

1994

Special Educators, Employers, and Special Students: A Comparison of Perceptions of the Working World

Lena Arrington-McClenny
Longwood University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.longwood.edu/etd>

Part of the [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Arrington-McClenny, Lena, "Special Educators, Employers, and Special Students: A Comparison of Perceptions of the Working World" (1994). *Theses, Dissertations & Honors Papers*. 290.
<https://digitalcommons.longwood.edu/etd/290>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Longwood University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses, Dissertations & Honors Papers by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Longwood University. For more information, please contact hamiltonma@longwood.edu, alwinehd@longwood.edu.

**Special Educators, Employers, and Special Students: A
Comparison of Perceptions of the Working World
Lena Arrington-McClenny**

This thesis proposal was approved by:

Dr. Ruth Lyn Meese-Director _____

Dr. Patricia Whitfield _____

Dr. Stephen Keith _____

Dr. Rachel Mathews _____

Date Approved: _____

Running head: Perceptions of the Working World

Abstract

Education is designed to prepare all students for productive citizenship. Students with disabilities, however, are employed at lower rates, earning less money, and accruing fewer benefits than their nondisabled peers. In order to design a curriculum that targets employment as an outcome, special educators must determine the needs and expectations of employers. This study compared the perceptions of employers, special education teachers, to learning disabled students. Employers and special education teachers rated work related, communication, personal, and social skills similarly while students with learning disabilities formed incongruent perceptions of the working world.

Acknowledgments

It is with great thankfulness and love that I acknowledge the support of my husband, Kenneth McClenny, for his patience and support throughout my graduate career. Special thanks are given to Dr. Ruth Meese for directing me through the research process enabling me to focus my energies. I extend to Dr. Rachel Mathews great appreciation for guiding me in statistical analysis and giving me a new appreciation for scientific research.

Table of Contents

List of Appendices by Titles.....5

List of Tables by Titles.....6

Text of Thesis

Literature review.....7

Methods.....23

 Subjects.....23

 Instrument.....24

 Procedure.....26

Results.....28

Discussion.....32

References.....34

Appendices.....38

Tables.....47

List of Appendices by Titles

Appendix A: Letter to Special Education Director...	39
Appendix B: Cover Letter to Employer.....	42
Appendix C: Employer Demographic.....	44
Appendix D: Questionnaire.....	46

List of Tables by Titles

Table

1. Results of Kruskal-Wallis on Social, Personal, Communication, and Work Related Factors of Employers, Teachers, and Students.....	47
2. Results of the Mann-Whitney U-test of Employers, Teachers, and Students on Social Factors.....	48
3. Results of the Mann-Whitney U-test of Employers, Teachers, and Students on Communication Factors.....	49
4. Results of the Mann-Whitney U-test of Employers, Teachers, and Students on Work Related Factors.....	50
5. Mean Ranking of Personal, Social, and Work Related Categories.....	52

Special Educators, Employers, and Special Students: A
Comparison of Perceptions of the Working World

Hasazi, Gordon, & Roe (1985)

Parents, educators, and rehabilitation

professionals have become increasingly concerned about

the future of students with disabilities once they
leave school programs. (Hasazi, Gordon, & Roe, 1985).

Efforts were made to obtain information on the
employment status of former special education students
leaving school programs in the early 1980's. Statewide
studies in California, Vermont, Colorado, and Texas,
focused educators on the plight of special education
students outside of the school setting (Hasazi, Gordon,
& Roe, 1985). Edgar (1985) posed the question, "Did
the special education programs influence their
opportunity to have an improved quality of life" (p.
470)? The purpose of this study is to determine the
relationship between the perception of employers,
educators, and students with learning disabilities as
to what skills are required for job success.

Research Regarding Outcomes for Special Students

Hasazi, Gordon, and Roe (1985), intensively
studied factors associated with the employment status

of youth with disabilities exiting school from 1979 to 1983. Citing the 1983 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights report, the researchers sought to examine why unemployment rates among individuals with disabilities fell between 50 to 75 percent (Hasazi, Gordon & Roe, 1985). The researchers questioned if the demands of the post school environment have any relationship to the curriculum of the secondary schools. In addition researchers are not clear as to what student characteristics, family characteristics, and program variables influence employment (Edgar, 1985).

