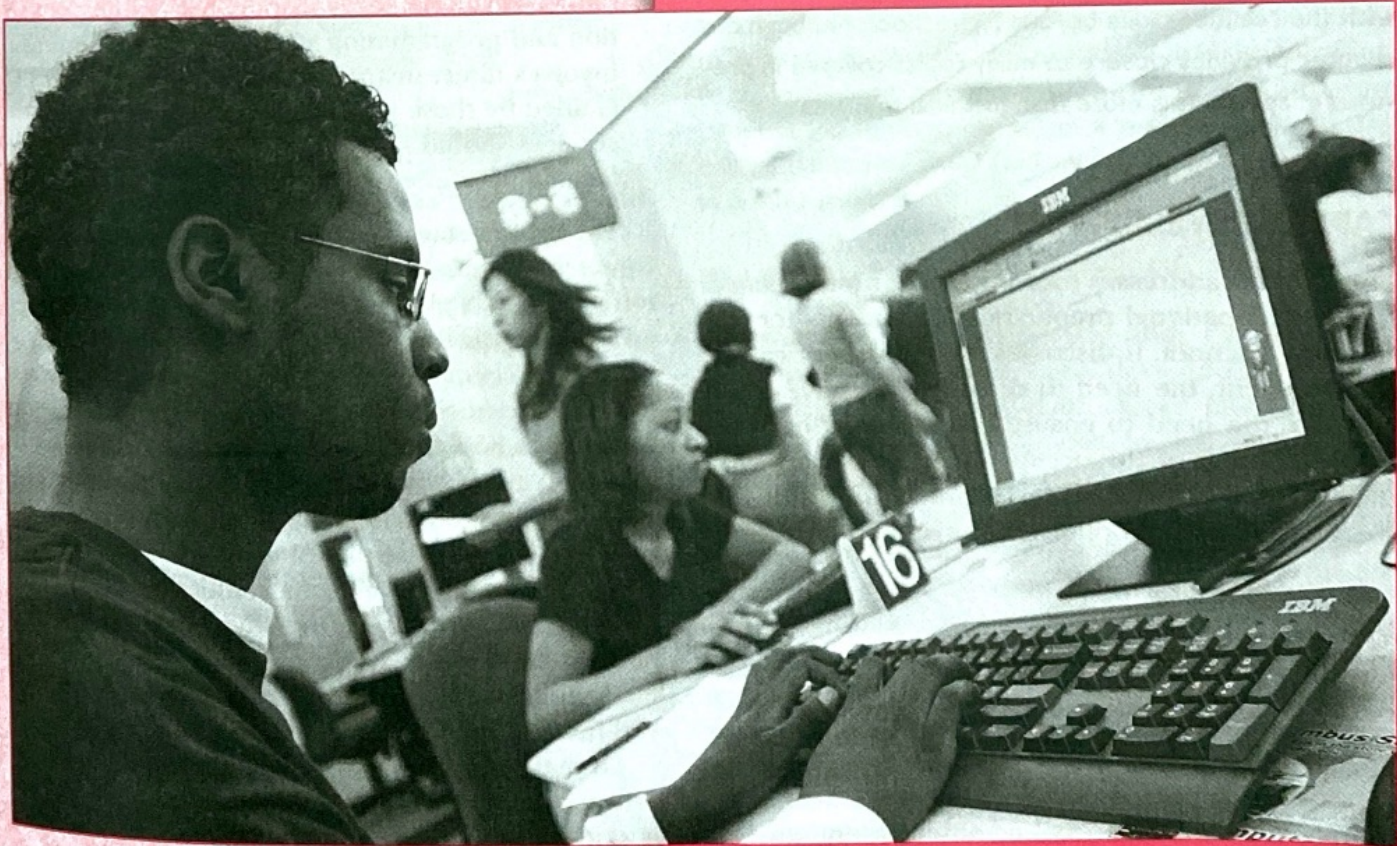


# 14



## *Career Development and Transition*



## OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this chapter, the reader should be able to:

1. Explore the important aspects of career development most beneficial to students with special needs and provide tactics for preparing for them.
2. Identify a number of transitions that may occur during the early childhood years, leading to the important transition to formal schooling.
3. Discuss the key transitions during the school years from the elementary level to middle school.
4. Explore the basic issues related to the transition from school to life after high school with emphasis on the specific elements of the transition planning process, as mandated by IDEA, for students who are exiting school.

**T**his final chapter of the text focuses on the articulation that should exist throughout the schooling process that assists a student and his or her family with the key transitions that will occur during school and ultimately with the realities of life beyond high school. Although the chapter provides closure to many topics covered in previous chapters, it is more than just final thoughts.

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT

This section addresses four important topics related to the occupational preparation of students for life after high school. It discusses the concept of career development, the need to develop a positive work attitude, the need to ensure that students have an understanding of the occupational vocabulary that they will encounter in the work world, and the array of vocational options that may be available at the secondary level.

### Career Development and Students with Special Needs

The concept of career development is akin to the idea of instruction in functional areas. It was used often in the early 1970s and intermittently since

that time. Career development suggests that individuals should be presented with information that is related to a variety of situations (i.e., careers) associated with community living. The term *career* can be misleading because it is often viewed solely from an occupational perspective. However, the broader notion of career includes various adult roles (e.g., in the home and community).

Career development should be viewed as a lifelong process that begins at the preschool level and continues past retirement. This view has been espoused by the Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) of the Council for Exceptional Children. The view of the DCDT is reflected in the following principles (G. M. Clark, Carlson, Fisher, Cook, & D'Alonzo, 1991):

- Education for career development and transition is for individuals with disabilities at all ages.
- Career development is a process that begins at birth and continues throughout life.
- Early career development is essential for making satisfactory choices later.
- Significant gaps or periods of neglect in any area of basic human development affect career development and the transition from one stage of life to another.
- Career development is responsive to intervention and programming when the programming involves direct instruction for individual needs.
- Guided by these principles, schools and adult services should strive to provide mechanisms for facilitating lifelong career development.

The typical stages of career development include career awareness, career exploration, career preparation, and job placement (see Figure 14–1). Career awareness activities (i.e., making students “aware” of various careers and occupations) are likely to begin during the elementary years, although they may begin at the preschool level. A key phase, as will be highlighted in this chapter, will occur during the later elementary or middle school or junior high school years when an emphasis is placed on “exploring” careers, occupations, and specific jobs in more detail. The latter phases involve preparing students for a specific occupation or career. It is important to recognize that, for some careers, postschool education and training will be needed (e.g., engineering, teaching, etc.).

Over the years, professionals in the field of education have endorsed starting this process early. It is critical that career awareness activities begin at

**FIGURE 14-1** Stages of Career Development During the School Years

	Career Awareness	Career Exploration	Career Preparation	Job Placement
Elementary				
Junior High				
Senior High				
At graduation				

Source: Wehman, P., & Targett, P. S. (2004). "Principles of Curriculum Design: Road to Transition from School to Adulthood." In P. Wehman & J. Kregel (Eds.), *Functional Curriculum for Elementary, Middle, and Secondary Age Students with Special Needs* (2nd ed., p. 9). Austin: PRO-ED.

the elementary level. Techniques such as infusing career topics into the existing content were discussed in the previous chapter. The following ideas are suggestions that, in our opinion, should be part of an elementary-level career education program—some of the recommendations were initially provided by G. M. Clark (1979) in his classic work on this topic:

- Provide instruction and guidance for developing positive habits, attitudes, and values toward work and daily living.
- Provide instruction and guidance for establishing and maintaining positive human relationships at home, at school, and at work.
- Provide instruction and guidance for developing awareness of occupational alternatives.
- Provide instruction for an orientation to the realities of the world of work, as a producer and as a consumer.
- Provide instruction for acquiring actual job. (p. 13)
- Explore the variety of leisure activities, including hobbies and recreational activities.
- Discuss what is expected of and required from a contributing member of the community.
- Examine the responsibilities of maintaining a house or an apartment, assuming both an owner's and a renter's perspective.

