AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE IEP TEAM COMPOSITION AND TRANSITION PLANNING UPON THE SUCCESS OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN URBAN DISTRICTS

Petrina D. Hill

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
August 2010

Committee:
Judith Jackson May, Advisor
Larry Small
Graduate Faculty Representative
Mark A. Earley
Patrick D. Pauken
ABSTRACT

Judith Jackson May, Advisor

The primary purpose of this correlational study was to examine the impact of IEP team composition (team member attendance) and transition planning (types of transition outcomes) upon the success (graduation) of students with disabilities in urban districts. Other factors also included gender, academic status of school, socioeconomic status of the students, and age of students at graduation.

Transition is defined as the point at which change occurs in somebody’s life (Cimera & Rusch, 2000). All humans are affected or impacted by transitions occurring in their lives. Some researchers agree that transition for students with disabilities can be more difficult than transition for students without disabilities, reflecting the need for the participation of students with disabilities in their IEP development specifically transition planning (Cimera & Rusch, 2000; Furney & Salembier, 2000; Gargiulo, 2003; Kohler & Chapman, 1999; Martin, Marshall & Sale, 2004; Patton, 2004; Trach & Sheldon, 2000; Wagner & Blackorby, 1996). Furthermore, planning and implementing transition services for students with disabilities is mandated by federal law.

The evidence of transition planning is the development of the transition page of the student’s individual education plan (IEP). Every sixteen year old student with disabilities should have a transition page developed and incorporated into the IEP and every fourteen year old student with disabilities should have a statement of needed transition services incorporated into the IEP. The development of the transition page is critical because the goals of these transition
services address the following areas: instruction, community service, employment, and other adult-living objectives (Yell, 2006). The achievement of these transition goals translates to a better quality of life in adulthood for students with disabilities (Gargiulo, 2003). For example, Benz, Lindstrom, and Yovanoff (as cited in Conderman & Katisyannis, 2002) identified that career-related work experience and the completion of student-identified transition goals were highly associated with improved graduation and employment outcomes. Furthermore, IDEA 2004 (IDEIA) requires IEP teams to prepare recommendations and a summary of the student’s academic achievement and functional performance, which includes recommendations on how to assist the student to meet postsecondary goals (IDEA, 20 U.S.C. §1414(e)(5)(B)(ii)). Likewise, research indicates the need for comprehensive transitional planning with a broad focus (Childre & Chambers, 2005; The PACER Center, 2006; Warger & Burnette, 2000).

The primary independent variables (IEP team composition, the number of transition outcomes present, and the type of transition outcomes present) demonstrated statistical significance as indicated by an increase in the number of transition outcomes when parents and students are present at the IEP conferences and by the increase in the types of transition outcomes included in the discussion during transition planning. These results may direct future research. Particularly, a relationship exists between parent presence, administrator presence, and student presence at the IEP conference and the number of outcomes present in the IEP; student presence at the annual IEP conference and graduation; parent presence and types of transition outcomes (independent living and community service) and student presence and types of transition outcomes during the eleventh grade year.
In Loving Memory of:

My Grandmother, Mrs. Eva Holland

and

My Mother-in-law, Mrs. Evelyn M. Hill
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Life is a journey. Along the journey, there are some people who make it more pleasant with unconditional love, unwavering support, and encouraging words. I would like to acknowledge the following people:

For unconditional love, my children, Rikka Desiree, Thomas Anthony, and Joshua Jeremiah. Thanks, Rikka for reading to me while I cooked dinner. Thanks Thomas for the “Suga Mama, you can do it”. Thanks, Joshua for all your hugs. Mom loves you all.

For unconditional love and always believing in me, my husband of twenty-three years, the Rev. Dr. Billy J. Hill. Thanks for your slogan, “Just Write the Document.” I love you.

For unwavering support, my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jeston A. Holland, Jr. …And Dad, no thanks I don’t want to borrow one of your high school English papers as a reference.

My cousin who I love just like a sister and her family, Dr. Pamela Greene Haney. Thanks for being there no matter what.

For encouraging words, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Mabrey and Family, Dr. and Mrs. Phillip Michael Masterson and Family, Ms. Sambretha Bailey, Dr. Francis Collins, Dr. Robin Wheatley, Dr. James Tate, Ms. Paula Martin, Ms. Jennifer Dooley, and Ms. Arnella Jamison.

To My BGSU Leadership Family, all who have gone before and all who will come after…this program Rocks!

Last but not at all least, to my Committee for unwavering support and encouraging words,

Dr. May for always having my back, Dr. Earley, for his patient work, Dr. Pauken, for the gentle way he critiques, and Dr. Small, for his careful attention to detail.
Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before
the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and
majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of the Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for the Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions of Terms</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions of Variables</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Limitations</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of Remaining Chapters</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Special Education and Legislation in America</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of Civil Rights in Shaping the Rights of Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Brown</em> Opens Door for Seminal Special Education Legislation</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy Movement</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Education for All Handicapped Children Act</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolution of Special Education Policy: EHA to IDEA, IDEA to IDEIA</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDEA to IDEIA</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Importance of the Individual Education Program</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Individual Education Program as a Foundation for Success</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP Team Membership</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of IDEA 1997 and 2004 on the IEP Team Membership</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition Planning and the IEP</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The IEP Transition Page</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Impact of NCLB on Special Education and the IEP</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges of IEP Compliance</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of Graduation in America</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance with IEP Team Participation and Student Success</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of the IEP in the Success of Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Coding and Collecting</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Sample Schools</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV. RESULTS</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Sample Characteristics</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question One</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Two</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS ............................................................. 74

Introduction ............................................................................................................. 74
The Significance of IEP Team Composition ............................................................. 75
The Significance of IEP Compliance and Graduation Status ................................. 77
Recommendations for Policy and Practice ............................................................... 79
Recommendations for Future Research ................................................................. 82
Conclusion ................................................................................................................. 84

REFERENCES ................................................................................................................... 86

APPENDIX A. LETTERS OF APPROVAL ................................................................. 92

Human Subjects Review Board ................................................................................. 93
Draft of Letter Seeking Permission to Conduct Study ............................................. 94
Reply from District .................................................................................................... 95

APPENDIX B. INSTRUMENTATION .......................................................................... 96

APPENDIX C. SAMPLE IEP DOCUMENTS REVIEWED ......................................... 110
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure | Page
---|---
1 | Key Special Education Litig ation and Legislation .................................................... 27

LIST OF TABLES

Table | Page
---|---
3.1 | Enrollment Data for Sample Site ............................................................................... 56
3.2 | Frequency of the Number of IEPs Present................................................................. 58
3.3a | Categorical Variables Descriptions and Value Assignments..................................... 63
3.3b | Continuous Variables Descriptions and Value Assignments..................................... 64
4.1 | Graduation Status....................................................................................................... 66
4.2 | Correlations between IEP Team Members and the Number of Transition Outcomes Present....................................................................................................... 67
4.3 | Correlation Matrix for IEP Team Attendance and the Total Number of Transition Outcomes per Student Set ....................................................................... 68
4.4 | Chi-Square Results for Student Present by Outcome by Grade Level ...................... 69
4.5 | Correlation between Team Members Present and Student Graduation Status ........ 71
4.6 | Chi-Square Results for Gender and Outcome by Grade Level................................ 72
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Ensuring the educational success of students with disabilities through our system of American public schools has been paved by the efforts of federal legislation and advocacy groups in the creation of a system of procedural safeguards. The genesis of modern special education practice dates back to the early 19th century with French physician Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard and his work with deaf children. The seminal work of Itard marked “the first example of an Individual Education Program (IEP)” as a foundation upon which today’s special education practices are built and implemented (Hulett, 2009, p. 15). The development of, and compliance with, an educationally and legally sound IEP is essential to ensuring a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for students with disabilities. The IEP document, including specific needs, requirements, services, and accommodations, is perceived as the vehicle by which students with disabilities may have a successful educational experience (Trach & Shelden, 2000).

While the U.S. Constitution does not explicitly claim responsibility for the education of the nation’s students, the federal role in the development of special education legislation is remarkable, from mandates in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. Furthermore, the path to FAPE for students with disabilities is attributed largely to the tireless efforts of parents and advocacy groups who have been instrumental in gaining, implementing, and protecting the laws ensuring the educational success of students with disabilities, most notably through the IEP document (Hulett, 2009; Patton, 2000; Yell, 2006).
Likewise, understanding the evolution of special education practices in the American system of public schools can only be achieved through the examination of the historical perspective upon which legislation relative to special education practices have been predicated. The genesis of special education is analogous to understanding the relationships among the history of slavery, the civil rights movement, the current status of affirmative action, and current issues relating to race and the American culture (Hulett, 2009, p. 13). This chapter will serve to provide a historical perspective on the evolution of special educational practices as depicted through legislative measures as well as investigating IEP team composition, transition planning, and IEP procedural compliance in predicting the graduation rate of students with disabilities.

Rationale for the Study

There are nearly six million students with disabilities in this country (Swanson, 2008). The research literature provides a strong rationale for studying the factors affecting the IEP process (planning, developing, implementing and monitoring) of students with disabilities. First, the research literature describes the IEP document as the most significant document in the special education process and the necessary component from which to monitor and enforce the law (i.e., IDEA) (Smith, 1990). However, according to Smith (1990), the intent of the IEP is to fulfill the spirit of the law. Exemplary compliance, however, has been elusive since the inception of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA, 1976) (a precursor to IDEA), indicating the need for research to help increase understanding in closing the gap between policy and practice. Secondly, the No Child Left Behind Act requires schools to be accountable for educating all students which clearly includes students with disabilities (Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006). Thus, the outcomes of students with disabilities are being highlighted. The goal for special education professionals is identifying the best approaches to address undesirable outcomes, such
as low graduation rates among students with disabilities (Advocacy in Action, 2007). Thirdly, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1990) added the transition services requirement to the IEP process to ensure that the IEP team would carefully consider where each student is heading after he or she leaves school and to determine what services will assist a student in reaching his or her post-school goals (Yell, 2006). Finally, trends in research indicate studies examining transition planning are increasing, and this is an area in which IEP compliance is essential (Sorrells, Rieth, & Sindelar, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the degree to which compliance in the development of transition planning and the involvement of team members with transition planning relates to the success of high school students with disabilities. More specifically, the purpose of this correlational study was to examine the relationship of IEP team composition (team member meeting attendance) and the content of the transition services (the types of outcomes and the number of activities) to the success (graduation, school completion) of students with disabilities in an urban district in the state of Michigan.

Research Questions

The study addressed the following questions:

1. Is the success (graduation) of high school students with disabilities in an urban school related to the types of transition outcomes and the number of transition activities?

2. Is the success (graduation) of high school students with disabilities in an urban school district related to the IEP team composition, the gender of the student, and the status of the school?
Significance of the Study

Students with disabilities continue to experience difficulty in transitioning from high school to life after high school even though federal policy mandates the procedures to be followed in planning for the transition. The findings of this study inform policymakers, professionals, and other related service providers regarding the development of the IEP for students with disabilities enrolled in urban districts. The development of the IEP is closely associated with the post-secondary outcomes of students with disabilities. The findings of this study reveal relationships between the IEP team composition and the number and types of transition outcomes documented during the IEP conference which are linked to positive post-school outcomes.

Compliance with the federal policy in the development of IEPs for students with disabilities also continues to be a concern for school administrators in urban districts. The findings of this study contribute data to inform policymakers, and education professionals in the best practices for developing IEPs for students with disabilities. The findings reveal the relationship between graduation status of the student and IEP team composition. The findings also reveal the importance of compliance with federal policy and improved transition planning.

Finally, the research is limited in depicting the characteristics associated with the success of urban high school students with disabilities. The findings contribute to the limited research regarding the IEP components relating to the graduation rates of urban high school students with disabilities. The findings reveal relationships between the student’s attendance at IEP conferences and the types of transition outcomes documented in the IEP. The findings of the study reveal the need to approach research in special education systematically in order to gain improved quality of services for students with disabilities.
Definitions of Terms

Accreditation-describes the set of standards set forth by the Michigan State Board of Education as the system to accredit Michigan Schools (Retrieved October 17, 2009 from https:oeaa.state.mi.us/ayp/schoolRptCardHist.asp).

Achievement Change-one of three achievement components in Education YES! computed by dividing the computed improvement rate (slope) by the target improvement rate, determining the ratio of the target that the school has attained, using comparable scores from the Michigan Educational Assessment Program for up to five years(Retrieved October 17, 2009 from https: oeaa.state.mi.us/ayp/schoolRptCardHist.asp).

Achievement Growth-one of three achievement components in Education YES! computed by comparing the equivalent scores of the students on the fourth grade assessment with the equivalent scores for the same group of students on the seventh grade assessment (and seventh grade to high school) (Retrieved October 17, 2009 from https: oeaa.state.mi.us/ayp/schoolRptCardHist.asp).

Achievement Status-one of the three achievement components in Education YES! which will use up to three years of scaled scores from the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) (Retrieved October 17, 2009 from https: oeaa.state.mi.us/ayp/schoolRptCardHist.asp).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)-describes the measure used to hold schools and districts responsible for student achievement in English language arts and mathematics. AYP is based on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test results, participation rates in MEAP testing, and attendance or graduation rates (Retrieved October 17, 2009 from https: oeaa.state.mi.us/ayp/schoolRptCardHist.asp).
Cognitive Disabilities—significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects a child’s educational performance (Information and Resources for Community Agencies Serving Children, 2005).

Composite School Grade—describes the label derived from the individual school score and the school’s status in terms of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Schools labeled “A” will be summary accredited. Schools labeled “B”, “C”, “D/Alert” or unaccredited will be in interim status (Retrieved October 17, 2009 from https: oeaa.state.mi.us/ayp/schoolRptCardHist.asp).

Economically Disadvantaged Family or Individual – Such families or individuals who are determined to be low-income according to the latest available data from the U.S. Department of Commerce (Ohio Educational Management Information System Guidelines, 2001).

Education YES!—describes the state accountability system used in Michigan to determine how well a school is performing based on MEAP results and other school characteristics. Each school is graded on its MEAP achievement and MEAP improvement, as well as performance indicators. YES is an acronym for “Yardstick for Excellent Schools”. (Retrieved October 17, 2009 from https: oeaa.state.mi.us/ayp/schoolRptCardHist.asp)

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)— the IDEA requirement which consists of special education and related services which (A) have been provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge, (B) meet standards of the state educational agency (SEA), (C) include an appropriate preschool, elementary, or secondary school education in the state involved, and (D) are provided in conformity with the Individualized Education Program. (Yell, 2006, p. 93)
Graduation - receipt of a diploma awarded to an individual upon fulfillment of state requirements (Yell, 2006).

Graduation Rate - the percentage of students, measured from the beginning of high school, who graduate from a high school with a regular diploma in the standard number of years (Hall, 2005)

IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990) – Public Law 101-476, amended the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), Public Law 94-142. The Act ensures that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that includes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs (PCESE, Retrieved November 27, 2007).

IDEIA (Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004) - This Act is an amendment which defined a highly qualified special education teacher, removed the short-term objectives requirement, prohibited states from using a discrepancy formula for eligibility determination, and encouraged the use of a intervention-response model (Yell, 2006).

Indicators of School Performance - the indicators are investments that schools are making to improve student achievement. These indicators are based on research and best practice. Schools completed self-ratings on 40 Key Characteristics of the School Improvement Framework. The school’s grade on the indicators is derived from its self-rating. (Retrieved October 17, 2009 from https: oeaa.state.mi.us/ayp/schoolRptCardHist.asp)

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) – a written statement for each school-aged child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with 20 U.S.C. Section 1414 (d)(1)(A) of the United States Code and required to include these eight components: a statement of the student’s present levels of academic achievement and functional
performance; a statement of the student’s measurable goals and objectives; a statement of the student’s progress toward meeting the annual goals; a statement of the special education, related services and supplementary aids and services; an explanation of the extent of student’s participation with students without disabilities; a statement of any testing accommodations; the projected initiation date for services and modifications, the anticipated frequency, location, and duration of those services; and a statement of appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based on age-appropriate transition assessments services and the transition services needed to assist the student in reaching those goals (Yell, 2006).

**Level of Compliance** – the extent to which each of the fourteen written components of the IEP meets the federal criteria (Section 614 of IDEA)

**NCLB (No Child Left Behind Act)** – Public Law 107-110, redefines the federal role in K-12 education and will help close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers. It is based on four basic principles: stronger accountability for results, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work (PCESE, Retrieved November 27, 2007).

**Outcomes** – an end result; a consequence (The American Heritage Student Dictionary, 2003).

**Parent Participation** – required by IDEA in the development of the student’s individual education plan, right of the parent to actively participate in all discussions and decisions regarding their child’s special education program (Yell, 2006).

**Placement** – refers to the setting in which a free appropriate public education (FAPE) will be delivered to a student with disabilities (Yell, 2006).
Regular/General Education Teacher Participation – required by IDEA in the development of the student’s individual education plan if the student is participating in the regular/general education environment (Yell, 2006).