Follow-up studies involving learning disabled students are limited in number. A major portion of these studies are concerned with basic skills achievement and behavioral/emotional functioning rather than with employment. In view of the paucity of research concerning special education students and their employment status, Hasazi, Gordon, and Roe (1985) sought to determine the status of youths with disabilities who received special education services in resource room and special education classrooms in relation to demographic, educational, vocational, and social services utilized.

Although there is variation by gender, geographic location, and type of high school program, only an average of 60 percent of special education students found employment after leaving high school in the 1980's. The issue of gender played a significant role in decreasing employment rates with a greater number of women with disabilities remaining unemployed. Some have hypothesized that the severity of disability predicts the rate of employment (Edgar, 1985). For example, Maddox, Edgar, and Levine (1984) analyzed data from the Vermont Department of Employment and Training by handicapping condition. Graduates with mild mental retardation were far less likely to find post school employment than graduates with learning disabilities or behavior disorders. Employment rates were 38 and 64 percent respectively (Edgar, 1985). Clearly, outcomes for special education students do not look good.

Transitional Movements in Education

Halpern (1992) reviewed the movements in education that attempted to bridge the gap between the workplace and the schoolhouse. Cooperative work study approaches, popular during the 1960's, were conducted between the public schools and local offices of state rehabilitation agencies. The general goal of these

Movements

programs was to integrate the academic, social, and vocational curriculum, accompanied by appropriate work experience. The programs designed for persons with mild disabilities intended to provide support for eventual community adjustment. Due to coordination and funding difficulties these programs eventually died (Halpern, 1992).

The Career Education movement was much more general in its articulation and did not specifically mention the special needs population in its initiation. In 1974 when the office of Career Education was established within the U.S. Department of Education federal visibility came. Later, in 1977, with the Passage of Public Law 95-207, The Career Education Implementation Incentive Act, the specific inclusion of special needs students was seen (Halpern, 1992).

With attention focused on life beyond high school for special education students a call for transition services has been issued. In 1984, excellence in education was being emphasized for all students (Will, 1984). Will (1984) cited the task of implementing Public Law 94-142 as more difficult than formulating it and called for the reorganization of the system of services for disabled people in our nation. Will

(1984) stated that, "there is no alternative to cooperation between vocational rehabilitation and vocational education and special education for the handicapped" (p. 11).

Questions focused on the need to improve functional job skills for children and youth with disabilities as the age of "Transition" swept over the educational profession. Exploration in the area of vocational skill development for individuals with disabilities, proper sequencing of special education, vocational education, and vocational rehabilitation was initiated as a goal through the U.S. Department of Education. The ultimate goal of transition movement is the training of individuals with disabilities to be independent, vocationally competitive, and productive individuals (Will, 1984).

Transitioning Students with Mild Disabilities

Like their peers without disabilities, students with mild disabilities can experience a wide variety of appropriate postsecondary outcomes. The transition planning process must accommodate various possibilities including competitive employment. A framework must be established through which educators, parents, students

and postsecondary service providers can systematically gather information about the kinds of services needed by special education students upon high school completion. An effective transition plan should question what the student will be doing, where the student will live, and what type of support will be needed to accomplish goals set by the person with disabilities (Benz & Halpern, 1987).

Transition methodology has involved administrative transfer of responsibility mechanisms that schools use to facilitate the movement of students with disabilities into the working world. Interagency agreements, inventories of resource availability through local agencies, and the provision of incentives to secure agency involvement in the transition process were included in early transition plans. Follow-up studies of graduates to evaluate program effectiveness were included. Provisions must be made for students with disabilities to encounter a variety of outcomes including: education at community college or a university, competitive employment, vocational-technical training, and military service (Benz & Halpern, 1987).

Benz and Halpern (1987) found in their study of

secondary special education administrators that 46 percent have an informal agreement with vocational education to provide vocational instruction and 42 percent of community agencies have informally agreed to provide post school services. Administrators utilized agreements with vocational rehabilitation service providers at a rate of 36 percent. Placements of students are used by 19 percent of the districts and 15 percent have no coordination mechanisms (Benz & Halpern, 1987).