As students move through school and the need for exploration and more specific occupational preparation become more important, other program goals arise. These will include:

- Enhance the occupational awareness and aspirations of students through career counseling.
- Conduct an assessment of each student's occupational interests and aptitudes.

- Integrate the assessment findings into the individualized education program.
- Provide students with community-based training opportunities.
- Ensure the development of entry-level job skills.
- Provide job placement for and work supports to students as needed.

Even though the unemployment rate for adults with disabilities is high during recent years, most individuals with special needs will usually obtain a job, continue their education and training, and begin to assume their roles in the community and/or within their families. However, changes often occur in jobs (e.g., layoffs, promotions) and in families (e.g., offspring, divorce), requiring a reeducation process for many people. As a result, some of the early phases just described may have to be repeated at a later point in life.

### Key Areas of Focus

#### Assessing Career Interests and Preferences.

Many instruments have been developed for a variety of purposes related to career interests, job preparation, and employment. In this section, we focus the discussion on the area of career interests, strengths, and preferences. In our opinion, students with special needs must be provided with opportunities to become aware of and *explore* various occupational options that are potentially available to students. More formalized assessment in this area is often conducted by guidance and counseling staff or by vocational assessment personnel. However, we feel it is important for teachers to be aware of the instruments that are typically used with students and be able to use

some of them during the initial stages of career development process.

The assessment of career interests and strengths should be undertaken earlier rather than later. While the process of acquainting students with various careers (career awareness) should begin at the elementary level, a more systematic assessment of interests, preferences, and strengths should occur during the middle school years. Formal measures like the Kuder and the Strong Interest Inventory can be used to generate useful information about career interests. Many informal resources also exist for accomplishing this task. One resource that can be used to ascertain this information is the *Informal Assessments for Transition: Employment and Career Planning* (Synatschk et al., 2007). This book contains 62 informal instruments that cover four areas: interests and preferences, abilities and skills, career exploration, and job searching and securing. A few of the titles of the informal instruments include: Reach for the Stars; More Information from You, About You; Skills You Are Good At; Job Readiness Checklist; Job Analysis Short Form; and Interview Simulation.

It is very important for teachers at the middle school level to be able to initiate the career exploration process. A computer-based instrument called the Career Interest, Strengths, and Preferences Inventory (CIPSI; Clark, Synatschk, Patton, & Steel, 2012) allows school-based personnel to obtain enough information from a student to be able to explore career clusters, and therefore specific occupations. The CIPSI has four surveys that are used for obtaining information from the student: General Preferences, Personal Interests, Strengths, and Careers. The career clusters or occupations that are identified for exploration are based on information that the student provides from these four surveys. The results from two of the surveys (Personal Interests and Strengths) are directly linked to the O\*NET online database (see the next section) so that further investigation of careers and occupations can be conducted. A sample results screen from the Strength survey is illustrated in Figure 14-2.

**Exploring Potential Careers.** To accomplish reasonable exploration of careers and occupations, efforts must be made to provide teachers with appropriate information, resources, and techniques for teaching about careers. Accentuating the importance of career education, demonstrating its educational

and personal relevance, and providing ways for incorporating it into the existing curriculum will assist in its successful implementation. Two examples of excellent resources that teachers can access and that are now available online are: O\*NET Online (<http://online.onetcenter.org/>) and the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>). Both of these resources provide detailed information about occupations which is extremely useful during the exploration phase.

A technique for assisting with the process of career exploration that is recommended for upper elementary or middle school students is maintaining a portfolio that includes information related to occupations. Students should be engaged in activities that lead to acquiring information that will answer some of the following questions: What occupations interest me? Who works in these occupations? What is the lifestyle of the workers? Whom do they work with? Where are their jobs? How do the workers accomplish their jobs? What type of education and training is necessary? What is the typical salary for this job? Activities such as these expose students to the different roles of different workers and also aid students in clarifying alternatives for future study and consideration. An example of a form that can be used for exploration purposes is shown in Figure 14-3.

**Developing a Usable Vocational Vocabulary.** To be proficient in the job-seeking process (school, vocational rehabilitation, vocational training) or the world of work, individuals must understand the vocabulary of jobs and the workplace. Research (Fisher & Clark, 1992) has identified and validated the most important occupational terms with which individuals need to be familiar. Figure 14-4 provides a list of the 52 most frequently used occupational vocabulary terms. It will be important to assess a student's understanding of these terms and to teach their meaning, if the student does not understand it.

**Developing a Positive Work Attitude.** U.S. culture is result-oriented and the definition of transition services, as stated in the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, affirms this notion. Good or bad, many of the results that are usually accorded positive treatment in our society are work related (i.e., those who hold a job are held in higher esteem than those who do not hold a job). The individual with a results- or work-oriented attitude is in a better position to

**FIGURE 14-2** Sample Screenshot from Strengths Survey

**CIPSI**  
**Strengths**  
**Student:** James Patton  
**Date:** 9/2/2011

The following career clusters are sorted based on your strengths from highest to lowest. The percentage listed by each career cluster shows the number of strengths you indicated were like you out of the total number possible for that cluster. To see some careers associated with a selected career cluster, click the **View** button. To print your results, click the **Print Report** button.

Career Cluster	Average	View Related Careers
Government & Public Administration	80%	<a href="#">View</a>
Human Services	80%	<a href="#">View</a>
Marketing, Sales & Service	78%	<a href="#">View</a>
Education & Training	76%	<a href="#">View</a>
Law, Public Safety, Corrections, & Security	75%	<a href="#">View</a>
Business, Management & Administration	73%	<a href="#">View</a>
Health Science	72%	<a href="#">View</a>
Hospitality & Tourism	64%	<a href="#">View</a>
Transportation, Distribution & Logistics	57%	<a href="#">View</a>
Agriculture, Foods & Natural Resources	50%	<a href="#">View</a>
Finance	45%	<a href="#">View</a>
Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics	38%	<a href="#">View</a>
Architecture & Construction	24%	<a href="#">View</a>
Arts, A/V Technology & Communication	19%	<a href="#">View</a>
Information Technology	14%	<a href="#">View</a>
Manufacturing	10%	<a href="#">View</a>

Source: Clark, G. M., Synatsch, K. O., Patton, J. R., & Steel, L. E. (2012). *Career Interests, Preferences, and Strengths Inventory (CIPSI)*. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

**FIGURE 14-3** Career Exploration Form

Career Cluster _____
Career _____
SOC Code _____ Salary Range _____
Job Requirements _____
Education Required _____
Jobs in My Community:
Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____ Email/Website _____

Source: CIPSI

**FIGURE 14-4** Essential Occupational Vocabulary

ability	eligible	job description	responsibility
accommodation	employment	layoff	safety
apply	experience	merchandise	satisfactory
benefits	fired	occupation	schedule
break	first aid	on time	shift
breakage	full time	overtime	signature
checklist	harassment	part time	skill
competent	hazardous	paycheck	supervisor
cooperation	hire	policy	transportation
deduction	hours	preferences	union
department	income	promotion	vacation
dependable	interests	qualification	wages
directions	interview	raise	warning

Source: From *Understanding Occupational Vocabulary* (p. 4), by S. Fisher, G. Clark, and J. Patton, 2004.

obtain a job than the individual who is negative or naïve about work, so it is clear that education should assist students in developing strong positive work personalities with habits and attitudes that will ultimately lead them to become what they are interested in and capable of becoming. Ways to assess work attitudes can be found in *Informal Assessment of Transition Planning* (Gaumer Erickson, Clark, & Patton, 2012).

During the preschool stage, youngsters observe the daily living and working habits of those around them. Their observations, as well as interactions with older persons in their environment, begin to yield the perceptions of life that will ultimately cause these individuals to develop a particular type of work personality. The family has a tremendous influence on the child. Families who are consistent in meeting family members' needs or who are work-oriented tend to produce persons who behave in the same fashion. Families who are not consistent in meeting family members' needs or who are not work-oriented tend to produce young adults who exhibit these latter types of behaviors. Certainly, there are exceptions to this generalization, but it

depicts the tremendous importance of the family to the preschool child.

