

THE EFFECT OF A STUDENT-DEVELOPED PERSONAL
TRANSITION PORTFOLIO ON STUDENT
SELF-EFFICACY RELATED TO TRANSITION READINESS

By

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

1996

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I believe it takes a network of support to see a dissertation to completion and most of my support was in place for years prior to my dissertation. What I treasure the most is that I owe my appreciation not just to people, but to friends.

I am grateful to my committee chairperson, Dr. Stuart E. Schwartz; my committee cochairperson, Dr. Jeanne Repetto; and my committee members, Dr. Cecil Mercer, Dr. Cary Reichard, and Dr. David Miller. I also appreciate the service of Dr. James Hensel on my committee until his retirement. Each one, at different times and in unique ways during my program, has guided and supported me through a demanding and rigorous program.

I want to acknowledge and thank the many people that were so helpful in the three school districts where the study was conducted. Without the administrators and department directors who opened their schools to research and the teachers who took the time to learn a new program and made the effort to implement it in their classrooms and take the extra steps that research involves, this study would not have been possible.

I am very grateful for the assistance and friendship of my comrades at the Florida Network and in the Department of

Special Education. Dr. Kristine Webb knew exactly when to inspire and when to allow freedom. Vicki Tucker has always made me look good ever since the very beginning when she encouraged me to enter Project LITE: Leaders in Transition Education. My thank you goes to Sharry Knight, Patty LeFevers, and Sabrina Thomson and the other support staff for being there with a smile and an encouraging word, willing to help. I also want to thank Sybil Brown for her friendly and knowledgeable assistance.

Without my fellow doctoral students it just would not have been the same. Many friends have offered words of encouragement and support. The comradery of all the Florida "Networkers" was very valuable to me. Dollean and I have had great adventures. Laura and I have shared tears, laughter, fears, and success. LuAnn has provided motivation and confidence many times at just the right moments. She convinced me I belonged in the first place and stood by me every step of the way. Special thanks go to all my fellow doctoral students. We have persevered together and that has made it all the better.

I think the world would be a happier place if everyone had a family like mine. I truly have been blessed. My parents, Carl and Jo Herman, have always been there for me. They have inspired me and guided by example, but most importantly they have taught me to care for others. My brothers, Richard and Daniel, and their families have been encouraging and supportive always. My uncle and aunt, Bob

and Nancy Ernst, make me feel very special and seem to know just when to call. What a joy my husband's grandmother is. She has motivated me to succeed. I appreciate the support of the entire Gibbs family.

My greatest love and appreciation go to my husband, James Harrison Gibbs, my son, Carl, and my daughter, Liza. The people who ask me how I can be a doctoral candidate and manage a family do not understand. It is the love of my family that gives me the assurance and strength of conviction to continue. I do not have the words to express how much I appreciate my best friend, James Harrison.

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of
the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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By

Elizabeth Herman Gibbs

August 1996

Chairman: Stuart E. Schwartz, Ed.D.
Major Department: Special Education

The purpose of this investigation was (a) to determine the effectiveness of teaching high school students with mild disabilities to develop transition portfolios and (b) to compare the effects of two different methods of developing portfolios on the students' self-efficacy related to transition readiness.

Portfolios supplied the framework for teaching high school students with mild disabilities to identify and explore their own transition goals. The subjects in the study were students in varying exceptionalities classes in five high schools.

The study included a pretest, an implementation phase, and a posttest. A comparison was made among the students in three different groups (a) experimental, (b) comparison, and (c) control. In both the experimental and comparison groups

the students received instruction in personal transition portfolio development. Additionally, the students in the experimental group initiated contact with community members to gather information for their transition portfolios. The students in the comparison group used traditional classroom activities and materials to gather information for their transition portfolios.

Analyses of the results included (a) a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine differences among the treatment groups between the pretest and the posttest, (b) a t test to investigate group differences in the final evaluation scores of the transition portfolios, and (c) a regression analysis to test the relationship between treatment groups of the portfolio evaluation score and the final self-efficacy. Additional regression analysis investigated the relationship among the pretest, posttest, and portfolio score within treatment groups.

The performance on the posttest was significantly higher than performance on the pretest for all groups, even though no significant differences were found among the research groups between the initial and final self-efficacy. Comparison of the final evaluation score of the transition portfolios revealed no significant differences between treatment groups. No significant differences were found between treatment groups when examining the relationship between final self-efficacy and final portfolio evaluation

score. However, further analysis revealed a significant relationship among the pretest, posttest, and final portfolio evaluation within the experimental group. The results of this investigation provide practical implications for classroom instruction and future research.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Portfolios have been implemented in education in numerous ways. Educational portfolios have been demonstrated to increase communication and to involve students in the educational process. Both communication and student involvement are vital to successful transition planning. The intention of transition planning is to design individualized, educational programs based on the unique, dreams, interests, and desires of each student with a disability.

This study explores the potential of transition portfolios as a framework to involve high school students with mild disabilities in the transition planning process. The transition portfolio is a format for students to identify their transition goals, express their dreams, explore their options, discover their educational needs, and reflect on the results.

The purpose of this chapter is to present issues critical to the present study and provide a rationale for the study. This section addresses issues that relate to secondary students with mild disabilities and to their involvement in the transition planning process as part of their preparation for postsecondary life.

Transition Planning

The enactment of Public Law 101-476, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), in 1990 broadened the focus of transition planning for high school students with disabilities. Transition services, as described by IDEA (1990), provide a coordinated set of activities which facilitate movement from school to postschool activities. The transition services are designed within an outcome-oriented process and are individualized for each student as part of his or her individualized education plan (IEP). The intent of the IDEA legislation is for transition services to be based on the dreams, interests, and desires of the student with a disability.

Educational Planning

In the case of students with disabilities it is not uncommon for the parents, family members, teachers, or service providers, with the best of intentions, to move forward with the decisions that will impact the student's future (Halpern, 1994). Teachers and parents decide about current programs and postschool plans. In many situations, the students with disabilities have limited options to learn how to make choices about their futures and to explore potential opportunities. Still, transition services are to be based on individual needs and take into account the students' preferences and interests. "Students must be taught, whenever possible, how to examine and evaluate their own academic, vocational, independent living, and

personal/social skills" (Halpern, 1994, pp. 118-119).

Students with disabilities must be encouraged to identify postschool goals. Additionally, they need to be involved in the selection of appropriate educational options to prepare for those goals.

Postschool Success

Researchers have indicated that students with disabilities traditionally do not fare as well after graduation as their nondisabled peers in terms of transition to adult life (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Edgar, 1987; Rusch & Phelps, 1987). The researchers found that, after completing high school, many young adults with mild disabilities were unemployed or underemployed (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Rusch & Phelps, 1987), not involved in their community (Mithaug, Horiuchi, & Fanning, 1985), not living independently (Benz & Halpern, 1987; Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Edgar, 1987), or not very satisfied with their post high school lives (Menchetti, English, Burkhead, Leach, & Johnson, 1991; Rusch & Phelps, 1987).

When asked about their situations after high school, the majority of the young adults with disabilities who were not working indicated they would prefer to be working (Rusch & Phelps, 1987). These students did not know how to plan for change or explore their options. Johnson and Rusch (1993), in their review of the literature on transition services to identify areas for future research on parent and student involvement, found that "none of the studies during

this review measured or addressed the extent of student involvement in planning their exit from school" (p. 6).

Empowering Students

Students with disabilities must be empowered (Clark, Field, Patton, Brolin, & Sitlington, 1994; Field & Hoffman, 1994; Martin, Marshall, & Maxson, 1993). They need the opportunity to set goals, explore them, and reflect on them. Sands, Adams, and Stout (1995) found that "teachers believe the IEP constitutes the curriculum for students with disabilities" (p. 68). As such, "educational programs for all students should be determined according to students' unique interests, needs, and capabilities" (Falvey, Coots, Bishop, & Grenot-Scheyer, 1989, p. 146). To be successful, the transition process must help students gain a sense of empowerment over their transition planning (Halpern, 1994). Students need "opportunities to explore options and take responsibility for choices, either for their present or future lives" (Halpern, 1994, p.118).

Portfolios

Portfolios have been implemented in a variety of areas in education in conjunction with the authentic assessment trend. Some professionals consider them effective teaching tools (Vavrus, 1990). Portfolios contribute unique information as part of an assessment package. One of the advantages is that the students are actively involved in the process.

Portfolios are a format where students can be given responsibility. Portfolios have been found to (a) provide a vehicle for communication, (b) involve students in goal setting, (c) allow students to contribute to decisions about required components and evaluation criteria, and (d) help students learn to self-evaluate and reflect (Stiggins, 1994; Vavrus, 1990; Wiggins, 1990).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to the student's judgment of his or her ability in the given area. As Bandura (1977b) stated, "efficacy is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes" (p. 79). Self-efficacy and goal setting are closely related. Locke and Latham suggested that self-efficacy "affects goal choice, goal commitment, and response to feedback, and it also has a direct effect on performance" (1990, p. 24).

According to Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (1977a), a person's self-efficacy can be increased or influenced in a positive way. Bandura highlighted performance accomplishments as the most influential factor in terms of changing a person's self-efficacy. Personal accomplishments are also referred to as personal mastery experiences. Self-instructed performance is one example of a personal mastery experience.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this research undertaking was twofold. The first was to ascertain whether teaching high school

students with mild disabilities to develop their own personal transition portfolios was an effective method of increasing self-efficacy of transition readiness. The second was to determine if, as Bandura's theory of self-efficacy suggests, there is a difference in the final self-efficacy score between two methods of instruction in portfolio development. For the first method (experimental group), in addition to classroom instruction, students developed an action plan to contact and interview community members. This method was designed to involve a personal mastery experience. In the second method (comparison group), students received traditional classroom instruction and used classroom resources to develop personal transition portfolios but did not contact community members.

Statement of the Problem

The problem investigated in this study was the effectiveness of teaching students to develop a personal transition portfolio. Additionally, this study was designed to ascertain if there is a difference between the effectiveness of two methods of personal transition portfolio instruction. The effectiveness measure was based on the students' self-efficacy of their transition readiness, which is their judgement of their abilities in the transition area. A comparison was made between the final self-efficacy of the students in three different

groups after controlling for the initial self-efficacy. The three groups were (a) experimental, (b) comparison, and (c) control.

In both the experimental and comparison groups students received instruction in personal transition portfolio development. Additionally, the students in the experimental group received strategy instruction that involves an action plan to initiate direct community contact. For each of the five transition areas in the portfolio, the students in the experimental group developed and implemented an action plan to personally contact and interview at least two community members. In addition, each student initiated a discussion about each transition area with his or her parent or guardian.

The students in the comparison group also received general instruction about the development of a personal transition portfolio. The students in the comparison group did not have the community contact component but discussed issues about the five areas of transition with a parent or guardian and researched the answers to questions using traditional classroom procedures and resources.

The third group was the control group. The students in the control group took the pretest and posttest but did not develop a transition portfolio.

To address these research objectives the researcher (a) developed and implemented a curriculum guide for teaching students with disabilities to complete a personal

transition portfolio, (b) implemented a pretest-posttest measure of the students' self-efficacy of transition readiness, and (c) completed a final evaluation of the student developed personal transition portfolios. Through these activities the following research questions were addressed:

1. Is there a difference in the final self-efficacy of transition readiness between (a) the students in the experimental group who receive strategy instruction in developing personal transition portfolios that involves an action plan for direct community contact, (b) the students in the comparison group who receive general instruction in portfolio development, and (c) the students in the control group who do not receive instruction in portfolio development?

2. Will students in the experimental group who receive the strategy instruction in developing personal transition portfolios receive higher evaluations on their transition portfolios than students in the comparison group who receive general instruction in portfolio development?

3. Is there a relationship between the final evaluation score of the transition portfolio and the final self-efficacy?

The effect of instruction in developing a personal transition portfolio on the students' self-efficacy is important for several reasons. First, the study expands the current research data on student self-efficacy of transition

readiness. Second, the study investigates the effectiveness of personal transition portfolios on the self-efficacy of students with disabilities. Third, the study adds to the limited research data on using transition planning portfolios as an intervention with high school students with mild disabilities.

Rationale

The 1990 reauthorization of Public Law 94-142, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), mandated that a transition plan be designed for each student in special education by the age of 16 or by age 14 if considered appropriate. Moreover, directives resulting from the legislation are intended to ensure that students with disabilities are invited to their IEP meeting and that the educational planning components that address transition planning be grounded in the needs, desires, and preferences of the student with a disability.

Involving Students in Transition Planning

Since the reauthorization of IDEA (1990), many researchers in transition education across the United States (Clark & Patton, in press; Halpern et al., 1995; Martin & Marshall, 1995; Perkins, Bailey, Repetto, & Schwartz, 1995; Van Reusen, Bos, Schumaker, & Deshler, 1994) have responded to the challenge of empowering students to identify and express their future aspirations. The research has progressed from different perspectives. Some researchers have addressed self-evaluation (Clark & Patton, in press).

Others have developed curricula to guide educators in empowering students with disabilities to identify goals (Halpern et al., 1995; Perkins et al., 1995). Still others have focused on involving the students in their own transition planning (Martin & Marshall, 1995; Van Reusen et al., 1994). Ideally, the students are learning to identify their strengths and areas that need to be strengthened, express their goals, and advocate for themselves, even to the extent of leading their own IEP meetings.

In theory, the transition plan is very logical. The student sets goals for the future. The individualized transition plan is then developed to help best prepare the student during high school to be able to achieve those goals or prepare him or her for the next step in achieving those goals. Gerber, Ginsberg, and Reiff (1992), from their research with successful adults with learning disabilities, suggested teaching students with learning disabilities how to set a goal and how to identify discrete steps to accomplish it. Spekman, Goldberg, and Herman (1992) also reported that successful young adults with disabilities frequently referred to the importance of the step-by-step process of reaching goals and obtaining necessary skills. Another important component in goal selection is the ability to honestly assess one's strengths and weaknesses so the goals are realistic and achievable (Gerber et al., 1992). Moreover, when a student accomplishes one goal, it "becomes

the wellspring for self-efficacy and the inspiration for setting a new goal" (Vogel, Hruby, & Adelman, 1993 p. 42).

Transition Portfolios as a Tool

Teaching students to develop and explore their goals is a step in the transition planning process that can still be expanded (Martin & Marshall, 1995). Transition portfolios developed during high school can provide to students with disabilities an opportunity to break their goals into smaller steps and explore their goals within a supportive environment. Portfolios are increasing in use in general education and may be the vehicle to help students with disabilities assess their strengths and weaknesses, explore their potential goals, and practice the steps necessary to take responsibility for finding information about postsecondary options and opportunities.

While some researchers in special education have focused on developing transition curricula (Halpern et al., 1995), other researchers in education have been implementing portfolios in new and interesting ways (Vavrus, 1990; Bloom & Bacon, 1995). In general education, portfolios have been introduced in the areas of (a) assessment, (b) program and course modification, (c) program evaluation, (d) program planning, and (e) career development. Portfolios help the students reflect about their strengths and areas that need to be addressed (Wolf, 1989). Wiggins (1989) reported that portfolios teach students self-discipline, self-regulation, and self-assessment.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) in conjunction with the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC) (1993) developed a school-to-work planner, Get A Life: Your Personal Planner for Career Development, and a planning portfolio, Get A Life: Your Personal Planning Portfolio for Career Development (Van Zandt, Perry, & Brawley, 1995). The planner is designed to help students make career choices and develop an appropriate educational plan. The portfolio is more comprehensive and addresses the additional areas of self-knowledge and life roles.