Although Public Law 94-142 has increased access to elementary and secondary education for youth with disabilities, individuals with disabilities lag behind those without disabilities in virtually every indicator of economic activity (Fairweather & Shaver, 1991). Some educators hypothesized that lower income or unemployment may have been due to participation in postsecondary employment; however, studies show that this is not the case. A discrepancy in socioeconomic status between youth with disabilities and nondisabled youth exists. Of high school graduates, youth with disabilities are more likely to come from families with low incomes. Youth with disabilities are greater than three times less likely to enroll in postsecondary

educational programs than their nondisabled peers. Community college attendance is three times less likely for students with disabilities. Four year university attendance is ten times less likely for students with disabilities. High school graduation seems to do little to reduce the discrepancy in rates of participation in post secondary programs between youth with disabilities and nondisabled youth (Fairweather & Shaver, 1991).

For youth with disabilities having part-time jobs during school, enrollment in vocational classes, and secondary school completion all correlate with increased employability (Siegel, Robert, Waxman, & Gaylord-Ross, 1992). There is a need to create a vocational needs support system to keep special needs students from failing vocational and academic courses and thereby assisting them to complete high school (Jones, 1987). Okolo and Sitlington (1986) found that adolescents with learning disabilities fared much better when vocational programming is included in the special education program (Shapiro & Lentz, 1991). These experiences, however, while improving employment rates of individual with disabilities, still tend to leave students with disabilities less than prepared for

their adult lives. Ethnographies have revealed that success depends on factors such as aptitude or readiness. Mental state, family situation, level and style of intervention, employers' behaviors, corporate takeovers, gang warfare, access to tutoring services, program guidelines, and under-the-table employment arrangements are factors that affected postsecondary outcomes but which were hard to report systematically (Siegel, Robert, Waxman, & Gaylord-Ross, 1992).

Programs have been developed with the belief that all citizens should have access to career development through which they can grow in their jobs, even those with disabilities. Finding job satisfaction, earning money, accruing benefits, and feeling job security should not be limited to those without developmental disabilities. The Career Ladder Program (Halpern, 1992) a career development program with this mission, included a semester-long supervised work experience in a real work setting during the senior year of high school. A concurrent weekly Employment Skills Workshop curriculum and continuously available postsecondary services were provided to students with mild disabilities. The Career Ladder Program participants achieved an overall employment rate of 80 percent

across the 48-month period examined. Part-time employment accounted for 45 percent of participants with 35 percent maintaining full-time employment. Participants with emotional disturbance had the highest rate of part-time employment and participants with learning disabilities reached the highest full-time employment rate. The mean hourly wages received by participants was \$5.80. Post secondary transition services were most intensive in the six-month period following graduation and the lowest level of services were utilized three years beyond graduation (Halpern, 1992).

Follow-up counseling, rehabilitation case work, assistance with job search, on the job training and assistance with postsecondary education were the services requested and utilized to the greatest extent. This study showed significant improvement from the results of the National Transition Study (Hasazi, Gordon, & Roe, 1985) and emphasized the role of work experience (Siegel, Robert, Waxman & Gaylord-Ross, 1992). Work experience has been identified as an educational process designed to provide students with career education experiences which will assist them in making realistic decisions enabling them to function as

independently as possible in the world of work (Sires, Bloom, Miller, Quinn, Rhiner, Smith, & Weaver, 1986). The need for work experience in the education of the special needs student stems from the fact that the traditional education program may not be sufficient to assist these students in making the transition from school to young adulthood. Student characteristics that cause difficulties in the school setting do not disappear when students leave the educational environment (Elrod, 1986).

Shapiro and Lentz (1991) followed students with learning disabilities and their nondisabled peers from their vocational-technical programs and regular high school programs to the workplace. Compared to students without learning disabilities, youth with disabilities were employed at lower rates, and more commonly part-time in the first six months post graduation. Fluctuation in rate of employment was seen in the first 12 months after graduation with a more stable rate of employment appearing at 24 months. At 24 months substantially fewer students with learning disabilities were employed compared to nonlearning disabled students from regular high school and vocational technical programs. Youth with learning disabilities used job

placement services through the vocational technical program to find employment more than the nonlearning disabled population just after graduation. At 24 months after graduation 70 percent of disabled graduates utilized friends and family to locate jobs.