During the elementary school stage, students form a clearer, more precise perception of the world and their immediate surroundings. As students engage in academic and nonacademic endeavors, teachers need to be aware of the importance of their developing behaviors that will lead to positive work habits and positive work personalities—for example, starting a task on time, cooperating with others, being neat, or cleaning up and putting things away. As children get older and can accept more responsibilities, they should be given more important responsibilities in classrooms and in school. Students should also be given tasks that require them to express their ideas and understanding about different occupations. For example, students might be asked to write a composition or tell a story about a certain job, such as being a plumber, or students might role-play the actions of different persons, such as a park ranger, magician, or travel agent.

The secondary school period is a crucial stage in the life of the potential worker. Most adolescents with learning-related problems require a

comprehensive curriculum (see Chapter 2) that is responsive to their current needs and consistent with their transitional needs across the life span. Some facet of their secondary programming should include attention to the development of occupational knowledge and the acquisition of some specific vocational skill.

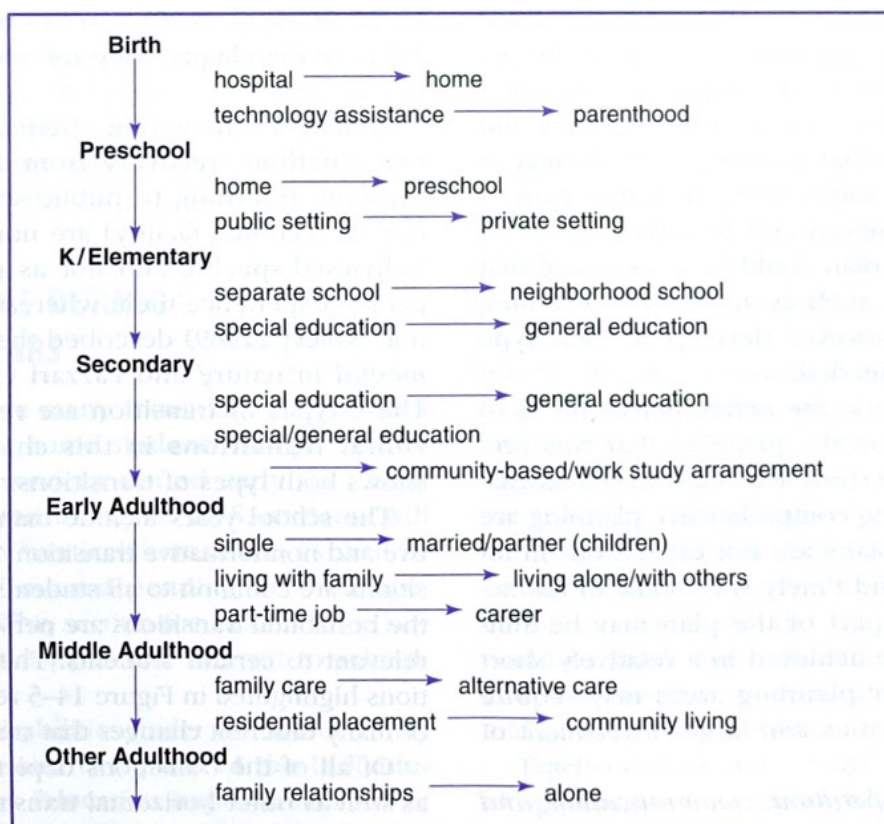
**Providing Training Options and Developing Vocational Skills.** A number of school-based options for vocational training may be available in a school system. The various alternatives include: course work, work-study, and other types of work experience. Although vocational training is often offered at the postsecondary level (community colleges, community training programs), students with special needs can benefit from receiving some form of vocational experience and skill development prior to exiting from formal schooling. This is critical because too often these students will not access such training at a later time.

Unfortunately, many students with special needs leave school without any vocational skills, often because they are in academically oriented programs that do not allow time for vocational training. Also, not all of the vocational options mentioned are available to students with special needs in many school districts.

## TRANSITION ALONG AND ACROSS THE SCHOOL YEARS

Presento  
2

Transitions are part of everyone's life. Some are predictable while others are unforeseen. Some of the transitions that students might encounter in their lives are depicted in Figure 14-5. Although the focus of this chapter is on those transitions that occur during school years, it is worthwhile to think about transitions as a lifelong reality (see L. Price & Patton, 2003), as dramatic transitions will occur in life as well.



**FIGURE 14-5** Vertical and Selected Horizontal Transitions

Source: From *Transition from School to Young Adulthood for Students with Special Needs: Basic Concepts and Recommended Practices*, by J. R. Patton and C. Dunn, 1996, Unpublished manuscript. Copyright 1996 by J. R. Patton. Adapted with permission.

## Critical Elements of Successful Transitions

Certain important elements are associated with increasing the chances of any transition being successful (Bruder & Chandler, 1996; Patton & Dunn, 1998). The point that should be noted is that, regardless of the transition that an individual is moving through, certain activities will make the transition smoother and what is referred to often as “more seamless.” The three key elements identified by Patton and Dunn include:

- Systematic and comprehensive planning— involving assessment and individual planning
- Implementation of a plan of action
- Coordination, cooperation, communication, and collaboration

*Systematic and comprehensive planning* involves two major activities: needs assessment and individual planning. The assessment phase should address two separate but related elements: (1) the evaluation of the demands and requirements of the setting(s) to which the person is likely to go next, and (2) the evaluation of the individual’s competence (i.e., knowledge and skill levels) associated with handling these impending demands. In assessing a student’s levels of competence, attention should be directed to both areas of strength and areas of need. Individual planning is the formal or informal process of formulating an action plan to address areas of concern and to capitalize on areas of strength. The plan could be a document that is mandated by law, such as an IEP, or something much less formal; however, developing some type of plan of action is needed.

The second element, the *action phase*, refers to the follow-through on the planning that was previously done. Wonderfully executed needs assessment and the resulting comprehensive planning are meaningless if the plans are not carried out in an efficient, effective, and timely way. Some of the action items that are part of the plan may be simple activities that are achieved in a relatively short time; however, other planning areas may require more elaborate activities and larger investment of time and effort.

*Coordination, cooperation, communication, and collaboration* refers to the various relationships and ongoing efforts between the sending environment (preschool, elementary school, high school) and any number of receiving settings. Ideally, representatives

from specific receiving settings would participate actively in the individual planning phase; however, regular participation of these individuals is often not possible. As a result, at the very least some level of cooperation and communication must exist between sending agencies and receiving agencies.

If transition planning, regardless of the transition of interest, is not conducted at all, is conducted in some minimal fashion, or is conducted ineffectively, several problems are likely to arise. They may include the interruption of important services, the termination of needed services through oversight or lack of information, inadequate preparation of the student in the sending environment, or inadequate preparation of the receiving environment.

## Types of Transitions

As mentioned, throughout life we all experience many different transitions. Some (e.g., beginning kindergarten, moving from elementary to secondary school) are predictable or normative and most people experience them. These types of transitions have also been referred to as *developmental* or *age-based* (Wolery, 1989) and *chronological* (Lazzari, 1991). In this chapter they are referred to as **vertical transitions**.

Other transitions (e.g., frequent changes in living situations, recovery from a major illness or accident, returning to public school from a juvenile correctional facility) are nonnormative—more individual-specific and not as predictable. Some people experience them whereas many others will not. Wolery (1989) described these as *nondevelopmental* in nature and Lazzari (1991) as *ongoing*. These types of transition are referred to as **horizontal transitions** in this chapter. Figure 14–5 shows both types of transitions.

The school years include many of these normative and nonnormative transitions. Most vertical transitions are common to all students, whereas many of the horizontal transitions are person-specific and are relevant to certain students. The horizontal transitions highlighted in Figure 14–5 represent only some of many different changes that can occur.