Guidance counselors use the portfolio with large groups of students in general education as a structure within which students can develop responsibility and ownership for short- and long-term goals. However, during the pilot study by the ASCA and the NOICC, the personal planning portfolio was not found to be as effective in classes for students with disabilities, since it was designed and used as a presentation to large groups without individualized instruction (personal communication, Nancy Perry, September 20, 1995). As the authors of the Personal Planning Portfolio Facilitator's Manual stated (Van Zandt et al., 1995), "some students may need individualized implementation plans to derive the greatest benefit from the portfolio" (p. 48). Another limitation to using the personal planning portfolio with students with disabilities is that it targets career development (i.e., employment and personal

interests). It does not specifically address other postschool areas considered important in transition planning such as independent living, adult services, and community involvement (Halpern, 1985).

The present study combines the research of transition planning and student portfolio development. Information from the study will add to the existing knowledge on transition planning and portfolio development. The additional aspect of assessing self-efficacy as a component of transition readiness may determine each student's conviction that they can execute the necessary behaviors for successful postschool experiences. Bandura (1986) demonstrated the importance of self-efficacy when he found that "a strong sense of self-efficacy enables people to make the most of their capabilities" (p. 465). The findings from a systematic evaluation of personal transition portfolios and their relationship to self-efficacy can inform preservice and inservice teachers about effective techniques in transition planning for students with disabilities. Students are likely to benefit from their instructors' increased knowledge in effective teaching strategies.

Definition of Terms

Career development "is a process which facilitates responsible and satisfying life roles--that is, student, worker, consumer, family member, and citizen--through the utilization of teaching, counseling, and community interventions" (Greene, 1995, inside front cover).

Empowering students "means teaching them to make effective learning and development decisions and to advocate for themselves" (Van Reusen et al., 1994, p.1).

A goal is described as an idea (Locke & Latham, 1990). Additionally, "a goal is at the same time a target to aim for and a standard by which to evaluate the adequacy of one's performance" (Locke & Latham, p. 77).

Goal setting theory refers to "the relationship between goals and action, or more specifically, goals and task performance" (Locke & Latham, 1990, p. 9) and the factors that influence the relationship (e.g. cognitive factors like feedback, self-efficacy, and task strategies).

Goal selection is the basis of the transition planning process. "Student needs and interests should be the primary determinant in selecting those goals" (Halpern, 1994, p. 119).

Portfolio as defined by Paulson, Paulson, and Meyer (1991) means

a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievement in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting [portfolio] contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student self-reflection. (p. 60)

Self-advocacy "refers to an individual's ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs, and rights. It involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions" (Van Reusen, Bos, Schumaker, & Deshler, 1994, p.1).

Self-assessment is when people "take charge and ownership of their own evaluations within the context of customary assessment activities" (Halpern, 1994, p. 118).

Self-determination "is the ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself" (Field & Hoffman, 1994, p. 164).

Self-efficacy "is defined as people's judgements of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391).

Self-regulation is the "process by which people regulate their behavior through internal standards and self-evaluative reactions to their behavior" (Bandura, 1986, p. 390).

Strategy instruction involves teaching students to use a strategy or method to plan, execute, and evaluate their actions (e.g., the transition action plan) when they approach a task as well as to acquire the needed information (Mercer, 1992). The transition action plan provides a format that directs students to identify a person as a source of information, determine how to contact that person, establish a list of questions, initiate contact, and reflect on the interaction.

Transition was defined by IDEA (1990) as an outcome-oriented process which facilitates movement from school to post-school activities in many aspects of adult life. These include employment, postsecondary education, vocational

training, adult and continuing education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.

Transition planners are workbooks designed to help students make career choices and develop appropriate educational plans.

Transition portfolios include a collection of student work within the areas of transition (postsecondary training or education, employment, independent living, community involvement, and adult services) which exhibits effort and progress toward transition readiness. A transition portfolio must include examples of goal setting and the exploratory steps to achieve those goals. The transition portfolio is a tool. As a student-developed resource guide, it provides a structure that can be revisited over the years.

Transition readiness refers to a person's state or quality of being prepared for the transition or movement from high school to postsecondary life.

Delimitations

The scope of this study is delimited in three ways. First, this study is delimited by geographical restriction to Levy County, Gilchrist County, and Alachua County--three counties located in north central Florida. Second, only high school students in classes for students with varying exceptionalities in public high schools were included in the sample pool. Third, no consideration was given to

disability category, race, gender, age, or socioeconomic level during assignment to treatment groups.

Limitations

Since this study only included high school students with mild disabilities the findings should not be generalized to students who have finished high school or to students still in middle school. In addition, the findings should not be generalized to students without disabilities or to students with more severe disabilities. One should also exercise caution in extrapolating the results of this study to students outside of Levy, Gilchrist, or Alachua Counties. Finally, the use of a testing instrument (Transition Planning Inventory) submitted as yet only to limited field testing as a measure of self-efficacy may inhibit the results of the measurement.

Summary

Although the transition provisions in IDEA were designed to help students with disabilities prepare for postschool life, researchers have found that the majority of people with disabilities are still not satisfied with life after graduation. Clearly, further research is needed in instructional methods that empower students and involve them in their curriculum planning so they are better prepared for independent adult living. The intent of this study was to contribute to the existing research of effective instruction in transition planning. The relationship between self-efficacy of transition readiness and student developed

personal transition portfolios was examined specifically. The results of this study have direct implications for teachers of high school students with mild disabilities.

Chapter 2 presents a review of research and related literature relevant to this study. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to implement this study. The results are reported in Chapter 4, and the implications are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to review, analyze, and synthesize the professional literature related to teaching secondary students with mild disabilities to develop personal transition portfolios. Specific areas that are relevant to transition portfolios include (a) transition planning, (b) the use of portfolios, and (c) students' self-efficacy of transition readiness.

The chapter is divided into five major sections. First, criteria for the selection and inclusion of literature are presented. Second, transition issues are described. Third, research on the relationship between goal setting and successful adults with mild disabilities is addressed. Fourth, an analysis of research on self-efficacy is presented. Finally, portfolios are discussed. Chapter 2 concludes with a summary and the implications of previous research on the present study.

Criteria for Selection of Relevant Literature

An initial step in the review of the literature was to determine the criteria for inclusion. To be considered for the review, studies were required to meet the following criteria.

1. Research questions addressed (a) transition, (b) portfolios, (c) self-efficacy, (d) self-determination or self-advocacy, or (e) successful adults with disabilities and goal setting.

2. Middle school, high school, or college students or adults were the subjects in the studies.

3. Studies were data based, published, and detailed enough to permit replication, and the findings were consistent with the results.

Studies were considered for inclusion if they met the previous criteria and were completed in the last eight years (1988-1995). In addition, any notable research cited in the literature prior to 1988 and doctoral dissertations were examined for relevant findings. Professional literature, other than empirical investigations, were also included that provided valuable information about teaching students to develop transition portfolios. Additionally, information was collected in person at the International Division of Career Development and Transition Conference (1995). At the conference, professionals in the field of transition presented papers on current transition issues.

Descriptors used in this literature search included transition, transition planning, portfolios, transition portfolios, self-efficacy, self-advocacy, self-determination, goal setting, and successful adults with disabilities.

Sources of databased resources used for the literature review included Dissertation Abstracts International, Educational Resources Information Clearinghouse (ERIC), and Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE).

The review of the literature that follows is intended to demonstrate that research into transition portfolios is a logical next step in the area of transition research. These findings are based on the research and professional opinions of experts in the fields of transition, successful adults with disabilities, self-efficacy, and portfolios.

Transition Issues

The enactment of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990 broadened the focus of transition. The intention of the legislation was to facilitate the movement of students with disabilities from high school into successful involvement in postschool activities. Transition was defined in the final IDEA regulation in the 1992 Federal Register in the following way:

Transition services means 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. (USOE, 1992, p. 44804)

In addition to defining transition, IDEA stipulated that the Individualized Education Program (IEP) must

address transition planning for all students with a disability by age 16. Moreover, transition planning was to be based on the needs and interests of each individual student.

An Outcome-Oriented Process

The IDEA legislation (1990) responded to the concerns of many professionals in the field of transition about the need for transition planning for students with disabilities. According to IDEA, transition planning should be designed within an outcome-oriented process. In other words, transition planning should be based on the desired outcomes or postschool interests and preferences of each student.

Prior to the enactment of IDEA, research evaluations showed that students with disabilities did not fare as well as their nondisabled peers in terms of successful transition to adult life (Edgar, 1987; Rusch & Phelps, 1987). Researchers in the 1980s played an integral role in expanding the parameters of transition to include outcomes in postsecondary education, community participation, independent living, and awareness of adult services in addition to employment.

Edgar (1987) found that while some 75% of the adults with disabilities have had jobs, only 18% earned more than minimum wage. Moreover, the majority of people with disabilities who were not working indicated that they wanted to work (Rusch & Phelps, 1987). Rusch and Phelps suggested that, "without better preparation, the likelihood of

improving their employment prospects and successful adjustment to living in their home communities will be minimal at best" (p. 488).

Benz and Halpern (1987) in a statewide follow-up study in Oregon found that only 7% of the youth with mild disabilities were living independently. Mithaug et al. (1985) reported the results of a Colorado Department of Education follow-up study. Their research data showed that two-thirds of the respondents lived with their parents or guardians. Additionally, the data indicated that the respondents had relatively little activity in terms of social activities. Their respondents expressed the need for the skills to participate in social/community activities.

Chadsey-Rusch, Rusch, and O'Reilly (1991) reviewed the literature on transition outcomes. They reported that students need to be empowered to make decisions and be prepared to make important postsecondary service connections. Additionally, Chadsey-Rusch et al. stated, "some parents had not thought seriously about where their children would be living after school, were not aware of the options, and did not know how to answer questions of this type" (p. 25).

Hasazi, Gordon, and Roe (1985) followed-up 462 former students. Their findings indicated that, while a majority of their former students were in the labor market either full- or part-time, only a minority had accessed adult service agencies. Most of the employed youth with

disabilities (84%) had found their jobs through the "self-family-friend network" (Hasazi et al., p. 467). They suggested, based on their research results, that information on locating jobs through the network could be a valuable component of high school curricula for students with disabilities.

Burns, Armistead, and Keys (1990) conducted a district-wide needs assessment and found that it was difficult for youth with disabilities to take advantage of available educational opportunities. The data indicated that the students with disabilities lacked self-confidence and had an incomplete awareness of career and job opportunities. To address this issue the educators at John Wood Community College established the Transition Initiative Program to better prepare eligible students for vocational training and employment (Burns et al.).

In one respect, White et al. (1982) summarized the perspective of special education students. They concluded that many of the students who leave special education programs lack a sense of destiny or vision for the future.

The research findings in the areas of employment, postsecondary education, community participation, independent living, and adult services have supported the intent of the IDEA legislation: Transition programs must be outcome oriented. The importance of preparing students to be successfully involved in all aspects of adult life was

also emphasized in the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992.

Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of an individual to--

- A. Live independently;
- B. Enjoy self-determination;
- C. Make choices;
- D. Contribute to society;
- E. Pursue meaningful careers;
- F. Enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of American society. . . . (Section 2.3a, p. 1)

Student-Centered

In addition to being outcome oriented, transition planning was to be individualized and based on the needs, desires, and interests of each student. The student must be invited to any IEP that addresses transition planning (IDEA, 1990). The 1992 Federal Register specifically addresses the issue of student involvement, "If the student does not attend, the public agency shall take other steps to ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered" (USOE, 1992, p. 44814).

One indication of the importance of insuring that the student's interests and preferences are considered in the IEP was demonstrated by the findings of Sands et al. (1995). Their data, from a statewide study of elementary and secondary special education teachers, indicated, "teachers believe that the IEP constitutes the curriculum for students with disabilities" (p. 68). This research contradicted Smith's (1990) findings that suggested teachers did not consider the IEP useful when planning instruction. The

research results of Sands et al. may indicate that since the enactment of IDEA, teachers' attitudes about using the IEP to plan instruction have changed.

Clark and Kolstoe (1995) advocated for student involvement in curriculum planning for additional reasons. "Moral, ethical, and legal issues are involved in imposing any curriculum option on a person. The school should not make the decision for any students; the students themselves and their families have that right and responsibility" (Clark & Kolstoe, p. 163). The students need the opportunities to learn how to make those decisions and evaluate what the outcomes of those decisions will be. Johnson and Rusch (1993), in their review of the primary transition research for the previous ten years, noted the small number of studies that have addressed transition planning services. They recommended assessing the impact of student participation in the transition planning process. Moreover, the researchers found that students "exiting from school without sufficient or clear goals" (Johnson & Rusch, p. 11) was one of the barriers to achieving program goals in secondary education and transition services.

Empower Students

It is not uncommon for parents and teachers to move forward with decisions for youth with disabilities, yet when decisions are made for students, they can "diminish that person's ability and opportunity for assuming responsibility with respect to important life decisions" (Halpern, 1994, p.

118). In a position statement of the Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT), Halpern (1994) emphasized that for transition planning to be successful, students must feel empowered to practice transition skills such as self-assessment and identification of future goals.

Mithaug, Martin, and Agran (1987) designed the Adaptability Instruction Model to help high school students with disabilities succeed in community employment situations. They advocated teaching students with disabilities "(a) decision making, (b) independent performance, (c) self-evaluation, and (d) adjustment" (Mithaug et al., p. 500). The goal was to move the responsibility for problem solving to the students to help them learn to self-assess and plan new strategies.

Self-assessment. Assessment procedures have to be expanded to identify the interests and preferences of each student in terms of their present and future needs (Clark et al., 1994). Traditional assessments provide valuable information, but it is important to help students learn how to examine, evaluate, and communicate their own transition skills (Halpern, 1994; Martin et al., 1993).

Miller, La Follette, and Green (1990) identified five self-advocacy tools for students to be active participants in their transition planning. The first is that students must have a realization of their strengths and weaknesses. The students should also have the skills and abilities to formulate goals, be assertive, make decisions, and use

appropriate social skills. The researchers referred to these skills as the tools for self-advocacy.

Wandry and Repetto (1993) listed self-assessment as the first of the four transition skills fundamental to all students with disabilities. These four skills or knowledge areas include the "ability to assess themselves . . . ; awareness of the accommodations they need . . . ; knowledge of their civil rights to these accommodations . . . ; and self-advocacy skills" (Wandry & Repetto, p. 10).

In addition to self-assessment and awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, students also need to apply this information in their transition planning. The definition of transition adopted by the DCDT concluded, "Transition planning should begin no later than age 14, and students should be encouraged, to the full extent of their capabilities, to assume a maximum amount of responsibility for such planning" (Halpern, 1994, p. 117).

An example of one assessment perspective was presented by Salembier and Furney (1994). They described a qualitative study with one student who applied a modified version of the McGill Action Planning System (MAPS) (Forest & Pearpoint, 1992) to transition planning. In using the MAPS approach, they included family members and friends in the transition assessment and planning process. "Parents and other family members have an understanding of the student that provides rich information and perspectives on the student's past, present, and future. This information is

useful in identifying and clarifying the student's needs, preferences, and personal goals" (Salembier & Furney, pp. 12-13). The adapted MAPS process helped the student assess his history, dreams, fears, personal qualities, and needs. It was a holistic assessment that focused on strengths and identified current needs as well as future dreams and preferences. The MAPS information did provide direction for developing the transition component of the IEP. The student, parents, and peers were active participants in the assessment process, rather than feeling like the objects of the assessment. The active participation of the parents and the student appeared to give them a sense of control.