"Specifically comparisons of disabled youth and nondisabled youth on the variables of future plans, employment status at follow-up, annual income, and the relationship between trained occupation at the vocational technical program and the participants job post graduation should suggest potential outcomes of such training on the transition period" (Shapiro & Lentz, 1992, p. 57).

A major difficulty for special students after leaving high school was found when a shift in the format of service provision offered by governmental agencies. During the high school years services are provided as an entitlement and are mandated. The law requires that special students receive free appropriate public education. After graduation, however, services become available as a measure of eligibility. "In other words adults with learning disabilities commonly receive service if they meet Vocational Rehabilitation eligibility requirements: they are not automatically

entitled to receive free appropriate services based on their individual needs as they leave special education programs" (Smith, 1992, p. 451).

The skills of special students to utilize local governmental agencies and their knowledge of such agencies plays an important role in their successful employment. Smith (1992) found while studying persons with disabilities who utilized vocational rehabilitation services 49 percent of those who did not apply had never considered applying. Over 34 percent did not know how to apply. Twenty-three percent did not know where vocational rehabilitation offices were located. Those who never applied for vocational rehabilitation tended to be older persons with disabilities employed full to part-time. Almost 35 percent of this group earned more than \$35,000 annually.

Do these people need services? Based on this information it appears they do not; however, 18 percent of this group were unemployed. One third of older persons with disabilities earned less than minimum wage. Over 30 percent still lived with parents or relatives. Those who had attempted to use rehabilitation services and were ineligible or

dissatisfied were unemployed at a rate of 40 percent and 57 percent earned less than minimum wage. Dissatisfied clients often cited the counselor/client relationship as the problem. Others complained of counselors attitudes/expectations; they felt that counselors belittled their problems or talked down to them. A third group felt they were not adequately evaluated and were inadequately placed as a result. Dissatisfied clients felt that their interests were not taken into account when job placements were made. Those who used vocational services and reported satisfaction held full-time jobs, had more education beyond high school, and were in higher income brackets. More people reporting satisfaction lived with a spouse; however, 50 percent still resided with parents. This leads to the question whether or not rehabilitation services were really helpful for these respondents in terms of outcomes (Smith, 1992).

The key to success in the work place for students with disabilities depends on the content of the curriculum provided and the quality of transitional services provided (Benz & Halpern, 1987) as well as the perceptions held by educators (McCrea, 1991) and employers (Schmelkin & Berkell, 1989). With increased

attention to education for employment and detailed programs designed to increase the employability of persons with disabilities, many questions emerge. Are these individuals being effectively prepared to accept the role of employee? What do employers expect of their employees with disabilities? What skills do employers deem necessary for continued employment?

Employer Expectations

McCrea (1991), for example, studied the relationship between employer's perceptions and special educator's perceptions of what skills and skill categories were most relevant to job success for individuals with disabilities. Educators ranked the four categories viewed as critical to job success in the following order: work related, social, communication, and personal. Employers, however, ranked the categories somewhat differently: work-related, communication, personal, and social. Educators and employers ranked personal and social skills in the same manner. Both groups gave the highest rank order to getting along well with others. Employers preferred initiative and work related skills. Neatness on the job, being able to communicate basic needs, and

initiating contact when appropriate were selected by educators.

Research of this nature is critical to special educators as they must continually modify curricula to serve students with disabilities. "Training should be modified: (a) to incorporate those job skills employers view as critical; (b) to enhance employment longevity; and (c) to increase potential career opportunities" (McCrea, 1991, p. 129).

With a large portion of the community of individuals with disabilities remaining unemployed and dependent on parents and community programs, educators must address how to enable these individuals to develop productive independent lives. Increasing employability will contribute to successful independent living for individuals with disabilities. Maintaining successful employment depends upon the ability of individuals with disabilities to fulfill the expectations of their employers. Educators must be fully aware of the skill and skill categories employers deem necessary for successful employment. This study was designed to reveal the perceptions held by employers, teachers, and students of the working world by requesting them to rank skill and skill categories viewed important to

successful employment. In order to obtain a meaningful picture of the perceptions of employers, teachers, and students this study has addressed the following question: What do employers expect of their employees? What do special educators believe students should know about having a job? What do students with disabilities believe the demands of the working world will be? Do employers, teachers, and students hold the same view of the working world? Do employers, teachers, and students prioritized factors affecting job success differently? If so, what factors are valued by each group?

