

Best Practices vs. Reality: Student-centeredness In Post-secondary Transition Planning

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Introduction

- Transitioning from high school to post-secondary education, employment, or other opportunity is especially difficult for individuals with an intellectual and/or developmental disability (IDD).
- Research has shown that transition-planning should be student-centered, meaning empowering the student to participate and share his/her emotions, opinions, and perspective.¹
- Federal legislation states that transition services must be “based on the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child’s strengths, preferences, and interests.”²
- There is little research that seeks to gain the student’s perspective on transition.

Method

- Research Design: Phenomenological study
- Participants: Three participants with mild/moderate IDD that had graduated from high school within the past two years
- Data Collection: Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant.
- Data Analysis: Thematic coding

Research Question: From the student’s perspective, how can transition planning be more student-centered?

Findings

Theme 1: Involvement in transition planning

- *Do you remember anyone asking you what you wanted to do after graduation?*
- “They didn’t ask me.”

Theme 2: Current Situation

- “I just sit in the house all day, play video games, and watch TV.”
- “Just hang out...”
- “I have two jobs.”

Theme 3: Happiness and satisfaction with daily routine

- All of the participants said they were fully satisfied with their current routine
- “I am the happiest person on the planet!”

Discussion

- Based on the small convenience sample of three, the results suggest that transition planning for students with IDD is not student-centered.
- Despite not experiencing student-centered transition planning, participants reported being very happy.
- Is happiness an indicator of a successful transition?
- Increased self-determination, higher rates of employment, and more participation in meaningful activities are other outcomes of a successful transition.³
- Therefore, if the participants’ transition plans had been more student-centered, perhaps the participants would report more than only happiness.
- It is also important to question: Is the transition plan sustainable?

Conclusions

- There is a need for personnel working with individuals with IDD throughout transition planning to broaden their views on what a successful transition may be.
- Occupational therapists can offer skilled services to contribute to students’ transition planning.

References

- 1 Lopez, E. C., & Michaels, C. A. (2006). Collaboration and consultation in transition planning: Introduction to the mini-theme. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 16(4), 255-261.
- 2 Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (2004).
- 3 Field, S., & Kohler, P. D. (2003). Transition-focused education: Foundation for the future. *Journal of Special Education*, 37(3), 174-183.