Student choices. To empower students also means giving them opportunities to make choices and express those opinions. Van Reusen, Deshler, and Schumaker (1989) investigated the effectiveness of teaching youth with disabilities to use self-advocacy procedures to increase their participation in the IEP meetings. The students inventoried their needs and interests, asked and responded to questions during the meeting, and summarized their educational planning goals. The results indicated that students can contribute important and relevant information about their choices and thereby influence their educational goals. The potential impact is that students can be empowered to gain influence over their own learning and increase their motivation for achievement and success (Van Reusen, Deshler, & Schumaker).

Van Reusen and Bos (1994) provided further evidence that a participation strategy is an effective method for involving students and their parents in educational planning. They applied the strategy intervention to a group instruction setting with students and parents. In the first step the students and their parents inventoried "learning strengths, weaknesses to improve, goals and interests, and preferences for classroom learning and studying" (Van Reusen & Bos, p. 469). Later, the students and parents presented that information at the educational planning meeting.

Van Reusen et al. (1994) also adapted the strategy to address the transition component of educational planning. In this version, the students completed a transition skills inventory. At the meeting the students followed the steps of the self-advocacy strategy: IPLAN.

Inventory your strengths, areas to improve or learn, goals, choices for learning or accommodations
Provide your inventory information
Listen and respond
Ask questions
Name your goals. (Van Reusen et al., 1994, p. 130)

Other researchers (Martin et al., 1993) have broadened the concept of student involvement in the educational planning process to include students directing their own educational planning meetings. The Adaptability Model (Mithaug et al., 1987) provided the foundation in self-management that was later expanded to address student management of the planning process. The self-directed transition concept was implemented at the Academy School District in Colorado Springs and applied the same four

components as the Adaptability Model: (a) decision making, (b) independent performance, (c) self-evaluation, and (d) adjustment to transition planning.

The philosophy is that when students direct their meetings they get the opportunity to develop self-determination skills. Martin et al. (1993) stated that, "Self-determination is when individuals define goals for themselves and then take the initiative needed to achieve their goals" (1993, p. 55). The researchers challenged educators to develop a curriculum to teach self-determination as an outcome of transition programs.

Five Transition Focus Areas

Transition has been defined as a coordinated set of activities that involve employment, postsecondary education or training, community involvement, independent living, and adult services (Wandry & Repetto, 1993). The transition focus areas parallel those in IDEA except that the postsecondary education, vocational training, and continuing and adult education have been collapsed into one area.

Employment. Employment is usually the first area that comes to mind with transition, but it is only one of many transition components. Even though many people with disabilities are successfully employed, the research data revealed that a higher percentage of young adults with disabilities are unemployed than their nondisabled peers (Menchetti et al., 1991). Menchetti and his colleagues reported that, "the majority (52%) of young adults with

disabilities, age range 16-26, who recently left high school are unemployed" (p. 18).

Employment issues refer to paid employment in the community whenever possible, job benefits, and possible subsidies. Employment skills include (a) occupational choices, (b) appropriate work behaviors, and (c) finding and maintaining employment (Kokaska & Brolin, 1985).

Postsecondary education and training. There are a variety of possibilities for continuing education and training. Youth with disabilities may be interested in community colleges or universities, vocational training programs, technical training programs, or apprenticeship opportunities. The students can take remedial classes, graduation equivalency courses, or adult interest classes. Today's educational goals highlight continuing educational opportunities or life-long learning. Skills that would be beneficial include (a) identification of appropriate programs, (b) awareness of needed accommodations, and (c) location of support services (Wandry & Repetto, 1993).

Community participation. As transition models developed and the concept of transition expanded to include more than employment and education in preparation for employment, "successful community adjustment" became the goal of transition programming (Halpern, 1985, p.486).

"A person's community can be either a resource or a barrier, depending upon how well that person becomes

involved in the community" (Halpern, 1994, p. 120). It is vital for youth with disabilities to be involved in the community to (a) enjoy recreational and leisure activities, (b) accept civic responsibilities, and (c) exhibit appropriate social behaviors. "Part of the transition planning process should include teaching people with disabilities to learn the landscape of these community organizations and then help them to gain access to such organizations" (Halpern, 1994, p. 123). Moreover, Miller, Snider, and Rzonca (1990) reported that young adults with disabilities who use community resources participate more in postsecondary education.

Independent living. Living in the community is possible with a variety of levels of support that range from complete independence to group homes with 24 hour supervision. There are many skills involved in independent living that begin with locating a place to live and arranging for utilities such as electricity and telephone services. Students need to have daily living skills such as (a) health and hygiene, (b) money management, (c) transportation, and (d) household maintenance. Many of these skills are taught throughout the educational system, but some may best be learned in the community (Wandry & Repetto, 1993).

Adult services. One of the results of the IDEA legislation is the involvement of representatives from adult service agencies in transition planning. The goal is to

make the connection with adult service providers as smooth as possible. While students are in school they are entitled to many services, but after they leave the school system they have to prove their eligibility for many of those same services (Wandry & Repetto, 1993).

For some youth with disabilities, successful transition depends upon accessing the adult service delivery system (DeStefano & Snauwaert, 1989). The services include generic services (e.g., employment agencies, health departments, or public education programs) and specialized services (e.g., vocational rehabilitation, developmental disabilities, social security). Hasazi et al. (1985) indicated that one of the advantages of the generic service system is the lack of "stigma" associated with it because anyone can use the generic service agencies. Liebert, Lutsky, and Gottlieb (1990) reported that while over half the subjects in their study of post-secondary experiences of young adults with disabilities found employment through personal networks, the ones who used rehabilitation agencies were more likely to be employed. As a result, Liebert et al. recommended that students learn how to use personal networks and community resources.

Research and professional opinions have been presented that demonstrated that transition planning includes many areas pertinent to successful community adjustment. Researchers have highlighted the importance of a transition program that (a) empowers the students, (b) is outcome-

oriented, and (c) is individualized to meet unique goals. The following section will address successful adults with disabilities and goal setting and the relevance and importance to transition planning.

Successful Adults with Disabilities and Goal Setting

The intention of this section is to present research-based evidence about people with disabilities who are considered successful adults. Ginsberg, Gerber, and Reiff (1994) focused on systems of interaction and variables considered alterable or behaviors that could be learned. They reported that the most important factor was that successful adults took control of their lives.

Successful Adults with Mild Disabilities

An analysis of the research on successful adults with learning disabilities concurs with the importance of the theme of control of one's life. Spekman et al. (1992) reported that successful adults adapted to their life circumstances through an awareness and acceptance of their learning disabilities, a proactive approach to events, perseverance, and coping strategies. Secondly, successful adults emphasized the importance of planning and goal setting that includes the step-by-step process necessary to acquire the skills and to reach the goals. Finally, the successful adults realized and appreciated the value of effective support systems. For many, this support came from individuals outside their family, and as their interests or

needs changed, they would actively seek new support. This support network was most important during transition times.

Control is the key to the model for vocational success developed by Gerber et al. (1992) which is divided into internal and external components. The internal decisions included a desire to excel, a commitment to setting and achieving goals, and reframing. Reframing refers to recognizing that they have a disability, accepting and understanding it, and taking action to do something about it. The other component, external, addressed the external adaptations of being persistent, locating an environment that accented their strengths, using strategies to compensate for any deficiencies, and creating support networks.

These two perspectives (Gerber et al., 1992; Spekman et al., 1992) paralleled each other on the factors related to success in adults with disabilities. Successful adults understood and accepted their disabilities, yet they had a desire to excel and believed they could take control and make positive things happen through a proactive approach to life. Successful people set goals, identified the steps to achieve those goals, and persevered. Additionally, the characteristics included valuing and seeking out a support network, using coping strategies to deal with stress, and finding an environment and career that emphasized their strengths and allowed them to creatively compensate for their particular disability.

Affleck, Edgar, Levine, and Kortering (1990) reported the results of a study on the postschool status of students with mild mental retardation, students with learning disabilities, and students without disabilities. These researchers also indicated the importance of setting specific goals and access to an effective support system to attain success and independence.

The research provides a framework for teaching students behaviors that can lead to success. Vogel et al. (1993) researched factors related to successful college students and their findings supported the results of other researchers (Gerber et al., 1992; Spekman et al., 1992). They recommended an environment where students can practice characteristics of successful adults (e.g., set goals and determine the steps to achieve them). "Accomplishing a goal becomes the wellspring for self-efficacy and the inspiration for setting a new goal" (Vogel et al., 1993 p. 42).

In 1993, Spekman, Goldberg, and Herman presented a model on risk and resilience that indicated students should be provided with a climate "in which risk-taking is safe and perseverance is encouraged" (p. 16). As defined by Gerber and Reiff (1994) the degree of resilience is strongly related to the extent people feel they can guide their lives to match their capabilities and interests.

Effective instructional interventions that foster success and are founded in models about risk and resilience should address the whole individual from a life-span

perspective, not just the current academic component (Spekman, Herman, & Vogel, 1993). These programs need to (a) involve the broader community, (b) teach students how to access community services, and (c) also teach students to expand their support networks. Moreover, students and teachers have to realize that success is relative and evaluate it on an individual basis. Outcomes can be evaluated on different definitions of success, at different periods of time, and span different components (e.g., employment, education/training, and community involvement). Programs should foster goal setting and the necessary planning processes as well as encourage perseverance and risk-taking.

"The provision of authentic experiences at every level allows us to plant the seed of success in each individual while also providing a safety net to give encouragement and to help deal with and process failure experiences and disappointments" (Spekman et al., 1993, p. 64). Teachers can instill in students that striving for success is a lifelong process, and help them realize that even adults are not finished products (Bassett, Polloway, & Patton, 1994).

An evaluation of the research on successful adults with disabilities identified goal setting as a major variable. The following section presents information on how goal setting instruction is being applied in educational environments.

Goal Setting in the Classroom

Locke and Latham (1990) summarized their findings on goal choice as follows, "goal choice is a function of what the individual thinks can be achieved and what he or she would like to achieve or thinks should be achieved. Hoffman and his colleagues (Hoffman, et al., 1987) reported that one of the difficulties experienced by adults with learning disabilities is learned helplessness. One explanation was their dependence upon their parents and teachers to make decisions for them when they were students. "Removing the right to make decisions also takes away the right to seek what one desires, to learn how to make decisions, and to anticipate the consequences of decisions and learn from mistakes" (Hoffman & Field, 1995, p. 134). Since the enactment of IDEA, educators and researchers have been developing transition programs and curricula designed to empower students and involve them in the transition planning process.

At the International DCDT conference held in 1995, Martin (1995) presented an overview of the Choicemaker Self-Determination Transition Curriculum. At that time only two components had been completed ("Choosing Employment Goals" and "The Self-Directed IEP"). The Choicemaker curriculum is divided into three sections: (a) choose goals, (b) express goals, and (c) take action on goals. The students identify their goals in the different transition areas (e.g., employment, community participation, and post high school education) in the first section. The second section is

where the students express their goals and direct their IEP meetings. In the final section the students take action on their goals. To take action the students follow the model of Plan, Action, Evaluate, and Adjust. The Adaptability Model (decision making, independent performance, self-evaluation, and adjustment) of Mithaug et al. (1987) is the foundation for the Choicemaker curriculum.

Martin, Oliphint, and Weisenstein (1994) reported on the Self-Directed Employment Model. This model is designed to prepare students to become empowered workers. The students are empowered to make their own decisions about employment based on a 10- to 12-week vocational assessment and a 3- to 4-month vocational placement. The steps to the Self-Directed Employment Model are (a) choose, (b) manage, (c) evaluate, and (d) adjust. The model helps students match their strengths, skills, and preferences to community jobs.

Halpern also presented a transition curriculum at the DCDT Conference (Halpern et al., 1995). The objectives of the NEXT S.T.E.P.: Student Transition and Educational Planning curriculum are twofold: "to *teach* students the *skills* they need to do transition planning, and to *engage* students successfully in this process" (p. 1).

The curriculum designed by Halpern and his colleagues (1995) focuses on goal selection. The students explore and self-evaluate, select transition goals, identify activities to pursue goals, conduct the transition meeting, and monitor

and adjust when needed. In the NEXT S.T.E.P curriculum the students choose goals from a list of goal choices.

Hoffman and Field (1995) provided a third example of a transition planning curriculum. They developed a self-determination curriculum around their model of self-determination. The model has five stages (a) know yourself, (b) value yourself, (c) plan, (d) act, and (e) experience outcomes and learn. In most respects, the curriculum parallels the literature on teaching the variables deemed effective for successful adults. There are sessions that address self-awareness and self-acceptance and accessing support networks. The curriculum additionally targets setting long- and short-term goals, planning steps and activities to reach goals, and taking risks.

Educators and researchers agree that goal setting is important in most areas of education. Mercer (1992) stated, "Basically, goals provide the basis on which instruction is planned" (p. 211). Goals are the major statements at the IEP meetings and to change goals, teachers need the parent's permission. The current focus in education is to involve students in the goal setting process. Wang (1987) included self-regulation as one of the features that can help promote student success. Under self-regulation Wang cited (a) student participation in goal setting and the planning of some activities, (b) students self-monitoring the progress toward their goals, and (c) opportunities for students to work independently. The effective teaching literature

(Christenson, Ysseldyke, & Thurlow, 1989) also indicated that the effective classroom managers teach students to be responsible and accountable for their own learning.

In their research, Spekman et al. (1992) analyzed the variables related to success in adults with disabilities from three perspectives. Success was evaluated on (a) an individual's achievements, (b) the individual's self-perception of accomplishment and satisfaction, and (c) the match between current experiences and self-perceptions and aspirations. The following section focuses on that match between goal setting and self-perception or perceived self-efficacy.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is one's perception of "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (Bandura, 1982, p. 122). Locke and Latham (1990) asserted that self-efficacy is highly interrelated with goal setting. "It affects goal choice, goal commitment, and response to feedback, and it also has a direct effect on performance" (p. 24).

Self-Efficacy Theory

Efficacy expectation is the person's belief that he or she is capable of accomplishing the necessary behavior to produce the outcome. Bandura's (1977a) self-efficacy theory stated, "that psychological procedures, whatever their form, alter the level and strength of self-efficacy" (p.191).

Therefore, according to the theory, a person's self-efficacy can be influenced or increased in a positive way.

In the self-efficacy theory Bandura (1977a) highlighted four factors or sources of information that influence or change efficacy expectations or beliefs in themselves or their capabilities. Performance accomplishments were listed first and as the most influential factor. Vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal were listed as the other three factors. Personal accomplishments are considered the most influential because they entail personal mastery experiences. Bandura (1977a) cited four examples of the types of personal accomplishments that can change efficacy expectations. They are (a) participant modeling, which uses successful performances in a structured environment; (b) performance desensitization, where the participant progresses through a step-by-step process with each step closer to the desired behavior; (c) performance exposure, where the subject performs the behavior, but not alone or independently; and (d) self-instructed performance, where an independent performance of the behavior allows the subject the opportunity to cope with the stress of the situation. Bandura reported that successes raise efficacy expectations. "After strong efficacy expectations are developed through repeated success, the negative impact of occasional failures is likely to be reduced" (Bandura, 1977a, p. 195).

The fact that the subjects are actively involved in the process (performance accomplishments) allows the opportunity for them to practice and refine their behaviors and coping skills. The most significant factor for research into transition skills is self-instructed performance. The independent performance can help increase efficacy expectations because students have had opportunities to perfect skills important to successful transition. Moreover, the successful experiences reinforce feelings of self-competency.