Of all of the transitions depicted in Figure 14–5 as well as other horizontal transitions that could be added to this figure, legal mandates for action are required of only two of the transitions. IDEA mandates that transition activities occur for the following situations: (1) young children who are moving

from early intervention services (i.e., birth to 3 years of age—Part C of IDEA) to a range of options at the preschool level, and (2) students who are 16 years of age and who are preparing to move from high school to life in the community. Many other important transitions may be encountered; however, only these two require transition planning.

For infants and toddlers who qualify and are served through early intervention programs, the transition from early intervention programs to any number of possible preschool settings (e.g., early childhood special education, private day care) is extraordinarily important and is a key component of the individualized family service plan (IFSP).

The other mandated transition that has received considerable attention in recent years is from school to living in the community as a young adult. This transition should be a focal point of the special education process for students who have reached the age of 16. As the major school-level transition, the majority of this chapter has been devoted to it. It is obvious, though, that a number of key transitions (e.g., preschool to kindergarten, elementary to middle school, middle school to high school) occur between age 3 transition planning and age 16 transition planning. We strongly believe that preschool, elementary, and middle school teachers consider transition knowledge and skill needs of their students as these students move through various levels of schooling.

## KEY TRANSITIONS DURING THE SCHOOL YEARS

Students experience many transitions during their school careers. For some students, the process of receiving special services started early (i.e., right after birth). As noted in Figure 14-5, students will experience certain “vertical” transitions as well as some “horizontal” ones depending on their specific life situation. This section focuses on some key transitions that have particular interest to school-based personnel.

Children with disabilities under the age of 5 may receive services under two parts of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. Through a formula based on census counts and poverty levels, states and local school systems receive federal resources to provide special education and related services to preschool-age children

with disabilities under Part B, Section 619 of IDEA. Part C of the act provides federal resources to designated state agencies to provide initial services to infants and toddlers with disabilities. Through Part C, states receive funds to plan, develop, and implement services, supports, and information systems for children with disabilities, birth to age 3, and their families.

Although special education professionals focusing on secondary students’ transition from school to adult living like to think they “invented” the notion of transition planning and transition services, early childhood educators began thinking about this at about the same time in the mid-1980s. Both groups of educators had different outcomes in mind for their groups, but much of the conceptual base was the same. Repetto and Correa (1996) pointed out the common features of the delivery of transition services for both early and secondary levels. For example, in comparing definitions applied to both age-level groups, the following commonalities are seen: curriculum, location of services, futures planning, multiagency collaboration, and family and student focus.

### Preschool to Kindergarten

Moving into kindergarten is a key transition and is a challenging adjustment, according to most professionals and parents (Chandler, 1993; Meier & Schafran, 1999; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003). This challenging transition was noted early on after the federal initiatives for establishing preschool programs for children with disabilities. Instruction in transition skills for making the move to kindergarten became recommended practice with “survival skills” curricula appearing in the literature (Rule, Fiechtl, & Innocenti, 1990). Rule et al. stated, “One rationale for teaching survival skills to preschoolers with handicaps [*sic*] is that they will encounter different learning conditions when they graduate into kindergarten or first grade” (p. 79). This same statement could be made for high school to postsecondary education settings, underscoring again the conceptual similarities in planning for life transitions.

Teachers often find it more helpful to have a set of specific skills in mind when starting to think more specifically about transition planning from preschool to kindergarten. Table 14-1 provides some of these specific skill examples generated by Chandler (1993) for preparing children to make a

**TABLE 14-1** Transition skills related to successful transition from preschool to kindergarten

**Social Behaviors and Classroom Conduct**

- Understands role as part of group
- Respects others and their property
- Interacts and defends self without aggression
- Plays cooperatively; shares toys and materials
- Expresses emotions and affections appropriately
- Takes turn: participates appropriately in games
- Is willing to try something new
- Follows class rules and routines
- Lines up and waits appropriately
- Imitates peer actions
- Sits appropriately
- Plays independently

**Communication Behaviors**

- Follows two- to three-part directions
- Initiates and maintains peer interactions
- Modifies behavior when given verbal feedback
- Asks peers or teachers for information or assistance
- Recalls and follows directions for tasks previously described
- Follows group instructions
- Relates ideas and experiences
- Answers questions
- Communicates own needs and wants

**Task-Related Behaviors**

- Finds materials needed for tasks
- Does not disrupt peers during activities
- Complies quickly with teacher instructions
- Generalizes skills across tasks and situations
- Follows task directions in small or large group
- Replaces materials and cleans up work space
- Monitors own behavior; knows when a task is done
- Begins and completes work at appropriate time without extra teacher attention
- Makes choices
- Stays in own space
- Follows routine in transition
- Uses a variety of materials
- Seeks attention appropriately
- Attends to teacher in a large group

**Self-Help Behaviors**

- Recognizes when a problem exists
- Locates and cares for personal belongings
- Avoids dangers and responds to warning words
- Takes outer clothing off and puts it on in a reasonable amount of time
- Tries strategies to solve problems
- Feeds self independently
- Cares for own toileting needs

Source: From "Steps in Preparing for Transition: Preschool to Kindergarten," by L. K. Chandler, 1993, *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 25, p. 48, Copyright 1993 by Council for Exceptional Children. Reprinted with permission.

successful transition from preschool to kindergarten and the elementary school.

Regardless of the type or location of early intervention services, there is strong support for a "seamless system" of services for birth through kindergarten (Bruns & Fowler, 2001; Campbell & Halbert, 2002). Transitions are more likely to be successful when young children are taught "survival" skills for entering new environments through systematic instruction. These young children are also more likely to succeed after this transition process occurs when there is a clear policy on interagency collaborations, specific guidelines for sending and receiving programs for planning and implementing children's movement from program to program, and a commitment to include parents in the process.

The involvement of family in this transition to kindergarten is crucial. Mangione and Speth (1998) identified "families as partners" as the number one element in determining continuity of transition for early childhood. Involving families as partners in this process is the key to the entire process. Figure 14-6 is an example of a document that provides an agreement between parents and preschool staff to

facilitate the transition of a student from preschool to kindergarten. Agreements such as this, even though they are not required under IDEA, make partnerships more likely to succeed.

### Elementary to Secondary Education

One of the most neglected developmental transitions during the school years for all students is from elementary school to the secondary level. Although middle schools typically have an orientation for fifth-grade students and their parents, these events are not sufficient to make this transition as seamless as possible. Unique challenges exist as a student moves from elementary to middle school (Robinson, Braxdale, & Colson, 1985) and from middle to a ninth-grade center or high school setting (C. Wells, 1996). Moreover, the time when a student leaves the elementary setting and moves on to middle school is a time of many critical changes. Not lost on anyone is the fact that this time period is one of major biological change in the students.

**Key Difference Between Elementary and Middle School.** The nature of the school experience and

**FIGURE 14-6** Parent Transition Plan

**PARENT TRANSITION PLAN**

Child: Missy

The following plan states the steps that the parents (and/or guardian) of the above named child and the staff of the Preschool Transition Project (PTP) will take, at the beginning of the 2004/05 school year to ensure an orderly transition to the school district for the child.

Recommended Placement: Regular Kindergarten

Neighborhood School: Seven Oaks Elementary

In completing this plan, please write out the step to be taken, who will be responsible for the step, and by what date the step will be accomplished.

Step	Person Responsible	Target Date	Date Accomplished
1. Missy is recommended for enrollment in regular kindergarten at Seven Oaks Elementary. Parents will contact the principal to discuss Missy's physical status and capabilities.	Parents	May 30, 2005	
2. Send records to school principal, district special education office, and provide the parents with copies of preschool reports for their file.	B. Fiechti, teacher	June 2, 2005	
3. Provide kindergarten teacher with preschool teacher's report, stressing Missy's skills and possible adaptations for the environment.	B. Fiechti, teacher	June 9, 2005	
4. Monitor Missy's progress throughout the year; inform kindergarten teacher whenever physical status changes.	Parents	2004-05 school year	
5. Contact psychologist if advice needed or problems occur.		2004-05 school year	

This plan has been read and agreed to by the following parties. A signature on this plan imparts permission for the person responsible to contact other significant persons (e.g., teachers, principals) necessary to complete the step. These contacts are only to include information relevant to completing the objective of the step.