Method

Subjects

Three distinct groups participated in this study: special educators, employers, and special education students with learning disabilities in their final year of instruction. Special students (n=45), educators (n=12), and employers (n=43) from participating school districts involved in the study were requested to complete a survey. Employers were selected randomly from the Virginia Business Directory. School districts were arbitrarily selected due to demographic and geographic location. Students were selected because of their attendance in school districts requested to participate. Employers, teachers, and students represent the same geographical location.

Instrument

The instrument utilized for this study was developed by Chamberlain in 1988, and utilized by McCrea in 1991 (See appendix D). The original instrument was designed to identify factors or categories of factors employers felt most beneficial for job success based on research studies by Foss and Peterson in 1981, and Rusch and Mithaug in 1980.

Researchers performed a comprehensive review of over 200 vocational assessment instruments and identified 24 checklist and rating scales that contained items relevant to social/interpersonal skills needed within the work setting (Foss & Gilbert, 1981). The identified checklist and rating scales were utilized by Chamberlain (1988) to develop the instrument.

The survey contained four categories of factors: social, personal, communication, and work related. Five groups of factors were presented with a representative of each category in each group. Respondents ranked each item 1 to 4 with 1 being considered the most closely related to job success. A space was provided for respondents to write in factors not listed but considered to be important for job success. In addition to the questionnaire the researcher requested the employers to complete a demographic information form including the type of company, number employed, position held by the person completing the form, type of contact the respondent may have had with persons with disabilities, and the age of respondents.

Procedure

Permission was obtained from school districts in Southside Virginia to conduct the study (See appendix A). With the permission of appropriate offices of research, a cover letter with a brief description of the study and a copy of the instrument were mailed to the special education directors in the study area. Copies of the questionnaire for teacher and student completion were mailed after the appropriate numbers were determined. Self addressed stamped envelopes for survey return were included for teacher and student use. All responses were held in complete confidentiality. Surveys were coded for response only. Responses and respondents were not linked in any manner.

Forty five employers were selected at random from the same geographic location. The employers were mailed a cover letter, (See appendix B.) a copy of the survey, a self addressed stamped envelope for survey return, and a demographic form (See appendix C). The employers represented personnel directors or persons in charge of hiring employees within the business. Complete confidentiality was maintained and coding for response only was used.

Data Analysis

Categories of personal, social, communication, and work related were formed in order to compare the perceptions of each category. The Kruskal-Wallis one way analysis of variance was used to test the hypothesis among the means. In order to determine whether significant differences existed among the perceptions employers, teachers, and students, on the social, personal, communication, and work related categories, Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance was used (See Table 1). This procedure was applied to the entire set of data collected. This analysis revealed that the data set included significant H values at the .05 level for specific categories. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected in each of these categories. A random sub sample of 12 cases was utilized to confirm results. The Mann-Whitney U-test was utilized to determine where significant differences were occurring. The mean rank of each category was computed (See Table 5).

Results

Forty-five employers from Southside Virginia were asked to participate in the study with 43 returning surveys. The Employers represented textile, industrial, trucking, governmental, food service, electrical, construction, medical, and other service industries. The average number employed by the group was 31. Most often the survey was completed by a personnel director (30%) with vice-presidents returning 15 percent of the questionnaires. The remaining respondents were presidents, supervisors of specific shifts, or business owners. The average length of employment was 6 years. The average age of the respondent was 37.

Numerous employers (n = 38) indicated having contact with individuals with handicaps; both mental and physical. The most frequent type of contact was a friend. Employers wrote in following instructions, knowing the work routine, and punctuality as the factors most closely related to successful employment. Employers ranked worked related skills as the most pertinent to job success. Communication, social, and personal skills followed respectively. Categorical

rankings were determined utilizing the mean rank (See Table 5).