Self-contained Classroom – placement option in which most of the services for a student with disabilities is received (Yell, 2006)

Transition Services – a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that—

(a) is designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported 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. (Hulett, 2009, p. 39)

Definitions of Variables

Adult services (SERV) – transition outcome defined as services that provide the necessary support for adult persons to live, work, and recreate in the community (Trach, 1994).

Community participation (COM) – transition outcome defined as student’s participation in the community through established and recognized personal and social roles (Trach, 1994).

Continuing and adult education (CAE) – transition outcome defined as a continuation of a student’s education, for some stated purpose, through established state and/or community programs (Trach, 1994).
**IEP Team Composition** – for the purpose of this study refers to the number of times IEP team members attended the IEP conference of students with disabilities.

**Independent living (LIV)** – transition outcome defined as a student’s access to a living environment determined by available resources, and options (Trach, 1994).

**Integrated employment (including Supported employment) (EMP)** – transition outcome defined as a student’s placement in a work setting for pay, and with support if necessary, while still in school, prior to graduation, and/or immediately upon graduation (Trach, 1994).

**Post-secondary education (PSE)** – transition outcome defined as preparation for and entrance to an institution of higher learning with the intent of accessing formal training to develop and prepare for a chosen career (Trach, 1994).

**Status of the School** – for the purpose of this study refers to the percentage of students who are identified as economically disadvantaged.

**Success** – for the purpose of this study refers to the graduation status of the student with disabilities.

**Vocational training (VOC)** – transition outcome defined as an continuation of a student’s training beyond high school in either a formal or informal setting with the intent of attaining an accepted skill level in a chosen profession or work area (e.g. carpentry, plumbing, computer programming) (Trach, 1994).

**Study Limitations**

The following limitations should be noted regarding this study. While appropriate for this study, the chi square test does have some restrictions of which the reader should be aware. The restrictions associated with the chi square test for independence include independent observations and size of expected frequencies (Gravatter & Wallnau, 2002). The restriction,
independent observations, refers to the inappropriateness of the test if a person produce responses that can be classified in more than one category or contribute to more than one frequency count to a single category. Size of expected frequency refers to the error in performing the test when the expected frequency of any cell is less than five. The participant pool or sample for this study was a purposive convenience sample. Therefore, the sample may not be representative of the entire population. Unlike a randomly selected sample, generalizations to a population can seldom be made with a convenience sample. The small sample size contributes to the lack of generalizability to the population as well.

Other limitations relative to the study necessitated adjustments in the selection of the sample and variables. The original focus of the study was to examine predictors of success of students with cognitive disabilities. However, the sample size for students with cognitive disabilities was so small that the researcher had to include all students with disabilities to have an adequate sample size to continue the research. Likewise, adjustments were necessary to eliminate the variable, the presence of an agency representative (vocational rehabilitation representative) at the IEP conference, due to lack of documentation. Simply, a majority of the IEP documents reviewed did not have a signature for this IEP team member. Time constraints, resources, and district record keeping procedures also contributed to the limitations of the study. Time constraints and resources available are general limitations experienced by most researchers in conducting studies. However, district record keeping procedures is a limitation specific to this study. During the data gathering stage of the study, the researcher encountered numerous cumulative files with IEPs missing, documents misfiled, poor quality of documents to reproduce, and overall poor record keeping.
Organization of the Remaining Chapters

The remaining chapters of this study are organized to include a literature review, the methodology and research design of the study, a discussion of the findings, recommendations for policy and practice, implications for future research and a conclusion.
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

History of Special Education and Legislation in America

“A transformation in attitude is frequently a prerequisite to a change in the delivery of services”

– (Gargiulo, 2003, p. 16)

Current United States perspectives toward individuals with disabilities and special education are grounded in the early works of European philosophers, advocates, and humanitarians during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. (Gargiulo, 2003; Hulett, 2009). The earliest known contemporary in the early works of special education is French physician, Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard. Itard designed the first “individualized education program” for a 12-year-old boy who was discovered by a group of hunters living in the forest near Aveyron, France. The youth was found unclothed and exhibiting animal-like behavior. Itard, known for his expertise in ear diseases and hearing impairments, began to train the “wild boy of Aveyron” using sensory techniques (known today as behavior modification). Through Itard’s work, the “wild boy of Aveyron” gained basic social and self-help skills even though he never developed language skills. Initially, Itard perceived this pioneering work a failed project. However, Itard’s work is considered groundbreaking in the field of special education and earned him the title as the “Father of Special Education” (Gargiulo, 2003, p. 16).

Likewise, other pioneering contemporaries offered groundbreaking discoveries in the field of special education. Edouard Seguin, a protégé of Itard, designed an “individual education program” for youth using methodologies based on sensorimotor activities. Seguin completed a comprehensive assessment of each youth’s strengths and weaknesses, then developed an instructional plan consisting of sensorimotor exercises (Gargiulo, 2003, p. 17). Later, Maria Montessori used Seguin’s ideas and theories to develop a special education program for the
urban poor and children with mental retardation. Other pioneers in the field of special education made notable contributions.

The efforts of Itard and Seguin lead to the following practices in special education which are now considered integral components. According to Hulett (2009), these practices – individualized instruction, carefully sequenced series of educational tasks, an emphasis on sensory stimulation, meticulous arrangement of the child’s environment, immediate reward for correct performance, tutoring in functional skills, and the belief that every child should be educated to the greatest extent possible – are essential to special education (pp. 14-15).

The optimism generated by the efforts of these early pioneers in educating individuals with disabilities soon waned and was replaced by fear, prejudice, and unwarranted scientific views (Gargiulo, 2003). By the mid-19th century, “schools” better known as asylums, were established to provide protective care and management rather than treatment and education (p. 17). Since no federal aid was provided for the care of individuals with disabilities in these facilities, funding for these “schools” was provided by wealthy benefactors and philanthropists according to Gargiulo (2003). Soon these facilities became warehouses for individuals with disabilities with little hope of education or treatment.

By the late-19th century, special education classes in public schools were evolving. These classes were the first self-contained classes serving a small number of individuals with disabilities (Gargiulo, 2003). During this timeframe, Rhode Island was the first state to pass a compulsory education law, followed by the state of Massachusetts. By 1918, compulsory education laws were established in all states (Yell, 2006, p. 62). Compulsory education stipulated that parents require their children to attend a public school. Yet, youth with disabilities and their families still experienced societal isolation and exclusion from public
schools. This pattern of societal isolation and public exclusion is not unique to students with disabilities and is remarkably similar to the treatment afforded freed slaves. Both groups found some relief through litigation and legislation of the civil rights era. The evolution of the fight for educational rights for students with disabilities has not been unlike the struggle faced by freed slaves at the turn of the century in America and, in fact, their paths to increased human and educational rights are inextricably intertwined (Hulett, 2009, p. 16).

The Role of Civil Rights in Shaping the Rights of Students with Disabilities

“Public policy is the dynamic and value laden process through which a political system handles a public problem. It includes a government’s expressed intentions and official enactments as well as its consistent patterns of activity and inactivity.” (Fowler, 2004, p. 9)

In 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation was signed by President Lincoln in order to free the American slaves (Hulett, 2009, p.15). Congress then followed the lead of the federal government by adopting what is known as the “Civil War” Amendments. The 13th Amendment abolished “slavery” and “involuntary servitude”. The 14th Amendment guaranteed the right to “life”, “liberty”, “property”, and “equal protection of the laws”. The 15th Amendment guaranteed all American citizens “the right to vote no matter what their race, color, or previous condition of servitude” (Hulett, 2009). However, the government’s “expressed intentions” were soon undermined by the enactments of what is known as the “Black Codes” of 1865.

According to Hulett (2009), the Black Codes were legislation enacted by the Southern states to hinder the efforts of the federal government to protect the rights of African Americans. The federal government responded with the adoption of the Civil Rights Act of 1866, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of prior servitude, race, or color. Nevertheless, the federal government’s efforts were futile and by the end of the 19th century; most of the laws to protect
African Americans’ rights were repealed. For example, in the *Civil Rights Cases* of 1883, the Supreme Court ruled that the protection of rights in the 14th Amendment only applied to the states not individuals. The impact of this decision set the stage for segregation of the races. The Court’s decision in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) case declared that it was legal to segregate individuals and have separate facilities as long as the facilities were equal (Hulett, p. 16).

Likewise, this pattern of public exclusion is mirrored in the experience of individuals with disabilities. According to Gargiulo (2003), excluding students with disabilities from attending school was routine practice of local school boards particularly in the 1890s and early 1900s. Yell (2006) cites a few major cases in which the Court decided that expulsion or exclusion of students with disabilities is legal with respect to the student’s limitations despite compulsory education laws (see *Beattie v. Board of Education*, 1919; *Department of Public Welfare v. Haas*, 1958; *Watson v. City of Cambridge*, 1893). Furthermore, the state of North Carolina made it a crime for parents to advocate for attendance of students with disabilities (Yell, 2006, p. 63). Supported by federal legislation, the concept of segregation of individuals based on physical appearance and ability became a societal “norm”.

**Brown Opens Door for Seminal Special Education Legislation**

In the *Brown* (1954) case, the plaintiffs argued that state-mandated segregation damaged their right to educational opportunities and that separate facilities could never be equal. Furthermore, the plaintiffs maintained that state-mandated segregation violated their constitutional rights under the 14th Amendment. The Supreme Court decided that “…state-required or state-sanctioned segregation solely on the basis of a person’s unalterable characteristics (e.g. race or disability) was unconstitutional” (Yell, 2006, p. 66). The rationale of the high court also emphasized that segregation in education denied students equal protections and equal educational opportunities. Thusly, the ruling in the *Brown* case provided opportunity for other cases to be heard by the Supreme Court, particularly those cases involving students or children with disabilities.

In the case of *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) v. Pennsylvania* (1972), the plaintiffs sued the state secretaries of Education and Public Welfare, the state Board of Education and thirteen school districts for denying students with mental retardation equal educational opportunities (Yell, 2006). The plaintiffs argued that the state violated its statute of publicly supported education and the 14th Amendment rights of the students. During the hearing of the *PARC* case, four points were established - all students with mental retardation are capable of benefiting from an education/training program; education cannot be defined as only the provision of academic experiences; the State undertook the provision of educating all children and could not deny students with mental retardation access to a free public education and training; and preschoolers with disabilities could not be denied access to preschool programs for children without disabilities. The ruling of the Court in this case granted all children with mental retardation between the ages of 6 and 21 access to free public education. Furthermore, the Court
agreed that children with mental retardation should be educated in the same programs as their peers without disabilities (Yell, 2006).

Following the PARC case in 1972, another class action suit was filed by the Federal District Court on behalf of all out-of-school students with disabilities in the District of Columbia. In the Mills v. Board of Education (1972) case, the Board of Education was sued by the parents and/or guardians of seven students with disabilities for improper exclusion from school without due process therefore violating the students’ 14th Amendment rights of equal protection and educational opportunities (Yell, 2006). The Court decided that total exclusion of these students with disabilities was unconstitutional just as segregation in public education is unconstitutional. The Mills case established the following - the provision of procedural safeguards for due process, labeling requirements and placement, and exclusion criteria of students with disabilities (Yell).

Advocacy Movement

Prior to the legal rulings resulting from the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, another grass roots movement materialized in the historical experience of individuals with disabilities - the parental movement (Abeson & Davis, as cited in Patton, 2000). Parents of individuals with disabilities began to come together to organize with the priority of obtaining educational rights for their children. (Hulett, 2009; Patton, 2000; Yell, 2006).

The first advocacy organization, the Council of Exceptional Children (CEC), was founded in 1922 by students and faculty of the Teachers College at Columbia University in New York City. This group of concerned individuals advocated for the educational rights of all children with disabilities at all levels of government (Hulett, 2009). The CEC’s main purpose was to ensure that all children with disabilities receive “free and appropriate education” and that the profession of special education was promoted and developed (Hulett, 2009, p. 19). Hulett
(2009) also noted that the organization’s integral role in the design and advocacy of special education legislation led to six successful reauthorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act which will be discussed in detail in the next section. Membership of the CEC has grown to over 60,000 since its inception (Yell).

The second advocacy organization, the National Association for Retarded Citizens, known as the ARC, is the larger of the two advocacy organizations. Originally established in September 1950, ARC has grown to over 218,000 members. The ARC began when forty-four delegates from various parent groups representing 23 locales in 13 states came together to join forces in Minneapolis, Minnesota (Abeson & Davis, 2000; Hulett, 2009). According to Yell (2006), the following purposes - to provide information to concerned individuals, to monitor the quality of services for individuals with mental retardation, and to advocate for the rights and interests of individuals with mental retardation – were established by the ARC (p. 65). Other ARC purposes - to change the public perception of children with mental retardation, educate parents and organization’s leaders on the condition of mental retardation, and procure services for those denied services were also noted by Abeson and Davis (2000, p. 20). The CEC is known for its accomplishments in legislation. Likewise, the ARC is known for its accomplishments in litigation. As previously noted the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC), a state-level ARC organization, successfully litigated for the educational rights of all children with mental retardation (PARC v. Commonwealth, 1972).

The CEC and the ARC have been pivotal in influencing as well as impacting special education legislation and litigation in America and continue to be the most influential advocacy groups during the 21st century (Abeson & Davis, 2000; Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006). Some researchers dually note that progress in special education can be attributed, in part, to the
successful efforts of parents and other concerned individuals advocating for the full participation of individuals with disabilities as American citizens (Abeson & Davis; Hulett; Yell).

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) was signed by President Gerald Ford on November 29, 1975 (Gargiulo, 2003; Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006). The EAHCA is described as the “pinnacle of Special Education advocacy”, the “legislative heart of special education”, a “Bill of Rights for children with exceptionalities and their families”, and “the single most important piece of legislation” regarding youth with disabilities (Gargiulo, Hulett).

Prior to the passage of EAHCA, “one point seventy-five million students with disabilities did not receive educational services and three million who were admitted to school did not receive an appropriate education to meet their needs” (Yell, 2006, p. 70). Furthermore, Ysseldyke, Algozzine, and Thurlow (2000) note that prior to the passage of EAHCA, the following issues were considered common practices in special education - identification and placement of children with disabilities were haphazard, inconsistent, and generally inappropriate; blacks, Hispanics, and some other groups were often stereotyped and disproportionately placed in special education programs; parental involvement was generally discouraged; special education placements were often made with the goal of avoiding disruption in the general classroom; both special educators and regular educators were competitors for resources; and consequently the two groups didn’t work in a spirit of cooperation (pp. 55-56).

The EAHCA of 1975 effectively addressed the issue of access to a free education for youth with disabilities. This significant legislation established enduring principles which shape special education practice today (Gargiulo, 2003). These principles - a free appropriate public education (FAPE); the least restrictive environment (LRE); an individualized education program
(IEP); procedural due process; nondiscriminatory assessment; and parental participation - became the “six pillars” of the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Gargiulo, 2003; Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006).

According to Hulett (2009), the EAHCA outlines the six pillars of special education policy. The first “pillar”, a free appropriate public education (FAPE), is based upon a “zero reject” philosophy in which all children despite the extent of the disability cannot be denied the right to an education. The second “pillar”, least restrictive environment (LRE), refers to placement in which a student with disabilities receives instruction. The law requires that students with disabilities be educated with their non-disabled peers to the maximum appropriate extent. The third “pillar”, the individualized education program (IEP), is the document developed by an IEP team that is tailored specifically for the student with disabilities. The IEP denotes the plan and procedure in which educational services will be rendered and those responsible for these services and resources allocated. The fourth “pillar”, procedural due process, is the requirement that affords the student and parents/guardians safeguards pertaining to the student’s education. For example, the safeguards include - the right to confidentiality of records; the right to examine all records; the right to receive written notification (in native language) of changes to educational classification or placement; the right to an impartial hearing in the event of a disagreement concerning educational plans, and the right to legal representation. The fifth “pillar”, nondiscriminatory assessment, refers to the process of evaluating a student with disabilities. The student must be evaluated by a multidisciplinary team using tests that are neither racially, culturally, nor linguistically biased. Finally, the last “pillar”, parental participation, refers to “meaningful parental involvement” and requires that parents participate in the decision-making process that affects the child’s education.
Evolution of Special Education Policy: EHA to IDEA, IDEA to IDEIA

‘The law never is. The law is always about to be.’

–Former US Supreme Court Justice Benjamin Cardozo (as cited in Hulett, 2009)

The evolutionary nature of special education policy like other human and civil rights challenges is perpetuated by the “symbiotic relationship” between litigation and legislation (Gargiulo, 2003; Yell, 2006). Furthermore, Gargiulo (2003) notes that the mutual interdependent relationship between these two processes “played major roles in the development of state and federal policy concerning special education” (p. 42). Some researchers contend that in order to better understand special education practice, the reader must gain a better perspective of special education policy since “much of special education today has a legal foundation (Gargiulo, 2003; Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000). Thus, a brief discussion of types of law, key litigation and key legislation that shaped special education policy follows. A flow chart is also included at the end of this section to clarify for the reader the relationship between litigation and legislation among key pieces of legislation.