Bandura (1986) cited athletic competition as an example where people might recognize the impact of self-efficacy on success. "After capabilities are perfected and practiced extensively, perceived self-efficacy can be the difference between a good or poor showing" (p.433).

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's overall judgement of their capacity to perform that includes the (a) self-assessed ability, (b) intended effort, (c) problem solving capabilities, and (d) strategies for dealing with stress. It is appropriate and important to apply the concepts of self-efficacy theory when working with students with disabilities for several reasons. First, as Bandura reported, "a strong sense of self-efficacy enables people to make the most of their capabilities" (1986, p. 465). Second, the efficacy expectation affects the amount of effort people will use and the length of time they will persist when facing obstacles and aversive experiences

(Bandura, 1977b). Third, personal efficacy affects a persons' decisions about their choice of activities, especially in areas where they are unsure of their capabilities. Fourth, "once established, enhanced self-efficacy tends to generalize to other situations in which performance was self-debilitated by preoccupation with personal inadequacies" (Bandura, 1977a, p. 195). Finally, "one's level of perceived self-efficacy in these skills [the ability to communicate well, to relate effectively to others, to plan and manage the demands of one's job, to exercise leadership, and to cope with stress effectively] can aid or impede career advancement quite apart from the technical skills one possesses" (Bandura, 1986, p. 433).

Self-Efficacy Change Strategies

Researchers have applied the concepts of self-efficacy theory to education. Bandura and Schunk (1981) reported that "Children who set themselves attainable subgoals progressed rapidly in self-directed learning . . . and heightened their perceived self-efficacy and interest in activities that initially held little attraction for them" (p. 595). Additionally, Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1990) suggested that self-efficacy measures could provide teachers unique insights into students with little motivation.

Although transition planning is a broader concept, career development is a very important aspect of it. Researchers have studied the relationship between self-efficacy and career decision making from different

perspectives. The following studies applied self-efficacy theory to career development decision making.

Hackett and Betz (1981) developed a model of career development based on Bandura's (1977a) self-efficacy theory. They followed the premise that low self-efficacy ratings restricted women to concentrating on low-status, low-paying occupations. Their model was designed to help people, especially women, strengthen their career-related efficacy expectations in order to make more informed choices that allowed them to use their talents, interests, and capabilities.

Taylor and Betz (1983) studied self-efficacy theory and its application in regard to treating career indecision. Their findings suggested that self-efficacy theory provides a useful framework to understand or influence an individual's attitudes and behaviors in the career development process.

Career decision-making self-efficacy as a variable of students' overall, academic, and social integration in college was also researched (Peterson, 1993). The research involved underprepared college students and their perceived self-efficacy to plan and accomplish vocational tasks while in an educational setting. Peterson's data indicated a relationship between self-efficacy and integration into the educational setting.

Luzzo (1995) compared self-efficacy theory to the locus of control model in terms of predicting college students'

career decision-making attitudes. In a study with 113 undergraduate students the results indicated self-efficacy theory was more effective. Luzzo interpreted the results as evidence that Bandura's (1977a) self-efficacy change strategies (e.g., performance accomplishments) could be effective career decision-making strategies for students.

These research findings (Hackett & Betz, 1981; Luzzo, 1995; Peterson, 1993; Taylor & Betz, 1983) demonstrated the importance of perceived self-efficacy in the career development area. Self-efficacy was found to pertain to career decision making and integration into educational institutions for underprepared students. Moreover, data indicated that self-efficacy change strategies such as performance accomplishments should be further investigated as strategies for students.

One example is the research of Wehmeyer and Lawrence (1995). They examined changes in self-determination, locus of control, and self-efficacy related to a student-directed transition planning program. The program was field tested with 53 students. The subjects were students with mild mental retardation and students with learning disabilities. The results were analyzed for self-efficacy and outcome expectancy for transition planning meetings. The efficacy and outcome expectancy questionnaires focused on the student's perceived preparation for the IEP meeting. The research findings indicated significant changes in self-efficacy scores for educational planning. There were no

significant changes in the self-determination or locus of control ratings which, according to the authors, may have been because (a) they were only focusing on the school environment and (b) there were no robust changes in the students' circumstances or learning experiences. Wehmeyer and Lawrence suggested that further validation of the efficacy of student involvement in transition planning is needed, although their findings indicated that self-efficacy is both beneficial and achievable.

The research on effective strategies to change self-efficacy parallels the variables associated with successful adults in the area of transition planning. They both address the same objective which is to increase self-efficacy through performance accomplishments. The transition curricula that have been presented (Halpern et al., 1995; Hoffman & Field, 1995; Martin & Marshall, 1995) highlighted involving students in each aspect of the planning process. The students look over options and personal preferences to set the goals and the steps to attain the goals. They have the opportunity to take risks, recognize opportunities, and explore the goals in a secure environment. Moreover, students can experience success and thereby increase their belief that they can successfully carry out the behaviors necessary to attain personal goals.

Goal setting and self-efficacy are highly interrelated if, as Locke and Latham (1990) suggested, "a goal is at the same time a target to aim for and a standard by which to

evaluate the adequacy of one's performance" (p. 77). In the next section an evaluation of the research and professional opinions on portfolios will be presented. Portfolios are an example of an old concept applied to a new situation. They may prove to be an excellent vehicle for students to learn transition skills.

Portfolios

A portfolio, going back to its roots in art and architecture, is a sample of work representing two perspectives. First, it holds what the students judge to be their best work. Second, from the assessor's perspective, the portfolio represents evidence of student performance on a given range of categories or genres of work. (Wiggins, 1990, p. 51)

The intention of this section is to demonstrate the potential role of portfolios in transition programs. Portfolios can provide a framework for students to discover, develop, and document their transition skills and thereby empower them in their transition planning. Portfolios have been demonstrated to increase communication and to involve students in the educational process. Moreover they can help students (a) improve self-evaluation skills, (b) learn responsibility and goal setting, (c) gain ownership of their education, and (d) develop an understanding of the relationship between school and future outcomes.

A Format for Student and Family Participation

Portfolios allow students the opportunity to express their interests and desires. Moreover, portfolios can serve as a vehicle for the vital communication about transition plans among students and parents and teachers as well as

between teachers and parents. Within the portfolio format, students identify the goals and then share them with their parents and teachers. In this way, transition portfolios can facilitate the advisement process.

Communication. Morningstar, Turnbull, and Turnbull (1995) stated, "In fact, parent participation is considered to be one of the most important elements of transition programs" (p. 249). They also reported that most students felt their families should be involved in helping them plan for their futures, but at its best the planning was very informal. The researchers indicated that as a result of the lack of formal planning (a) none of the students in their study had discussed IEP goals with their families prior to the IEP meetings, and consequently, (b) there was no sense of agreement on important issues between the parents and the students prior to their attendance at the meetings.

Empowerment. In addition to being a vehicle for communication, transition portfolios may meet the principles of intervention for empowerment within both the life-space and life-span considerations that Szymanski (1994) identified. According to Szymanski, interventions must empower the students and the families to take responsible control of the transition process and facilitate independence or interdependence. Portfolios also parallel other life-space considerations that Szymanski presented as vital to transition planning. First, portfolio development can involve the family at the decision-making level and

allow for culturally diverse influences in transition planning process. Second, a focus on planning within the context of the community labor markets and available network and community supports is also possible with transition portfolios. Finally, portfolios can impact the life-span aspect of transition planning when introduced in elementary school as part of career development process.

Portfolios can provide a format and strategy for the students to explore their own transition skills. Teachers may have to learn to relinquish some of their control in order to empower the students in transition planning. "Some teachers may need to do some soul searching about whether students are too dependent on them for direction, standards, or judgement. The whole point is to put the student in a self-disciplined, self-regulating, self-assessing position" (Wiggins, 1990, p. 51). The students help determine the components, after the guidelines for a portfolio have been established. The portfolios are also a format where the students can express their dreams, explore options, make community contacts, and reflect on the results. Portfolios allow students the important opportunity to learn to operate from both a performance and reflection perspective (Dickinson, 1993).

As Assessment Tools

Portfolios can give students the opportunities to develop assessment skills. In the first place, portfolios can serve as an effective vehicle for communication, and

personal communication with students is an excellent way for teachers to gather information about their students' achievement and growth (Stiggins, 1994). A section of the portfolio can be designated just for communication and feedback between students, peers, teachers, and family members. Still, as an assessment tool, Vavrus (1990) reported a portfolio can do much more. A portfolio "reveals a range of skills and understandings, supports instructional goals, values student and teacher reflection, shows changes and growth over a period of time, and provides for continuity in education from one year to the next" (p. 48). With portfolios the students can be involved in the assessment process rather than the object of the assessment.

Peer evaluation of portfolios can widen the audience and help to ensure that portfolios are part of the everyday activities in the classroom. More importantly, through peer review the students can learn from each others' experiences and open channels of communication between students (Hill, Kamber, & Norwick, 1994).

Belanoff and Elbow (1991) listed advantages they found from their work when using a portfolio format. The teachers became more like allies than umpires when their feedback on portfolios encouraged the students to improve. They also felt that the students' thinking processes were enhanced by the opportunities to talk with peers and teachers about their ideas.

Portfolios have been implemented in numerous areas in education as part of an authentic assessment trend. Vermont and Kentucky have moved to statewide portfolio assessment and the United Kingdom is moving toward performance-based assessment on a national level. Portfolios, as authentic assessment, can be a unique source for a variety of information about students. Wesson and King (1996) made the analogy that "a portfolio is like a videotape, as opposed to a snapshot of the student" (p. 46).

Transition portfolios could be an important component of the total assessment package, especially for students in special education programs. "The high school diploma, by remaining tied to no standard other than credit accrual and seat time, provides no useful information about what students have studied or what they can actually do with what was studied" (Wiggins, 1989, p. 43). On the other hand, through a comprehensive assessment program, students, parents, and faculty could have an accurate evaluation of the student's strengths and areas that need improvement for a successful adult transition. The transition skills portfolio evaluates the overall transition concept. The student, teacher, or parent can get an in-depth description of the skills the student has mastered. Transition portfolios, used in conjunction with an employability skills portfolios or career portfolios and other assessment tools, could provide a more comprehensive assessment picture.

Employability skills portfolios. Employability skills portfolios, career portfolios, and career development portfolios fulfill an important aspect of transition programming. Employability skills portfolios (ESP) have been implemented in the schools in Michigan. The goal was to teach students to develop an accurate display of their accomplishments (Stemmer, Brown, & Smith, 1992). The ESP had four components: (a) an academic, personal management, and teamwork folder; (b) a parent guide; (c) an information guide for students and teachers; and (d) a summary sheet of employability skills for job interviews. The ESP was based on the premise of lifelong learning. The goal was that students would continue to update the information in their ESP. The teachers involved in the project reported that students showed "increased motivation, more interest in school, and increased self-esteem" (Stemmer et al., p. 33).

Stemmer et al. (1992) identified issues that needed to be addressed. They wanted more parent and business community involvement and a more standardized evaluation system that could be meaningful across the districts and the state. They also needed a method to more successfully integrate the existing assessment programs with the portfolios because many students did not understand the test results they included in their portfolios. Still, the overall findings were positive and the results indicated that "the portfolio project encourages students to recognize

successes, seek opportunities to fill in gaps in skills, and gain confidence in preparing for work" (p. 33).

Smith, (1993) the Coordinator of Employability Skills Assessment for the Michigan Department of Education, highlighted additional advantages to the ESP. First, according to Smith, students learned improved self-evaluation skills and became more involved in their own development as lifelong learners and citizens. Second, the students gained a sense of how the lessons in the classroom apply to life in the community. As an example of the effect of the ESP, Smith shared the comment of a student. After his portfolio demonstration, one ninth grade student shared that "this was the first validation he got that school fits his own goals" (p. 27).

Career portfolios. In Texas, a career portfolio was the end product of a state project to identify a validated list of competencies for successful transition. The competencies focus on careers but include employability skills, work related social skills, self help/independent living skills, generalizable skills, and job specific skills. Sarkees-Wircenski and Wircenski (1994) organized these competencies into a career portfolio designed for students with disabilities in vocational education programs.

The career portfolio is designed as an assessment tool for the vocational education or special education personnel. It can be used to evaluate each student individually. Each item is evaluated on a scale of mastery from no experience

to independent competency. The resulting information can be useful for any of the following applications (a) as an informal vocational assessment, (b) as the basis for academic objectives, (c) to identify specific job competencies, (d) as a vocational counseling tool, (e) as documentation, and (f) employment portfolio contents.

Career development portfolios. One of the areas where portfolios have been implemented in the schools is in career development (Van Zandt, Perry, & Brawley, 1994; Bernhardt, Cole, & Ryan, 1993). Van Zandt et al. reported that portfolios are effective as intrinsic motivators. The students are focused on education. They also provide students an opportunity to feel ownership of their work and to reflect on their accomplishments.

Career development portfolios require documentation of the steps and skills to locate, evaluate, and interpret career information. The key concepts for career development portfolios are "education, self-development, and career information as it relates to short- and long-term planning" (Bernhardt, Cole, & Ryan, 1993, p. 71).

Sormunen (1994) found, "the portfolio concept is one method that encourages the kind of teacher planning, student processing, and collaborative evaluation that assists the transition process" (p. 10). Teachers can use portfolios to guide their instruction. Each evaluation of the portfolios can help teachers identify specific areas that need remediation, receive feedback on the effectiveness of their

teaching, and get insights into the most effective strategies for each student. Teachers can use the information gleaned from portfolios to individualize their instruction to address each student's needs.

Sormunen (1994) reported that the experience of using portfolios was beneficial to both students and teachers. The greatest benefit was that students became aware of the learning process and felt ownership in it. The students took responsibility and set the goals. "It's clear that the more students are aware of their own learning processes, the more likely they are to establish goals for their education and the more deeply engaged they are in those processes" (Mills-Courts & Amiran, 1991, p. 103).

An additional advantage of portfolios is the continuity from year to year and teacher to teacher. Portfolios can provide a wealth of information on each student. Students should select the examples of their accomplishments, special awards, interests, and dreams to include. Portfolios could also document the steps and the strategies that students used to achieve the final products.

Portfolios in teacher education. Teacher education is another area that has been exploring the process of portfolio assessment. The portfolios are applauded by researchers for encompassing diversity, while demonstrating and documenting personal strengths. The portfolios have also given educators insights into program effectiveness.

In 1995, Bloom and Bacon discussed a program that had implemented portfolios in teacher education. In their program, the students submitted a proposal to their committee for approval early in their educational program. The evaluation criteria for each portfolio must be included in the original proposal. Scheduled appointments for reviews and revisions were also an important component. Evaluation criteria might include overall appearance, sequential design, and established content and objectives. There were also scheduled opportunities for reviews and revisions.

Bloom and Bacon (1995) discussed advantages and disadvantages of portfolios they noted in their program. Advantages included the increased ability to individualize their program, the variety of applications, and the opportunities for the students to learn self-evaluation. On the other hand, the portfolios were more subjective than the traditional program assessment, some areas were harder to evaluate, and there was no guarantee of standardization across mastery of skills.

Barton and Collins (1993) also reported on implementing teacher portfolios in a teacher education program. Through their experience they identified most of the same advantages to using portfolios in general. The authors appreciated (a) the students' reflection and ownership, (b) the faculty insight into individual's skills, (c) the opportunity for faculty and peer review, and (d) the fact that the students

became more articulate which was demonstrated in the portfolio rationale statements.

