

R- Please describe your disability and how it affects your learning.

S5: Walking slower so getting to class, my writing predominantly my right hand is my natural writing hand, and it no longer works. So I use my left hand which will be a little slower.

R- Okay, so is there any other way you overcome this barrier in learning? So when you're in class, is there something on let's say you you're talking about your hand and the writing part, is there something is there another way you overcome that when you're in class?

S5: It helps when teachers give me notes, and a little extra time to write them down. Sometimes that's not always in the time for the class for a little extra time for the kids to write.

R- How did you know you could receive accommodations before you came to college - who told you that you could receive accommodations - did anybody tell you or how did you know?

S5: Yes, the ones in high school that set up my IEP, they told me kind of that I would early, before you even get to college, because you have to set up with whichever college that you would have to let them know and see if they knew anything about my accommodations.

R- Can you explain what the term transition services means to you?

S5: To me it's the series that they can help transfer you to help get your disabilities that help with disabilities, what they are going to use and to help you with it.

R- Did you ever or were you ever invited to take part in an IEP meeting?

S5: Yes.

R- Did you ever lead an IEP meeting?

S5: I was the main person answering questions they asked.

R- Did you feel the adults in the meeting, your parents or teachers, took into consideration the suggestions you made for your future?

S5: Yes.

R- What type of accommodations did you receive in high school?

S5: I had extra time to get to class. I was supposed to receive notes, they didn't do so well with that on the teachers' part, extra time for test taking, notes.

R- Have you received different accommodations here in college?

S5: Better ones.

R- Better ones - so you expected that or not?

S5: I wasn't sure what to expect, but I kind of held it to a little higher standard.

R- Do you know what the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act is?

S5: Not off the top of my head.

R- Can you figure out what it does and when it applies?

S5: Yes, can you say it one more time?

R- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, sometimes it's just called IDEA.

S5: Okay, it helps those with disabilities and it supports them, what they might need and gives them a voice.

R- Do you know what the Americans with Disabilities Act is?

S5: Just what it implies.

R- Do you have any idea what the difference is or when these two laws, IDEA and ADA, when they apply?

S5: No, I do not.

R- What services did your transition plan include in high school?

S5: Transition plan? We only met before I got into high school for my IEP?

R- No, a transition plan is part of your IEP. Do you know what services that transition plan included?

S5: Besides the accommodations, I'm not sure.

R- The transition plan was supposed to help prepare you for college. Did you feel like this plan prepared you for college?

S5: No.

R-What skills do you feel you still needed when you entered college?

S5: I feel in general more, not necessarily more work, but they needed to prepare us with the amount of work or different skills in certain things. I feel me and other people may have been better off if we had more skills than I think.

R- What type of skills?

S5: Writing – I remember my class.

R- So academic skills.

S5: Yes.

R- Can you explain what self-determination skills include?

S5: Well, believing in yourself, knowing that you can do the work, confidence.

R- Were self-determination skills included in your IEP and if they were, how were they taught?

S5: They were taught in goals, like each time we had to re need –meet for my IEP, we would have goals. We revisit them and make new ones.

R- Do you think you are able to demonstrate any of the self-determination skills?

S5: Yes.

R- Which ones are you able to demonstrate? Which ones do you feel confident about?

S5: Strive to get things done.

R- If you could go back to your teachers in high school, what would you be able to tell them that would've assisted you more when you came to college?

S5: More help with the notes.

R- Any other skills, possibly not just academic but life skills or anything like that would you include any of those?

S5: Yes, which ones I'm not sure.

R- Do you have anything else you'd like to add about the skills and knowledge you needed to enter college?

S5: No.

R- Thank you very much for your time and participation in this research study. I will be glad to send you a copy of the transcript for your review to ensure I have recorded our conversation accurately. If you think of something you'd like to add, please feel free to contact me the email address I sent you. Thank you very much.

Student Six

Interview Student 6:

R- Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. As I explained, I am researching the types of transition services you might have had while in high school. I'm particularly interested in what role you played in developing your IEP and your transition services and if you felt you were prepared for college.