There are four types of law in America: constitutional, statutory, regulatory (administrative) and case (Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006). Constitutional law is also known as the Supreme law and no single statute, regulation or case can violate the Constitution (Hulett, 2009, p. 6). Statutory laws are those policies created by legislative bodies. These policies are also known as legislative law, federal statutes, or public law (e.g., P.L. 94-142). Regulatory or administrative laws are federal regulations created for the practical implementation of the statute’s provisions (Hulett, 2009, p. 6). Finally, case law is the Court’s interpretations of the intent of Congress regarding statutory laws. The interpretation of statutory law becomes the obligation of the Court when a statue is contested (Hulett, 2009, p. 8). Hulett (2009) also notes
that court decisions can become precedents. However, precedents set at the federal level
generally apply to the states while precedents set at local and state levels only apply to specific
jurisdictions. Typically, litigation leads to legislation, which leads to more litigation when
disputes arise or a clarification is needed.

The Brown (1954) case, as noted earlier, was the catalyst that spurred litigation for the
educational rights of children with disabilities (e.g., PARC, 1972, and Mills, 1972). The Court’s
decisions in these cases set precedents for all states to follow regarding the educational rights for
all children with disabilities. Following the successful litigation of the PARC and Mills cases,
the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, EAHCA (P.L. 94-142) “incorporated the rights
from PARC and Mills into law” (Yell, 2006, p. 77). The EAHCA was amended in 1977, 1983,
and 1986. These Amendments allowed for the following modifications - the extension of
authority for discretionary programs and the elimination of the National Advisory Committee on
the Handicapped; the strengthening of the support programs covered in Part D (grants and
contracts managed and awarded at the national level) to promote integration of children with
severe disabilities including the creation of institutions; the promotion of transitions from school
to adult living; a change in the statewide service systems; made least restrictive environment a
requirement; and completed the age mandate of P.L. 94-142 by establishing a phase-in FAPE for
preschool” (Hulett, 2009, pp. 29-30).

In October 1990, the Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments (P.L. 101-476)
were signed into law by President George H. W. Bush (Ysseldyke, Algozzine & Thurlow, 2000).
The 1990 Amendments provided the following modifications - addition of transition services as
required content of the IEP; the addition of two disability categories, traumatic brain injury and
autism; the change in name to IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act); the establishment of a national parent training and information center (Hulett, 2009).

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was also signed into law in 1990 and is considered “the most significant civil rights legislation affecting individuals with disabilities (Gargiulo, 2003; Ysseldyke, Algozzine & Thurlow, 2000). The ADA guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in employment, public accommodation, transportation, state and local government agencies, and telecommunications (Ysseldyke et al., 2000, p. 313). Furthermore, this law protects any person with an impairment that substantially limits a major life activity (Gargiulo, 2003, p. 49). Yell (2006) notes that “the effect of ADA on special education services for students with disabilities is limited to reinforcing and extending the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act which prohibits recipients of federal funds from discriminating practices against individuals with disabilities” (p. 155).

The 1990 Amendments of EAHCA changed the name of the law to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). IDEA was further refined by the 1997 and 2004 Amendments. These amendments allowed for the following modifications - the addition of new IEP contents and changes in the IEP team; the addition of new disciplinary provisions; the requirement that states offer mediation to parents prior to due process hearings; the reorganization in structure of IDEA; the definition of “highly qualified” special education teacher; the removal of short-term objectives requirement from IEP except for severe disabilities; the prohibition of state requirements for school district’s use of a discrepancy formula for eligibility determination of students with learning disabilities; and the encouraged use of a response-to-intervention model when determining whether students were learning disabled (Yell, 2006, p. 78).
IDEA to IDEIA

The 2004 Amendments to IDEA are also known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), P.L. 108-446. President George W. Bush signed this bill into law on December 3, 2004. The IDEIA or IDEA 2004 was developed in response to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006). Specifically, the primary goal of Congress in passing IDEA 2004 was to align IDEA with NCLB, thereby increasing accountability for improving student performance (Yell, 2006, p. 106). Moreover, Hulett (2009) describes this federal legislation alignment of NCLB and IDEA 2004 as the mark of “a confluence of the two largest pieces of federal education legislation in the history of the nation, melding the broad accountability of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) with the singular focus on children with disabilities of IDEA” (p. 71).

The NCLB (2001) comprehensively solidifies academic achievement (e.g., proficiency and graduation) for all students and accountability for all schools in all districts by requiring districts and states to report educational outcomes for each group of students. The congressional intent of NCLB is to “close the achievement gap between minority and low-income students and their more affluent white peers (Hulett, 2009, p. 71). Furthermore, Congress wanted to see evidence of this academic progress for each subgroup of students (e.g., Caucasian, African American, non-white Hispanic, Asian, Native American, low income, disabled) and holds schools accountable for reporting the results.

Likewise, Congress amended IDEA to address academic achievement of students with disabilities and accountability within the special education program. For example, Yell (2006) notes changes in the IEP process: to make it easier for IEP teams to navigate, to reduce paperwork and meetings, and to increase accountability. Hulett (2009) notes the adoption of
The specific impact of IDEA 2004 on the IEP document, the IEP process and IEP team will be discussed in a following section. A few researchers describe the meaningful impact of NCLB and IDEA 2004 (IDEIA) on the academic achievement of students with disabilities. However, the success of the implementation of IDEA 2004 has yet to materialize in the educational progress of students with disabilities. One of the issues of implementation in the IEP process is adequate monitoring of the progress of students with disabilities. Adequate monitoring of the progress of students with disabilities toward meeting goals may improve transition outcomes for students with disabilities. Educational staff may need to reconvene IEP conferences more often annually in order to ensure the success of students with disabilities.
Figure 1. Key Special Education Litigation and Legislation (Gargiulo, 2003; Yell, 2006).
The Importance of the Individual Education Program

The educational rights of students with disabilities improved with each modification of the federal legislation regarding their access to public schools. For example, Yell (2006) notes that the statutes of the Education for All Handicapped Act provided access to the general education curriculum while the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act enhanced the quality of education by monitoring the outcomes for students with disabilities. Key pieces of federal legislation and key litigation shaped the development process of the individual education program or IEP so extensively that the document is regarded as “the keystone of the Individual with Disabilities Act” (Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006).

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is the document which directs all educational aspects for students with disabilities (Yell, 2006). For example, the goals which students are expected to meet, the placement of the student for instruction, the services the students will receive, the delivery mode of those services, the way in which students are evaluated and the way in which goals are measured are all documented in the IEP (Yell, 2006). The IEP also serves the following purposes in educating students with disabilities (Yell, 2006).

The IEP is a communication vehicle between parent and schools. The IEP is a management tool with a set of procedures mandated by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and a list of resources needed for the student to receive an appropriate education. The IEP also serves to hold schools accountable for the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE). The IEP is a compliance/monitoring tool which is used by state and federal agencies to monitor services for students with disabilities as well as courts to assess compliance with the FAPE mandate set forth by IDEA (Nevin, Semmel, & McCann, 1981, p. 16).

Finally, the IEP is a tool in which the student’s progress is evaluated according to the extent in which IEP goals are met (Yell, 2006, p. 273).
The IEP is defined as a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with section 1414 of the United States Code. Section 1414 (d)(1)(A) states that the IEP includes:

(I) a statement of the child’s present levels of academic achievement and functional performance,

(II) a statement of measurable goals,

(III) a description of the child’s progress toward meeting the annual goals

(IV) a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the child, or on the behalf of the child, and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided for the child,

(V) an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with nondisabled children in the regular class and in the activities described in subclause (IV)(cc),

(VI) a statement of any individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child on State and districtwide assessments consistent with section 612(a)(16)(A) [20 USCS § 1412 (a)(16)(A)];

(VII) the projected date for the beginning of the services and modifications described in subclause (IV), and the anticipated frequency, location and duration of those services and modifications,

(VIII) beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child is 16, and updated annually thereafter--

The Individual Education Program as a Foundation for Success

The IEP is the document that establishes the foundation of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities (Yell, 2006). Therefore the procedures encompassing the development and implementation of the IEP should be strictly adhered to by the school professionals (Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006). In fact, the best practice in servicing students with disabilities in developing (writing) and implementing IEP’s is through a team of professionals (Brownell, Adams, Sindelar & Waldron, 2006). The composition of the IEP team includes the parents/guardians of the student, the student (when appropriate), the special education teacher, the regular education teacher, the school district or local education agency
(LEA) representative, and a professional qualified to discuss evaluation results. Likewise, the participation of these individuals as IEP team members is mandated by IDEA (Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006). Psychologists, therapists, and social workers are professionals who may participate as IEP team members as well. Once the IEP team is established, the IEP team convenes to plan and draft the initial IEP. During this time of IEP planning, parents and other school personnel work collaboratively to develop the following components of the IEP document - the vision statement or future planning; the present levels of performance; goals and objectives; special education services and/or other related services; the extent in which the student will not participate in the general education curricula; accommodations for state- or district-wide assessments; projected date for beginning services and modifications as well as anticipated frequency, location, and duration of services; and a statement of postsecondary goals and transition services (Gargiulo, 2003; Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000). After the IEP team comes to consensus to approve the draft of the IEP document, revisions are made where appropriate and copies are printed with the original copy filed in the student’s cumulative folder. The parents and the special education teacher each receive a copy of the IEP document. The Individualized Education Program is reviewed and/or revised at least annually as mandated by IDEA Regulations, 34 C.F.R. § 300.343(d) (Yell, p. 302).

Since the IEP document is considered the keystone of IDEA, failure to properly develop and implement it may render a student’s entire special education program invalid in the eyes of the courts (Yell, 2006, p. 273). Therefore, further discussion pertaining to the members of the IEP team and their specific roles in participating in the development of the IEP will follow.
IEP Team Participants

The Individuals with Disabilities Act mandates the persons required to participate as members of the IEP team for the development and implementation of the individual education program of a student with disabilities (Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006). The required IEP team participants are the parents/guardians of the student, the student (when appropriate), special education teacher, regular education teacher, school district or local education agency (LEA) representative, and a professional qualified to discuss evaluation results. Other professionals (e.g., attorneys, advocates) can participate in the IEP conference at the discretion of both the school and parents for mediation purposes.

Parent as IEP Team Member

IDEA clearly states that parents are equal partners in the development of the individual education program (Yell, 2006, p. 281). Furthermore, equal partnership is clarified as the right to active participation in all the discussions regarding developing, reviewing, or revising the IEP for their child (Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006). In other words, the parents of students with disabilities have the right to actively participate in the decision-making process during IEP development which occurs at the IEP annual conference. The parents are considered one of the two most valuable members of the IEP (the other being the student) because they can provide critical information needed to plan the educational services for the student. Research indicates that parental participation is valuable to the process of IEP development (Cimera & Rusch, 2000; Furney & Salembier, 2000). These researchers conclude that cultivating family involvement in the IEP development process enhances the quality of education planning. Specifically, Furney and Salembier (2000) conclude that parental participation has been linked to positive parent/professional relationship developments and positive education outcomes. Moreover, Yell
(2006) notes the regulations schools must follow in notifying parents regarding the time, purpose, and location of the annual IEP conference (p. 282).

**Student as IEP Team Member**

The student (when appropriate) is considered a required participant of the IEP team. Additionally, schools must notify parents that the student may attend the annual IEP conference. Yell (2006) notes that the student must be invited when transition services are being discussed. For example, Martin, Marshall, and Sale (2004) completed a three-year study of middle, junior high, and high school IEP meetings to collect data regarding student and parent participation. Specifically, these researchers conclude that student attendance adds value-added benefits and validated the usefulness of student participation, student attendance improved parent’s understanding regarding the purpose of the meeting when students were present at IEP meetings, parents were more open when students were present at IEP meetings, and better understood what was said and knew what to do next; administrators talked more about the student’s strengths, needs and interests; and general education teachers felt more comfortable being open, understood the process better and felt better about the meeting - when students were present at IEP annual conferences. Moreover, some researchers indicate that a lack of student involvement in the IEP process leads to issues such as student low self-esteem and limited academic success due to the student’s limited understanding of his/her disability (Cimera & Rusch, 2000; Hulett, 2009; Patton, 2004).

**Special Education Teacher as IEP Team Member**

The student’s special education teacher is a required IEP team member because the special education teacher will also implement the individual education program. Although the primary role of special education teacher is perceived as the member who functions in
developing the IEP, the IEP process is team oriented. The intent of IDEA is to ensure that at least one of the members of the IEP team has expertise in the student’s disability (Yell, 2006, p. 284). Hulett (2009) notes other various functions of the special education teacher as IEP team member, such as, chairing the meeting, facilitating discussion, and handling the paperwork (p. 151).

Regular Education Teacher as IEP Team Member

The student’s regular education teacher is required to participate in the IEP development if the student with disability is participating or might participate in the general education curriculum (Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006). The participation of the regular education teacher is viewed by Congress as “central” in educating students with disabilities and is considered appropriate in determining behavioral interventions and strategies, supplementary aids/services, program modifications, and support for school personnel (Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006). Moreover, Nevin, Semmel, and McCann (1981) conducted a study to determine the impact of the regular education teacher’s participation upon the IEP process. These researchers indicate the results of this study were highly consistent since the data was triangulated from three different sources. Nevin et al. found that regular education teachers were basically uninvolved in the formal aspects of IEP development and implementation due to lack of attendance during IEP planning and review meetings; did not receive a copy of the student’s IEP; and did not refer to a copy when access was available (p. iv). Likewise, Ysseldyke, Algozine and Allen (1981) also conducted a study investigating the IEP placement decision-making process and the extent of participation of the regular education teacher. Ysseldkye et al. report that teachers participated (talked) in the IEP placement meetings for an average of twenty-seven percent of the meeting time. These researchers also report that out of this average rate of participation that forty-three
percent of the teacher’s participation dealt with classroom data and forty-seven percent of the participation dealt with subjective/irrelevant information suggesting that district practice is not reflective of the intent of the law – meaningful participation.

*LEA Representative as IEP Team Member*

IDEA mandates the participation of a representative of the local education agency or school district. Legislation clarifies that this representative can be the principal or designee, assistant principal, or special education coordinator (Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006). These researchers agree that the LEA representative is responsible for the administration and supervision of the IEP; therefore, he or she must be considerably competent in the area of special education.

*A Qualified Professional as IEP Team Member*

Finally, IDEA mandates the participation of a professional who is able to evaluate the results of assessments to interpret the instructional implications concerning the student with disabilities (Yell, 2006, p. 285). Hulett (2009) notes this professional is often the same person who is able to evaluate results in determining eligibility for special education programming. This qualified professional is required to articulate the relationship between assessment results and the individual needs of the student with disabilities. Although IDEA requires these various participants as IEP team members, both researchers agree that the IEP team membership should be kept to a small number of members to facilitate collaboration, openness, and increased active parental involvement.

**Impact of IDEA 1997 and 2004 on the IEP Team Membership**

Further discussion is needed for the purpose of this study regarding the impact of the 1997 and 2004 amendments of IDEA upon the membership of the IEP team and the IEP planning process. The members of the IEP team, as noted earlier, are responsible for the
development of the IEP for students with disabilities during the planning process. Therefore, local education agencies are responsible for informing school personnel in special education about these changes so that compliance issues are kept minimal.

Huefner (2000) notes the impact of the 1997 amendments to the Individual with Disabilities Act. First, the overall change expands the language of IDEA, which leads to increased responsibilities for IEP teams. For example, IDEA 1997 requires the presence of a local education agency (LEA) representative which can be a special education teacher or regular education teacher as long as the person is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum and resources available in the school district. IDEA 1997 requires the presence of both special education and regular education teachers.

The 2004 amendments of the Individuals with Disabilities Act further refined the IEP planning process. Yell (2006) notes that these amendments included six provisions to reduce time demands on team members therefore streamlining the planning process. However, the parents and school personnel must agree when implementing these provisions (p. 280). For example, a member of the IEP team is not required to attend an IEP meeting or other meetings if the student’s parents and the school personnel agree in writing that the person’s attendance is not necessary because his or her area of curriculum or related services are not being addressed. Furthermore, a member may be excused from the IEP meeting if he or she submits a written request to the parents and the IEP team and both parties agree to excuse this particular IEP team member (Yell, 2006, p. 280). Finally, IDEA 2004 allows other forms of participation in the IEP meetings, such as, videoconferencing or conference calling. Moreover, alternative means of facilitating placement or mediation meetings, resolution sessions and the administrative aspects of due process hearings may be used as long as both the parents and LEA agree to this provision.
However, Yell (2006) warns against making these alternative means common practice in the planning process since the intent of the legislation is meaningful participation among IEP team members (p. 280).

Some researchers investigated the extent of participation of the IEP team members during IEP meetings as a means to lend data so that school professionals can better comply with IDEA mandates for IEP team participation (Furney & Salembier, 2000; Martin, Marshall & Sale, 2004; Nevin, Semmel & McCann, 1981; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Allen, 1981).

Transition Planning and the IEP

...Having students with disabilities participate in their IEP’s is not only a fashionable policy, it is the law. –Cimera and Rusch (2000)

Transition is defined as the point at which change occurs in somebody’s life (Cimera & Rusch, 2000). All humans are affected or impacted by transitions occurring in their lives. Some researchers agree that transition for students with disabilities can be more difficult than transition for students without disabilities. The inclusion of students with disabilities in their IEP development, specifically transition planning, encourages discussion needed to develop an educationally beneficial Individual Education Program (Cimera & Rusch, 2000; Furney & Salembier, 2000; Gargiulo, 2003; Kohler & Chapman, 1999; Martin, Marshall & Sale, 2004; Patton, 2004; Trach & Sheldon, 2000; Wagner & Blackorby, 1996). Furthermore, planning and implementing transition services for students with disabilities is mandated by federal law.