Persons	Title	Date
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Source: From "It's Time to Get Ready for School," by B. Fiechtl et al., 1989, *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 21(2), p. 54. Copyright 1988 by The Council for Exceptional Children. Reprinted with permission.

the school structure changes when a student moves to the middle school level. For many students with special needs, the experience can be like being an English-speaking traveler in a non-English-speaking country. Given the significant differences that exist between elementary and secondary schooling, it is extremely important that systematic transition planning occur, especially for those who will be in inclusive settings.

Certain features of the secondary school setting make it particularly alien to the new arrivals. Some of the most obvious features include a larger student population, more teachers to deal with each day, heavy curricular emphasis on content areas, increased amounts of homework, need for more self-regulated behavior, different in-school procedures (e.g., use of lockers, physical education), and a different type of class scheduling.

**Specific Demands of the Secondary Setting.** In addition to the obvious distinctions just noted, major demands are placed on students that affect their academic success and social acceptance. In a classic article about the transition to middle school, Robinson et al. (1985) introduced three areas that are crucial to school success: academic demands, self-management/study skills demands, and social/adaptive demands. Based on Robinson and colleagues' original conceptualization, we have adapted these areas into a slightly different organizational system that includes five areas. Each of these areas is briefly described as follows:

- **Academic demands**—Behaviors or competencies that relate to the application of basic skills to the demands of the classroom setting. These skills include reading, listening, speaking, and writing and, when successfully used, result in successful performance as evidenced by being able to complete assignments or activities and receiving passing grades (at a minimum). This area does not include mastery of content.
- **Content demands**—Behaviors or competencies, based primarily on previous knowledge acquisition, that relate to current knowledge and skill levels in specific subject areas which the student has to take as part of his/her course of study.
- **Academic support skills demands**—Behaviors or competencies associated with the acquisition, recording, remembering, and use of information. The majority of these skills are typically associated with study skills and include skills such as organizational skills, note-taking skills, the ability to use reference materials, and test taking (see Chapter 11 on study skills).
- **Social/adaptive demands**—Behaviors or competencies that lead to acceptance by peers, balanced by compliance with school-based and classroom-based rules and procedures. As Robinson et al. (1985) pointed out, this latter point is particularly problematic for some students, as explicit and implicit classroom-specific rules and procedures vary from one teacher to another and are often difficult for students with special needs to recognize.
- **Nonacademic demands**—Behaviors or competencies that do not relate directly to scholastic success but are required to be successful at the middle school level. Some examples of demands in these areas are using a locker, changing clothes or showering for physical education class, and

bringing appropriate materials (books, notebooks, calculators) to specific classes. This dimension also taps the “informal” demand of participating in an assortment of extracurricular activities that become available at the middle school level.

To help identify areas in which students are strong as well as where possible challenges may occur, we have developed an informal measure, titled Middle School Transition Inventory (MSTI). This instrument, provided in Appendix 14A, is organized according to the five areas discussed previously. The instrument includes items that are rated by both the student (when appropriate) and by his or her teacher(s). As indicated, the intent of the instrument is to identify areas of strength as well as areas that will become barriers to success at the middle school level. Ideally, the instrument should be implemented at the end of fourth grade or the beginning of fifth grade so that instruction can be provided to address those areas of need and/or to establish supports that might be useful. Ratings are based on four levels of proficiency (not proficient, partially proficient, proficient, highly proficient). The results of performing this assessment that are transformed into appropriate instruction can assist in making this transition more successful.

**Enhancing the Transition from Elementary to Middle School.** Like all other transitions, the successful movement from the sending school to the receiving school depends on (a) the identification of the skills required in the receiving environment, (b) the assessment of student competence vis-à-vis these demands, and (c) then addressing the areas that need attention. As McKenzie and Houck (1993) pointed out, this sequence of activities must be accomplished before students arrive at the secondary level by maximizing communication, cooperation, coordination, and collaboration between the elementary staff and those at the secondary level.

Carter, Clark, Cushing, and Kennedy (2005) recommended that students, their families, and school-based personnel incorporate strategies into the planning process for moving from elementary to middle school. Although their suggestions were developed with students with significant disabilities as the focal group, their recommendations have merit for other students with milder challenges and align with the themes offered in this chapter. Incorporating many of the strategies proffered by Carter

and colleagues (2005), we recommend the following actions:

- Start planning early.
- Assess the transition needs of students.
- Collaborate and communicate across schools.
- Prepare students early.
- Encourage and support family involvement.
- Develop peer support programs.
- Foster independence.

Upon examination of all the elements that contribute to the seamless transition from elementary to middle school and the array of demands that are needed to be successful at this level, it is amazing that so little attention is devoted to this critical transition. To help organize the information provided in this section, a checklist for planning for this transition is provided in Appendix 14B. The checklist is an adaptation on a timeline developed by Carter and colleagues (2005). Following their structure, the checklist is organized along four time frames: during the final years of elementary school, during the months prior to entering middle school, during the first few weeks of middle school, and throughout middle school. The checklist can contribute to establishing a framework for thinking through this process and making sure that essential activities are accomplished. It, too, can be the impetus for establishing ongoing collaborative efforts between elementary and secondary personnel.

## TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

Although earlier parts of this chapter draw attention to the importance of transition planning during various stages of a student's life, the transition from high school to whatever happens after high school is most often the subject of policy, research, and practice. In fact the concept of formally planning for the transition of students with disabilities was first developed in the 1980s in response to the difficulty adolescents with disabilities often experienced after leaving high school. At that time, family members, teachers, researchers, and policy makers focused on how to help youth with disabilities find employment. Professionals came to realize, however, that finding fulfilling and gainful employment was only one component of adult life (Halpern, 1985).

Research and practice in the area of transition planning quickly expanded to include the much broader concept of community involvement. This expanded focus included independent living skills and social networks of people with disabilities, in addition to employment. Now, a wide range of transition planning domains are commonly identified as areas in need of attention: employment, further education or training, self-determination, independent living, personal money management, community involvement and usage, leisure activities, health, functional communication, and interpersonal relationships (Patton & Clark, 2012).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), as amended in 2004, defined "transition services" as "a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed within an results-oriented process that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of a child with a disability to facilitate movement from school to post-school activities including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing adult education, adult service, independent living, or community participation" [Sec. 300.42(a)(1)]. Other notable elements associated with transition services that were part of the mandates in the 2004 reauthorization include:

- Transition services, now defined as "a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within a results-oriented process" indicated a change from the previous wording of "outcome-oriented process."
- The IEP for students 16 and older—and younger when appropriate—must contain certain elements:
  - Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills. [Sec. 300.320(b)(1)]
  - Transition services should be based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests [Sec. 300.42(a)(2)].
  - Services that are needed to attain postsecondary goals should be specified (this would include courses of study).
  - Documentation that the student is informed of his or her rights as an adult no later than one year before age of legal adulthood (according to state law) should be provided.

- For students graduating or exiting school due to aging out, the law now requires local school districts to provide a student with a summary of his or her academic achievement and functional performance that includes recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting his or her postsecondary goals.

## Adult Outcomes

Despite the addition of transition services to special education programs, postsecondary outcomes for youth with disabilities continue to generate concern. One important measurement of postsecondary success is obtaining a high school diploma. This remains a challenge for adolescents with disabilities. Only 56.5% of students in special education received a regular diploma during the 2004–2005 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). While the percentage of students in special education who have received a diploma has increased significantly since 1995–1996 when the percentage was at 42.4, it is clear that many students do not receive a diploma. In a related matter in terms of academic success, the overall dropout rate for youth served under IDEA was 26.2% of all students in special education. Although the number of students who drop out has decreased over the years, many students, particularly those with emotional and behavioral disorders, do not complete high school. As is obvious, educational attainment is relevant to other indicators of postsecondary success such as employment and enrollment in training programs and institutions of higher education.