I would like to assure you that your name, the name of your school, or school district will not be disclosed in the study. I'm recording this interview today to make sure I'm getting all the information correctly. I will be glad to share a copy of the transcript with you to ensure my information is correct.

When you first came to college, how did you disclose your disability?

S6: When I first came in, I thought that I would know a lot of stuff. And I didn't, like, go to tutors and stuff. I just thought I knew everything and that classes would be easy and I would just breeze through, until I learned after the first semester that I needed help, and I started going to tutors in the second semester. My grades started to boost up since I've been going to tutors.

R- Can you describe your disability and how it affects your learning?

S6: Well, when I start to read, I do have dyslexia and then when I read everything gets backwards so when I'm trying to read out in public and stuff in front of people I make some mistakes. And when I take like a test, and I'm trying to read it and I'll read the question but get confused my head so then I put the wrong answer one it's actually I know the right answer.

R- What helps you in the classroom to overcome this learning barrier?

S6: What helps asking my teacher to help me; like if I need help I'll go ask her and I tell her to read it over for me so I can understand it more better or different... or, yeah, that's pretty much all, I just ask my teacher.

R- How did you know you could receive accommodations before you came to college?

S6: When I was in high school, I had this – the head of school came to me and he talked to me about everything, and how I would get everything I'd need for help and how my high school would help me go through it because they're certified in like helping disabilities and stuff, so I had a lot of one-on-one with all my teachers so I knew I would be good.

R- Can you explain what the term transition services means to you?

S6: Transition services –I think that it means like people that are trying to help you think..

R- What is the word transition mean to you?

S6: Transition oh transitions like from one place to another place Oh, oh it's different than when I was in high school than it is now in college.

R- Okay, were you ever invited to take part in your IEP meetings?

S6: Not that I know.

R- So did you ever sit with your parents or your teachers during your IEP meeting- did you ever get to lead one or have a say in it?

S6: No - no wait, I had it in elementary school and in the middle school, but in high school I didn't have any.

R- Did you feel like the adults in the meeting, your parents and your teachers, took into consideration suggestions that you made for your own future? Or did they decide everything for you or did you help decide things?

S6: Well at the beginning, my parents decided what they would want and then as I started getting older then I started like knowing what I wanted and I talked to my parents about what I wanted and how we all met together to form what I wanted.

R- What type of accommodations did you receive in high school?

S6: Like in work?

R- The accommodations like you have accommodations here. Some of your accommodations include extra time on tests. So what accommodations did you receive in high school?

S6: I received extra time, I could go take a test in a private area where it would just be me and no one else, so I wouldn't like rush if someone would get up and stuff.

R- Did you expect the same accommodations when you got to college?

S6: Yeah I did and then in my first semester, I didn't think I could, but then as I got to the second semester I met with the LRC and they told me that I could do it so that helped me a lot.

R- Have you received any different accommodations in college than you did in high school?

S6: No it's like the same.

R- What about in your reading?

S6: In my reading, high school I would meet one-on-one with the teacher to help with my reading, but in college they have this stuff like you can have it go on a computer and it reads it to you which helps me and then I can ask the teacher if I needed help.

R- Do you know what the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is?

S6: No, I have no idea.

R- Do you know or do you have any knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act?

S6: No.

R- Okay, if you don't know then you can't explain the differences. What services did your transition plan include in high school? So you had a plan that would help you transition from high school to college, do you know what services were included in there?

S6: Not that I really remember.

R- Did you feel like you were prepared for college when you left high school?

S6: Uh, uh. I was a little prepared when I was in high school because I would study a lot like I would focus on my work and I didn't want to get into that other stuff that people do and I just wanted to get my degrees. I was trying to concentrate in high school more than anything else.

R- What skills-and they can be either academic or life skills- do you feel you still needed when you entered college?

S6: I needed academic skills more.

R- When you graduated high school, did you feel you were prepared to go to college? Were there some of the skills you think you could've used more practice on?

S6: I think that I was ready to come to college, but I could use a little bit on my academic skills like my writing skills cause my handwriting and my grammar is not proper enough.