In 1990, the requirement for transition services for 16 year old students with disabilities was added to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Specifically, the IEP must contain a statement of needed transition services. According to Yell (2006), transition services are defined as:
a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based upon the individual student’s needs, taking into account the student’s preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, 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. (p. 297)

Since the addition of this requirement, the trend in research concerning students with disabilities has begun to focus on the importance of transition services and planning (Cimera & Rusch, 2000; Patton, 2004; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997; Trach & Sheldon, 2000). While educators may have a renewed focus on transitional services, they are not new.

According to Cimera and Rusch (2000), the issue of transition for individuals with disabilities was formerly addressed in Congress with the passing of laws at the end of World Wars I and II to facilitate integration of veterans into the job force (p. 61). However, the issue of transitioning students from school to adult life was initially addressed in 1984 by Madeline Will, the Assistant Secretary of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, OSERS (Cimera & Rusch, 2000; Gargiulo, 2003; Patton, 2004). Will (as cited in Gargiulo, 2003) articulated the current perspective regarding transition for students with disabilities as:

a period that includes high school, the point of graduation, additional postsecondary education or adult services, and the initial years in employment. Transition is a bridge between the security and structure offered by the school and the opportunities and risks of adult life…The transition from school to work and adult life requires sound preparation in the secondary school, adequate support at the point of school leaving, and secure opportunities and services, if needed, in adult situations. (p. 33)

Will’s perspective became the framework and model integral to the current paradigm of transition services and planning for students with disabilities.
The thought concerning student IEP attendance has evolved over the last decade. In 1997 with the reauthorization of IDEA, legislators focused on integrating transition planning within the process of education planning for students with disabilities starting at 14 years of age and required students with disabilities to attend the IEP meeting at the age of 14 (Hulett, 2009; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000). In 2004, Congress reverted to the previous age requirement of 16 years old for attendance. Moreover, research suggests that student participation in the IEP process specifically transition planning is directly linked to positive postsecondary outcomes (Patton, 2004; Ysseldyke et al., 2000).

The IEP Transition Page

Preparing our nation’s young people for lives as independent adults has long been a goal of American secondary education (Gargiulo, 2003, p. 32). The transition planning process is the “link” between school and society. Every sixteen year old student with disabilities should have a transition page developed and incorporated into the IEP and every fourteen year old student with disabilities should have a statement of needed transition services incorporated into the IEP. The development of the transition page is critical because the goals of these transition services address the students in the following areas - instruction, community service, employment, and other adult-living objectives (Yell, 2006). The achievement of these transition goals translates to a better quality of life in adulthood for students with disabilities (Gargiulo, 2003). For example, Benz, Lindstrom, and Yovanoff (as cited in Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002) identify career-related work experience and the completion of student-identified transition goals as highly associated with improved graduation and employment outcomes. Furthermore, IDEA 2004 (IDEIA) requires IEP teams to prepare recommendations and a summary of the student’s academic achievement and functional performance, which includes recommendations on how to
assist the student to meet postsecondary goals (IDEA, 20 U.S.C. §1414(e)(5)(B)(ii)). Likewise, research indicates the need for comprehensive transitional planning with a broad focus (Childre & Chambers, 2005; The PACER Center, 2006; Warger & Burnette, 2000).

Research from the PACER Center (2006) emphasizes the importance of collaboration in transition planning by suggesting the following actions - communicating and deciding how to work together; considering [the] needs, interests, and preferences of the student; including the student, parents, and interagency representatives; sharing resources, knowledge, unique experience/expertise, and successful outcomes. The PACER Center is a parent training and information center for families of children and youth with all disabilities from birth through twenty-one years old. Childre and Chambers (2005) suggest that the best practice approach for the IEP process is student-centered. These researchers analyzed the perception of family members (e.g., parents). The findings indicate that the IEP team participants planned more actively when using the SCIEP model. The Student Centered Individualized Education Planning or SCIEP model is a protocol used to guide the IEP team in improved planning. Families of students with disabilities were more satisfied with the outcomes of the planning process, and families demonstrated an increased level of input. Moreover, Warger and Burnette (2000) also report that student-focused planning is a necessary component in facilitating transition. Accordingly, a comprehensive student-centered approach seems to be best practice in fulfilling the federal mandate in developing goals for transition planning for students with disabilities.

The central transition goal for students with disabilities is preparation for employment, either supported employment for those students with severe disabilities or competitive employment for those students with mild disabilities. Some research indicates there are various predictors of employment for students with disabilities (Kohler & Chapman, 1999; Phelps &
Hanley-Maxwell, 1997). For instance, Kohler and Chapman (1999) identify a study by Benz, Yovanoff, and Doren which “suggested that two or more work experiences during school were related to competitive employment and that career awareness…[was] predictive of productive engagement” (p. 114). Further, Phelps and Hanley Maxwell (1997) report that “competitive employment was correlated with functional mental skills, participation in vocational courses, and school-supervised work experiences” (p. 208). Furthermore, Phelps and Hanley-Maxwell posit that studies indicated that employment during the high school years (e.g. summer jobs, school-year jobs) have been consistently related to better post-school employment outcomes for students with disabilities. These few studies indicate the need to support students with disabilities in transitioning from school to post-secondary options such as employment and suggest the need for efficacious development of transition goals during the IEP process.

The Impact of NCLB on Special Education and the IEP

As a process and document, the IEP was designed to carry into implementation the law’s intent of an appropriate education. Unfortunately, after a decade or more, the effort at fulfilling the law’s intent (exemplary compliance) remains mired in acquiescence. –Smith (1990)

The No Child Left Behind Act is described as a “massive and complex law” consisting of ten major divisions or titles with the primary goal of “closing the achievement gap between minority and low-income students and their more affluent white peers” (Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006). Moreover, NCLB ensures that students in every public school achieve important learning goals while being educated in safe classrooms by well-prepared teachers (Yell, 2006, p. 180). The content of the NCLB Act is based largely on Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and the Improving America’s Schools Act (IASA) of 1994. The No Child Left Behind Act mandates states to be accountable to and for all children they are
responsible for educating. This section will describe NCLB as it relates to special populations as well as its effect on the IEP process, accountability, adequate yearly progress, statewide assessments, and special education teachers.

No Child Left Behind, as a standards-based reform initiative, mandates accountability for educators working with students with disabilities through the development of an IEP. However, like other educational policies, NCLB affects districts in different ways depending on the school needs. One study investigated the potential impact of implementing the standards-based reform initiative of NCLB within an urban special education program. Voltz and Fore (2006) examined the context of standards-based reform in urban special education since the implementation of the NCLB (2001). They discuss the characteristics of urban special education (cultural/linguistic diversity, resource inequities, impact of poverty, home-school relationships, and depressed student achievement), and the implications of standards-based reform in urban special education. Voltz and Fore (2006) contend there are some potential advantages, such as, the attention drawn to students with disabilities by the accountability measure; and some potential problems, such as the inflexibility of standardized curriculum and the increase number of referrals of students to special education programs. Further, Voltz and Fore (2006) conclude that the potential problems of standards-based reform implementation could jeopardize the central theme of special education programs which is individualized instruction; and that the success of this implementation is dependent upon teachers. These researchers argue that the complexity of an urban school district presents various factors which affect the implementation of standards-based reform in the context of special education. For example, cultural differences between urban special education teachers and students create difficulty in teaching. These cultural differences between teachers and students may lead to unnecessary referrals for behavior since culture
influences behavior (p. 331). Voltz and Fore (2006) contend that urban school districts are forced to implement this reform with the lowest level of state financial support; with twenty-four percent of the students living below the poverty line; and with the lowest-performing group of students. Nevertheless, state accountability in educating students including students with disabilities is a central theme in the intent of NCLB (Hulett, 2009, p. 78).

Advocates of the standards-based reform believe that the low expectations for students and poor academic achievement can be improved by raising standards and holding teachers as well as students accountable (Voltz & Fore, 2006). Although some urban districts are experiencing progress, there are some implications which should be considered.

State accountability is measured as adequate yearly progress or AYP (Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006). Adequate yearly progress is an annual measure of progress of all subgroups of students (including students with disabilities) toward “proficiency” in a subject area as set forth by each state. Specifically, the impact of NCLB on students with disabilities is reflected in the IDEA 2004 (IDEIA). IDEA 2004 incorporates the accountability measure by holding states responsible for establishing “performance goals and indicators for students with disabilities as criteria for receiving IDEA funding” (Hulett, 2009, p. 79). Moreover, Hulett notes the state goals and performance indicators by law must:

- promote the purposes of the IDEA 2004 set forth in Section 601(d); match the state’s definition of AYP, including its objectives for progress by children with disabilities described in the state’s definition of AYP under Section 6311(b)(2)(c) of NCLB; address graduation and dropout rates, as well as other factors determined by the state; and stay consistent, to the maximum extent possible, with any other goals and standards for children established by the state. (p. 79)

The performance of students with disabilities along with their non-disabled peers is indicated by their results on state-wide assessments which determine the adequate yearly progress of school districts. NCLB requires that all students participate in the state- and district-
wide assessments. The participation of students with disabilities in these assessments necessitates the provision of appropriate accommodations as part of the responsibility of the school districts. These accommodations are determined by the student’s IEP team and must be documented within the student’s IEP as mandated by IDEA 2004 (Yell, 2006, p. 190).

Additionally, NCLB extends the same provision of public school choice to all students including students with disabilities when a school fails to meet AYP for two consecutive years. According to Hulett (2009), the public school choice is the option which allows parents to transfer their students to high-performing schools within the district. Furthermore, NCLB gives priority to the lowest-achieving students from the most disadvantaged families (p. 80). The public school choice option for families of students with disabilities is the same as the option for families of non-disabled students with the following exception - the receiving school is allowed to determine how to proceed with the provision of a free appropriate public education or FAPE. The receiving school has the option of continuing with the current IEP or convening a IEP team meeting to develop a new IEP (Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006). Moreover, school districts must consider the student’s needs and the receiving school’s ability to provide FAPE when transferring students with disabilities (Hulett, 2009, p. 80).

Another provision of NCLB that applies to students with disabilities as well as their nondisabled peers is access to supplemental education services (e.g. tutoring) when schools fail to meet AYP for three consecutive years (Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006). More specifically, when supplemental education services are offered to students with disabilities, the service provider must include a statement of goals and progress for the student that is consistent with the student’s IEP timetable (Yell, 2006).
Finally, the quality and skill of teachers are extremely important factors in student achievement (Yell, 2006, p. 205). These factors were also incorporated into the No Child Left Behind Act in Title II: Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers and Principals. Each state education agency is required to annually “boost…the percentage of teachers of core content areas who are deemed highly qualified under the law until end of the 2005-2006 school year (Hulett, 2009, p. 73). The No Child Left Behind Act also requires notification to be sent to parents if a student is taught by a teacher not deemed “highly qualified” for four or more consecutive weeks. This notification requirement is also extended to parents of student with disabilities. However, the “highly qualified” requirement impacts special education teachers at the secondary level (middle school and high school) differently. According to Yell (2006), special education teachers at the secondary level may teach more than one core subject area (e.g., math, science, history). The secondary special education teacher must meet the same criteria as the secondary general education teacher plus be highly-qualified in the core subject areas in which he or she teaches. In other words if a special education teacher is staffed in a self-contained class, he or she will need to be highly qualified in multiple core academic subjects versus a regular education teacher being highly qualified in one core academic subject (p. 209).

Challenges of IEP Compliance

As mentioned previously, the IEP document is the “keystone of IDEA”. The IEP document is cited as having various uses within the IEP process (Nevin, Semmel & McCann, 1981; Yell, 2006). The IEP document is a communication vehicle between parents and school personnel which ensures equal participation of parents and joint decision-making between parents and school personnel. The IEP document is also a management tool because it documents the resources and services the student will receive from the school in providing a
“free appropriate public education” (FAPE). Likewise, the IEP document is considered an accountability tool which “legally” commits the school in providing FAPE. Furthermore, state or federal governmental agencies may use the IEP document as compliance and/or monitoring tool to determine if schools are compliant with the mandates of IDEA. Finally, the IEP is an evaluative tool used to determine if the student is meeting the annual goals and objectives to progress academically. Therefore, the need to briefly discuss the issues surrounding the IEP document and the IEP process seems appropriate.

According to some researchers, the IEP process has endured at least two decades of challenges that seem to hinder the “intent and spirit” of the law - EACHA, 1975; IDEA 1990, 1997, 2004 (Huefner, 2000; Hulett, 2009; McLaughlin & Warren, 1995; Smith, 1990; Yell, 2006; Ysseldyke, Algozzine & Thurlow, 2000). In an attempt to simplify the plethora of issues plaguing the IEP document and the IEP process, a few researchers have classified the issues into the following categories, such as, problems with IEP development; problems with the IEP requirements; common issues and litigation; and pedagogical problems and legal errors (Huefner, Hulett, Yell). As a growing area of special education inquiry, many researchers have studied transition challenges associated with student and parent participation, development and implementation of transition plans (Cimera & Rusch, 2000; Furney & Salembier, 2000; Gargiulo, 2003; Kohler & Chapman, 1999; Martin, Marshall & Sale, 2004; Patton, 2004; Trach & Sheldon, 2000; Wagner & Blackorby, 1996). For example, Furney and Salembier (2000) reviewed the literature investigating the nature and role of student/parent participation during the IEP transition planning process. The results of the studies reviewed indicated that students with disabilities who dropped out had not been effectively involved in the IEP conferences; students with disabilities who seemed more self-determined had more positive adult outcomes; person-
centered planning strategies are associated with improving self-advocacy and self-determination among students with disabilities and parents (Furney & Salembier, 2000). Although the research has been consistent in the identification of the problems involving the IEP document process and recommended best practices, the same problems remain (Hulett, 2009; Smith, 1990; Yell, 2006; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000). Likewise, Smith (1990) notes early concerns relative to paper compliance juxtaposed to actual implementation, as well as concerns associated with multiple interpretations of the IEP team members when using the multidisciplinary approach during the IEP process (p. 7). Moreover, Smith cited that these concerns were confirmed by the evidence of early IEP research findings of the early to mid-1980s.

Currently, there are seven major categories of concerns surrounding the IEP process. These categories include improper committee composition, improper development procedures, failure to observe the timeliness requirement for development, omission of required portions of the IEP, failure to provide included services, delay in implementation and failure to provide included services on a cost-free basis (Hulett, p. 146). Moreover, Yell (2006) cites a list of the ten most common mistakes in IEP development in which the number one mistake listed is: “the IEP team membership is incorrect or incomplete (p. 274).” Specifically, Yell (2006) suggests that “the procedural and substantive requirements of the IEP form the framework that guides the development and implementation of an individualized FAPE for a student” (p. 274).

As stated previously, research in the area of transition planning is growing and comes with its own set of issues specifically, compliance with the federal mandate (Sorrells, Rieth & Sindelar, 2004). For instance, Baer, Simmons, and Flexer (as cited in Sorrells et al.) conducted a study analyzing transition practices in the state of Ohio. Their findings suggest that schools were
paper compliant (i.e., development of transition document). However, the schools were not compliant in the provision of needed transition services (p. 190). Moreover, Sorrells, Rieth, and Sindelar (2004) suggest factors, such as, lack of understanding of what to implement, time demands, and the very complex nature of the transition process contribute to the variance between development and implementation.

This variance between paper compliance (IEP development) and compliance in implementation (i.e., delivery of services, provision of FAPE, etc.) is considered one of the more controversial issues concerning special education (Sorrells, Rieth, & Sindelar, 2004). Smith (1990) discussed studies which examined the IEP document for compliance in IEP development and again the findings indicated areas of noncompliance with missing information and improper committee composition. Furthermore, Nevin, Semmel, and McCann (1981) presented data which suggest a potential cause of this variance in compliance which lead to issues with IEP development and implementation. Specifically, these researchers cite “studies of the actual effects of education policies on the intended effects of the policies”. These studies indicate that variance is introduced when policies (i.e., statements of action) are implemented (i.e., translated into action). The lack of correlation between policy and practice affords educators a substantial amount of discretion in implementing policies (p. 22). Moreover, Glaser (as cited in Nevin, Semmel, & McCann, 1981) suggests that characteristics of the implementation environment, the implementing personnel, and the policy itself contribute to this variance between policy (statements of action) and implementation (actual practice) (p. 23).

Fowler (2004) seems to substantiate this theory that the lack of correlation between education policies and practice leads to a substantial amount of discretion in implementation. According to Fowler, broadly worded rules allow considerable flexibility to educators who are
lower in the hierarchy, while narrowly worded rules allow very little flexibility (p.10).

Furthermore, Fowler seems to support the theory that there are other characteristics not considered that influence this lack of correlation between policy and practice. These factors include the implementation environment, the implementing personnel, and the policy. For example, Fowler states that “educators are not robots who mechanically carry out orders issued from above. They are human beings with minds of their own, making decisions in a specific social and cultural context that they understand better than presidents, governors, legislators, and judges” (p. 11). Thusly, policies are always altered during implementation (Mazmanian & Sabatier, as cited in Fowler, 2004, p. 11).