In 2000, the National Longitudinal Transition Study—2 (NLTS-2), a 10-year study that followed youth with disabilities throughout their transition into young adulthood was conducted by SRI. The results of this ongoing study provided a detailed picture of experiences across multiple transition domains including education, employment, and community involvement, to name only a few. Data also provide information about transition experiences across groups of youth by disability category, race/ethnicity, age, and gender.

Although the first National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS-1), based on data gathered between 1985 and 1993, documented gaps in both types of employment (full and part time) and wages earned between transition-aged youth with disabilities and youth without disabilities, NLTS-2 has provided evidence that employment and wage gaps are narrowing for youth with disabilities when

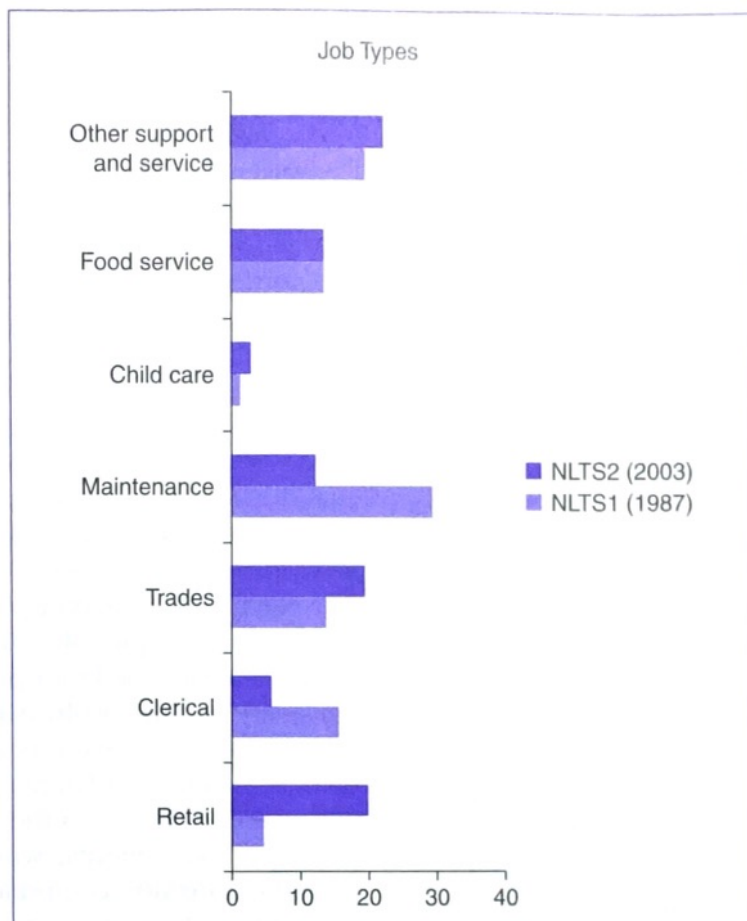
compared to their age peers without disabilities (M. Wagner et al., 2005). About 55% of youth with disabilities in NLTS-1 gained paid work experiences after high school, whereas nearly 71% of youth with disabilities in NLTS-2 had done so. Further, youth with disabilities in the second study were more likely to earn more than the federal minimum wage; however, this gain is mitigated by the fact that youth from NLTS-2 were actually *less* likely to be employed full time (M. Wagner et al., 2005). Also, as with the NLTS-1, gaps in employment and wages between these two groups may increase as youth age because youth with disabilities are less likely to obtain the benefits that are associated with college degrees (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). Figure 14–7 details the types of jobs youth with disabilities were likely to hold based on data from both the NLTS-1 and NLTS-2 studies.

## General Model of the Transition Process

Although the transition provisions in IDEA 2004 provide specific information regarding the age of the child and the types of documents that must be in place to meet the letter of the law (policy compliance), they do little to describe the range of transition services that best meet the spirit of the law (alignment with preferred practices). In other words, what do effective transition services for adolescents with disabilities *actually* look like?

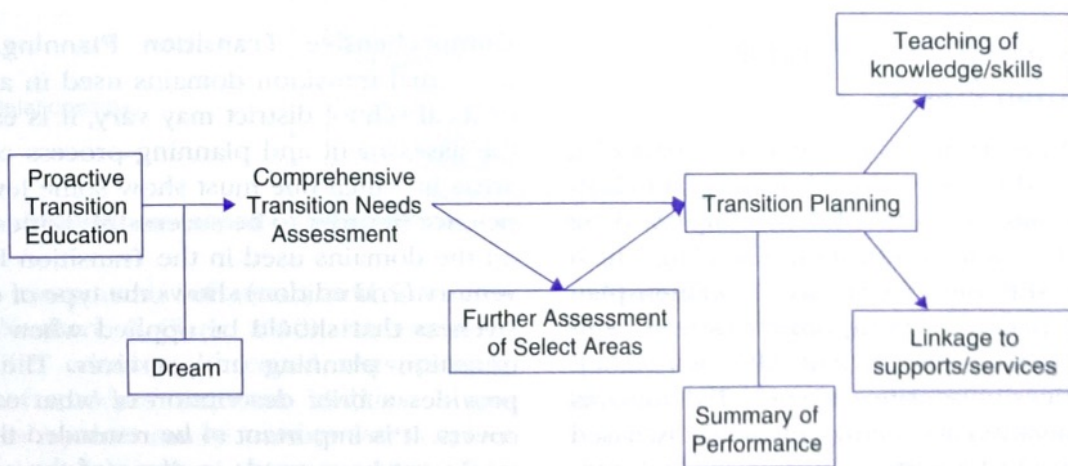
Key elements of the postsecondary transition process are depicted in Figure 14–8. This model conveys the importance of a broad range of planning activities that include the following features:

- The transition process starts very early and can be accomplished by addressing postschool topics when opportunities arise in the curriculum or during instruction.
- It is essential to expose students to a range of postsecondary issues early enough so that they can “dream” about their futures.
- This dream phase needs to be followed by a realistic exploration of careers and other post-school topics such as where one wants to live and play.
- Prior to age 16, a comprehensive assessment of needs, preferences, interests, and strengths must occur using age-appropriate instruments or techniques.
- Sometimes more in-depth assessment may be needed to determine the specific transition needs of a student.



**FIGURE 14-7** Types of Jobs Held by Young Adults with Disabilities After High School

Source: Wagner, M., Newman, L., Cameto, R., Garza, N., & Levine, P. (2005). *After High School: A First Look at the Postschool Experiences of Youth with Disabilities* (p. 4). Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.



**FIGURE 14-8** The Transition Planning Process

Source: Patton, J. R. (2007). *Transition Assessment and Planning: Evolution of a Concept and Actual Practice*. Unpublished manuscript. Austin, TX.

- Measurable postsecondary goals that are student-driven need to be identified and clarified.
- Specific transition goals and activities need to be developed that address the “transition

needs” of the students. As Scanlon, Patton, and Raskind (2011) noted, “there are two types of goals that should result from transition planning: *Instructional*—which addresses academic, behavioral, and social outcomes, and

*Linkage*—which concerns connections among services and agencies” (p. 600).

- Prior to a student leaving school through graduation or reaching the age of 22, a student-oriented summary of performance must be developed to assist the student with certain aspects of his or her life after high school.
- The model implies that collaboration among home, school, and adult agencies, occurs simultaneously with the purpose of increasing a student’s ability to respond with knowledge, skills, experience, and supports to be able to deal with the array of demands of adulthood.

In practice, transition services vary widely from state to state, district to district, and even school to school (Destafano, Heck, Hasazi, & Furney, 1999). Some elements of transition planning may vary according to the needs and strengths associated with specific disabilities. For example, transition-related needs of young adults with high-incidence disabilities such as learning disabilities may differ from the needs of young adults with low-incidence disabilities such as students who are deaf or blind. Yet, several decades of practicing and researching transition services have resulted in a wide range of recommended transition practices. Three key, recommended practices are individualization of transition components, active student and family involvement, and inter-agency collaboration.