R-What skills do you feel were your strengths?

S6: My strengths is reading is starting to be my strengths now. I'm like more learning some words and trying to help my disability a little bit and yeah, just my reading is been going up a little bit.

R- Can you explain what you think self-determination skills include?

S6: Self-determination-like things that you should improve in yourself and your body. And not to give up and like keep determining yourself, to keep up your hard work and not to give up.

R- What were self-determination skills or were self-determination skills included in your IEP or taught in your high school, and how were the skills taught?

S6: We really didn't have those.

R- Do you think you're able to demonstrate any self-determination skills?

S6: I'm pretty sure I could.

R- If you could go back to your teachers in high school, what would you be able to tell them that would've helped you more when you came to college?

S6: That my handwriting was really bad, and that I could use some help in my handwriting. If we could break my shyness, because when I get into class I get like shy and stuff.

R- Do you have anything else you would like to add about the skills and knowledge you needed to enter college?

S6: The skills I needed were to stop being shy and stuff so I could make friends. Since I was in leaving my old friends behind, I could have used that skill. The skill of pretty much just writing.

R- What about life skills? Are you pretty good about taking care of yourself and things like that?

S6: Yeah. I had life skills cause like pretty much like I just wanted I knew that my life would be good when I got to college, because I knew that I would I did something good in high school and I wanted to keep going on. So that's why I went to college to get more knowledge and get a better job and stuff when I'm done.

R- Thank you very much for your time and participation in this research study. I will be glad to send you a copy of the transcript for your review to ensure I've recorded our

conversation accurately. If you think of something else you would like to add, please feel free to contact me at the email address I sent to you.

Student Seven

Interview Student 7:

R- Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. As I explained, I am researching the types of transition services you might have had while in high school. I'm particularly interested in what role you played in developing your IEP and your transition services and if you felt you were prepared for college.

I'd like to assure you that your name, the name of your school, or school district will not be disclosed in the study. I'm recording this interview today to make sure I'm getting all the information correctly. I will be glad to share a copy of the transcript with you to ensure my information is correct.

When you came to college, how did you disclose your disability prior to starting your first class?

S7: Go further in what you mean with disclose.

R- You came to college, did you just go to classes and tell your professors, how did you disclose your disability?

S7: Being one of four kids with some type of disability, my mom, kind of told me know all colleges offer some type of disability services and that's when I picked up the phone that summer before freshman year and called this office because I wasn't really sure how to go about it, and kind of made it work- to ask questions to figure out how to get the accommodations.

R- Please describe your disability and how does this disability affect your learning?

S7: My disability is in learning comprehension and with language arts so basically, I can understand it if I did it hands-on or see pictures but when it comes to reading it goes through one ear and out the other and I don't understand what I'm reading. So comprehending with anything is the struggle.

R- What helps you in the classroom to overcome this?

S7: Asking questions to make sure I'm getting-or I'm asking the question how I can understand it back.

R- How did you know you could receive accommodations before you came to college- who told you or did you research it on your own?

S7: It would probably be my disability teacher in high school. I remember her mentioning it and saying yes like higher education does have support. But she get really didn't get into detail of how to go about it, to you know, get it concrete.

R- Can you explain what the term transition services means to you?

S7: I can make a guess out of it – I mean obviously say it's transitioning so you're going through one phase to another phase. For now never really heard of it.

R- Were you ever invited to take part in your IEP meeting and if so what role did you play?

S7: No I was not.

R- So you never lead one of your IEP meetings?

S7: uh uh (no)

R- Did you ever feel like the adults in the meeting, your parents and teachers etc., took into consideration any suggestions you might have had for your future?

S7: No, it was more of they thought they knew it was best for me and like how and what type of setting I needed to be at or what was the best learning style for me, so really...

R- What type of accommodations did you receive in high school?

S7: I received like a special class that you had to have an IEP for so it gave me a class period where I can learn certain learning strategies and then I was more like a reflect class where I can take sit down like do homework, kind of get organized for myself. And then I also received extra time on my tests from the mainstream classrooms.

R- Did you expect the same accommodations in college?