While NCLB served to bring needed attention to special populations, there are still challenges. The research indicates that the full impact NCLB has on student performance is not readily revealed. Public employees, such as regular/special education teachers and administrators, “have substantial discretion in the execution of their work” (Nevin, Semmel, & McCann, 1981, p. 22). Unfortunately, this substantial discretion among human beings leads to the incongruence between paper compliance and implementation.

The Role of Graduation in America

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of IEP team composition and the content of the transition page on the successful school completion (e.g., graduation) of students with cognitive disabilities. Therefore, this section will discuss the role of graduation as a measure of educational success for students with cognitive disabilities.

The role of graduation in America is pivotal as it is a goal for every student. The graduation of a student from a public high school is depicted by a “pomp and circumstance” ceremony with the graduate adorned in a cap and gown. The graduate receives a diploma to
certify that he or she has met the academic requirements for graduation. Graduating from high school in America signifies the successful completion of 12-13 years of formal education and is considered a major accomplishment in the lives of adolescents. Moreover, the “point of graduation” can be viewed as the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Gargiulo, 2003). However, transitioning for students with disabilities tends to be difficult (Cimera & Rusch, 2000; Furney & Salembier, 2000; Gargiulo, 2003; Kohler & Chapman, 1999; Martin, Marshall & Sale, 2004; Patton, 2004; Trach & Sheldon, 2000; Wagner & Blackorby, 1996).

Although transitioning is generally difficult for students with disabilities, recent research seems to suggest that outcomes for students with disabilities are improving. For instance, data reported by the National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 (2005) (NLTS2) indicate gains in the number of students with disabilities completing high school. Seventy-two percent of out-of-school youth with disabilities completed high school by receiving a diploma or certificate of completion. The NLTS2 reports significant gains for students with disabilities classified as mentally retarded and learning disabled. The percentage points for students with disabilities in these two disability categories increased by 21 percentage points and 18 percentage points, respectively. School completion rates are quite high among youth with visual impairments and youth with hearing impairments (95 percent and 90 percent, respectively) (p. 2). This school completion rate among youth with visual impairments and youth with hearing impairments remains consistent over time. Likewise, the high school completion rate of students with emotional disabilities remains consistently low as compared to the high school completion rate of all students with disabilities (56% and 72% respectively).

Other factors influencing high school completion rates among students with disabilities are age, household income, and race. Older students with disabilities, ages 18 and 19, have a
higher school completion rate than younger students with disabilities, ages 15 through 17. However, students with disabilities, ages 15 through 17, experienced a gain of 37 percentage points since 1987 increasing the rate of school completion to forty-eight percent. Students with disabilities who resided in households with an income of $50,000 or more experienced a higher rate of high school completion than those students with disabilities residing in households with an income of less than $50,000. Students with disabilities identified as Hispanic lag behind students with disabilities identified as white or African-American by 17 percentage points (60%, 74%, and 77% respectively). Moreover, research data compiled for the U. S. Department of Education indicate an increase nationally in the number of students with disabilities graduating with a diploma or receiving a certificate of completion (Planty, Hussar, Synder, Provasnik, Kena, Dinkes, KewalRamani, & Kemp, 2008). Planty et al. reported an increase from 52% to 72% over a ten-year period.

These recent studies seem to indicate an upward progression in high school completion rates among students with disabilities. These data seem to also support the need to effectively plan for transitioning students through high school as mandated by special education policy.

Compliance with IEP Team Participation and Student Success

The research thus far seems limited in discussions relative to the relationship between IEP team participation/composition and the success (graduation/school completion) of students with disabilities. The studies examined and cited in this review of the literature analyzed the actual practice regarding parent and student participation in IEP process specifically transition planning (Furney & Salembier, 2000); the perceptions of IEP team members specifically the difference between one’s perception and role as an IEP team member (Martin, Marshall, & Sale, 2004); the decision-making process of special education (IEP) team and the extent/nature of
regular education teacher participation (Ysseldyke, Algozzine & Allen, 1981); the pertinent issues, practices, and perspectives in transition planning (Patton, 2004); and the role of the regular education teacher in IEP development and implementation (Nevin et al., 1981). The dearth within the research regarding compliance with IEP team participation/composition and the success (graduation, school completion) of students with disabilities is slowly declining which seems to clearly affirm the need for this study.

The Role of the IEP in the Success of Students with Disabilities

As discussed previously, the individual education plan or IEP document is considered the “keystone of IDEA”. Likewise, failure to properly develop and implement IEP may render a student’s special education program invalid in the eyes of the court.

Yell (2006) provides concise data regarding the role of the IEP with regards to graduation of students with disabilities. The IEP team should consider if the student has met the state requirements. For instance, the IEP team should ensure that the student has met the school’s regular high school graduation criteria, even though; the student may not have met the IEP goals. The IEP team must notify the parent because graduation is considered a change in placement and the procedural safeguards apply. Likewise, the IEP team must provide the student with a summary of his or her academic achievement and functional performance to include recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting postsecondary goals since FAPE ends once the student receives a regular diploma (p.241).

Furthermore, Gorn (as cited in Yell, 2006) suggests incorporating the state’s or district’s graduation criteria into the transition planning or development of annual IEP goals for students with disabilities. Moreover, the school district could continue to provide services to students with disabilities who have graduated if these students with disabilities could benefit from the
continuation of special education services. The IEP team would still be obligated at this point in determining FAPE (free appropriate public education) for the student (p.242).

One recent study examined the effects of high-stakes testing in relation to graduation and students with disabilities (Johnson, Thurlow, Cosio, & Bremer, 2005). The data revealed that 39 states allow local education agencies (LEA’s) to exercise discretion in determining graduation requirements. Furthermore, IEP teams play a role in determining graduation requirements for students with disabilities. The impact of graduation requirements on students with disabilities was also examined. The data revealed that most states using high-stakes testing as a graduation requirement allow modifications for students with disabilities. However, twenty-seven states require youth with disabilities to pass the exit exam (Johnson, Thurlow, Cosio, & Bremer, 2005). Moreover, Johnson et al. also report higher dropout rates and lower self esteem may result among students with disabilities in relation to this high-stakes testing graduation requirement.

The IEP document has been identified as having various purposes such as communication tool, management tool, compliance/monitoring tool, evaluation tool in ensuring the educational success of students with disabilities. However, the role of the IEP document in predicting the success (graduation, school completion) of students with disabilities has yet to be established through research. Some researchers consistently cite limited research as a limitation in the field of special education (Johnson, Thurlow, Cosio, and Bremer, 2005).

**Summary**

Some researchers agree that the Individualized Education Program (IEP) is the most significant document guiding the special education program for youth with disabilities. The IEP serves various functions within the special education program for students with disabilities; therefore, the issues surrounding the development and implementation of the IEP for the student
with disabilities are full of complexities. Furthermore, the IEP of students with disabilities is the single document that gives access to the general education curriculum and ensures a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) with accommodations as needed. However, compliance issues arise when educators are left to their own interpretation of the broad definitions of the federal law leading to the difference (variance) between paper compliance and actual implementation. Even though these issues exist, federal legislation, such as the *No Child Left Behind Act* positively effects the IEP process by establishing accountability measures to ensure the educational success of students with disabilities.

Additionally, the mandate to include parents and students in the IEP process has proven to be effective in ensuring educational success. Current studies relative to student/parent participation and IEP team membership reveal the need for compliance in planning, developing and implementing the Individual Education Program of students with disabilities. Moreover, the inclusion of parents and students with disabilities in transition planning is positively associated with improved educational outcomes, such as school completion and post-school employment.

This study seeks to examine the degree to which compliance in the development of transition outcomes and the involvement of team members impacts the success of students with disabilities in urban schools. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the ability of six variables (the types of transition outcomes, the number of transition activities, the IEP team composition (i.e. attendance at the annual conference), the age of the student at graduation, the gender of the student, and the status of the school) to predict the success (i.e. graduation/school completion) of students with cognitive disabilities.
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

This chapter will focus on the description of the research design, sample, instrumentation, variables and materials used to conduct the study. Additionally, the chapter describes data collection and data analysis procedures.

Research Design

This study utilized a correlational research design to explore the relationships pertaining to IEP team composition and transition variables, the number and types of transition outcomes, and graduation. Correlational research seeks to collect data in order to determine the degree to which a relationship exists (Frankel & Wallen, 1993). This study examined variables differing in nature. Some of the variables relative to transition planning are categorical. Categorical variables do not come from a normal distribution and a mean value cannot be calculated. Therefore, the non-parametric analysis chi-square test for independence was utilized for this study to test the hypotheses related to the relationships between these variables (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2002; Krathwohl, 1993). The remaining variables relative to IEP team attendance are continuous. Continuous variables come from a normal distribution and a mean value can be calculated. Therefore, the Pearson correlation was used to determine the degree of relationship among each IEP team member’s attendance at the annual IEP conference and the total number of transition outcomes. The null hypothesis for the chi-square test of independence states there is no relationship between two variables. When there is no relationship between variables, the variables are independent. The alternative hypothesis states there is a consistent, predictable relationship between two variables. The study examined the relationships between IEP team attendance and transition outcomes.
Sample

The sample for this study was drawn from two urban schools in a Midwestern school district with an average daily student enrollment of 9,000 students. The schools are located in a community with the population size of 66,095 people, according to the 2008 estimate accessed from the United States Census Bureau website (www.census.gov). The community is considered a small city and is ranked 20th in population size in the state. Approximately, 18.3% of the population, 25 to 44 years of age, is unemployed. The unemployment rate among blacks is 23% and among whites is 13.9% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey). Both schools are identified as Title I schools with similar rates of students eligible for free or reduced lunches (71% and 65.6%, respectively). School C has a student enrollment of 1,224, while School N has a student enrollment of 1,431 according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2006-2007 school year). Table 3.1 reflects the enrollment characteristics for both schools.
### Table 3.1

*Enrollment Data for Sample Site (National Center for Education Statistics)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment Characteristic</th>
<th>School C</th>
<th>School N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity/Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amer Indian/Alaskan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>864</td>
<td>1,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>708</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A report of all students with disabilities who entered the 2008-2009 school year as seniors was obtained from the district’s Office of Special Education once permission was granted to conduct the study by the Office of the Superintendent (see Appendix A). Fifty-five students with disabilities were selected from the report of all senior students for the 2008-2009 school year from both high schools. The IEP documents were collected for each student for the four school years between 2005-2006 and 2008-2009 consecutively resulting in a sample of 55 students ($n = 55$) and 134 IEP documents reviewed. The IEP documents for this study
were accessed through the student’s cumulative file once permission was granted by the Office of the Superintendent of the school district (see Appendix A). Once the selection process for the study began, the inclusion of all students with disabilities was a necessary adjustment due to the low availability of students with cognitive disabilities enrolled within the district.

Thirty of the fifty-five students (63% male) with disabilities were eighteen years old (55%) at graduation, while sixteen students with disabilities were nineteen years old (29.6%). Four students with disabilities were seventeen years old (7%) and four students were twenty years old (7%). One of the fifty-five students did not have data documenting age at graduation. Sixty-five percent of students with disabilities were categorized as learning disabled, 20% were categorized as cognitively impaired, and the remaining 15% were categorized as either other physical impairment, emotionally impaired, or speech and language impaired (7%, 5%, and 1.8%, respectively).

In an optimal situation, each student with special needs should have one IEP document on file per year as mandated by law; however, this was not the case for the sample in this study. Of the fifty-five students in the sample, only seven had four years of IEPs on file. Many of the files were incomplete due to issues such as personnel layoff and staff reduction in the district’s Office of Special Education. Table 3.2 reflects the frequency distribution relative to the number of IEP documents present for each student (n=55).
Table 3.2

*Frequency of the Number of IEPs Present*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of IEP Present in Cumulative File</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instrumentation

The Transition Services Checklist (TSC) was developed as a documentation tool for transition-related outcomes and activities in IEPs (Trach, as cited in Trach & Shelden, 2000). The checklist includes seven transition outcomes identified by IDEA: adult services, community participation, continuing and adult education, independent living, integrated employment, postsecondary education and vocational training (see Appendix B).

The Adult Services outcome is defined as accessing services that provide the necessary support for adult persons to live, work, and recreate in the community (e.g., be certified eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, apply for residential services). The Community Participation outcome is defined as participating in the community through established and recognized personal and social roles (e.g., register to vote, join a service organization). The Continuing and Adult Education outcome is defined as continuing education, for some stated purpose, through established and recognized personal and social roles (e.g., enroll in an adult art class pursue hobby, enroll in adult academic remediation courses). The Independent Living
outcome is defined as accessing a living environment determined by available resources, and options (e.g., rent an apartment with a friend, live in a group home). The Integrated Employment outcome is defined as being placed in a work setting for pay, and with support if necessary, while still in school, prior to graduation, and/or immediately upon graduation (e.g., participation in a work-study program, supported employment). The Postsecondary Education outcome is defined as preparing for and entrance to an institution of higher learning with the intent of accessing formal training to develop and prepare for a chosen career (e.g., enrollment in community college for associate’s degree, enrollment in a bachelor program). Finally, the Vocational Training outcome is defined as establishing activities that would continue a student’s training beyond high school in either a formal or informal setting with the intent of attaining an accepted skill level in a chosen profession or work area (e.g., auto mechanic program, nursing assistant program) (Trach & Shelden, 2000, p. 139).

Each outcome has six activities identified in the IDEA: (a) acquisition of daily living skills, (b) community experiences, (c) development of employment objectives, (d) development of other post-school adult objectives, (e) functional vocational evaluation, and (f) instruction (Trach & Shelden, p. 138).

The TSC allows for ratings of outcomes and activities as present, implied, or absent. A present rating score of 2 indicates that an explicit reference to planning for the outcome area or activity is made in the IEP goals and objectives. An implied rating score of 1 indicates an implicit reference to planning for the outcome area or activity is made in the IEP goals and objectives. An absent rating score of 0 indicates there is no explicit or implicit reference to the outcome area or activity within the IEP goals and objectives. Each outcome and each activity within each outcome was rated as previously described. The decision process for categorizing
outcomes and activities as present, implied, or absent is governed by a series of rules, examples, and non-examples developed for use of the TSC (see Appendix B).

Data Collection and Coding

The researcher coded each IEP document for each student with disabilities by concealing the name of the student and replacing the name of the student with a numerical code based on the student’s school identification number. Each coded IEP was examined to collect the following data: age, gender, IEP team composition, and transition content. The attendance of each IEP team member (IEP team composition) was determined by the signature of each member documented on the sign-in and/or signature pages of the IEP document. The IEP transition-related content was determined by using the modified Transition Services Checklist, TSC, to evaluate the transition page of each IEP document (see Appendix B).

A second-rater was utilized to ensure inter-rater reliability during the document review of the IEPs. The researcher selected a second rater based upon educational background and professional experiences. The second rater earned a Master of Social Work from the University of Michigan. She also served as a Commissioner and Site Visitor for the Council of Social Work Education to review social work programs for accreditation for eight years. These roles provided the necessary experience in practice of document review.

Thirty days prior to the document review phase of the study the second rater received training to become familiar with the instrument. The researcher distributed a copy of the Transition Services Checklist Outcomes and Activities Identification Procedure to the second rater to read and/or review (see Appendix B). The researcher and second rater met for a second time during the 30-day training to consult to resolve any issues regarding the use of the modified TSC. The consultation included a discussion about the definitions pertaining to the designations
to document the presence of transition outcomes in the TSC Outcomes and Activities Identification Procedure (see Appendix B). In the case of a disagreement between the researcher and second rater in documenting the presence of a transition outcome, the decision to refer to the definitions for designations was established and the IEP transition page was reviewed a second time to improve accuracy. The significant areas of disagreement are addressed in Chapter Four in which the results of the study are reported.

Description of Sample Schools

The academic status of each urban school was established based upon information retrieved from the state department of education website. Since the inception of the No Child Left Behind Act, school districts are required to published data related to various educational outcomes, such as, attendance rate, graduation rate, percent of students passing standardized tests, group distribution of students based on gender, race, disability, and socioeconomic status, on a local report card annually. The academic status of each urban school was established by the percentage of economically disadvantaged students and the number of state indicators met. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2007), both schools are Title I schools. Title I schools are those schools which receive funding through the federal education program to help improve student achievement through additional instruction for students, professional development for school staff and activities to help parents support their children’s education. Both schools have a moderate percentage of their students eligible for free or reduced lunch. School C has a seventy-one percent eligibility rate while School N has a sixty-five percent eligibility rate. Furthermore, both schools did not meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) for four consecutive years from 2005-2006 to 2008-2009 school years according to the State Department of Education website.
Data Analysis

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, chi-square analysis was utilized. According to Gravetter and Wallnau (2002), the selection of data for the chi-square test is “remarkably simple…you just select a sample of $n$ individuals and count how many are in each category” (p. 430). The resulting values are observed frequencies. The chi-square test of independence tests how well these observed frequencies fit the hypothesis or expected frequencies. Expected frequencies are frequency values predicted from the null hypothesis and the sample size (p. 431).