### Key Features and Guiding Principles of the Transition Process

An individualized transition plan is one part of a student’s individualized education program (IEP) and typically one or more IEP meetings will be dedicated to the topic of transition. The plan, which is part of the IEP, must be a formal, written plan that includes specific learning objectives relative to the transition goals of the student. Although recommended practices in transition suggest that domains other than education and employment, as discussed previously, should be addressed in individual transition plans, a review of existing transition plans revealed that other domains such as health care and transportation are far less likely to be addressed (Everson, Zhang, & Guillory, 2001).

Because transition is results-based, the document itself must contain a statement of expected outcomes in each postschool domain that the plan addresses.

For example, in the domain of postsecondary education, is the expected outcome to attend college? If so, will the individual attend a community college, junior college, four-year university, or some other learning institution? Clearly, the learning objectives addressed in each major domain of the transition plan, as well as the plan to access the general education curriculum, must address the expected outcome in that domain (Wehmeyer, 2002). This is important so that the educational goals in the IEP align with the measurable postsecondary goals that have been identified by the student.

For example, if a student states that he wants to attend a four-year university, his IEP must reflect assessment that has examined all aspects of future need in this setting and contain learning objectives that contribute to making this goal become a reality. In this example, objectives would include necessary academic skills to prepare the student for a university setting (addressing strengths and needs in study skills, as well as core academic subjects such as reading and language arts). Furthermore, in this example, access to the general curriculum and statewide assessments, whether stated in the IEP or in the transition component, must align with the goal of attending university.

The remainder of this section discusses key features of the transition process that should be implemented to maximize the future adjustment and success of students in a range of postschool environments.

**Comprehensive Transition Planning.** Although the actual transition domains used in a given state or local school district may vary, it is essential that the assessment and planning process cover critical areas in which one must show some levels of competence in order to be successful. Table 14–2, based on the domains used in the Transition Planning Inventory (2nd edition) shows the type of comprehensiveness that should be applied when considering transition planning and services. The table also provides a brief description of what each domain covers. It is important to be reminded that students might not have needs in some of the areas; nevertheless, all areas should be examined for needs and strengths.

**Assessment of Transition Needs.** A required activity in developing effective transition plans based on individualized postschool goals is to collect data regarding the present level of functioning, as well

**TABLE 14-2** Transition domains

<i>Domain</i>	<i>Description</i>
<b>Working</b>	
Career Choice & Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knows about jobs</li> <li>• Knows how to get a job</li> </ul>
Employment Knowledge & Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquires and performs general and specific skills related to a job or jobs</li> <li>• Knows how to change jobs</li> </ul>
<b>Learning</b>	
Further Education/Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knows about options for further development beyond high school</li> <li>• Has the skills to be successful</li> <li>• Knows how to use support services</li> </ul>
Functional Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is able to read, write, listen, and speak in applied settings</li> </ul>
<b>Living</b>	
Self-Determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands his or her strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>• Is able to plan, set goals, make decisions</li> <li>• Is able to be in charge of his or her own life</li> </ul>
Independent Living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has skills related to a variety of everyday demands such as cooking, cleaning, making simple repairs</li> <li>• Is able to solve everyday problems that arise</li> <li>• Has skills to use current technology</li> </ul>
Personal Money Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has skills associated with buying everyday items</li> <li>• Is able to pay bills, maintain checking and savings accounts, budget</li> </ul>
Community Involvement & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has skills associated with being a capable citizen</li> <li>• Is able to use services and resources in the community</li> <li>• Is able to use local public transportation</li> </ul>
Leisure Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is aware of range of leisure activities</li> <li>• Participates in indoor and outdoor activities</li> <li>• Engages in various types of entertainment</li> </ul>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has knowledge and skills associated with staying physically healthy</li> <li>• Has knowledge and skills associated with staying emotionally and mentally healthy</li> <li>• Has knowledge of appropriate sexual behavior</li> </ul>
Interpersonal Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has skills to interact appropriately with a range of other people</li> <li>• Is able to make and keep friends</li> <li>• Is able to deal with conflict</li> <li>• Has knowledge and skills to be a good parent</li> </ul>

as ongoing assessments of needs and strengths (Sitlington, Neubert, & Clark, 2010). For example, subject-specific, criterion-referenced tests provide a snapshot of students' academic abilities. Norm-referenced instruments can be used to assess career aptitudes or establish college entrance criteria. Less formal instruments like the Career Interests, Preferences, and Strengths Inventory (CIPSI) can provide entry points for exploration. Certain assessment techniques, both formal and informal, measure transition-related competencies, and may include functional, and ecological assessments (Sitlington, Neubert, Begun, Lombard, & Leconte, 2007).

A number of age-appropriate assessment procedures have been developed to assess directly various transition domains. Some of the instruments are comprehensive in nature while others focus on a specific topic. Informal techniques can include observations and interviews of students and important adults (e.g., parent[s] or a supervisor at a part-time job setting). Informal assessment can also involve the administration of checklists and rating scales. One resource that includes good examples of these types of instruments is *the Informal Assessments for Transition Planning* (2nd ed.; Gaumer Erickson et al., 2012).

In addition to many informal techniques that are available to school personnel for assessing needs, strengths, preferences, and interests, a number of formal transition instruments exists as well. These assessments, while meeting the requirement of being age-appropriate, provide results that span a range of transition domains. Thus, they can serve as effective tools for conducting a comprehensive assessment of transition needs on which individualized planning can be based. Some of the more popular instruments include:

- *Brigance Transition Skills Inventory*—Brigance (2010)
- *Enderle-Severson Transition Rating Scales*—Enderle & Severson (2003)
- *Transition Behavior Scales (2nd ed.)*—McCarney & Anderson (2000)
- *Transition Skills Inventory*—Halpern, Herr, Wolf, Doren, Johnson, & Lawson (2000)
- *Transition Planning Inventory (2nd ed.)*—Patton & Clark (2012)

**Student Involvement.** Individualization is an essential element of any comprehensive transition component, yet this practice has not been implemented with widespread success. Many studies that have included reviews of transition components of IEPs have revealed that individualization was not occurring. At times, this lack of individualization resulted from the use of disability-based expected outcomes rather than the preferences of the student (Grigal, Test, Beattie, & Wood, 1997). More frequently, however, has been the documentation of a lack of student involvement in developing transition plans (J. M. Williams & O’Leary, 2001). One way to increase the individualization, and therefore the usefulness, of transition components is to increase the participation of the student in the plan’s creation.

Increasing the active involvement of students with disabilities in the development and implementation of their transition component has the potential to increase the individualized nature of the document. In addition, incorporating students’ perspectives (as required by IDEA 2004) fosters a sense of student ownership, increasing the active involvement of students in the implementation of plans that reflect their goals for the future (Bassett & Lehmann, 2002). When planning and providing services related to postsecondary transition,

incorporating the preferences of students with disabilities makes sense.

Students must actively participate in their transition planning and instructional activities so that teachers, family members, and personnel from outside agencies are able to understand his or her short-term as well as postsecondary goals and are able to facilitate goal attainment. Although students with and without disabilities may display a wide variety of preferences and maturity levels when invited to participate in formal meetings with adults, research shows that skills such as self-advocacy, goal setting, and problem solving can be taught (Powers, Turner, Westwood, Matuszewski, & Phillips, 2001).

To capitalize on this active involvement, teachers and other adults must consistently promote student **self-determination** skills (see Chapter 12), as well as listen to the decisions young adults with disabilities make about their own lives and support them while they work to make their dreams become realities. Self-determination is a complex concept and has been defined in numerous ways (Field, Hoffman, & Spezia, 1998). Generally, the term refers to the attitudes and skills necessary to make choices, decisions, and goals, as well as take action to realize these goals. An underlying assumption is that self-determination includes causal agency, or the ability to act independently (Wehmeyer, 1994).