S7: I mean, yeah, because why not?

R- Did you ever receive any different accommodations between high school and college, were any of the accommodations different?

S7: Yes, I ended up because at college it's a totally different learning style so I was able to incorporate a recorder like the lecture because their little bit more hands I think in high school and in college now. So that definitely changed and the audiobooks in college because there's a lot more reading is more intense reading.

R- Have you, or do you know or have any knowledge of the laws of the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act?

S7: Well, since I'm an HR minor, I did not know until this semester and last semester, until I was in my HR class. Then I kind of learned through that but not before, no.

R- Do you know when these laws apply?

S7: Not really.

R- Do you know anything about the Americans with Disabilities Act?

S7: Again, going back to my HR class and learning some, but not really before.

R- Can you explain any differences between these laws?

S7: Nope.

R- What services did your transition plan in high school include - did you have a transition plan in high school?

S7: No, it was more just I need the documentation from my IEP that was on file sent.

R- Do you feel like high school did anything to prepare you for college?

S7: Yes, in some sense they did prepare me I was lucky enough to be more of a private high school, so they were more focused on students and my being successful. But it was more of the willingness of myself and not the faculty - most of it was how bad I wanted it and wanted to be successful.

R- What skills do you feel you still needed when you entered college?

S7: I have a lot of online courses of how we go from a lot of books and completely go to online because those are the classes I'm struggling with and still struggling with. So a lot of the e-learning because we had no e-learning in high school. And somebody with my disability, I was not prepared whatsoever and it definitely shows to my work.

R- When you graduated high school, what were some of the skills you think you could've used more practice?

S7: Probably understanding the material in some sense of the skills of reading and knowing what I'm reading.

R- Just in particular was it just the academic skills, or were there other skills that you needed?

S7: Along with my learning disability, I feel like I'm so OCD on like organization skills I didn't really need the structure of knowing how to schedule make a calendar or a list or anything like that. Of the skills, it was more honestly just academically with me. I was always on top of my things trying to get things completed and what not, asking questions but it was just honestly a lot of the education side of things the skills.

R- What were the skills you feel were your strengths when you first came to college?

S7: My people skills, because a lot of people don't realize I do have a learning disability because we, it's kind of like the fight or flight type of deal, where you, I communicate with everybody and I talk to everybody so people don't they expect some Down syndrome or somebody that looks the physical part but they don't realize it could be anybody that actually does have a learning disability.

R- Can you explain what you think self-determination skills include?

S7: Self-determination skills? Include? It just depends on how bad you want it. I mean it depends on how bad you're determined. There's a line of laziness and then not being lazy but you don't how to go about something but how it's how you react in a situation. So I don't really know.

R- Were self-determination skills ever taught?

S7: No, it was more of just like a survival of the fittest, in my household of being the baby of four.

R- Do you think you were able to demonstrate any self-determination skills?

S7: Demonstrate, yeah.

R- Which ones?

S7: Goal setting, I don't know exactly all the skills. Achieving certain things you know like making- it's something like the smart plan –specific, measurable, and in essence so I was able to show them and wasn't taught, but definitely.

R- If you go back to your teachers in high school, what would you be able to tell them that would've assisted you more when you came to college?

S7: Definitely more e-learning., or online learning because everything was just old school book, paper, pen, everything was nothing was done on the computers, so right then and there is like a drop off from college of that's high school definitely different from that. Also I understand like there's teachers for me for high school especially my English classes- they're like they would assign so many reading assignments and their like oh

then they were this is how college is going to be but it's really not because I they college yes it's more intense in the subjects but in the sense of staying on one topic and they're not changing books every so often. Like I don't like really explain that. In my other English class I read like 12 books, I don't really read because reading is difficult for me, but I was assigned like 12 different books, like chapter books, that I would have to like finish in a semester, but in college it's more like two or three and you actually take time and understand what the material it's not just read the book, take a test, and you're done with that. So I think actually doing assignments is different than what assignments are in college.

R- Do you have anything you'd like to add about the skills and knowledge you needed to enter college?