Ryan and Kuhs (1993) described their use of portfolios in assessing elementary and early childhood graduate level preservice teachers and targeted the assessment component as the greatest advantage. They wanted a formative assessment and self-evaluation components. They listed the following advantages as evaluational advantages: (a) flexibility, (b) multiple sources of information, (c) longitudinal information collection, and (d) an holistic perspective.

The results of the programs that have implemented portfolio assessment in preservice teacher education supported the same general advantages. The advantages have included successful self-evaluations, allowance for diversity, formative and summative evaluations, and the increasing number of applications for portfolios. One of the most important outcomes of using portfolios in teacher education programs may be how that directly increases their use in the public school classroom. If the teachers found portfolios to be successful, innovative teaching and assessment techniques, they may be more likely to apply them in their own classrooms.

Evaluation standards. Valencia and Calfee (1991) categorized portfolios into three different, but not necessarily distinct, models: showcase, documentation, and evaluation. These portfolio models highlight different

standards, methods, and audiences but share the same overriding concept of empowering the students.

In the showcase portfolio, students' selection, evaluation, and reflection of the contents to demonstrate student progress or growth take precedence over standardization. The evaluation criteria are usually discussed in the beginning, at the same time as the required components. Showcase portfolios are generally evaluated according to components such as organization, content, presentation, and overall effect.

The second model, a documentation portfolio, uses a variety of informal assessment techniques to establish an ongoing record of student progress. This model may demonstrate growth but does not evaluate against a set of standards. The focus of the documentation portfolios is to provide evidence of accomplishment.

The third model describes the evaluation portfolio. These are the most standardized and usually contain a predetermined selection of entries and required activities.

The showcase portfolio is conceptually the closest to the transition portfolio because of the self-reflection, self-selection, and self-evaluation. Even though the transition portfolio has a number of required activities, the students have freedom of choice within each activity. The showcase portfolio also uses the most appropriate evaluation system for personal transition portfolios.

The evaluation of the personal transition portfolio is based on the components outlined by Paulson, Paulson, and Meyer (1991) and adaptations from Sornumen (1994). Within an organized framework, the contents exhibit evidence of the student's work on developing transition skills. The portfolios also demonstrate self-reflection, self-selection, self-evaluation, and progress toward the goals.

Transition portfolios address the six elements that Salvia and Ysseldyke (1995) identified to define portfolio assessment. The six elements include

targeting valued outcomes for assessment, using tasks that mirror the work in the real world, encouraging cooperation among learners, and between teacher and student, using multiple dimensions to evaluate student work, encouraging student reflection, and integrating assessment and instruction. (p. 265)

Effective Transition Programs

The portfolio concept may be an effective strategy to prepare students for their transition from secondary special education programs. Portfolios can be designed to parallel the instructional variables associated with successful adults with disabilities, as well as factors identified with self-efficacy change. The transition portfolio format can involve the student in planning, exploring, and assessing.

Successful adults with disabilities. Transition portfolios can teach students how to take a proactive approach to life. Portfolios are a format where students can reflect on their strengths and identify areas that need to be addressed (Wolf, 1989). The students can learn to

establish long- and short-term goals within the portfolio framework and identify careers that accent their strengths. The students can work toward an understanding and acceptance of their unique situations as they focus on the steps to achieving their goals. Importantly, the short-term goals and the steps to attain them may serve as opportunities for students to take risks in a secure environment, experience success, and learn to cope with stress and disappointments. One of the most realistic aspects about portfolios may be the commitment to complete a long-term project. Students can practice the perseverance necessary to accomplish many adult experiences. Most of the responsibilities of adult life are long-term tasks (e.g., postsecondary education, employment, marriage, and child rearing).

Self-efficacy change. The portfolios, as personal accomplishments, follow the factors that have been found to influence self-efficacy scores. The students can experience success and attain goals through a step-by-step process. In a safe environment, students can explore and discover their own strengths. The teachers can set up role modeling activities so students can discuss, analyze, observe, and practice proactive behaviors. The accomplishment of short-term goals and the support of peers may be enough to encourage students to attempt other new experiences.

Transition skills development. The transition portfolio concept addresses a broader set of components than does a career development portfolio or an employability

skills portfolio. A transition portfolio also encompasses community involvement, independent living, and access to adult service providers. More importantly, the unique factor of the transition portfolio is that it is student-driven. Transition portfolios put the students in control. The students (a) discover and explore goals, (b) document a checklist of skills that need to be learned or improved, and (c) develop those skills. Portfolio development can prepare the students to present their findings at the transition IEP meeting. Moreover, portfolios are an excellent method to establish annual goals and short-term academic objectives.

A unique aspect is that the transition portfolios may serve as a student-developed transition resource for the students after they leave the secondary school setting. As research has shown (Rusch & Phelps, 1987; Burns et al., 1990) many young adults who were unemployed, not going to school, and not involved in their communities indicated the desire to be involved but lacked the skills. A completed transition portfolio should contain the step-by-step procedure to initiate community contact in each transition area. Brown (1989) stated that, "Students who have to perform or exhibit their knowledge and skills get learning in their bones: active learners become lifetime learners" (p. 33).

Summary

The importance of transition planning in the areas of employment, postsecondary education/training, community

involvement, independent living, and awareness of adult services to the successful integration of students with disabilities in the community has been demonstrated in the literature. The research on transition reveals that while provisions were made to help students prepare for postschool life, many students do not have the skills necessary to make that transition successfully. Many students have not had the opportunity to acquire the skills necessary to take a proactive role in their lives and their transition planning. Clearly, research is needed on instructional methods that will foster student empowerment and acquisition of transition skills.

Research data have indicated variables that have contributed to the success of adults with disabilities. These factors relate to being in control of one's life. They involve acceptance and understanding of one's disability, taking a proactive approach to life, setting goals and determining the steps to meet those goals, establishing support networks, and accessing an environment where one can emphasize his or her strengths and seek assistance in weaker areas. The same factors apply to successful transition.

Research and professional opinions on portfolios maintain that portfolios are an effective teaching and assessment tool. Portfolios provide a format where students can evaluate their own strengths and areas that need to be addressed. Professionals who have worked with portfolios

have reported that portfolios are an excellent vehicle to empower students, encourage student involvement, and put students in charge of their own learning. Additionally, a portfolio framework can enhance communication between students and their parents and teachers. The students, while still in a supportive environment, have the opportunity to explore and perhaps fail, only to be encouraged to try again.

Self-efficacy refers to a person's perception of their ability to accomplish a given task. Research into self-efficacy has suggested that a person's belief that they can accomplish a task is as important or in some situations even more important than the skills, especially when comparing two people with equivalent ability.

Self-efficacy has been used as an outcome measure for students with disabilities in regard to contributing information to their IEP meeting. The results have indicated that instruction is effective in influencing self-efficacy scores in that one aspect of transition planning. Research has demonstrated that specific variables associated with success can be targeted to enhance transition readiness skills. These same factors can be addressed in a portfolio format.

Bandura's (1977a) Self-Efficacy Theory supplied a framework for further research in transition planning. Research that applies findings gleaned from two different areas (a) studies on factors associated with transition

readiness skills and (b) studies on factors that influence a person's perceived self-efficacy.

Perhaps transition portfolios can accomplish the goals of teaching students transition readiness skills within a framework designed to increase the variables that researchers have associated with successful adults. Therefore, this study on the effect of student-developed transition portfolios on self-efficacy may add to the existing data in both areas.

CHAPTER 3 METHOD

This chapter presents the methods and procedures that were used for this study to investigate three experimental questions about teaching high school students with mild disabilities to develop personal transition portfolios. For the purpose of presentation, the chapter has been divided into six sections. The sections of this chapter include descriptions of (a) the hypotheses, (b) the subjects and the setting, (c) the research instrumentation, (d) the materials, (e) the procedure, and (f) the experimental design and analysis of data.

Hypotheses

This study was designed to (a) examine the difference between two approaches to teaching high school students with mild disabilities in Varying Exceptionalities (VE) classes to develop personal transition portfolios and (b) investigate the effect of developing personal transition portfolios on the self-efficacy of transition readiness of high school students with mild disabilities. The research questions for this study are expressed in the null hypotheses that follow.

H_1 : There will be no statistically significant difference between the initial and final self-efficacy of

transition readiness among the three research groups: (a) the experimental group (strategy instruction in developing personal transition portfolios), (b) the comparison group (presentation of general instructions in portfolio development), and (c) the control group.

H₂: There will be no statistically significant difference in the final evaluation scores of the personal transition portfolios between the experimental group (strategy instruction in developing personal transition portfolios) and the comparison group (presentation of general instructions in portfolio development).

H₃: There will be no statistically significant relationship between the final evaluation score of the transition portfolio and the final self-efficacy of transition readiness after controlling for initial self-efficacy between the experimental group (strategy instruction in developing personal transition portfolios) and the comparison group (presentation of general instructions in portfolio development).

Rejection of the null hypothesis was based on the .05 level of significance.

Subjects and Setting

The research study was conducted with 66 students in 13 high school varying exceptionalities (VE) classrooms for students with mild disabilities. The pool of subjects included students eligible for placement in VE classes according to criteria required in Florida for the following

mild disabilities: (a) specific learning disabilities, (b) mild emotional handicaps, and (c) mild developmental disabilities. The subjects attended three high schools in Levy County and two in Alachua County, Florida. Initially, the researcher contacted either the Director of Exceptional Student Education or the Director of Transition Programming in each district, described the study, and invited participation. Each director was given a copy of the Personal Transition Portfolio Guide. The directors provided the names of teachers whose classes fit the parameters of the study (high school, varying exceptionalities classes). The researcher contacted the teachers, described the study and personal transition portfolios, and gave the teachers copies of the Personal Transition Portfolio Guide. After permission was received from the district offices, the researcher met with either the principal or the assistant principal at each school where a teacher indicated interest in participating in the study. The purpose was to (a) describe the transition portfolio concept and the study and (b) get permission to include the school in the research project. Schools were selected whose staff indicated a willingness to participate. A description of the subjects is presented in Chapter 4.

The subjects initially were contacted through a letter that requested their participation in this study. The letter included a parental consent form (see Appendix A). The consent form described the proposed study and requested

approval by the student's parent or legal guardian. The students also gave their verbal assent to participate in this study.

Research Instrumentation

For this study, two Personal Transition Portfolio Guides (PTP-G) (see Appendix B) for teachers were designed and implemented, one for the experimental group and one for the comparison group. The PTP-G provided teachers with lesson plans to teach students to develop their own Personal Transition Portfolios (PTP).

The goal of the personal transition portfolio (PTP) was to give students the opportunity, support, and motivation to explore their post-school dreams. The overriding concept was to teach students how to explore options for themselves.

The PTP presented transition planning within a portfolio structure. Students made the decisions on (a) what to research, (b) what to include, and (c) how to present the results and their reflections. The PTP was designed to be used alone or within an existing curriculum.

The portfolio was designed to serve as a template or resource guide. The portfolios can provide an opportunity for the subject to practice, record, and reflect on the necessary steps to find a job, attend post-secondary school or apprenticeship training, become involved in the community, live independently, and develop awareness of pertinent adult services and the eligibility requirements of each. Upon the completion of the PTP the students will have

developed their own transition resource guide that includes the procedures for transition as well as the student's reflections on each area of transition planning.

Halpern et al. (1995) described two main components to transition planning. These two components are learning about transition planning and learning how to do transition planning. The transition portfolio concept addresses how to do transition planning. As a student-developed resource guide, the portfolio can serve as a strategy for how to do transition planning (Halpern et al., 1995).

Two measurement procedures were used for the purpose of this study. First, the Transition Portfolio Inventory (TPI) was administered in a pretest-posttest format to assess the students' self-efficacy of transition readiness. The pretest allowed the researcher to gather information about individual differences among subjects before the onset of treatment. Second, the dependability of scoring student developed personal transition portfolios (PTPs) was evaluated based on an interscorer reliability index.

Pretest and Posttest

The instrument that was used for the pretest-posttest was the Transition Planning Inventory (TPI) developed by Clark and Patton (in press). The TPI has three forms. The student completes the first form. The other two forms can be completed by the parent and the teacher using knowledge about the student. For the purpose of this study only the student form was used.

The student form of the TPI assessed the student's self-efficacy of transition readiness with one overall score. The student responded to a Likert-type scale. The instructions were to "Rate yourself based on what you think you can do right now in each of the areas below" (Clark & Patton, in press, p.1). The scale ranges from "strongly disagree" (0 points) to "strongly agree" (5 points) with additional choices of "don't know" (DK) and "not applicable" (NA).

The TPI was field tested during the 1994-95 school year (Clark & Patton, in press). Data were collected from 288 students with disabilities, 227 parents/guardians, and 329 school based personnel in Alabama, Florida, Hawaii, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Canada. The results indicated a high degree of reliability. For content sampling (internal consistency reliability) 18% of the coefficient alphas were .90 or higher, 52% were between .80 and .89 and 30% between .70 and .79. The coefficients for the time sampling (test-retest reliability) range from .78 to .92.

Two types of validity were considered for the TPI: content and criterion-related. The format selected allowed for self-assessment in an informal manner that did not require highly specific knowledge. Family ratings and professional ratings also were included. The appropriateness of the content for use as a transition inventory was determined in several stages. The item

selection was based on transition skills, a review of the literature, and the adult adjustment of persons with disabilities (Clark & Patton, in press). The items then were reviewed by experts in the field. Finally, the instrument was revised based on an additional survey of the purpose and utility on the TPI. According to the survey respondents, the TPI appears to be appropriate for interpreting the self-assessment of transition planning skills of students with disabilities as outlined in IDEA.

While the ability of the TPI to predict the future performance remains to be established, the criterion-related validity was derived by comparing the TPI with other measures that assess transition needs. The data are limited in this area for the TPI, but the existing results suggest the instrument is valid in terms of concurrent validity.

The TPI, as a self-assessment tool of transition skills, is a measure of perceived self-efficacy of transition readiness. Self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in his or her ability to perform a given task (Bandura, 1977a). Hackett and Betz (1981) reported that "subjects' ratings of the level and strength of expectations of behavioral performance in related domains could be used to assess the generality of efficacy expectations" (p. 335).

Portfolio Evaluation

The personal transition portfolio assessment was a posttest only evaluation. The PTP evaluation criteria was reviewed by a panel of experts in the field of transition

for secondary students with mild disabilities. The panel of experts (see Appendix D) was comprised of a doctoral candidate and a doctoral student in special education/transition, a secondary Exceptional Student Education (ESE) teacher, an ESE resource specialist, an ESE administrator, and a professor of special education/transition.

This diverse panel provided feedback on three aspects of the transition portfolio. First, the panel considered the five transition areas included in the portfolios (a) employment, (b) further education/training, (c) community involvement, (d) independent living, and (e) adult services. The second aspect the panel reviewed was the list of suggested components included within each of the five transition areas. The last aspect was the final portfolio evaluation procedure which included the point value assigned to each area (see Appendix E).

The essential areas for the transition portfolio and the guidelines for evaluation given to the panel were based on the current literature on transition and portfolios. As with any portfolio, the final decision on specific components to be included in the portfolio rested with the person developing the portfolio (Paulson et al., 1991; Van Zandt et al., 1995).

The portfolio evaluation procedure suggested to the panel was adapted from a portfolio assessment method developed by Sormunen (1994). Scores for each portfolio were recorded on a scorer sheet. For a final evaluation

score with a total of 50 points, the points were allocated as follows: organization (15 points), content (20 points), presentation (5 points), and overall effect (10 points).

