

Preface to Series

The transition of students from school to adulthood roles has emerged as one of the most important topics in the field of special education and rehabilitation. The critical nature of planning for the transition needs of students has also been recognized in the school-to-work, often referred to as school-to-careers, initiative.

The PRO-ED Series on Transition evolved from a symposium convened in September 1994. Along with the opportunity for professionals interested in the practical aspects of the transition process to discuss many different issues, the symposium produced a series of papers that were published originally in the *Journal of Learning Disabilities* and subsequently bound as a book titled *Transition and Students with Learning Disabilities*. The current series provides practical resources to transition personnel on a variety of topics that are critical to the process of preparing individuals for adulthood.

- *Adult Agencies: Linkages for Adolescents in Transition*
- *Assessment for Transitions Planning*
- *Developing Transition Plans*
- *Facilitating the Transition of Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*
- *Family Involvement in Transition Planning and Implementation*
- *Follow-Up Studies: A Practitioner's Handbook*
- *Infusing Real-Life Topics into Existing Curricula: Recommended Procedures and Instructional Examples of the Elementary, Middle and High School Levels*
- *Self-Determination Strategies*
- *Student-Focused Conferencing and Planning*
- *Teaching Occupational Social Skills*
- *Transition from School to Young Adulthood: Basic Concepts and Recommended Practices*
- *Transition Issues Related to Students with Visual Disabilities*
- *Transition to Employment*
- *Transition to Postsecondary Education: Strategies for Students with Disabilities*
- *Transition Services for Students with Significant Disabilities in College and Community Settings*
- *Using Community Transition Teams To Improve Transition Services*
- *Working with Students with Disabilities in Vocational–Technical Settings*

Preface

Some readers will find that this book contains more than they want to know about assessment, whereas others will readily see the gaps and the need for even more substance. Although the book purposely presents some foundational content, for the most part it is intended as a practical guide for school personnel. I encourage anyone who wants purely practical information to skim Chapter 1 and dive right into the remaining chapters. In Chapter 1 I try, however awkwardly or pedantically, to make a case for going beyond our past perspective on “transition” to the idea of multiple transitions within and across age levels. I also try to make a strong case for multiple transition planning areas across all age levels. If Chapter 1 does nothing more than open readers’ thinking to those notions, it will have been worth my effort.

A significant portion of Chapter 2 is devoted to discussion of standardized assessment instruments in transitions assessment, for two primary reasons. First, the vast majority of students with disabilities in schools have mild levels of disability in cognitive and academic performance. With testing accommodations related to their specific disabilities, these students can and should participate in general education assessments and benefit from information that a variety of standardized instruments might provide. Standardized instruments come closest to giving us “evidence-based” and “measurable” outcomes. Therefore, any standardized assessment instruments used with students in general education should be considered for their value in assessing various kinds of performance that relate to planning with students with disabilities for their educational and vocational futures. Second, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1997 and 2004) requires that students with disabilities be in general education programs and included with other students in large-scale assessments. Special educators need to update themselves on current standardized measurement systems used in both general and special education. They need to know the advantages and disadvantages of these measurement systems so that they can make appropriate decisions with the students and their families about how best to assess students for planning. If secondary special educators’ roles change as much as I believe they will, these educators must master a body of measurement knowledge to meet that challenge.

Chapter 3 in this second edition expands the discussion of the value of informal assessments in the transition planning process. It presents a variety of informal or nonstandardized assessment strategies, intended to stir the creative thinking of practitioners in the field. On the other hand, the chapter raises cautions about unrestrained faith in and use of informal assessments. Poorly developed or inappropriately interpreted informal assessment instruments or techniques can generate real educational and public relations problems.

Chapter 4 should leave readers with a broad view of how a school district might approach its transitions assessment as well as some specific suggestions for practice. The complexity of the task and the number of students requiring assessment may also leave readers with a sense of how overwhelming assessment

for transitions planning can be. This is understandable, given all that teachers and related service professionals are expected to do. Nevertheless, consider how to make “reasonable accommodations” in what you do and how you do it, as employers do under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). Most employer accommodations under ADA have turned out to be relatively inexpensive and without the expected amount of disruption. By picking and trying a few ideas or strategies, you can move ahead and improve your assessment responsibilities without taking on the whole load. Finally, I encourage you to check out the tables, figures, and appendixes. They will provide you with summarized information that you can share with others and use as a continuing reference source in your work.

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