S7: knowledge-wise, I felt prepared because my freshman year especially coming into college when people do you know that with APA or MLA style is I was kind of shocked, so they definitely prepared me on that, definitely prepared me on expected on that and knowing that the basic foundation of what to expect in college. Probably another big skill I wish they did work on is time management, and how to be realistic and knowing that it is college you are going to have fun or you know, you're going to have things to do on the weekends, but yet still practice on time management of when to start how early to start an assignment if it's due two months from now or when assignments are more needed started you know for early or you can put it off to the little bit later to the due date type of deal. Cause I feel like that I had to get everything done so early and then I'd panic about it and then if I put it off then I'm too late and then I end up screwing over myself, cause it's due like the next day sort of thing – if that makes sense.

R- Thank you very much for your time and participation in this research study. I'll be glad to send you a copy of the transcript for your review to ensure I have recorded our conversation accurately. If you think of something you'd like to add, please feel free to contact me at the email address I sent you.

Student Eight

Interview Student 8:

R- Good morning. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. As I explained, I am researching the types of transition services you might have had while in high school. I'm particularly interested in what role you played in developing your IEP and your transition services and if you felt you were prepared for college.

I would like to assure you that your name, the name of your school, or school district will not be disclosed in this study. I am recording this interview today to make sure I am getting all the information correctly. I'll be glad to share a copy of the transcript with you to ensure my information is correct.

How did you disclose your disability prior to starting your first class in college, or did you disclose your disability prior to your first class in college?

S8: I did not.

R- When did you finally do that?

S8: Sophomore? Yeah end of sophomore year.

R- Can you describe your disability and how it affects your learning?

S8: I have dyslexia so I'm very slow at reading, and I have a hard time pronouncing certain words.

R- What helps you in the classroom to overcome this barrier?

S8: I listen, I take notes, and then I reread the chapters.

R- How did you know you could receive accommodations before you came to college?

S8: I didn't. I know I did not know that I had accommodations in college. I knew about it in high school just not for college.

R- How you find out?

S8: I heard about this office and came to see about it.

R- Can you explain what the term transition services means to you?

S8: I'm assuming it has something to do with the transition from high school to college.

R- Got any ideas what it means – transition services?

S8: Probably helps with your accommodations and everything switching from your high school to your college.

R- Were you ever invited to take part in your IEP meetings and if so what role did you play?

S8: I do not think I had any part of it.

R- Okay, so you never lead one of your IEP meetings?

S8: Uh uh (no)

R- Did you feel the adults that were in the meeting, your parents and the teachers, took into consideration the suggestions you made for your future, or did you make any suggestions for your future?

S8: I don't think I made any – not that I can remember.

R- So pretty much, who decided your future?

S8: My mom.

R- What type of accommodations did you receive in high school?

S8: Extended time and they were lenient with my spelling as long as I was semi close.

R- Did you expect the same accommodations in college?

S8: At first no. Not until I came to the disability office and talked to this office and found out about my accommodations do come up here from my high school.

R- Have you received any different accommodations?

S8: No, I think I still have the time and spelling.

R- What knowledge do you have of the laws that fall under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act- do you have any knowledge of these laws and when they apply?

S8: No.

R-Do you have any knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act?

S8: Nope.

R- So you can't explain the differences between these laws and how they affect you?

S8: No Maam.

R- What services did your transition plan include in high school?

S8: I don't know, transition plan what?

R- Your IEP would have had a section that is supposed to set out what transition services you're supposed to have that would help you transition to college. Do you know what services?

S8: Hm uh (no)

R- So did you feel like you were prepared for college?

S8: Well, at first I was just trying to wing it. I didn't know about the accommodation so I was just pretty much throwing myself into my courses so, I guess no, not really.

R- So what skills do you feel you still needed when you entered college?

S8: I had to work pretty hard at reading the textbook and understanding some of the words. Like I had a hard time with that?

R- When you graduated high school, did you feel you were prepared to go to college?

S8: Yeah.

R- What were some of the skills you think you could've used more practice on?