The names of subjects were kept confidential by recording data using a numerical coding system. Each subject was randomly assigned a coded number upon agreement to participate in the study. After the portfolios were completed, they were coded with the same number assigned to the subject.

Fifteen portfolios were evaluated by two independent scorers to obtain an interscorer reliability index. Once the reliability was established to be reasonably high, one rater was used to evaluate the portfolios. The portfolios were evaluated according to the 50-point evaluation criterion approved by the panel of experts based on organization, content, presentation, and overall effect.

Materials

The panel of experts involved in the study received copies of the materials produced by the researcher. These included the Personal Transition Portfolio Guide developed for the teachers as lesson plans for portfolio development and the materials provided for the students.

The teachers who participated in the research each received their own copies of the Personal Transition Portfolio Guide for the experimental group. This guide was designed along the framework of a teacher's manual and contains an overview, five units of step-by-step lesson

plans, and a final evaluation section. The teachers who had classes in the comparison groups also received the Personal Transition Portfolio Guide for the comparison group.

All the students participating in the study were given a three-ring portfolio notebook with pockets. This was divided into five sections, one for each of the transition areas addressed during portfolio development. There were 18 activity sheets for the students that provided a format for the students to follow. The students were given suggestions for items to be included in the portfolio, but the final decision for the contents of the portfolio was left up to each individual student. The students were expected to use their imaginations and be creative. The students' ideas could include but were not limited to written entries, drawings or paintings, pictures from magazines or brochures, photographs, or cassette or video recordings.

Procedure

The procedure for this study consisted of four phases. Phase one was a pilot study to test the Personal Transition Portfolio Guide (PTP-G) as a portfolio strategy intervention in a classroom setting. Additionally, the content review of the Personal Transition Portfolio strategy was done in phase one to establish the validity of the PTP. Phase two consisted of training inservice teachers in the use of the PTP-G for portfolio development for the experimental, comparison, and control groups. Phase three was the large group study in which the portfolio intervention developed in

the PTP-G was implemented with 5 classes as the experimental group, 4 classes as the comparison group, and 4 classes as the control group. After the interscorer reliability was established, the fourth phase was the final evaluation of the personal transition portfolios. In the next section, each procedure will be explained in more detail.

Prior to the implementation of any training, permission was received from the University of Florida Institutional Review Board (UFIRB) to conduct research with human subjects. Upon approval from the UFIRB, permission was obtained from Gilchrist County School District, Levy County School District, and Alachua County School District to conduct research with students in their districts. Permission was obtained through personal contact with the Directors of Exceptional Student Education in Levy and Gilchrist Counties. The applications for permission to do research in Alachua County were filed with the Office of Extended Services at the University of Florida and then forwarded to the Alachua County School Board. After permission was received at the district level, permission was obtained from the principals at each individual school. Consent for permission to work with the students was obtained from the parents of all the students in the study (see Appendix A). The students also gave their verbal assent to participate in the study.

Personal Transition Portfolio Strategy Intervention

The portfolio strategy was presented in five units, one for each transition area: (a) employment, (b) further education/training, (c) community involvement, (d) independent living, and (e) adult services. Prior to the presentation of the first unit there was an introduction to portfolios and an overview of transition.

Each unit contains four parts: (a) advance organizer, (b) discussion of the task, (c) supervised practice, and (d) independent practice (adapted from Mercer & Miller, 1992 and Van Reusen et al., 1994).

Advance organizer. The advance organizer serves several purposes. First, it aids the student in accessing prior knowledge about the concept to be introduced. Second, it presents an overview of the information to be addressed. Finally, it provides a rationale for why the information is important to the student.

Discussion of the Task. The discussion time provides the opportunity for the teacher to explain the concept and present examples about the assignment. The teacher and the student have the opportunity to ask and answer questions, especially about the steps involved in accomplishing the goals.

Supervised Practice. The supervised practice can be started on the day of the introduction to the task at hand and continued at a small group session during the next discussion session. In the small groups the students and

the teacher can provide feedback as each student shares his or her initial ideas and intended steps or accomplishments. The supervised practice helps prepare the students for the independent practice.

Independent Practice. The students explore their individual interests on an independent basis. Based on their unique needs, the students in the experimental group make contact with people in the community, record the information, and reflect on their findings. The students in the comparison group use classroom materials and activities for their portfolio information. At this point the portfolios should show progress toward the goals and demonstrate growth. Feedback from the teacher is important at this step.

For the purpose of this study students were given assignments when each lesson was introduced. There was time for small group meetings. Assignments were to be completed by the time the students met in groups again to discuss their findings.

Phase One: Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted in Gilchrist County, Florida. It is a rural school district with a small population.

Subjects. The 9 subjects who participated in the pilot study were in a mixed-grade high school varying exceptionalities (VE) class. There were 5 females and 4 males with 2 students in the 9th grade, 3 students in the

10th grade, 3 students in the 11th grade, and 1 student in the 12th grade. Of these subjects, 7 were identified with specific learning disabilities and 2 with mild developmental disabilities.

Design. The purpose of the pilot study was to test the personal transition portfolio intervention as designed by the Transition Portfolio Guide in a classroom setting. A pretest-posttest design with the Transition Planning Inventory was employed to determine self-efficacy of transition readiness. Additionally, there was a posttest-only evaluation of the student-developed personal transition portfolios.

Training of scorers for reliability. The scorers received information on transition planning, a description of the transition portfolio concept, and general instructions for portfolio development. Additionally, the scorers were instructed in the use of the personal transition portfolio evaluation form. Fifteen portfolios were evaluated by two independent scorers to obtain an interscorer reliability index. Once the reliability was established to be reasonably high, one rater was used to evaluate the Personal Transition Portfolios.

Content validation. The results of the content review by the panel of experts was used to establish the content validity of the Personal Transition Portfolio Guide and Portfolio Evaluation. The content of the five units and the guidelines of evaluation were based on the current

literature on transition and portfolios. The panel of experts reviewed the PTP-G to ensure that it addressed the transitions areas. Additionally, the panel examined the posttest only evaluation of the personal transition portfolio to determine that it measured what it was designed to assess.

Phase Two: Portfolio Intervention Education

The portfolio intervention education consisted of providing the teachers with instruction in personal transition portfolio development. The six teachers who taught classes for students with varying exceptionalities at the five study sites and the pilot study site attended an inservice training prior to the beginning of the large group study. Each training lasted approximately 90 minutes. The teachers were provided information on transition planning, the transition portfolio strategy, and general instructions for portfolio development (see Appendix C).

The teachers were provided separate lesson plans for the experimental groups and the comparison groups. During the inservice, specific emphasis was placed on the significance of two concepts. First, how important it was to adhere to the lesson plans for each separate treatment group. Second, how important it was not to discuss the experimental methodology with the comparison groups or the portfolio concept with the control groups. The teachers were told that the researcher would stop in at random to

observe class presentations and peruse the portfolio notebooks.

Additionally, the teachers' lesson plan books were color coordinated. The lesson plan books for the experimental groups were blue and the lesson plan books for the comparison groups were gray. The students' notebooks were also color coordinated by group. For each class the notebooks were a different color and every student in that class had the same color notebook. For example, all the students in the 2nd period comparison group had purple notebooks, all the students in the 3rd period experimental group had blue notebooks, and all the students in the 5th period experimental group had green notebooks.

Phase Three: Portfolio Intervention Implementation

The intervention phase consisted of the pretest, the implementation of the intervention, and the final evaluation and posttest.

Pretest and posttest. The student form of the Transition Planning Inventory was administered as the pretest and the posttest. The self-efficacy ratings are presented in Chapter IV. After the students completed the pretest, portfolio instruction began in both the experimental and comparison groups.

Experimental group. Instruction in the experimental group followed the portfolio strategy outlined in the Personal Transition Portfolio Guide. The students received approximately 45 minutes of instruction or small group time,

three times for each of the five lessons. The major focus of the strategy instruction was the community contact component.

Comparison group. The students in the comparison group received general instruction for transition portfolio development from the second Personal Transition Portfolio Guide. The students received approximately 45 minutes of instruction or small group time, three times for each of the five lessons. The students developed the portfolio using classroom activities, materials, and focus groups without the community contact component.

Control group. The students in the control group took the pretest and the posttest. They did not receive instruction in transition portfolio development.

Phase Four: Final Evaluation

The final evaluation of the personal transition portfolios was ascertained using the criteria in the evaluation form. The students had the final decision on what to include in the portfolio and how to present the material, but they had to meet the basic requirements. The requirements addressed portfolio (a) organization (logical presentation, coordination throughout, and coherence); (b) content (met requirements, demonstrated communication, and showed individuality); (c) presentation (appearance); and (d) overall effect (impact of the portfolio).

Experimental Design and Analysis of Data

The design of this study was a pretest-posttest comparison group statistical design. The subject pool consisted of students in secondary classes in Levy and Alachua Counties. Thirteen classes that offered programming for students with varying exceptionalities at the high schools were involved in the study. The classes at each school were generally divided in the following way (a) one ninth grade class, (b) one class of ninth and tenth graders, and (c) one class of eleventh and twelfth graders. The intact classes were assigned to either the experimental group, the comparison group, or the control group. The classes were matched as closely as possible on the basis of (a) the teacher (each teacher who had two or more research groups had diverse groups--e.g., one experimental and one comparison group), (b) the grade level (each grade level was represented in the experimental, comparison, and control groups), and (c) the number of subjects (the classes were assigned for equality in the number of subjects and the number of classes per research group; e.g., experimental, comparison, and control groups). Five classes received instruction in the personal transition portfolio strategy (experimental group), four classes received general instruction in transition portfolio development (comparison group), and four classes served as the control group.

Chapter 4 includes the descriptive statistics for all the variables. A repeated measures analysis of variance

(ANOVA) was computed to address Hypothesis 1 and determine if any significant differences were present between the experimental treatments on the final self-efficacy. For Hypothesis 2 the researcher completed a t-test to investigate group differences in the final evaluation scores of the transition portfolios. For Hypothesis 3 a regression analysis addressed the relationship between the final evaluation score of the transition portfolios and the final self-efficacy of transition readiness after controlling for initial self-efficacy. A .05 level of confidence was used to determine if the differences were significant and whether or not to reject the null hypotheses.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect on self-efficacy related to transition readiness of teaching high school students with mild disabilities to develop personal transition portfolios. The general question of this study was as follows: Does instruction in developing personal transition portfolios that involves an action plan for community contact affect the student's self-efficacy of transition readiness? In order to examine this question, the researcher compared the final self-efficacy of an experimental group, whose members established an action plan to contact and interview community members, in addition to classroom instruction in portfolio development to the final self-efficacy of two additional groups, one a comparison group and the other a control group. The students in the comparison group received traditional classroom instruction and used classroom resources to develop personal transition portfolios but did not contact community members. The students in the control group received neither instruction in transition portfolios nor developed transition portfolios. The effects of both types of instruction in portfolio development and no portfolio development on self-

efficacy of transition readiness of high school students with mild disabilities were measured and compared.

This chapter is divided into seven sections and presents data acquired in the study that addresses the experimental questions. First, results are presented from measures taken to insure interrater reliability. Second, the results from the panel of experts on the content validity of the Personal Transition Portfolio Guide are discussed. Third, demographic characteristics of the students in the study are described. Fourth, the results are reported of the repeated measures analysis of variance to determine if any significant differences of final self-efficacy between experimental treatments were present. Fifth, the results of a t -test to investigate group differences in the final evaluation scores of the transition portfolios are discussed. Sixth, the results of a regression analysis to address the relationship between the final evaluation score of the transition portfolios and the final self-efficacy of transition readiness after controlling for initial self-efficacy are reported. Finally, the results of additional related findings are presented.

Interrater Reliability for Portfolio Grading

The following procedures were implemented during the study to insure reliability of measurement (a) portfolio graders received a key to standardize the evaluations and (b) fifteen portfolios were scored independently using the

same scoring procedures to establish interrater agreement. Interscorer reliability was calculated using the Pearson correlation coefficient. Interrater reliability on the portfolio evaluation for the two independent scores was .994.

Portfolio Content Validation and Measurement Criteria

Both the content of the personal transition portfolio and evaluation criteria for the transition portfolio were reviewed by a panel of six experts in the field of transition for secondary students with mild disabilities. The panel members (see Appendix D) were asked to rate the content of the transition portfolio from three perspectives. All panel members indicated the portfolio guide included the necessary information and correctly addressed (a) the five transition areas, (b) the goals and objectives for those areas, and (c) the final portfolio evaluation procedure.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

A total of 13 classrooms from five high schools participated in the study. The total number of subjects equaled 66. The experimental group totaled 30 subjects, the comparison group totaled 15 subjects, and the control group totaled 21 subjects. Of the total number of students, 17 (26%) were female and 49 (74%) were male. The racial makeup of the total included 43 (65%) white students, 21 (32%) African-American students, and 2 (3%) Hispanic students.

All the students were enrolled in high school varying exceptionalities (VE) classes for students with mild

disabilities. Thirty-eight (58%) of the students were identified with learning disabilities, 13 (20%) students were identified with mild emotional handicaps, 13 (20%) students were identified with mild developmental disabilities, one (1%) student was identified as having a speech impairment and one (1%) student was identified as having a hearing impairment. Table 1 presents a descriptive summary of students in the experimental, comparison, and control groups.

Preexisting differences among the three groups were determined by conducting chi-square analyses by gender, ethnicity, age, and grade. For each analysis the .05 level of significance was used.

Chi-square (χ^2) tests were used to compare the three groups by gender, ethnicity, age, and grade. The χ^2 revealed no significant differences among the groups by gender ($\chi^2 = 3.572, 2, p = .17$). The percentage of females in the control group (14.3%) was not significantly different from the percentage of females in the comparison group (20%) or the percentage of females in the experimental group (36.7%).

The χ^2 revealed no statistically significant differences among the groups by ethnicity ($\chi^2 = 5.617, 2, p = .06$). The minority populations (African-American and Hispanic) were grouped into one category for ethnicity

Table 1
Descriptive Information for Research Groups

| Descriptors | <u>Group</u> Exper | Compar | Control | Total |
|--|-----------------------|--------|---------|-------|
| <u>Gender:</u> | | | | |
| female | 11 | 3 | 3 | 17 |
| male | 19 | 12 | 18 | 49 |
| <u>Ethnicity:</u> | | | | |
| African American | 7 | 9 | 5 | 21 |
| Hispanic | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| white | 21 | 6 | 16 | 43 |
| <u>Age:</u> | | | | |
| 14 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| 15 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 11 |
| 16 | 9 | 5 | 10 | 24 |
| 17 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 12 |
| 18 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| 19 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 5 |
| <u>Grade:</u> | | | | |
| 8 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 9 | 16 | 3 | 8 | 27 |
| 10 | 10 | 6 | 8 | 24 |
| 11 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 9 |
| 12 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 5 |
| <u>Special education program status:</u> | | | | |
| learning disability | 15 | 6 | 17 | 38 |
| emotional handicap | 5 | 5 | 3 | 13 |
| developmental disability | 10 | 3 | 0 | 13 |
| hearing impairment | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| speech impairment | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| <u>Total</u> | 30 | 15 | 21 | 66 |

Note.

Exper = Experimental Group

Compar = Comparison Group

comparison due to the small numbers of students in each category. The percentage of minority students in the control group (23.8%) was not significantly different from the percentage of minority students in the comparison group (60.0%) or the percentage of minority students in the experimental group (30.0%).