**Parent Involvement.** Student engagement in the transition planning process is important, but the involvement of other family members is also an essential element in transition planning. In fact, parent participation throughout all special education processes is mandated by IDEA 2004. Additionally, parents and siblings, and in many cases extended family members, play important roles as advocates for and role models to their children. More important, parents and other family members will likely continue to be critical supports to their children as they become young adults. When educators and other school personnel invite family members to actively participate in transition planning, the end result is a meaningful, individualized plan that addresses postsecondary transition goals that are specific to the person with a disability (Hanley-Maxwell, Pogoloff, & Whitney-Thomas, 1998).

Positive collaboration between families and schools during the transition process can and does occur. Families have expressed that professionals

who listen carefully to their needs while arranging connections between them and community resources are highly valued (deFur, Todd-Allen, & Getzel, 2001). The creation of a trusting relationship between home and school, as well as effective communication and logistics that favor parents' schedule constraints, have the potential to facilitate parent involvement (Salembier & Furney, 1997).

Barriers to the active involvement of family members have also been identified in research. Some concerns family members have shared about the successful transition of their children with disabilities include a sense that partnerships between school and home were limited (J. L. Schuster, Timmons, & Moloney, 2003) and that family-identified transition needs and goals are not consistently represented on transition plans (J. R. Thompson, Fulk, & Piercy, 2000). Another reality is that some parents will not participate as fully as school-based professionals would like. The bottom line is, however, that transition personnel must be sensitive to family values and "resources" in terms of how much and the type of involvement parents are able to give to this process.

**Cultural Responsiveness.** One consideration when involving both students and their family members in transition-related planning and implementation is cultural reciprocity. As the U.S. student population becomes more racially/ethnically diverse, teachers and administrators must learn to respond to this diversity in ways that engage members of culturally and linguistically diverse subpopulations. Cause for concern about the efficacy of transition planning and instruction and diverse groups of young adults stem from evidence illustrating that youth of color, English language learners, and youth of all races/ethnicities from low socioeconomic backgrounds all face challenges to successful postsecondary transition in employment and postsecondary education.

Outcomes for many adolescents in the groups noted earlier are less positive than outcomes for adolescents without disabilities or European American adolescents with disabilities. For example, results from NLTS-2 revealed that, despite gains in employment African American and Latino youth with disabilities between NLTS-1 (1987) and NLTS-2 (2003), gaps in employment outcomes among European Americans, African Americans, and Latinos with disabilities after high school continue to be a problem.

In addition to differential measurements of outcomes such as employment rates and enrollment in colleges and universities, surveys of diverse groups of parents indicate that collaborative experiences with schools have the potential to be negative experiences in which the cultural identity of families has been disregarded (Geenen, Powers, Lopez-Vasquez, & Bersani, 2003).

Understanding the values and beliefs embedded in special education and transition is one of the first steps in becoming culturally responsive (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999). For example, the concept of transition itself is built upon ideals of independence and equity, which means that the preferred practices in transition planning and implementation support increasing students' abilities to become self-determining, as well as obtaining the same opportunities as their peers without disabilities. These values and beliefs, however, may be interpreted differently by people, in part based on their cultural identities (deFur & Williams, 2002). Although racial/ethnic identities are an important contributing factor to our cultural identities, socioeconomic status, as well as disability status, and many other characteristics contribute to our identities as individuals and as members of groups.

Additional surveys of parents' perspectives on transition provide evidence that the type of disability also influences parents' expectations for transition planning and instruction (Grigal & Neubert, 2004). For example, these researchers found that parents of children with low-incidence disabilities (e.g., traumatic brain injury) placed more emphasis on the importance of transition activities that address life skills than parents of children with high-incidence disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities). On the other hand, both groups of parents stated their intention for their children to attend postsecondary education.

Student and family involvement are important to successful postsecondary transition because their active engagement in transition activities will better prepare them for dealing with the real world when school ends (e.g., service providers in the community). If parents are involved in planning meetings along with representatives of adult agencies, acquaintances are made and information about services is shared prior to exiting high school.

**Interagency Cooperation.** Whereas educational and related services are guaranteed to youth with

disabilities in the public schools, adult agencies provide services based on eligibility rather than entitlement (Cozzens, Dowdy, & Smith, 1999). This means that postsecondary transition involves a shifting of shared responsibility, and that an adult with a disability, and in some cases with the assistance of his or her family members, must learn to disclose disability status, access adult agencies, and participate in eligibility determination activities.

Some examples of adult agencies are:

- Social Security Administration
- Federal employment programs (e.g., Ticket to Work)
- Vocational rehabilitation agencies
- State, local, and private service providers for people with cognitive disabilities or mental health needs
- Postsecondary educational institutions
- Disability advocacy groups

Connecting students with disabilities to programs and agencies they will need to access once they have exited high school is one way to increase the potential for postsecondary success. These connections, like all other aspects of transition planning, must be individualized. Some young adults with disabilities may need to establish connections to independent living facilities such as supported living settings, whereas others may need to contact offices for student services at colleges and universities to determine available academic supports.

Key to establishing these relationships is to formalize the connection within the transition component, including inviting adult agency representatives to transition planning meetings as well as incorporating related transition linkage goals that establish contact between the student and the agency representative. For a student who has an interest in pursuing a career in photography, for example, linking her to adult service providers might involve arranging a visit to the local community college where she would meet with a student services provider or counselor to determine how the college could accommodate her needs. In addition, subsequent visits could be arranged where she could meet other students with similar interests, perhaps sit in on a class, and/or participate in a tour of the photography facilities. The point here is to establish a multiyear, outcomes-based goal (e.g., pursue an associate's degree in photography) and develop short-term goals that

both align with the long-term goal and create connections to adult agencies.

Although linking students to adult services providers is a recommended practice, Agran, Cain, and Cavin (2002) surveyed rehabilitation counselors and teachers and found that counselors were rarely invited to transition planning meetings, and that a lack of collaboration between adult vocational rehabilitation agencies and schools characterized the process. A lack of connections to other adult services such as Social Security administrators and representatives from work incentive programs have also been documented (J. L. Schuster et al., 2003; J. R. Thompson et al., 2000). Weak or nonexistent connections to adult service providers may also serve as additional barriers for culturally and linguistically diverse families. Geenen et al. (2003) found that language barriers and unfamiliarity with adult agencies contributed to diverse family members' decisions to *not* pursue services for their young adult children with disabilities.

**Other Issues in Postsecondary Transition.** The preceding discussion has not exhaustively covered all transition issues. The transition needs of youth in special education are being addressed in both general and special education, by transition specialists within special education, and by researchers who specialize in studying how adolescents with disabilities move from high school to the demands of adult living. Additionally, most parents and families engage children with disabilities in transition-related issues in an ongoing manner.

Considering the breadth of transition within the field of special education, many important discussions are beyond the scope of this chapter. Additional issues concern access and accountability during the transition process, including access to the general curriculum (Wehmeyer, 2002) and graduation requirements and high-stakes assessment outcomes (D. R. Johnson, Stodden, Emanuel, Lueking, & Mack, 2002). Each of these issues intersects with the aforementioned foci in this field.

Students with disabilities, and their family members, are key players in participating actively in the transition process and ultimately in navigating the sometimes rough waters of life in the community for their sons and daughters. Additionally, questions about linguistic and cultural diversity must be recognized and considered in problem-solving efforts

around access and accountability. Finally, each of these issues must be considered in the context of the individual, with a particular focus on related strengths, needs, and preferences.

## SUMMARY

This chapter covered a number of topics related to transition, as this process applies to students with special needs. The first part of the chapter discussed the important topic of career development. The next section introduced the notion of vertical

and horizontal transitions. It also highlighted the critical components that contribute to successful transitions. The subsequent section of the chapter focused on two key transitions that students with special needs face during their school careers: transition into school and transition from elementary school to middle school. The last section of the chapter examined in some depth the transition from high school to life after high school. Important points that must be recognized and understood in regard to each of these transitions were discussed.