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows was used to analyze the data. Initially, a summary of the TSC outcomes was compiled via frequency distributions. Secondly, the steps for the chi-square analysis was conducted by stating the hypotheses and selecting an alpha level; computing the value for degrees of freedom, determining expected frequencies and computing the chi-square statistic. Finally, decisions were made regarding the hypotheses. The chi-square analysis for this study explored the relationships between each type of TSC outcome and whether the parent and student were present. Chi-square analysis also explored the relationships between the type of transition outcomes present in the student’s set of IEPs and the gender of the student. Pearson correlations were performed to determine the relationships between the total number of outcomes present in the student’s set of IEPs and the attendance of each team member at each IEP conference. Tables 3.3a and 3.3b reflect the study variables and the coding value assigned to each for analysis.
Table 3.3a  

*Categorical Variables Descriptions and Value Assignments*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Numeric Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Whether student is male or female</td>
<td>0 = male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 = female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Status</td>
<td>Whether student graduated or not</td>
<td>0 = did not graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 = graduated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The type of transition outcomes*</td>
<td>Whether an outcome area is present, implied or absent on the transition page</td>
<td>2 = present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of the IEP</td>
<td>1 = implied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
<pre><code>                                              |                                                                          | 0 = absent              |
</code></pre>

*see Definition of Variables, p. 9
Table 3.3b

Continuous Variables Descriptions and Value Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Numeric Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Attendance at annual IEP conference</td>
<td>Whether or not student participated in each of the 4 IEP conferences</td>
<td>0-4, the number of conferences at which the student was present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Attendance at annual IEP</td>
<td>Whether or not at least one parent participated in each of the 4 IEP conferences</td>
<td>0-4, the number of conferences at which the parent was present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Education Teacher Attendance at annual IEP</td>
<td>Whether or not at least one regular ed teacher participated in each of the 4 IEP conferences</td>
<td>0-4, the number of conferences at which the regular ed teacher was present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA or school district representative (e.g. school administrator) attendance at annual IEP conference</td>
<td>Whether or not school administrator participated in each of the 4 IEP conferences</td>
<td>0-4, the number of conferences at which a school administrator was present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational rehabilitation counselor attendance at annual IEP conference</td>
<td>Whether or not vocational rehabilitation counselor participated in each of the 4 IEP conferences</td>
<td>0-4, the number of conferences at which a vocational rehabilitation counselor was present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships among certain variables, IEP team composition and transition outcomes, in categorizing the participants as high school completers in an urban district. The review of literature suggests that transition-related
content and the presence of IEP team members influence the success of students with disabilities. Moreover, the IEP team composition and the content of the Transition Program for students with disabilities in high school is mandated by federal policy (IDEIA) and monitored by the *No Child Left Behind Act* (educational outcomes for all students).

In order to address the research questions, a convenience sample was identified and the Transition Services Checklist (TSC) was used to examine the transition-related content and the IEP team composition of the IEP documents of students with disabilities enrolled in two high schools in an urban district. The results of this study will be discussed in Chapter Four.
CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

This chapter presents the descriptive and inferential results of the correlational research design related to the impact of transition planning and IEP team composition on the success (graduation) of students with disabilities. In addition, descriptive results of the balance of this study include gender, disability category, and the age of the student at the time of graduation are presented.

Demographic Sample Characteristics

The sample consisted of 55 students with disabilities enrolled in two high schools in an urban district for the school years 2005-2006 to 2008-2009. Data were gathered relative to the variables age of student at graduation, gender, disability category and school of attendance. As indicated in Table 4.1, this sample data set was stratified by the categorical dependent variable, school completion.

Table 4.1

Graduation Status (n=55)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not graduate</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>52.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data relative to the transition outcomes, post-secondary education, continuing and adult education, community participation, adult services, vocational training, independent living, and integrated employment, were collected from each IEP document using the modified TSC (Hill, 2010, see Appendix B).
Research Question One

Is the success (graduation) of high school students with disabilities in an urban school related to the types of transition outcomes and the number of transition activities?

The relationships explored in Research Question One are presented in Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4. Parent presence at the annual IEP conference and the number of transition outcomes were significantly related, \( r = .54, n = 55, p < .01 \). Other significant correlations are noted in Table 4.2. These findings suggest that when the student, parent, and administrator were present at the IEP conference, the number of transition outcomes was more likely to improve.

Table 4.2

*Correlations between IEP Team Members Present and the Number of Transitions Outcomes Present*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Member</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation (( r ))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>0.333*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>0.537*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Education Teacher</td>
<td>0.197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Representative</td>
<td>0.134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>0.502*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*\( p < .01 \)

Correlation analysis was also used to examine the relationships between the attendance of four key individuals and the number of transition outcomes present in the IEP. The attendance data for the special education teacher was eliminated because it is not significant since the special education teacher chairs or facilitates the IEP conferences. The attendance data for the agency representative was also eliminated because there were only two of the 55 IEPs in which an agency representative was present at the IEP conference. The data revealed significant
relationships between parent presence at the IEP conference and the total number of post-secondary transition outcomes for each student set of IEPs, \( r = .62, n = 55, p < .05 \). The total number of transition outcomes per student set of IEPs increased when the parent attended the IEP conferences. Correlations are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

*Correlation Matrix for IEP Team Attendance and Total Number of Transition Outcomes per Student Set (n = 55)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Regular Education</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-Secondary Ed</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.45**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Participation</td>
<td>.33*</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.32*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Services</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.42**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Training</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.30*</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.36**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Living</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.39**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Employment</td>
<td>.57**</td>
<td>.53**</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.38**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* \( *p < .01, **p < .05 \)*

The chi-square analysis was conducted for the variables student presence at the annual IEP conference and transition outcome by grade level. The results revealed significant relationships among the transition outcomes – post-secondary education 12th grade level; community participation 11th grade level; adult services 11th grade level; vocational training 10th and 11th grade levels; and integrated education 9th and 11th grade levels. For example, there was a significant relationship between student presence and the post-secondary education transition outcome at the 12th grade level, \( \chi^2(8, n = 55) = 20.167, p < .05 \). The presence of the post
secondary transition outcome on the student’s IEP was improved when the student was present during the IEP conference at the twelfth grade level. Likewise, the presence of community participation and adult services transition outcomes on the student’s IEP was improved when the student was present at the IEP conference during the eleventh grade level. The presence of vocational training transition outcome on the student’s IEP was improved when the student was present at the IEP conference at the tenth and eleventh grade levels. The presence of the integrated employment transition outcome on the student’s IEP was improved when the student was present at the IEP conference at the ninth and eleventh grade levels. These data are reflected in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Student $\chi^2(8)$</th>
<th>$P$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSE – 9</td>
<td>5.856</td>
<td>.663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE – 10</td>
<td>12.997</td>
<td>.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE – 11</td>
<td>11.186</td>
<td>.191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE – 12</td>
<td>20.167</td>
<td>.010*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM – 9</td>
<td>8.217</td>
<td>.410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM – 10</td>
<td>6.896</td>
<td>.548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM – 11</td>
<td>21.246</td>
<td>.007*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM – 12</td>
<td>4.427</td>
<td>.817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERV – 9</td>
<td>10.507</td>
<td>.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERV – 10</td>
<td>2.929</td>
<td>.939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERV – 11</td>
<td>14.138</td>
<td>.078*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERV – 12</td>
<td>11.833</td>
<td>.159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Student $\chi^2(8)$</td>
<td>$P$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOC – 9</td>
<td>3.752</td>
<td>.441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOC – 10</td>
<td>21.159</td>
<td>.007*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOC – 11</td>
<td>13.420</td>
<td>.098*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOC – 12</td>
<td>6.906</td>
<td>.547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIV – 9</td>
<td>3.269</td>
<td>.916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIV – 10</td>
<td>8.693</td>
<td>.369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIV – 11</td>
<td>12.598</td>
<td>.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIV – 12</td>
<td>9.323</td>
<td>.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMP – 9</td>
<td>13.984</td>
<td>.007*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMP – 10</td>
<td>4.880</td>
<td>.300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMP – 11</td>
<td>26.039</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMP – 12</td>
<td>6.964</td>
<td>.138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .05$

Inter-rater reliability was calculated as the total number of agreements divided by the total number of ratings (1012/1540). Reliability for scoring outcomes was 66%. The rater disagreements were revealed for the following outcomes ranked in descending order – continuing adult education, vocational training, community participation, and post-secondary education. The raters reviewed the mismatches and came to agreement about those ratings before data analysis proceeded. The bias may exist within the researcher’s familiarity with the sample, therefore the rating of the researcher may have been more subjective while the second rater articulated that the documentation of the IEP files was lacking and remained more objective in rating the IEPs.
Research Question Two

Is the success (graduation) of high school students with disabilities in an urban school district related to the IEP team composition, the gender of the student, and the status of the school?

The relationships explored in Research Question Two are presented in Tables 4.5 and 4.6. A correlation for the data revealed that student presence at the annual IEP conference and graduation status were related, $r = .24, n = 55, p < .01$. The graduation status of the student more likely improved when the student was present at the IEP conference. Table 4.5 reflects other correlations.

Table 4.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Member</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation ($r$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>0.244*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>0.154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Education Teacher</td>
<td>0.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Representative</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>0.136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .01

A chi-square analysis was conducted for the variables gender of the student and outcome by grade level. There was a significant relationship between gender and post-secondary education, $\chi^2(8, n = 55) = 6.629, p < .05$. The presence of the post-secondary transition outcome on the IEP was improved when a female student was present at the IEP conference at the twelfth grade level. These data are reflected in Table 4.6.
### Table 4.6

*Chi-square Results for Gender and Outcome by Grade Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Gender $\chi^2$ (8)</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSE – 9</td>
<td>0.705</td>
<td>.703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE – 10</td>
<td>0.149</td>
<td>.928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE – 11</td>
<td>0.241</td>
<td>.886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE – 12</td>
<td>6.629</td>
<td>.036*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM – 9</td>
<td>0.947</td>
<td>.623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM – 10</td>
<td>0.265</td>
<td>.876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM – 11</td>
<td>0.818</td>
<td>.664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM – 12</td>
<td>1.272</td>
<td>.529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERV – 9</td>
<td>0.935</td>
<td>.627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERV – 10</td>
<td>0.879</td>
<td>.644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERV – 11</td>
<td>1.625</td>
<td>.444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERV – 12</td>
<td>2.679</td>
<td>.262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOC – 9</td>
<td>0.433</td>
<td>.510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOC – 10</td>
<td>0.601</td>
<td>.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOC – 11</td>
<td>4.478</td>
<td>.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOC – 12</td>
<td>0.636</td>
<td>.728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIV – 9</td>
<td>0.306</td>
<td>.858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIV – 10</td>
<td>3.167</td>
<td>.426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIV – 11</td>
<td>1.080</td>
<td>.583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIV – 12</td>
<td>0.268</td>
<td>.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMP – 9</td>
<td>0.708</td>
<td>.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMP – 10</td>
<td>0.634</td>
<td>.426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Gender $\chi^2(8)$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMP – 11</td>
<td>0.141</td>
<td>.932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMP – 12</td>
<td>0.938</td>
<td>.333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*$p < .05$*

Summary

The primary independent variables, IEP team attendance, the number of transition outcomes present, and the types of transition outcomes present, demonstrated statistical significance which may direct future research. Particularly, a relationship exists between parent presence, administrator presence, and student presence at the IEP conference and the total number of outcomes present in the IEP for the transition outcomes, post-secondary, and integrated employment; student present at the annual IEP conference and graduation; and student present and types of transition outcomes by grade level for post-secondary 12th grade level, community participation 11th grade level, adult services 11th grade level, vocational training 10th and 11th grade levels, and integrated employment 9th and 11th grade levels. A discussion of these findings will follow in Chapter Five to include study limitations, recommendations for policy and practice, and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

This chapter will discuss the findings and data reflections regarding the research. This chapter will also focus on a discussion of recommendations for policy and practice and further research followed by concluding thoughts concerning the study.

Introduction

As initially stated, ensuring the educational success of students with disabilities through our American system of public schools has been marked by the efforts of federal legislation and advocacy groups in the creation of a system of procedural safeguards. Currently, students with disabilities are able to benefit from the access gained through the provisions in the policies – EAHCA, IDEA, IDEIA and the NCLB Act – the general education curriculum and educational opportunities shared with peers without disabilities. The beneficial access gained through these measures is ensured through the development and implementation of a compliant Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each student with disabilities.

Because the beneficial access to state mandated provisions for students with disabilities is so crucial, compliance to federal mandates is incumbent upon the school professionals. Two areas in which compliance was examined in this study, IEP team composition and transition planning, were proven to impact the status of students with disabilities (Furney & Salembier, 2000; Martin, Marshall & Sale, 2004; Nevin, Semmel & McCann, 1981; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Allen, 1981) and are discussed in the following section. A study such as this is important because schools have traditionally fallen short of the IEP legal compliance as mandated by law (Smith, 1990, Yell, 2006). Each student, as outlined in IDEIA, is to have an IEP for each year they are identified as having a disability. But as evidenced during the data gathering stage of this
study, schools have been somewhat non-compliant with only sixty-four percent of the IEPs available for the sample drawn (134 out of 220 possible IEPs were reviewed).

The Significance of IEP Team Composition

Research Question One explored the relationships between the number of transition outcomes and the types of transition outcomes. Results revealed significant correlations between three pairs of variables - parent presence at the IEP conference and the number of transition outcomes; student presence at the IEP conference and the number of transition outcomes; and administrator presence at the IEP conference and the number of transition outcomes ($r = .54$, $r = .50$, and $r = .33$, respectively). These findings suggest that when the student, parent, and administrator were present at the IEP conference, the number of transition outcomes was more likely to be higher. The significance suggests that when parents of students with disabilities are included in the IEP conference, they are more likely to express their opinions and provide the necessary information, such as a student’s capacity to live independently or other information relative to the student’s interests or needs. The results of this study indicated that schools should work to include parents by encouraging advocacy, improving communication by reducing barriers, and become familiar with the needs and future plans for the families and their students with disabilities. So, the IEP team was more likely to discuss, develop, and include transition outcomes thereby suggesting the likelihood that the number of transition outcomes improved also.

The study further examined the significance of each of the transition outcomes and the composition of the IEP team. Statistical testing of the types of transitional outcomes revealed that significant correlations existed between parent presence, student presence, administrator presence at the IEP conference and the total number of post-secondary transition outcomes ($r =$}
.62, \( r = .42 \), and \( r = .45 \), respectively). The parent presence at the IEP conference may improve the discussion and inclusion of the post-secondary transition outcomes thusly improving the total number of outcomes. Similar findings exist between parent and student presence at the IEP conference and the total number of integrated employment transition outcomes (\( r = .56 \), \( r = .53 \), respectively). The presence of the parent and student at the IEP conference may lead to a more meaningful conversation relative to integrated employment. Research suggests that parents of students with disabilities may be the most valuable resource when developing an IEP (Cimera & Rusch, 2000; Furney & Salembier, 2000; Martin, Marshall, & Sale, 2004; Yell, 2006).

The chi-square test of independence measured the degree of relationship among the variables, IEP team composition and the type of transition outcome by grade level. The results revealed several significant relationships for the variables, student presence at the IEP conference and the type of transition outcome by grade level. The types of transition outcomes by grade level include post-secondary at 12\textsuperscript{th} grade level, community participation at the 11\textsuperscript{th} grade level, vocational training at the 10\textsuperscript{th} grade level, and integrated employment at the 9\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th} grade levels. These relationships suggest that these transition outcomes are more likely to be included in the transition planning at these specific grade levels when the student was present at the IEP. The findings in this study support the wisdom of the policy developers who stress the importance of having the students at the table for discussions relative to their educational direction (Childre & Chambers, 2005; Warger & Burnette, 2000). Districts that do not comply with the policies as developed, by ensuring student presence at the IEP conference, may reduce the types of transition services on the IEP and reduce the opportunities for student success. The research strongly supports the significance of this finding (Cimera & Rusch, 2000; Furney & Salembier, 2000; Patton, 2004). Cimera and Rusch postulates that lack of student participation
is linked to limited academic success of students with disabilities in graduation. Furthermore, students with disabilities who exit school prematurely were usually not involved with their educational planning. Transition outcomes are essential in the road to graduation as they outline activities to promote the movement of students with disabilities from high school to post-school adult living.

Compliance with the policy in ensuring that the student be present at the IEP conference is further evidenced in a pattern that emerged in other transitional outcomes as well. The data indicate a pattern between the presence of the student with disabilities at the IEP conference and community participation, vocational training, and integrated employment at the 11th grade level. The significance of this finding may suggest that the student may have experienced more meaningful discussion about his/her interests and plans for the future. The student’s presence at conferences where discussion of community participation is included may lead to more opportunities for the students to engage in activities, such as, student participation in hobbies, obtaining a state identification card or library card. Vocational training plans may include transitioning to a career center-based program in preparation for post-school employment, while integrated employment plans may include applying for part-time employment while enrolled in school. In sum, research question one supports the critical need to comply to the federal policy, IDEIA, to ensure that parents and students are present at the IEP meeting in order to maximize the opportunities for student success in transition planning.