Because the ages of the students in the study ranged from 14 to 19 years, the students were grouped into two age-based categories for the age comparison among research groups. One group consisted of the younger students (ages 14, 15, and 16) and the other of older students (ages 17, 18, and 19). The χ^2 did not reveal significant differences between these groups by age ($\chi^2 = .915, 2, p = .63$). The percentage of older students in the control group (33.3%) was not significantly different from either the percentage of older students in the comparison group (40.0%) or the percentage of older students in the experimental group (46.7%).

The study encompassed students in the 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades enrolled in high school VE classes. One 8th grade student was included in the study because that student was enrolled in and attended the high school class for students with varying exceptionalities. Due to the range of grades included in the study the students were grouped into three categories for the grade comparison. The categories included lower grades (8th and 9th), middle grade (10th), and upper grades (11th and 12th). The χ^2 revealed

no differences between the groups by grade ($\chi^2 = 3.943, 4, p = .41$). The percentage of students in the control group in the lower grades (38.1%) was not significantly different than the percentage of students in the lower grades in the comparison group (26.7%) or in the experimental group (53.3%). Additionally, the percentage of students in the control group in the middle grade (38.1%) was not significantly different than the percentage of students in the middle grade in either the comparison (40.0%) or experimental groups (33.3%). Finally, the percentage of students in the upper grades in the control group (23.8%) was not significantly different than the percentage of students in the upper grades in the comparison (33.3%) or experimental groups (13.3%). Table 2 presents the results of the chi-square analysis by grade range and research group.

Table 2
Chi-Square Analysis by Grade Range

| | Percentage of Students | | |
|--------------|------------------------|--------|-------------|
| | Lower | Middle | Upper |
| | 8th & 9th | 10th | 11th & 12th |
| Experimental | 53.3% | 33.3% | 13.3% |
| Comparison | 26.7% | 40.0% | 33.3% |
| Control | 38.1% | 38.1% | 23.8% |

$\chi^2 = 3.943, df = 4, p = 0.41$

Univariate Analyses

A univariate analysis was performed on all 66 subjects to determine if there were differences among the research groups on the pretest, posttest, or portfolio evaluation. No significant differences were found among the means of the experimental group, the comparison group, or the control group on the pretest ($F = 1.461$, $df = 2, 63$, $p = .24$). No significant differences were found among the means of the experimental group, the comparison group, or the control group on the posttest ($F = .460$, $df = 2, 63$, $p = .63$). Table 3 summarizes the means of the pretest, the posttest and the portfolio evaluation by mean scores. The total number of points on the pretest/posttest was 250 and on the portfolio evaluation was 50.

Table 3
Group Means on Pretest, Posttest, and Portfolio

| Group | N | Pretest | Posttest | Portfolio |
|--------------|----|---------|----------|-----------|
| Experimental | 30 | 175.7 | 193.4 | 35.1 |
| Comparison | 15 | 188.2 | 193.2 | 32.9 |
| Control | 21 | 191.8 | 202.2 | |
| Overall mean | 66 | 183.7 | 196.2 | |
| Overall mean | 45 | | | 34.8 |

Correlation Coefficients

The Pearson correlation coefficients were determined for each research group correlating the pretest with the posttest, the pretest with the portfolio, and the posttest with the portfolio. For the control group this correlation

of the pretest and posttest also served as a measure of test-retest reliability. The correlation coefficient from pretest to posttest (.5521) is significant and indicates there is a moderate relationship between the pretest and the posttest for the control group (the group that received no intervention). The correlation coefficient for the comparison group from pretest to posttest is high (.7369) and is also significant. The correlation coefficient for the experimental group is low (.3040) and is not significant. Table 4 depicts the results of the Pearson correlation coefficients and the significance value by research groups and for all students combined.

Table 4
Pearson Correlation Coefficients

| Group | Pre/Post | p | Pre/Port | p | Post/Port | p |
|--------|----------|-----|----------|------|-----------|-----|
| Contr | .5521* | .01 | | | | |
| Compar | .7369* | .01 | -.0357 | .899 | -.0379 | .89 |
| Exper | .3040 | .10 | -.0416 | .827 | .3335 | .07 |
| All | .5356* | .00 | -.0583 | .704 | .1729 | .26 |

Note. * Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Pre = pretest

Post = posttest

Port = portfolio

Contr = control group

Compar = comparison group

Exper = experimental

Hypotheses

Analyses were conducted to investigate the three experimental hypotheses. The repeated measures ANOVA procedure was used to test Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 1

H₁: There will be no statistically significant difference between the initial and final self-efficacy of transition readiness among the three research groups (a) the experimental group (strategy instruction in developing personal transition portfolios), (b) the comparison group (presentation of general instructions in portfolio development), and (c) the control group.

There were no significance differences in performance among treatment groups from pretest to posttest. That is, there were no significant differences in performance from pretest to posttest among the experimental group, the comparison group, and the control group (i.e., group*test). However, there were significant differences in the performance of all groups from the pretest to the posttest regardless of the treatment group. Performance for all groups on the posttest is significantly higher than performance on the pretest regardless of treatment group. Table 5 summarizes the repeated measures ANOVA from pretest to posttest. Based on these findings Hypothesis 1 was not rejected.

Table 5
Repeated Measures ANOVA for Pretest to Posttest

| Source | df | F value | p value |
|------------|----|---------|---------|
| Group | 2 | .92 | .41 |
| Error | 63 | | |
| Test | 1 | 12.20 | .01* |
| Group*Test | 2 | 1.37 | .26 |
| Error | 63 | | |

* Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Hypothesis 2

H₂: There will be no statistically significant difference in the final evaluation scores of the personal transition portfolios between the experimental group (strategy instruction in developing personal transition portfolios) and the comparison group (presentation of general instructions in portfolio development).

There was no significant difference between the experimental group and the comparison group on the final evaluation scores of the personal transition portfolios. Table 6 lists the results of the t-test for the portfolio evaluation scores of the experimental group and the comparison group. A two-tailed t-test was used since the direction of the possible differences in means was not known. Based on these findings Hypothesis 2 was not rejected.

Table 6
T-test for the Portfolio Evaluation

| Group | N | Mean | SD | df | t-value | p value |
|--------------|----|------|-----|----|---------|---------|
| Experimental | 30 | 35.1 | 8.0 | 43 | .87 | .39 |
| Comparison | 15 | 32.9 | 7.2 | | | |

* Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Hypothesis 3

H₃: There will be no statistically significant relationship between the final evaluation score of the transition portfolio and the final self-efficacy of transition readiness after controlling for initial self-

efficacy between the experimental group (strategy instruction in developing personal transition portfolios) and the comparison group (presentation of general instructions in portfolio development).

This pretest-posttest comparison group design examined the relationship between a dependent variable (posttest of self-efficacy) and three independent variables (portfolio evaluation score, pretest of self-efficacy, and treatment group). The model used to test Hypothesis 3 was significant and explains about 30% of the posttest scores although not all the variables used were significant. The results are presented in Tables 7 and 8. Based on these findings Hypothesis 3 was not rejected.

Table 7
Source Table of the Multiple Regression Analysis of Hypothesis 3

| Source | r ² | df | F | p value |
|--------|----------------|----|--------|---------|
| Model | .3178 | 3 | 6.3677 | .01* |
| Error | | 41 | | |

Table 8
Variable Table of the Multiple Regression Analysis of Hypothesis 3

| Source | df | Parameter Estimate | t value | p value |
|-----------|----|--------------------|---------|---------|
| Pretest | 1 | .5119 | 4.157 | .01* |
| Portfolio | 1 | .9004 | 1.507 | .14 |
| Group | 1 | 4.6936 | .479 | .63 |
| Intercept | | 67.2125 | 2.104 | .04 |

* Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Even though there were no significant findings from the regression analysis that explored the relationship between the dependent variable (posttest) and the independent variables (portfolio evaluation score, pretest score and treatment group), a visual inspection of the Pearson Correlation Coefficients in Table 4 indicated a possible relationship within treatment groups. Further analyses were conducted on the variables within each treatment group because (a) there existed no correlation for the posttest and portfolio for the comparison group and the correlation coefficient for the experimental group was positive and (b) the relationship for the experimental group was so close to being significant ($p = .07$). In addition, the pretest correlation with posttest was different in the two groups.

A separate regression analysis was run for the comparison group and for the experimental group. This analysis examined the relationship between the posttest of final self-efficacy (dependent variable) and the pretest of initial self-efficacy and the portfolio evaluation score (independent variables). The model used to test the relationship among the pretest, posttest, and portfolio within the comparison group is significant. The model does explain about 54% of the variation in posttest scores, although pretest was the only significant variable. The results are presented in Tables 9 and 10.

A regression analysis was used to examine the relationship between the posttest of final self-efficacy (dependent variable) and the pretest of initial self-

Table 9
Source Table of the Multiple Regression Analysis of Hypothesis 3 by Treatment Group (Comparison Group)

| Source | r ² | df | F | p value |
|--------|----------------|----|--------|---------|
| Model | .5431 | 2 | 7.1330 | .01* |
| Error | | 12 | | |

Table 10
Variable Table of the Multiple Regression Analysis of Hypothesis 3 by Treatment Group (Comparison Group)

| Source | df | Parameter Estimate | t value | p value |
|-----------|----|--------------------|---------|---------|
| Portfolio | 1 | -.0759 | -.059 | .95 |
| Pretest | 1 | .7483 | 3.772 | .01* |
| Intercept | | 54.8746 | .948 | .36 |

* Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

efficacy and the portfolio evaluation score (independent variables) within the experimental group. The model used to test the relationship among the pretest, posttest, and portfolio within the experimental group is significant. The relationship between the portfolio and posttest is significant and explains about 21% of the variation in posttest scores. The results are presented in Tables 11 and 12.

Related Findings

Further analyses were conducted to answer questions related to the study, but not included in the hypotheses. The related questions addressed whether there were

Table 11
Source Table of the Multiple Regression Analysis of Hypothesis 3 by Treatment Group (Experimental Group)

| Source | r ² | df | F | p value |
|--------|----------------|----|-------|---------|
| Model | .212 | 2 | 3.614 | .04* |
| Error | | 27 | | |

Table 12
Variable Table of the Multiple Regression Analysis of Hypothesis 3 by Treatment Group (Experimental Group)

| Source | df | Parameter Estimate | t value | p value |
|-----------|----|--------------------|---------|---------|
| Portfolio | 1 | 1.2587 | 2.029 | .05* |
| Pretest | 1 | .2834 | 1.863 | .07 |
| Intercept | | 99.4973 | 2.802 | .01* |

* Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

differences on pretest scores, posttest scores, or portfolio scores due to gender, ethnicity, age, or grade level.

Gender

No significant differences were found between the female students and the male students on the pretest ($F = 1.2819$, $df = 1, 64$, $p = .26$). No significant differences occurred between the female and male students on the posttest ($F = .4045$, $df = 1, 64$, $p = .53$). Significant differences were found between the female students and the male students on the portfolio evaluation ($F = 4.9007$, $df = 1, 43$, $p = .03$) with females scoring higher. Table 13 lists

the means on the pretest, posttest, and portfolio by category including gender.

Table 13
Means on Pretest, Posttest, and Portfolio by Category

| Category | N | Pretest | Posttest | Portfolio |
|------------------|----|---------|----------|-----------|
| <u>Gender</u> | | | | |
| female | 17 | 175.3 | 200.8 | |
| male | 49 | 186.5 | 194.6 | |
| female | 14 | | | 38.0* |
| male | 31 | | | 32.7* |
| <u>Ethnicity</u> | | | | |
| minority | 23 | 188.4 | 187.4 | |
| white | 43 | 181.1 | 200.9 | |
| minority | 18 | | | 32.7 |
| white | 27 | | | 35.4 |
| <u>Age</u> | | | | |
| younger | 39 | 182.7 | 191.8 | |
| older | 27 | 185.0 | 202.5 | |
| younger | 25 | | | 33.5 |
| older | 20 | | | 35.4 |
| <u>Grade</u> | | | | |
| lower | 28 | 178.7 | 190.3 | |
| middle | 24 | 181.9 | 197.8 | |
| higher | 14 | 196.4 | 205.2 | |
| lower | 20 | | | 33.3 |
| middle | 16 | | | 34.1 |
| higher | 9 | | | 37.1 |

Note. The portfolio was completed by the 45 subjects in the experimental and comparison groups.

* Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Ethnicity

The minority populations (African-American and Hispanic) were grouped into one category for ethnicity comparison due to the small numbers of students in each

category. No significant differences were found between the minority students and the white students on the pretest ($F = .6437$, $df = 1, 64$, $p = .43$). No significant differences occurred between the minority students and the white students on the posttest ($F = 2.303$, $df = 1, 64$, $p = .1341$). Additionally, no significant differences were found between the minority students and the white students on the portfolio evaluation ($F = 1.345$, $df = 1, 43$, $p = .25$). Table 13 lists the means on the pretest, posttest, and portfolio by category including ethnicity.

Age

The students in the study ranged in age from 14 to 19 years of age. For comparison by age, the students were grouped into two categories. The categories are the younger students (ages 14, 15, and 16) and the older students (ages 17, 18, and 19). No significant differences were found between the younger students and the older students on the pretest ($F = .0719$, $df = 1, 64$, $p = .79$). No significant findings were indicated between the younger students and the older students on the posttest ($F = 1.549$, $df = 1, 64$, $p = .22$). Additionally, no significant differences were found between the younger students and the older students on the portfolio evaluation ($F = .6497$, 43 , $p = .42$). Table 13 lists the means on the pretest, posttest, and portfolio by category including age.

Grade

Since the study included students that ranged in grade from 8th grade to 12th grade, the students were grouped into three categories by grade for comparison. The three categories included the lower grades (8th and 9th), the middle grade (10th), and the higher grades (11th and 12th). No significant differences were found among the higher, middle, and lower grades of students on the pretest ($F = 1.229, 64, p = .30$). No significant differences occurred among the higher, middle, and lower grades of students on the posttest ($F = .8983, 64, p = .41$). Additionally, no significant differences were found among the higher, middle, and lower grades of students on the portfolio evaluation ($F = .7411, 43, p = .48$). Table 13 lists the means on the pretest, posttest, and portfolio by category including grade.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of teaching students with mild disabilities to develop their own personal transition portfolio on their self-efficacy of transition readiness. Additional questions addressed the difference between two methods of instruction in portfolio development and the possible relationship between the final evaluation score of the portfolio and the final self-efficacy of transition readiness.

Procedural methods were used to insure the reliability of the portfolio scoring and content validity. Interrater

reliability for the portfolio evaluation was .994. Additionally, all the panel members agreed that the portfolio guide correctly addressed the transition content areas.

The results of the statistical analyses to test the three hypotheses were reported. First, an analysis of variance was computed to test the first hypothesis that compared the difference in the final self-efficacy between experimental groups. For the second hypothesis, a t -test was used to investigate group differences in the final evaluation scores of the transition portfolios developed by the students in the experimental and comparison groups. Finally, a regression analysis was used to test the third hypothesis which addressed the relationship between the final evaluation score of the transition portfolios and the final self-efficacy score after controlling for initial self-efficacy. No significant differences between the experimental, comparison, and control groups were detected resulting in a failure to reject the null hypotheses. Further analysis of the data indicated a significant relationship within the experimental group between the posttest and the portfolio.