S8: Reading comprehension, cause I'm horrible at that. Like understanding what I'm reading, I usually have to read it at least 4 times before I get it.

R- Just academic skills?

S8: Umm, I'm a pretty social butterfly.

R- What were the skills you feel were your strengths?

S8: I'm outgoing I can handle myself pretty well. So I was okay with that.

R- Can you explain what you think self-determination skills are and what they include?

S8: How well you can push yourself and the determination you have to get the degree you want.

R- Were self-determination skills included in your IEP or taught in any of your high school classes?

S8: No, my high school was not about that.

R- Do you think you are able to demonstrate any of the self-determination skills?

S8: Yeah.

R- If you could go back to your teachers in high school, what would you be able to tell them now that would've assisted you more when you came to college?

S8: I think I would tell them that it would've been more helpful if they taught me different ways. Because here I have teachers who not only put up like a presentation but they'll give examples, my school wasn't very good at that. So they didn't like help all the learning types, so they were strictly here are your notes, I'm going to lecture. Here we have Power points that go with the lectures, and we have other resources available. Like the notes that go with the books, teachers give me those. They'll explain stuff if you ask in class, my school wasn't very explaining.

R- So you needed more diversification in the classroom?

S8: Yeah.

R- Do you have anything you'd like to add about the skills and knowledge you needed to enter college?

S8: Writing and reading comprehension should be a bigger focus. I feel like once you get out of middle school they just kind of falloff. Like they don't enforce them anymore.

R- Thank you very much for your time and participation in this research study. I will be glad to send you a copy of the transcript for your review to ensure I've recorded our conversation accurately. If you think of something you'd like to add please feel free to contact me at the email address I sent you. Thank you very much.

Student Nine

Interview Student 9:

R- Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. As I explained, I am researching the types of transition services you might have had while in high school. I am particularly interested in what role you played in developing your IEP and your transition services and if you felt you were prepared for college.

I would like to assure you that your name, the name of your school, or school district will not be disclosed in the study. I am recording this interview today to make sure I'm getting all the information correctly and I'll be glad to share a copy of the transcript with you to ensure my information is correct.

When you first came to college how did you disclose your disability prior to starting your first class?

S9: I came to the disability office, here at college and all the director was able to take all my information that I had copies of from high school and she was able to process it and all my current or past accommodations were able to transfer over, without no problems.

R- Please describe your disability and how it affects your learning.

S9: Well, I have a learning disability, and so at times when I take tests I get nervous or I get distracted around the classroom. So I need a quiet place to take a test and just have extra time so I can really focus on the questions.

R- What helps you in the classroom to overcome this barrier in learning?

S9: Usually the professors are really compliant to a disability by providing notes or Power points of the speeches of the things they are going to be presenting, so at least I can follow along, go through at my own pace or ahead of time so that way I can gather the information.

R- How did you know you could receive accommodations before you came to college?

S9: My senior year I had talked to the person in charge of my IEP at my high school and they were informing me that I can talk to the director disability services of the University and just provide them with the copies of my IEP. They should be able to recognize and process everything without any problems.

R- Can you explain what the term transition services means to you?

S9: I believe that means like your ability to transfer from one place to another with having gained knowledge of how to do it and how to successfully complete that process.

R- Were you ever invited to take part in your IEP meetings?

S9: Yes, each time before we had met the information packets sent to my home for parents to review and in that packet, it allowed me the choice of going to the meetings with my parents' consent. And so my mom would always let me go with her, so that way I could know what they were doing. And then we just went to the meetings.

R- Did you ever lead one of your IEP meetings?

S9: I have never done that but there was always the leader of my IEP who was either a teacher at that time in one of my classrooms that would just go over my IEP.

R- What were some of the ideas you expressed? Did you ever express any ideas and did you feel like the adults in the meeting, your parents and teachers, took into consideration any suggestions that you made for your future?

S9: They did ask me if everything was going all right, if my conditions were fine, did I need more accommodations and each time I told them I thought I did pretty well and if I did have a problem, I would let them know. They were very compliant. Yeah, but anytime they asked me if I needed a new issue to be resolved or anything, or if I had any problems, I just needed to let them know.