The Significance of IEP Compliance and Graduation Status

In Research Question Two, the Pearson test was used to explore relationships between IEP team composition, graduation status, and gender of students with disabilities. The significant relationship between student presence at the IEP conference and the graduation status of the
student \((r = .24, n = 55, p < .01)\) suggests that graduation status of the student was positively influenced when the student was present at the IEP conference. For students with disabilities, graduation from high school may be the most pivotal education and career event in their lives because most students with disabilities have a difficult time with transition during their academic career (Cimera & Rusch, 2000; Furney & Salembier, 2000; Gargiulo, 2003; Kohler & Chapman, 1999; Martin, Marshall & Sale, 2004; Patton, 2004; Trach & Sheldon, 2000; Wagner & Blackorby, 1996). Given the fact that only 31% continue on to higher educational settings as compared to other post-secondary transition outcomes, the need to develop and implement the IEP of a student properly should be a priority for all school districts (Swanson, 2008).

Moreover, Swanson also noted that many students with disabilities drop out at the age of sixteen, the age at which the federal policy recommends initiating transition planning. These students are not afforded the opportunity to benefit from their Individualized Education Programs (p. 24).

The chi-square test of independence measured the degree of relationship between gender and the type of transition outcome by grade level. The results indicated a significant relationship between gender and the transition outcome, post-secondary education at the 12th grade level. This finding seems to suggest that the presence of female students at the IEP conference influenced the discussion and inclusion of post-secondary options during the final annual IEP conference for students with disabilities. Moreover, the post-secondary transition outcome at the 12th grade level was the only outcome influenced by gender in these findings. Gender most often influences the rate of graduation, but the research has not clearly revealed the influence of gender on types of transition outcomes. Swanson (2008) reported findings of the special education population age 6 to 21 years of age relative to educational settings, percentage of school population, race and ethnicity, race by gender, percentage suspended/expelled, reading
achievement, graduation rates of all disabled students, and post-school outcomes. The fact that
gender influenced this particular outcome would provide the opportunity for the school district to
investigate this finding further to truly deem it significant in improving educational outcomes for
students with disabilities.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The recurring patterns reflected in the study findings not only support previous research
relative to the need to follow IEP compliance procedures, but also have significant implications
for school practitioners. Significant data patterns show the need for school leaders to include
mandated members at the IEP team meeting, most significantly the parent and student.

Parents as Partners in the IEP Process

Study findings noting the significance of parent participation are supported by the
research of Furney and Salembier (2000) who purported that parent participation can be
beneficial in transition planning because parents are believed to have the greatest amount of
information available on the skills, needs, interests, and desires of their sons and daughters (p.
116). It would appear to be common sense that planning a child’s educational course can only be
enhanced with increased information about the child. Moreover, these researchers purported that
parental participation is related to positive education outcomes for students with disabilities. In
this age of accountability emphasized by the NCLB Act, school administrators and special
education personnel should do all they can to have parents participate and be involved in the
various aspects of educating their children. If parental participation is linked to positive post
school outcomes such as graduation, then school administrators should not be limited in fostering
school-parent relationships. This practice could inevitably increase the graduation rate of
students with disabilities enrolled in urban schools.
Students as Partners in IEP Process

The results of the study overwhelmingly show that student participation in the IEP team process may lead to increased success in their academic matriculation. Likewise, research suggests that student participation in the IEP process, specifically transition planning, is directly linked to positive post-secondary outcomes (Martin, Marshall, & Sale, 2004; Patton, 2004; Ysseldyke, Algozzine & Thurlow, 2000). In addition, Martin, Marshall and Sale (2004) asserted that student participation in the IEP conference added valuable benefits, validating the mandate that they be present at the meeting. One might assert that high school students who have the opportunity to be actively involved in the planning of their high school transitional activities may be more engaged in the process and more likely to continue to graduation. The ultimate goal of the high school experience is graduation, so it may be critical that high school students, more than any other age, be an active participant in the process. When discussing the planning process, Martin, Marshall and Sale (2004) contend that the presence of the student at the IEP meeting improved communication among team members leading to more meaningful participation by all team members. Meaningful participation is a mandate that is believed to improve the effectiveness of transition planning (Hulett, 2009; Yell, 2006).

Student participation in the IEP process appears to be increasingly pivotal as the student with disabilities progresses toward the planning of transitional outcomes. These activities are called such because they serve as the transitional link between school and the world beyond. As evidenced by the study, the significant correlation between student presence at the IEP conference and the transition outcomes of post secondary education, community participation, vocational training, and integrated employment is very meaningful. The student’s ability to be part of meaningful discussion relative to their participative link to the community and vocational
training is clearly a positive step toward educational success. In fact, the research relative to the transition outcome, integrated employment, suggests that there is a positive correlation between employment while enrolled in high school and the successful completion of high school students with disabilities (Conderman & Katisyannis, 2002). This pattern is more evident at the 11th and 12th grade levels further supporting the significance and value of increasing the frequency of student participation at the IEP conference (Martin, Marshall, & Sale, 2004).

The Significance of Parent-School Partnerships

Study results corroborate current research trends reporting that improved compliance is associated with meaningful participation of all mandated IEP team members (Furney & Salembier, 2000; Martin, Marshall, & Sale, 2004; Nevin, Semmel & McCann, 1981; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Allen, 1981). Moreover, researchers opine that compliance in the IEP process is positively linked to the success of students with disabilities (Brown, Adams, Sindelar, & Waldron, 2006; Hulett, 2009; and Yell, 2006).

Significant correlations evidenced in the study between the presence of all IEP team members (student, parent, teacher, and administrator) and improved total number of transition outcomes, such as integrated employment outcomes and community participation outcomes, strongly informs the need to comply with mandated meeting participation. Success of students with disabilities can only be enhanced if educational professionals work more diligently to foster meaningful parent-school relationships with family members to ensure more meaningful participation of parents and students at the time of the IEP conference. Enhancing these relationships is more important for urban leaders because they have the largest populations of students with disabilities.
Recommendations for Future Research

The accountability measure of NCLB has afforded the opportunity for education professionals to become self reflective in their practices and approaches in relation to educational outcomes for all students. In this same manner, this self reflective stance has impacted the IEP process, in that, special education professionals must work to develop an educationally sound Individualized Education Program that improves the educational outcomes for students with disabilities. The following recommendations are offered for areas of future research.

The recommendation for accurate and proper record keeping offers consideration for administrators to improve their procedures and practices by being proactive. The inaccuracies associated with the District’s procedures in record keeping of IEPs are fundamental to compliance issues experienced by the District. For example, missing IEPs of students (lack of documentation) can likely be associated with poor education outcomes for students with disabilities, improper implementation of the IEP, and a denial of a free appropriate public education. District administrators should conduct a self-audit of student files to correct these inaccuracies thereby, improving cost-effectiveness and educational outcomes for students with disabilities.

A follow-up study with a qualitative research design, such as a case study of the seven participants who had all IEPs present in their cumulative files, could be conducted. Qualitative research designs allow for the collection of richer data through techniques such as interviews and focus groups. The data gained from this research may inform the administration of urban districts of the causes in gaps between policy and practice, thereby creating an opportunity to create an effective school improvement plan in the area of special education.
Another follow-up to this study would include an examination of the IEP process during transition planning. A research study designed to collect data through surveys of all members of the IEP team would provide richer data as well. The survey could measure each members’ perspective and attitude toward transition planning (Furmey & Salembier, 2000). The data gleaned from this study may be useful in providing the information to develop an effective IEP document to monitor compliance.

Additionally, a follow-up study to examine effective models in transition planning could be conducted. Blalock (1996) recommends a model described as community transition teams. These community-level transition teams are critical to the foundation for transition services for youth with learning disabilities according to Blalock (p. 148). Furthermore, the author describes the reason for the need of community-level transition teams, as well as, team membership, goals and functions of the team, outcomes, and challenges for community teams. Urban districts in particular may want to investigate this model for transition planning as a means of increasing graduation rates among students with disabilities thereby improving the post-secondary outcomes of the students with disabilities.

Finally, school administrators in urban districts should conduct the same study to examine each disability category separately. The findings of the study may lead to cost-effective strategies for improving the graduation rates of students with disabilities particularly those students who are emotionally impaired since these students experience low graduation rates (Wargner & Blackoby, 1996; Wargner, Newman, Cameto, & Levine, 2005; Wargner, Newman, Cameto, Levine, & Garza, 2006; Swanson, 2008).
Conclusion

In conclusion, the examination of the impact of IEP team composition and transition planning upon the success of students with disabilities demonstrated the importance of adhering to the special education policy when developing the Individualized Education Program (IEP) of students with disabilities. The presence of mandated IEP team members during the IEP conference is linked to improvements in the total number of transition outcomes and the types of transition outcomes. Conversely, the results of this study also support the research relating compliance issues as evidenced by the lack of documentation of the presence of the vocational rehabilitation representative. The number one compliance issue is improper committee composition (Yell, 2006). Yet, the relationships among IEP team composition, transition planning, and graduation status of students with disabilities in urban districts were not readily discovered.

The discovery of these relationships was further compounded by the lack of data for analysis due to incomplete student files. In the optimal situation, the cumulative file folder for the student with disabilities should contain the original copy of every IEP the student has had developed and implemented including the current IEP for the years enrolled in a school district. However, the researcher experienced a situation in which compliance issues essentially compromised the integrity of the IEP process of the district.

In further review of the data, the range of values for the correlation was $r = .62$ to $r = .14$. Correlation values of $r = .75$ and higher would have allowed for more conclusive findings. The relationship between IEP team composition and graduation status was not readily discovered due to the fact that data were missing. For example, many student files did not contain all four IEPs. The researcher believes if more of the IEPs were present, then the data set would have been more
complete and correlation values may have improved during the analysis process. One hopeful result linking IEP team composition and graduation status revealed a correlation between the presence of the student during the IEP conference and the graduation status of the student. Yet, the conclusiveness of this finding did not meet the expectations of the researcher.

Likewise, the participating schools in the study have undergone sweeping changes in all areas including the Office of Special Education. Conducting the same study for the 2009-2010 cohorts may reveal improved findings. Examining these factors consecutively in a longitudinal study would be conclusive in providing data to support continued reform for improvement.

Finally, the IEP process is a dynamic process full of intricate complexities. The process requires that IEP team members collaborate effectively; IEPs are developed and implemented accurately; and progress of the student toward the attainment of goals is monitored frequently, so that students with disabilities experience success. The findings of the study correlate with the research relative to the use of the Individualized Education Program as a compliance tool (Hullet, 2009; Yell, 2006). In those instances in which compliance was met relative to IEP team composition, the number and types of transition outcomes were more likely improved thereby impacting the transition planning of students with disabilities positively. On the other hand, non-compliance results in the uncertainty that students with disabilities have benefitted from a legally sound, educationally beneficial Individualized Education Program.
REFERENCES


Wagner, M.M., & Blackorby, J. (1996, Spring). Transition from high school to work or college:
How special education students fare [Electronic version]. *Special Education for Students with Disabilities*. 6(1), 103-120.


APPENDIX A

LETTERS OF APPROVAL
April 9, 2009

TO: Pertina Hill
    EALS

FROM: Hillary Harms
      HSRB Administrator

RE: Human Subjects Review Board Project No.: H09D245CGX2

TITLE: An Examination of the Impact of IEP Team Composition and Transition Planning Upon the Success of Students with Cognitive Disabilities in Urban Schools

REVIEW DATE: April 8, 2009

The BGSU Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) has completed its initial review of your project involving research with human subjects.

The HSRB has determined that modifications/clarifications addressing the items noted on the attachment to this memo are required before final approval can be granted.

Please submit the requested modifications/clarifications, at your earliest convenience, to the HSRB c/o the Office of Research Compliance, 201 South Hall (Note - submit only materials revised in response to the required modifications/clarifications - do not resubmit materials that have not changed; there is also no need to include this notification, as the Office of Research Compliance has the original in the project file).

The HSRB will review the modifications/clarifications and notify you when the project has been given final approval. Please remember that no subjects may be recruited nor data collected until final approval has been granted by the HSRB.

If you have any questions, please contact the Chair of the HSRB or me at 372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu.

Comments:
CC: Dr. Judith Jackson May

RESEARCH CATEGORY: EXEMPT 12
June 1, 2009

Dr. Linda Paramore, Superintendent
Pontiac Schools District
47200 Woodward Avenue
Pontiac, MI 48341

Dear Dr. Paramore:

The purpose of this correspondence is to request permission to access data to be used in a research study for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education at Bowling Green State University.

The title of the study is *An Examination of the Impact of the IEP Team Composition and Transition Planning upon the Success of Students with Cognitive Disabilities in Urban Schools*. The purpose of my study is to examine what variables on the individual education plan (IEP) are most likely to predict graduation for students with cognitive disabilities.

The participants for this study will be randomly selected from two high schools designated as inner city high schools within the district. The IEP documents of the participants will be examined for four consecutive school years 2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05 and several factors will be examined (transition outcomes, IEP team composition, gender and graduation age). Student confidentiality will be maintained with the use of numeric codes by concealing the name of the student participant and replacing the name with a numerical code based on the student’s school identification number. Furthermore, recognizing the confidential nature of the study, Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) and this principal investigator assure that individuals will be protected. Further, tentative HSRB approval had been granted pending district permission.

If you have any questions or inquiries about the study, please direct them to the principal investigator, Petrina D. Hill via phill@bgsu.edu or the project advisor, Dr. Judith Jackson May, Associate Professor Education Administration & Leadership Studies, via judyjac@bgsu.edu. If you have questions about the conduct of this project or about your rights, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board at 419-372-7717 (hsrb@bgsu.edu).

Respectfully,

Petrina D. Hill

CC: Dr. Mardela Alexander, Chief Academic Officer
Dr. Sandra Screen, Interim Director of Special Services
Request to Conduct Study (received June, 1, 2009)

Dyan Perez [DPerez@pontiac.k12.mi.us] on behalf of Linda Paramore
[LParamore@pontiac.k12.mi.us]

Sent: Wednesday, June 24, 2009 9:37 PM
To: Petrine DeNiece Hill
Cc: Sandra Screen [SScreen@pontiac.k12.mi.us]; Mardella Alexander [MAlexander@pontiac.k12.mi.us]; Juriene Hurst
[JHurst@pontiac.k12.mi.us]

Good Evening Mrs. Hill:

Thank you for contact our office concerning a request to conduct a study.

I received your request to conduct a study in our district and I have approved your request.

If our district can be of further service to you, please contact us.

Thank you.

Linda
School District of the City of Pontiac
Office of the Superintendent

Linda Paramore, Ed.D., Interim Superintendent
47200 Woodward Avenue - Pontiac, MI 48342
phone | 248.451.6883 [51883]
fax | 248.451.6890 [51890]
"Pontiac Schools, Look Up!" | 2008-2009 Motto

https://mail.bgsu.edu/owa/?ae=Item&t=IPM.Note&id=RgAAAAD9gCp8kwYmSLEF1W... 6/28/2009
APPENDIX B

INSTRUMENTATION
The passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Employment Act (P.L. 101-476) has provided special educators with a definition of transition. Although, transition has to some degree existed conceptually, in practice and through state mandates for some time, this legislation provided some description of transition outcomes and procedures. The intent of the TRANSITION SERVICES CHECKLIST (TSC): Outcomes and Activities Identification Procedure is to provide a framework for an operational definition of the legislative description of transition to be interpreted and further defined locally. While legislation is a culmination of the research, model demonstration, and congressional testimony, and specifically define programs for every school. In other words, the legislative definition exists as the best description of what transition should include.

The following most clearly reiterates the language of the legislation.

Transition services are:

[a coordinated set of activities designed within an outcome oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including:

* post-secondary education
* vocational training
* integrated employment (including supported employment)
* continuing and adult education
* adult services
* independent living
* community participation

The coordinated set of activities shall be based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include:

* instruction
* community experiences
* development of employment objectives
* development of other post-school adult objectives
* acquisition of daily living skills (when appropriate)
* functional vocational evaluation (when appropriate)
The following lists each of the items with specific examples of the outcomes and procedures to attain them. These examples were sent to a group of experts in the field for validation, clarification, and expansion.

TRANSITION SERVICES CHECKLIST (TSC)

Outcomes and Activities Identification Procedure

John S. Trach, Ph.D., CRC

Transition Research Institute, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

OUTCOME: POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

DEFINITION: Preparation for and entrance to an institution of higher learning with the intent of accessing formal training to develop and prepare for a chosen career.

Specific post-school activities:

1. Entrance to a four-year institution for training in a specified area of study.
2. Entrance to a two-year institution for training in a specified area of study.
3. Entrance to a community college for study in an area of concentration.
4. Entrance to a community college for career exploration.

Present: a training program is specifically identified where the student will be studying after graduation (e.g. the person seeks to be enrolled in a computer program at a community college).

Implied: activities that the student has been involved in may imply that a post-secondary education program may be identified where the student will be studying after graduation.
OUTCOME: POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Procedures:

Instruction - Identifying and enrollment in high school classes that prepare students for post-secondary school (e.g., preparatory language or math sequence).