Teachers (n=12) representing seven of nine school divisions contacted for participation reported similar rankings to the employer sample. Work related skills ranked first with communication, social, and personal, skills following respectively. It is not known if this sample of teachers represents all teachers working with students with learning disabilities in the seven school districts that chose to participate. Teachers wrote in getting along with others, following instructions, and being able to read and write most frequently when asked to write the most important factors relating to job success.

Students (n=45) held a dramatically different view of the working world. Social skills were ranked first with communication, personal, and work related skills following respectively. Students wrote in being able to read and write, getting along with others, following instructions, and being able to calculate pay as important skills for holding a job. Several students also wrote in that employees should not "call in" for unnecessary reasons. Students indicated that reporting to work regularly was important.

Using the Kruskal-Wallis statistical procedure significant differences in rankings were found in the categories of work related, social, and personal skills. (See table 1). This analysis included the complete data set. A subsample of 12 cases gave the same result. The critical H value was found to be 5.99. In the category of personal factors the H value was 2.83 which at the .05 significance level ~~which~~ failed to reject the null hypothesis of a significant difference occurring among the groups. In the category of social skills the H value was found to be 7.83; therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. In the category of communication skills the H value was found to be 6.13 and the null hypothesis to be rejected. In the category of work related skills the H value of 7.89 exceeded the critical value allowing the null hypothesis to be rejected. There is a significant difference in the rankings in the categories of social, communication, and work related factors among the groups in the subsample.

When significant statistical differences were detected, data was furthered analyzed using the Mann-Whitney Analysis to locate the source of the difference. This procedure was performed on the random

subsample of 12 cases utilized in the Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance. In the category of social factors a significant difference was found in the students' ranking. The difference between students and employers and students and teachers was significant (See Table 2). In the category of communication skills a significantly different ranking was found between teachers and students and students and employers. (See table 3.) In the category of work related skills a significant difference was found between the students and teachers and students and employers (See Table 4.)

Discussion

Employers and teachers hold similar views of the working world while students are forming a different view of the skills necessary for successful employment. This study demonstrates that business and industry need employees who are able to complete the assigned task. Teachers recognize the skills needed to perform these tasks, however, students with learning disabilities are virtually unaware of the demands that the workplace will place on them. Efforts need to be made to bridge the gap between the schoolhouse and the workplace. Curricula need to be developed and implemented that teach students with learning disabilities workplace skills and prepare them to function in a new environment.

This study is limited in that information on students' current employment status was unavailable. Demographic information concerning teachers was unavailable. Number of years teaching special education and educational background of teachers involved with the instructional program of students with learning disabilities would have been helpful for analysis. Curriculum content and the existence of articulation agreements between vocational

rehabilitation and social services agencies is unknown. The teacher sample size is significantly smaller than that of the student and employer groups; however, the subsample testing demonstrated that the analysis yielded the same results.

Why do students rank the skill categories of communication, social, and work related factors so differently? Do curricula include job skills training? Do students with learning disabilities hold part-time jobs? Why did the student group form such a different perception of life after high school? Students may have held different perceptions of the working world because of the lack of exposure to employment. Maturity of the student group may have been reflected in responses or social and cultural issues may have influenced the participants' perceptions.

Follow-up studies of students with learning disabilities, particularly the students in this study, are needed in order to determine if perceptions of the working world play a role in continued job success. Special educators may need to examine past special education programs for supported employment and develop new models to enable students with learning disabilities to develop more appropriate outcomes.

References

- Benz, M. R., & Halpern, S. A. (1987).
Transition Services for Secondary Students with
Mild Disabilities: A Statewide Perspective.
Exceptional Children, 53(6), 507-514.
- Chamberlain, M. A. (1988). Employer's Rankings
of Factors Judged Critical to Job Success
Individuals with Severe Disabilities. Career
Development for Exceptional Individuals, 11(2),
141-147.
- Edgar, E. (1985). How Do Special Education
Students Fare After They Leave School? A Response
to Hasazi, Gordon, and Roe. Exceptional Children,
51(6), 470-473.
- Elrod, F. (1986). Work Experience for the
Rural, Special Needs Student: A Pipe Dream of a
Possibility? Clemson, SC: Clemson University,
College of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction
Service No. Ed 280 645)
- Fairweather, J., S. & Shaver, D., M. Making the
Transition to Postsecondary Education and
Training. Exceptional Children, 57(3), 264-270.