R- Did they ask you about your future plans?

S9: They did, they asked me if I was going to go to college, and I said yes. And they said do you know you can bring your accommodations to the University, and I said yes. And they explained a little bit more about it. And they that this follows work with you when you go to the university.

R- What types of accommodations did you receive in high school?

S9: I did receive a quiet room to take tests in, extra time for all my exams, including state wide exams so the FCAT.

R- Did you expect the same accommodations in college?

S9: Yes.

R- Did you receive anything different in college?

S9: They're about the same. I just have to maybe telling the professors if they can provide me with notes or PowerPoints within the classroom.

R- Do you have any knowledge of the laws of the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act?

S9: Do I have any knowledge? No, I do not.

R- Do you know what that is?

S9: Not that much.

R-Do you know anything about those laws?

S9: All I really know is that it protects anyone with a disability.

R- Okay, do you know what the Americans with Disabilities Act?

S9: No.

R- Can you explain what services did your transition plan include in high school? This is the plan in your IEP-did you feel that this plan prepared you for college?

S9: Besides providing me with the same services that I had, I don't think they really prepared me as to what to expect so much in a classroom setting for college, because it is different than high school. Especially like telling me about the workloads or anything along that but as far as who I can contact about my disability they said you can always go to the director disabilities and they can always help you. Then I found out that there was one on my campus and so I was able to see her about any situations.

R- What skills do you feel you still needed when you entered college?

S9: How to prepare myself for tests, the study habits for testing.

R- When you graduated high school, what were some of the skills you think you could have used more practice on? It can be academic skills, it can be life skills, it can be any type of skills that you have found that you needed to be successful in college. So what skills do you think you could've used more practice when you graduated high school?

S9: Probably some writing skills because the way we did some writing in school was a little different than what we learned here when we took our academic writing classes. And then, probably time management, that would have been helpful, knowing how to manage your time well to incorporate studying and hanging out with your friends and all extracurricular activities. So teaching us basic skills of how to prepare ourselves for everyday life in college which was little different than high school.

R- What were the skills where you feel were your strengths?

S9: Probably like some study habits, how to take notes in class, I had prior time management skills, but that was only because of the programs I was involved with in high school. They were able to teach me those methods. I think that's about it.

R- Can you explain what you think self-determination skills include?

S9: Just being like respectful to yourself and knowing that you have to accomplish your goals, the duties you have to do, making sure you're on a timely plan to do get like things done.

R- Were self- discrimination skills included in your IEP or taught in any of your classes in high school?

S9: Could you repeat that question?

R- Were self-determination skills included in your IEP or taught in any of your classes in high school?

S9: No.

R- Do you think you are able to demonstrate any of the self-determination skills?

S9: I feel like I am determined to work harder here in college. So, I believe so.

R- If you could go back to your teachers in high school, what would you be able to tell them that would have assisted you more when you came to college?

S9: Probably how to prepare you better, what to expect academically to a University because the workload and stuff is very different; how to properly write papers, especially emails, how to officially make a proper email because that's a big part of communication between your professors and you have to be official about it. And then the time management skills definitely should be part of teaching and basic life skills. How to manage a checkbook because there's a lot of students who don't know how to do. How to budget your expenses, the money that you make when you do get a job or part-time job. So basically, life skills that can prepare you for the future.

R- Do you have anything you'd like to add about the skills and knowledge you needed to enter college?

S9: Could you repeat that again?

R- Do you have anything you would like to add about the skills and knowledge you needed to enter college - anything you haven't thought of or said before?

S9: Probably teachers in high school should just let students know that you will be under stressful times when you're in college, but you should always continuance and step forward, try to conquer those fears, any problems you have because there's always support, no matter where you go and you can always talk to somebody about any problems that you have. So that we can get over that wall and keep going. So determination, how to seek help when needed.

R- Well, thank you very much for your time and participation in this research study. I'll be glad to send you a copy of the transcript for your review to ensure I have recorded our conversation accurately. If you think of something you'd like to add please feel free to contact me at the email address I sent you. Thank you very much.