Community Experiences - Participation in real work setting in order to identify potential barriers and evaluate interests (e.g., internship in chosen profession).

Development of Employment Objectives - Work experience related to chosen area of study (e.g., cataloging various options within career path).

Development of Other Post-School Adult Objectives - Identifying and developing support network appropriate for living and working in post-secondary education environment (e.g., requesting accommodations).

Acquisition of Daily Living Skills - Development of objectives related to identified living situation of post-secondary education.

Functional Vocational Evaluation (When Appropriate) - Career and guidance counseling, interest inventories, aptitude testing, identification of relevant barriers.

OUTCOME: VOCATIONAL TRAINING

DEFINITION: Those activities that would continue a student's training beyond high school in either a formal or informal setting with the intent of attaining an accepted skill
level in a chosen profession or work area (e.g., carpentry, plumbing, computer programming).

Specific post-school activities:

1. Entrance into technical/trade school for work-related training.
2. Entrance into apprenticeship for a specific occupation.
3. Entrance into community college for a specific work-related training.

Present: the IEP mentions that the student will be learning a specific skill (e.g., plumbing, carpentry) after high school graduation.

Implied: the IEP mentions that the student may be learning a specific skill (i.e., none specified) after high school graduation.

Procedures:

Instruction - Identifying and enrollment in high school classes that prepare students for specified occupational areas (e.g., drafting, automotive, horticulture).

Community Experiences - Practica in related occupational settings for observation and discussion of work roles.

Development of Employment Objectives - Work experience related to chosen area of occupation.

Development of Other Post-School Adult Objectives -

Acquisition of Daily Living Skills (When Appropriate) -

Functional Vocational Evaluation (When Appropriate) - Situational assessment of student skills. Enrollment in electives to do career exploration
**OUTCOME:** INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT (INCLUDING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT)

**DEFINITION:** Those activities that result in a student being placed in a work setting for pay, and with support if necessary, while still in school, prior to graduation, and/or immediately upon graduation.

**Specific post-school activities:**

1. Entrance into full-time employment.
2. Entrance into part-time employment.
3. Entrance into full-time employment with support.
4. Entrance into part-time employment with support.

*Present:* a site is specifically named where the student will be working after graduation (*e.g., the name of the hotel, company, store is mentioned in the IEP)*.

*Implied:* the student is working in community jobs while in school but no specific planning has been made for the student to continue or to be placed in an alternative job.
OUTCOME: INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT (INCLUDING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT)

Procedures:

Instruction - Providing instruction and training in order to develop job-specific and work-related skills (e.g., skill training, problem-solving, self-instruction, asking assistance, gathering work materials, on-task, vocational education classes).

Community Experiences - On-the-job training in various work settings across a specific occupation or various occupations (i.e., training which occurs at employment site in the community).

Development of Employment Objectives - Specific planning for placement including identifying work site, number of hours to be worked, and necessary supports (e.g., transportation, job coach, vocational rehabilitation counselor). May also include job seeking skills training or job placement.

Development of Other Post-School Adult Objectives - Socialization with co-workers on and off the work site (e.g., bowling team, lunch activities, donut provider, Christmas party, conversations, aerobic class, non-worked-related social interactions).

Acquisition of Daily Living Skills (When Appropriate) - Providing activities which are directly related to employment including transportation to work and mobility training at work, time management, money management, personal preparation (e.g., protective clothing and equipment).

Functional Vocational Evaluation (When Appropriate) - Situational assessment to assess skills, and job trials to assess preference and interest (e.g., career exploration, career counseling, taking a variety of classes to expand career possibilities).
OUTCOME: CONTINUING AND ADULT EDUCATION

DEFINITION: Those activities that would result in a student continuing their education, for some stated purpose, through established state and/or community programs.

Specific post-school activities:

1. Enrollment in a university/college continuing education program that address a student's stated purpose or goals.

2. Enrollment in a community program designed to provide adult education classes for basic education, enrichment, vocational, academic, and/or remedial.

3. Enrollment in classes provided through the community or through business that address a student's stated purpose or goals.

Present: the IEP mentions specific educational options (i.e., programs and objectives) that the student may be pursuing after high school graduation.

Implied: the IEP mentions that the student may be pursue additional education after high school graduation.

Procedures:

Instruction - Preparing the student through training in identifying and accessing relevant opportunities for additional education, and providing related skill training (e.g., identifying what the student wants from the class).

Community Experiences - Attending classes offered in the community system.

Development of Employment Objectives - Providing work experience and career exploration.

Development of Other Post-School Adult Objectives - Developing leisure time skills through courses in arts and crafts, hobbies, recreation programs, and the opportunity for informal networking with other community members (e.g. Adult Literacy Program).
Acquisition of Daily Living Skills (When Appropriate) - Developing skills relevant for adults (e.g., cooking classes, driver training).

Functional Vocational Evaluation (When Appropriate) - Matching class and course content with relevant vocational areas to describe potential options and preparatory possibilities.

OUTCOME: ADULT SERVICES

DEFINITION: Those services that provide the necessary support for adult persons to live, work, and recreate in the community.

Specific post-school activities:
1. Identifying and accessing basic mental and physical health institutions, services, and/or professionals (e.g., mental health centers).
2. Identifying and accessing necessary vocational services to provide the student with employment options and support (e.g., vocational rehabilitation).
3. Identifying and accessing necessary services to develop, acquire, maintain, and improve living conditions and/or leisure time skills (e.g., independent living centers, parks and recreation programs).
4. Identifying and accessing additional support services to complement all services for attainment of basic life functions (e.g., program to provide money management skill training/services).

Present: a state agency for rehabilitation or a community-based agency for rehabilitation assumes responsibility for part or all of the consumer's programming (e.g., the student will participate in the Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP)).
**Implied:** a state agency for rehabilitation or adult service agency person is present at the IEP meeting, implies the student will have access to the adult services when graduating; an evening course is identified without making the post-secondary outcomes clear.

**Procedures:**

**Instruction** - Provide training to identify life roles, how to access those roles, and to set personal goals.

**Community Experiences** - To visit and experience various settings to live, work, and recreate in the community, as well as support services.

**Development of Employment Objectives** - Identify employment goals to coordinate corresponding goals for living and recreation.

**Development of Other Post-School Adult Objectives** - Identifying and addressing entrance requirements for necessary programs and services.

**Acquisition of Daily Living Skills (When Appropriate)** - Identifying, sequencing, and cataloging necessary skills for exploring and accessing environments for living, working, and recreating in the community.

** Functional Vocational Evaluation (When Appropriate)** - Addressing eligibility requirements for identified vocational services.

**OUTCOME:** INDEPENDENT LIVING

**DEFINITION:** To access a living environment determined by available resources, and options.

**Specific post-school activities:**

1. Accessing an apartment/house that is appropriate for the student's current level of functioning, independence, and resources.
2. Accessing an apartment/house with a roommate that is appropriate for the student's current level of functioning, independence, and resources.

3. Accessing a group living situation that is appropriate for the student's current level of functioning, independence, and resources.

4. Providing the family/advocate with necessary support to permit the student to continue to live at home as independently as possible.

**Present:** A specific living environment is identified for the student after graduation (e.g., the name of a group home or apartment).

**Implied:** The student has exercised skills that are necessary for independent living in a group home or apartment, but no specific mention has been made where the student may be living after graduation.

**Procedures:**

**Instruction** - Identify and provide instruction to master skills of target living environment (i.e., must identify living environment otherwise score in ADL, consumer education classes).

**Community Experiences** - Providing the student with opportunities to visit and experience a variety of living situations (e.g., apartment, group home), areas (e.g., grocery store, malls, restaurants, recreation), and opportunities to acquire and demonstrate community skills (e.g., street crossing, transportation, grocery shopping in local stores, wheelchair use in community).

**Development of Employment Objectives** - Identifying the reciprocal effects of the living environment and the employment situation (e.g., go to bed to get enough rest).
Development of Other Post-School Adult Objectives - Identifying the reciprocal effects of the living environment and the possibilities for recreation/leisure time (e.g., hobbies, sports, self-advocacy training).

Acquisition of Daily Living Skills (When Appropriate) - Developing necessary skills to live in the chosen environment (e.g. toileting, hygiene, phone skills, meal prep, house keeping, grocery shopping, time management, money management, transfer to and from wheelchair, social skills training).

Functional Vocational Evaluation (When Appropriate) –

**OUTCOME:** COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

**DEFINITION:** To participate in the community through established and recognized personal and social roles.

**Specific post-school activities:**

1. To participate through personal roles of working, living, and recreating in the community (e.g., hobbies).
2. To participate through accepted community responsibilities (e.g., voting, community service volunteering).
3. To participate through accepted community functions (e.g., holiday celebrations, benefits).

**Present:** the IEP mentions in which activities the student will participate after high school graduation.

**Implied:** the IEP recognizes participation in the community through planned activities rather than objectives after high school graduation.

**Procedures:**
**Instruction** - Provide instruction, demonstration, and practica in the various roles of the community member, and of societal expectations, such as voting.

**Community Experiences** - Provide opportunities to observe and practice the roles identified for community members in the real environment (*e.g.*, membership in civic organizations, politics, professional, self-advocacy).

**Development of Employment Objectives** - Identify and clarify how the student will contribute to the community welfare, and how they are a member of the community workforce (*e.g.*, employment related organizations Future Farmers of America, Junior ROTC).

**Development of Other Post-School Adult Objectives** - Identify all relevant roles for student participation along with their age peers (*e.g.*, scouting, prom committee, student government, "Best Buddy" program).

**Acquisition of Daily Living Skills (When Appropriate)**

**Functional Vocational Evaluation (When Appropriate)**
TRANSITION SERVICES: OUTCOMES

PL 101-476 - IDEA

Student Code: ______________________  Date: __________________

Birthdate/Age: _____________________

Utilize documentation review, circle all targeted outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IEP</th>
<th>9th</th>
<th>10th</th>
<th>11th</th>
<th>12th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary Education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing and Adult Education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Participation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Services</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Training</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Living</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Employment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OTHER OBJECTIVES:

0 1 Graduated

0 1 2 3 4 Parent Signature

0 1 2 3 4 Student Signature

0 1 2 3 4 Regular Ed Teacher Signature

0 1 2 3 4 Administrator Signature

0 1 2 3 4 Agency Provider Signature

0 1 Gender

0 1 Building

0 1 2 3 4 5 Certification

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE IEP DOCUMENTS REVIEWED
### Transition Individualized Education Program Team (IEPT) Report

Including Post-School Transition Considerations

(Required for students 16 years of age during the IEP year and recommended for students 13 years and over)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IEP Date: ________________</th>
<th>Prior IEP Date: ________________</th>
<th>Initial/Most Recent Reevaluation IEP Date: ________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth Date: ______________</td>
<td>Gender: ________________________</td>
<td>Grade: ____________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student's Last Name: ________________________________________</th>
<th>First: ___________________________________</th>
<th>MI: _________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address: __________________________________________________________</td>
<td>City: ______________________________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State: ______ Zip Code: ____________ County: __________________</td>
<td>Telephone: ________________________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Dist.: __________________ Operating Dist.: ______________</td>
<td>Attending Bldg: ____________________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent's Last Name: _________________________________</th>
<th>First: ____________________</th>
<th>Relationship: __________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native Language or Other Communication Mode: __________________</td>
<td>Interpreter is Needed Y___ N___</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address (if different): _______________________________</td>
<td>Telephone: __________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent's Last Name: _________________________________</td>
<td>First: ____________________</td>
<td>Relationship: __________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Language or Other Communication Mode: __________________</td>
<td>Interpreter is Needed Y___ N___</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address (if different): _______________________________</td>
<td>Telephone: __________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Purpose of this IEP Team Meeting is to Discuss** (check one of the following):

- Initial Eligibility
- Review/Revise IEP
- Reevaluation
- Additional/change of disability reevaluation
- Other, please specify: __________________________________________________________________________________________

**Parental Rights and Age of Majority** (check all applicable):

- If the student will be age 17 during this IEP, the student was informed of parental rights that will transfer to him or her at age 18.
- If the student has turned age 18, the student and parent were informed of the parental rights that transferred to the student at age 18 including the right to invite a support person(s) such as a parent, other family member, advocate, or friend.
- The student has turned age 18 and there is a guardian established by court order. The guardian is: ___________________________
- The student has turned age 18 and has appointed a legally designated representative (e.g., power-of-attorney, trustee). The representative is: ___________________________

**IEP Team Meeting Participants in Attendance**

Check the box □ indicating the IEP Team member who can explain the instructional implications of evaluation results.
Check the circle ○ indicating the IEP Team member who has observed the student suspected of having a learning disability.

- Student □ Adult Service Agency Representative □
- Parent □ General Education Teacher □ ○
- Parent □ Special Education Teacher/Provider □ ○
- Parent □ Public Education Agency Representative/Designee □ ○
- Parent □
- Parent □
- Parent □
- Parent □
- Parent □

Participant signatures are required to verify a determination regarding a suspected learning disability under R 340.1713.
Any member who disagrees must submit a separate statement presenting his or her conclusion.
**Student’s Post-Secondary Goals**

If student did not attend the IEP, describe the steps that were taken to ensure consideration of the student’s preferences and goals:

________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________

34 CFR §300.344(b) requires the school to invite students to participate in IEP Team meetings if the meeting will include consideration of transition needs or services.

1) **Adult Living:** As an adult, where do you want to live?

2) **Career/Employment:** As an adult, what kind of work do you want to do?

3) **Community Participation:** As an adult, what hobbies and activities do you want to have?

4) **Post-Secondary Education/Training:** After high school, what additional education and training do you want?

---

**Statement of Needed Transition Services – Include by age 16 (Required)**

(Recommended beginning at age 13 and annually thereafter if determined by the IEP Team.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needed Transition Activities/Services Related to Student PLAAFP (describe the responsibilities of each participant)</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Responsible Agency/Person</th>
<th>Timeline (optional)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ADULT LIVING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considered, none needed ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAILY LIVING SKILLS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considered, none needed ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FUNCTIONAL VOCATIONAL EVALUATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considered, none needed ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EMPLOYMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considered, none needed ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considered, none needed ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RELATED SERVICES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considered, none needed ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FURTHER EDUCATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considered, none needed ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OTHER</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considered, none needed ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Was there a need to invite a community agency representative likely to provide current or future services?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes, did the community agency representative attend the IEP? Yes ☐ No ☐ Explain: ________________________________

Please list any additional steps taken to ensure that the student has made connections with any appropriate outside programs and services: __________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
## Commitment Signatures

Any IEP Team member may submit a dissenting report for attachment to this IEP Team Report.

### Resident District – Resident district superintendent/designee (check all that apply):

- [ ] Agrees with the IEP and its implementation
- [ ] Disagrees with this IEP and:
  - [ ] requests mediation
  - [ ] requests a due process hearing
- [ ] Authorizes the nonresident operating district to conduct subsequent IEP Team meetings
- [ ] Agrees that the student is not eligible for special education
- [ ] Disagrees with this IEP and:
  - [ ] requests mediation
  - [ ] requests a due process hearing

Signed: _________________________________________________________________  Date: __________________________

Resident District Superintendent or Designee

### Non-resident Operating District – The superintendent/designee (check all that apply):

- [ ] Agrees to provide the IEP program(s) and/or service(s)
- [ ] Agrees to conduct subsequent IEP Team meetings
- [ ] Agrees that the student is not eligible for special education
- [ ] Disagrees with this IEP and:
  - [ ] requests mediation
  - [ ] requests a due process hearing

Signed: _________________________________________________________________  Date: __________________________

Operating District Superintendent or Designee

### Notice Requirements

The superintendent or designee of the operating district assures that:

(a) to the maximum extent appropriate, a person who has a disability, including a person who is assigned to a public or private institution or other care facility, is educated with persons who do not have disabilities.

(b) placement of a person who has a disability in special classes, separate schools, or the removal of a person who has a disability from the general education environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in a regular class using supplementary aids and services cannot be satisfactorily achieved.

(c) the placement for the student is as close as possible to his or her home.

(d) unless the IEP of a student with a disability requires some other arrangement, the student is educated in the school that he or she would attend if nondisabled.

(e) in selecting the least restrictive environment, consideration shall be given to any potentially harmful effects to the student or the quality of services that the student needs.

(f) a student with a disability will not be removed from education in age-appropriate regular classrooms solely because of needed modifications in the general education curriculum.

Staff responsible for implementation: **Designated Case Manager/Building Principal** Initial implementation site: **Kennedy Center**

Beginning date (month/day/year): ______________________________  Ending date (month/day/year): ___________________________

Signed: _________________________________________________________________  Date: __________________________

Superintendent or Designee

### Adult Providing IEP Consent – I have been informed of all procedural safeguards and sources to obtain assistance, and:

- [ ] Understand the contents of this IEP
- [ ] Agree with the IEP and its implementation
- [ ] Disagree, but will allow implementation of this IEP
- [ ] Disagree with this IEP and:
  - [ ] request mediation
  - [ ] request a due process hearing

Signed: _________________________________________________________________  Date: __________________________

Adult Providing Consent

Student Signature: __________________________________________________________  Date: __________________________