- Foss, G. Bostwick, D. Problems of Mentally Retarded Adults: A study of Rehabilitation Service Consumers and Providers. Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin, 25(2) 66-73.
- Halpern, A., S. Transition: Old Wine in New Bottles. Exceptional Children, 58(3), 202-211.
- Hasazi, S., B., Gordon L., R., & Roe, C., A. (1985). Factors Associated with the Employment Status of Handicapped Youth Exiting High School from 1979 to 1983. Exceptional Children, 51(6), 455-469.
- Jones, J. (1987). Vocational Special Needs Support System. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 287 094)
- Maddox, M. E., Edgar, E., & Levine, P. (1984). Post-School Status of Graduates of Special Education. Working Paper, Experimental Education Unit University of Washington, Seattle, Washington.
- McCrea, L., D. (1991). A Comparisons Between the Perceptions of Special Educators and Employers: What Factors are Critical for Job Success? Career

Development for Exceptional Individuals, 14(2),
121-130.

Okolo, C. M., & Sitlington, P. (1986). The Role of
Special Education in LD Adolescents' Transition
for School to Work. Learning Disabilities
Quarterly, 9, 141-155.

Rusch, F. Mithaug, D. (1980). Vocational Training for
Mentally Retarded Adults: A Behavior Analytic
Approach. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Schmelkin, L., P. & Berkell, D., E. Educators'
Attitudes Toward the Employability of Persons with
Severe Handicaps. Career Development for
Exceptional Individuals, 12(1), 40-47.

Shapiro, E., S. & Lentz, F., E. (1991).
Vocational-Technical Programs: Follow-Up of
Students with Learning Disabilities. Exceptional
Children, 58(1), 47-59.

Shepherd, S., Robert, M., Waxman, M., &
Gaylord-Ross, R. (1992). A Follow-Along
Study of Participants in Longitudinal Transition
Program for Youths with Mild Disabilities.
Exceptional Children, 58(4), 346-356.

- Sires, M., Bloome, S., Miller R. J., Quinn L.,
Rhiner R., Smith, M.G. & Weaver, M.R. (1986).
Work Experience Instructor Program Handbook. Cedar
Rapids, IA Grant Wood Area Education Agency.
- Smith, J., O. (1992). Falling Through the Cracks:
Rehabilitation Services For Adults with Learning
Disabilities. Exceptional Children, 58(5), 451-
460.
- U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. (1983).
Accommodating the spectrum of individual abilities
Washington D.C: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.
- Will, M., C. (1984). OSERS Programming for
Transition of Youth with Disabilities: Bridges for
School to Working Life. Washington DC: Office of
Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
(OSERS), U.S. Department of Education.

Appendix A

Letter to Special Education Directors

October 3, 1994

Special Education Director
County
Box
City, Virginia, Zip Code

Dear Sir or Madam:

Preparing young people for the transition from school to work is a difficult task. The demands of the workplace change so quickly that constant contact with business and industry is needed to ensure that our students leave school with the proper tools for the trade.

As part of the Master's Degree program at Longwood College, I am seeking to complete a study to better enable our schools to prepare special education students for transition from school to work.

In order to provide you with a link to business and industry in your area and the most up to date information on the requirements for job success, this study is being conducted in coordination with business and industry personnel of Southside Virginia. A questionnaire constructed to identify factors associated with job success will be completed by local employers. I am asking that you become involved by completing an identical questionnaire and asking students with learning disabilities exiting your special education programs to complete the same questionnaire. A comparison of responses will be made. This comparison will enable each group to gain a more congruent perspective on what it is that students need to know to have job success.

I sincerely hope that you will join me in endeavoring to provide this crucial information to Southside Virginia schools. Responses will be held in complete confidentiality and will be coded for response only. I have enclosed a copy of the questionnaire for your review. Please return the enclosed participation form indicating your desire to participate so that I may send the proper number of questionnaires to you for your students to complete.

Sincerely,

Lena McClenny
Graduate Student

Appendix B

Cover Letter to Employer

October 3, 1994

Business Name
Box Number
City, Virginia, Zip Code

Dear Sir or Madam:

Preparing young people for the transition from school to work is a difficult task. The demands of the workplace change so quickly that constant contact with business and industry is needed to ensure that our students leave school with the proper tools for the trade.

As part of the Master's Degree program at Longwood College, I am seeking to complete a study to better enable our schools to prepare special education students for transition from school to work.

In order to provide you with employees that are prepared for today's workplace your input is needed. A questionnaire constructed to identify factors associated with job success will be completed by special education teachers and students. I am asking you to become involved by completing an identical questionnaire. A comparison of responses will be made to enable educators to make curriculum decisions and thus provide a work-ready employee.

I sincerely hope that you will join me in endeavoring to provide this crucial information to Southside Virginia schools. Responses will be held in complete confidentiality and will be coded for response only.

Sincerely,

Lena McClenny
Graduate Student

Appendix C

Employer Demographic Form

Employer Demographic Form

Type of Company: _____

Number employed by company: _____

Position held by person completing
questionnaire: _____

Length of employment of person completing
questionnaire: _____

What type of contact have you had with persons with
disabilities:

relative

friend

employee

other: Please describe: _____

Respondent's age _____

Appendix D
Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Please rank each of the items within the following groups one to four, with one being attributed to the factor you consider to be most clearly related to job success.

- 1. Getting along with others..... _____
- 2. Neatness on the job..... _____
- 3. Being able to communicate basic needs..... _____
- 4. Understanding the work routine..... _____

-
- 1. Responding appropriately to questions/statements..... _____
 - 2. Interest in the job..... _____
 - 3. Following instruction..... _____
 - 4. Displaying a socially acceptable attitude.. _____

-
- 1. Working independently of direct supervision. _____
 - 2. Efficiency..... _____
 - 3. Reading and following community and/or safety signs..... _____
 - 4. Being sociable/initiating appropriate contacts..... _____

-
- 1. Stamina/physical abilities..... _____
 - 2. Initiating contact with supervisor when necessary..... _____
 - 3. Pleasantness..... _____
 - 4. Responding appropriately to supervisor correction..... _____

-
- 1. Being able to adapt to new work situations.. _____
 - 2. Refraining form exhibiting irritating behaviors..... _____
 - 3. Maintaining an appropriate personal appearance..... _____
 - 4. Being able to read and/or write..... _____

Please write the five factors you consider to be most important for job success. You may choose from those factors listed above or you may add your own.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

Tables

Table 1

Results of the Kruskal-Wallis on Social, Personal, Communication, and Work Related Factors of Employers, Teachers, and Students.

	<u>Social</u>	<u>Personal</u>	<u>Communication</u>	<u>Work Related</u>
H Between Groups	10.43 ^a	0.44	6.86 ^a	9.63 ^a

a value required for significance at the .05 level, df=2 , critical value is 5.99.

Table 2

Results of the Mann-Whitney U-test of Employers,
Teachers, and Students on Social Factors

Statistic	Employ/Teach		Teach/Studt		Employ/Studt	
# of Cases	12	12	12	12	12	12
R	192	108	213	87	212	88
U	30		10*		9*	

*p < .05

Table 3

Results of the Mann-Whitney U-test of Employers,
Teachers, and Students on Communication Factors

Statistic	Employ/Teach		Teach/Studt		Employ/Studt	
# of Cases	12	12	12	12	12	12
R	178	122	100	200	78	220
U	44		22*		2*	

*p < .05

Table 4

Results of the Mann-Whitney U-test of Employers,
Teachers, and Students on Work Related Factors

Statistic	Employ/Teach		Teach/Studt		Employ/Studt	
# of Cases	12	12	12	12	12	12
R	126	174	98	202	100	220
U	48		20*		2*	

*p < .05

Table 5

Mean Ranking of Personal, Social, Communication, and
Work Related Categories

Category	Employers (n=43)	Teachers (n=12)	Students (n=45)
Work Related	2.10 (1)	2.23 (1)	3.00 (4)
Communication	2.32 (2)	2.55 (2)	2.40 (2)
Social	2.57 (3)	2.60 (3)	1.99 (1)
Personal	2.98 (4)	2.83 (4)	2.59 (3)

Note: The number in parenthesis is the ranking for the category.