Related findings of further analyses were also discussed. Analysis of the pretest scores, posttest scores, and portfolio scores due to gender, ethnicity, age, and grade revealed a significant difference between the scores of males and females on the portfolio evaluation. The

educational implications of the results of this study are discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

A discussion of the findings of the present investigation and the implications for this study of the effect of student-developed transition portfolios on self-efficacy of transition readiness are presented in this chapter. A summary of the hypotheses is first. Second, theoretical implications of the research findings are discussed and feedback from students and staff are presented. Finally, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are described.

Summary of the Hypotheses

The general question of the study was as follows: Does teaching students with mild disabilities to develop their own personal transition portfolio affect their self-efficacy of transition readiness? Additional questions addressed the difference between two methods of instruction in portfolio development and the possible relationship between the final evaluation score of the portfolio and the final self-efficacy of transition readiness. The following null hypotheses were posited for testing at the .05 level of significance. Following each hypothesis is a brief description of the results.

Hypothesis 1

H₁: There will be no statistically significant difference between the initial and final self-efficacy of transition readiness among the three research groups (a) the experimental group (strategy instruction in developing personal transition portfolios), (b) the comparison group (presentation of general instructions in portfolio development), and (c) the control group.

No significant differences were found among the research groups between the initial self-efficacy and the final self-efficacy. This resulted in a failure to reject the null hypothesis. However, it should be noted that the performance on the posttest was significantly higher than performance on the pretest, for all groups, regardless of treatment.

Hypothesis 2

H₂: There will be no statistically significant difference in the final evaluation scores of the personal transition portfolios between the experimental group (strategy instruction in developing personal transition portfolios) and the comparison group (presentation of general instructions in portfolio development).

No significant difference was found between the experimental group and the comparison group on the final evaluation scores of the personal transition portfolios. This resulted in a failure to reject the null hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3

H₃: There will be no statistically significant relationship between the final evaluation score of the transition portfolio and the final self-efficacy of transition readiness after controlling for initial self-efficacy between the experimental group (strategy instruction in developing personal transition portfolios) and the comparison group (presentation of general instructions in portfolio development).

No significant difference was found between the final evaluation score of the portfolio and the final self-efficacy after controlling for initial self-efficacy. This resulted in a failure to reject the null hypothesis.

Theoretical Implications of the Research Findings

Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1977a) provided the theoretical basis for the present study. The theory was applied through the design of the Personal Transition Portfolio Guide and the implementation of instruction in transition portfolio development. Portfolios supplied the framework for teaching high school students with mild disabilities to develop and explore their own transition goals. Two methods of instruction were compared within the Personal Transition Portfolio framework. The first method of instruction included an attempt to provide the students with personal mastery experiences related to each of the five major areas of transition planning (i.e., employment, post-secondary education/training, community involvement,

independent living, and adult services). In the first method of instruction, students were required to initiate contact with community members to gather this information for their transition portfolios. The first method of instruction was compared with instruction in transition portfolio development where the students used traditional classroom activities and materials to gather the information for the transition portfolios without the community contact component. Implications of the data analysis are discussed in the following sections.

Hypothesis 1

Initial analysis of the data indicated that all groups (experimental, comparison, and control), regardless of treatment, made significant gains between the pretest and the posttest on self-efficacy of transition readiness. One possible explanation for the lack of treatment differences may be found within self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977a). While personal mastery or performance accomplishment is considered the most effective way to increase self-efficacy, it is one of four methods posited by Bandura. Vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal are the other three factors that can influence or change efficacy expectations and those three factors could have an even stronger impact with high school age students than with other age groups. It is quite plausible that students in the experimental group shared their excitement about successful interactions with potential employers in the

community with their friends and through this emotional arousal influenced the final self-efficacy scores of their peers.

Another explanation for the lack of treatment differences could be the historical or concurrent factors that are inherent in a high school environment. Examples of potential historical factors include the following.

(1) One of the roles of high school teachers is to prepare students for adulthood by addressing different components of transition (e.g., employment, post-secondary education or training, and independent living). High school teachers not included in the study, but who work at the schools involved in the study, could have given instruction in transition skills within their own classes. Examples include completing job applications and writing resumes in English classes or setting up budgets and balancing checking accounts in mathematics classes, in addition to the work-related curriculum designed for vocational programs.

(2) As the end of the school year approached increased emphasis at school and at home may have been placed on finding summer employment. In one district included in the study, a local agency representative invited the students in the varying exceptionalities classes to submit applications and subsequently held planning meetings for summer employment even as the study intervention was being implemented.

(3) Transition IEP meetings were held during the time frame of the intervention at several of the schools involved in the study. Even if the students in the study were not directly involved, they could have been influenced by the proceedings. The teachers scheduled meetings with students, parents, and other visitors about transition planning during school hours.

Any of the previously mentioned concurrent events could have negated differences between treatment groups. In addition, the length of the intervention (approximately 20 lessons) may have been too short to increase self-efficacy enough to reveal differences between treatments. This is supported by the findings of Wehmeyer and Lawrence (1995) who found significant differences in self-efficacy for educational planning in their study that spanned an entire school year.

Alone, or in conjunction with other factors, the pretest itself might have made the students aware of transition issues and could have influenced the students' perceptions of transition readiness. An example of the potential impact of the pretest follows. At the end of the Transition Planning Inventory (TPI), the pre/posttest, are the words "Additional Comments:" (Clark & Patton, in press. p. 4). One of the few comments made by students was written by a student in the control group. It said, "This is great!" This might imply an impact on the student's self-perception of transition readiness. Moreover, the emphasis

placed on the importance of returning the permission slips may have alerted the students inadvertently to the value of the self-efficacy measure (pretest/posttest) for both the teacher and the researcher.

There are two additional factors that could possibly explain the lack of significant differences on the posttest between treatment groups. One issue worth noting is that while all the students were not in transition classes, all the teachers in the study taught transition classes and addressed transition components. Given that both school districts involved in the study have strong transition programs, it is plausible that the students were exposed to transition concepts which could have influenced the outcomes of the study.

A second point pertains to the demographics of the control group. There were students with developmental disabilities in the experimental and comparison groups, but no students in the control group with developmental disabilities. This difference in the abilities of the students in the control group from the other two groups possibly could have influenced the posttest scores of that group. The students in the control group may not have needed as much direct instruction about transition. They may have a) been more sensitive to and aware of transition planning and issues, b) been influenced more strongly by the pretest, or c) benefitted more from the strong transition programs in their schools. But, on the other hand, without

the direct instruction, the students in the control group may have had a false sense of their abilities in transition areas.

Hypothesis 2

Further analysis of the data indicated no significant differences between treatment groups on the final evaluation score of the transition portfolio. However, there were significant differences between the females and the males on the final evaluation score. These differences are discussed at the end of this section.

One possible explanation for the lack of differences in treatment groups may be the range of abilities and motivational levels in the high school VE classes. One teacher who had students in both experimental and comparison groups in the study made the following statement about the portfolio development in both groups.

I felt that many of my kids took this portfolio very seriously. These portfolios were outstanding. Many of the kids, however, did not want to put forth the effort, missed too many days, did not want to call, or just did not care. These portfolios did not turn out well.

The lack of significant differences on portfolio evaluation between groups may relate directly to the amount of content, one of the concerns about portfolios described by Salvia and Ysseldyke (1995) and the increased curriculum demands inherent in portfolio development (Schumaker, Deshler, Alley, & Warner, 1983). Especially with the population in high school VE classes, it is difficult to ensure that each student generates a sufficient amount of

content. Unlike an assessment that could be completed within a short time frame or quickly made up, the portfolios were long-term projects. For some of the students in the study this may have been their first attempt to develop a portfolio. It is plausible that there would be a division in most classes where some of the students in each class would enjoy the portfolio project while others would prefer more traditional short term activities. As another teacher said about students in both treatment groups, "I can't make the others do their portfolios."

The findings of Schumaker et al. (1983) are consistent with this concept. Schumaker and her colleagues reported that adolescents with learning disabilities had more difficulty coping with the curriculum demands as the performance demands increased. These researchers included the following curriculum demands that relate directly to portfolio development (a) locating the answers to questions, (b) organizing materials, and (c) using their skills across situations and settings.

In addition, some students may have had difficulty relating to the more abstract concepts addressed in the portfolio. For example, in the introduction and overview the students were to write about "Who I Am". That exercise could be very challenging and may have been beyond the maturity level of some of the students in the study.

The students had different reactions to the portfolios. There were negative and positive student comments about the

portfolios regardless of treatment group. The final worksheet in the transition portfolio focused on reflection and evaluation of the portfolio and elicited student feedback about developing the transition portfolio. A sample of comments from students in the community contact group (the experimental group) follow.

What I liked about building a transition portfolio is--
"I liked talking to other people and meeting them."
"that it can help me out."
"I don't like it."
"it helped me set my goals early."

Building my transition portfolio helped me--
"learn that I ain't got to be shy or nothing."
"think about my future."
"do a little more work."
"realize what I want to do when I graduate."

What I did not like about building a transition portfolio is--
"We had to do it every week."
"nothing."
"the whole thing."
"I liked all of it, it was easy."

A sample of comments from students in the group without community contact (comparison group) follow.

What I liked about building a transition portfolio is--
"It's not what I like, it's what I love."
"It was fun to work on."

"learn more about my career."

"hardly nothing."

Building my transition portfolio helped me--

"to get good grades and keep up with my work."

"keep in order."

"learn how to look for a place to live."

"have more homework."

What I did not like about building a transition portfolio is--

"It's not fun."

"it took too long."

"writing so much."

"everything."

While organization and expression are important components of portfolio development, attendance and motivation may have been more vital to attaining a higher final evaluation score. Each teacher involved in the study commented on the number of students who were not in attendance either due to absences from school, in school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or expulsion. One teacher who had students in all three groups even suggested that transition portfolio development might be more effective in a class where there were enough students to support day to day continuity and discussions.

Another possible explanation for the lack of differences between treatment groups could be the need to include additional dimensions to evaluate student work

(Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1995). The portfolios included several dimensions for assessment (e.g., self-reflection, cooperation among learners, and demonstration of either community contact or classroom research to gather information about transition issues). Familiar short assessment tools (e.g., multiple choice or short answer quizzes) added to each unit potentially may help the students adjust to a long-term portfolio project and reveal differences between the treatment groups.

Another possible explanation for the lack of significant differences between treatment groups on the portfolio evaluation score may be related to the concept of portfolios. Stiggins (1994) reported that portfolios are an excellent format to gather diverse information about students that can include a number of assessment methods, but they are more appropriately a means of communication than an assessment tool.

The significant difference between males and females on the portfolio evaluation is interesting in light of the findings by Wehmeyer and Lawrence (1995). Wehmeyer and Lawrence found significant differences in self-efficacy of transition planning of high school students with disabilities who participated in a year-long, student-directed transition planning program. Wehmeyer and Lawrence did further analysis on their data by gender and found that the increases in self-efficacy were primarily with the female students. From a different perspective, Sitlington

and Frank (1993) found that young women with cognitive disabilities have less positive adult outcomes. If, as Wehmeyer and Lawrence proposed, adult outcomes is an empowerment issue, then the results of the present study in combination with the findings of Wehmeyer and Lawrence warrant further research into the relationship between gender, transition portfolio development, self-efficacy, and empowerment.

Hypothesis 3

Analysis of the data also indicated no significant differences between treatment groups when examining the relationship between the final evaluation score of the portfolio and the final self-efficacy after controlling for initial self-efficacy. A possible explanation for the lack of a significant relationship between the portfolio score and the final self-efficacy between treatment groups may be that regardless of whether the students in the study contacted community members or researched their transition questions using traditional classroom methods, the evaluation of the portfolios did not reveal the actual increases in students' transition readiness skills. Students could have completed the required transition activities without recording the results in a portfolio. The students may have increased their knowledge of transition skills from attendance during the teachers' presentations, participation in the activities, or class discussions. The students could have set goals, discussed

their goals with their parents or community members, identified the steps to achieve their goals, and learned about support services without recording any of the information in the actual portfolio. Ginsberg, Gerber, and Reiff (1994) and Spekman, Goldberg, and Herman (1992) identified the following factors as important to successful adults: (a) control of one's life, (b) goal setting, (c) step-by-step planning, and (d) use of support systems. Students in the study may have achieved many of these factors associated with successful adults with disabilities as they completed their assignments and participated in class without creating the portfolio. Regular attendance in class may have provided the opportunity for the students to reflect on their own strengths and identify their own transition goals without evincing this in their portfolios.

Another potential explanation for the lack of significant relationship between the treatment groups may be related to specific assessment. Pajares and Miller (1995) addressed the issue of specificity of assessment in their research into mathematics self-efficacy. While the self-efficacy measure for this study was specific to transition skills, the portfolio assessment of transition tasks may not have been specific enough. The predictive value of the portfolio could have been increased with a more appropriate match between specific transition skills and the opportunity for the students to demonstrate mastery of those skills. Developing a transition portfolio was a new experience for

most of the students in the study. Perhaps, if the students had been provided more traditional methods within the portfolio framework to demonstrate mastery of the transition objectives (e.g., a short answer quiz related to each unit) to themselves, their peers, and their teachers, there would have been a stronger relationship between the portfolio evaluations and the final self-efficacy scores.

Additional Results

While the hypotheses dealt with mean differences between groups, Bandura's self-efficacy theory would also suggest within group differences based on the relationships between initial self-efficacy (pretest score) and portfolio performance with the final self-efficacy (posttest score). That is, Bandura has argued that performance accomplishments will have a positive effect on self-efficacy. This effect was exhibited in the within group regressions where post self-efficacy was predicted from portfolio performance and pretest self-efficacy (see Tables 10 and 12).

In the comparison group, pretest self-efficacy remained the only significant predictor of post self-efficacy (note the correlation between pre and post self-efficacy was significant--Table 4--for the control and comparison groups only). On the other hand, the experimental group had more of an opportunity to exhibit Bandura's performance accomplishments with their interactions with the community. While most of these interactions were positive, the range of interactions would be expected to be more strongly related

to post self-efficacy than pre self-efficacy according to Bandura's theory. One can see this predicted relationship in the regression for the experimental group where the portfolios significantly effected post self-efficacy and pre self-efficacy did not. Thus, the group that was given the opportunity to exhibit performance accomplishments were able to base their views of their capabilities on real world performances rather than some possibly inaccurate view of capability (pretest) that was not based on knowledge or experience.

The lack of a mean increase in self-efficacy for the group with the personal accomplishments (i.e., experimental) may simply be a function of the fact that not all of the students had positive experiences. For example, one student expressed the following results from a call to a potential employer, "They thought I was crazy and that I would never get that job. So you can just forget it until you are about 23 years old."

Unfortunately, not all community contacts can be controlled so that all students receive positive feedback. That may be one of the most important reasons for students to make community contacts while they still have the support system of the school network. Not all contacts are going to be positive and students need to learn how to cope with real world disappointments. While they are still in the school environment, the students can be given the opportunity to discuss their experiences and receive support and

encouragement to persevere and try again. At any rate, these within group relationships give strong support for Bandura's self-efficacy theory and the importance of transition portfolios in giving students an accurate assessment of their capabilities and the opportunities available to them as they transition into the community.

Feedback From Students and Staff

Although the research findings did not result in rejection of the hypotheses, the feedback from all the teachers involved in the study was positive and generally supportive of the personal transition portfolio intervention. All of the teachers in the study stated they would use the Personal Transition Portfolio Guide again.

The comments of two of the teachers who had both experimental and comparison groups specifically targeted the younger students, the 9th and 10th grade students. One teacher said, "It has really helped the students understand their IEP meetings. The 9th and 10th graders have benefitted the most. It gave them a clear idea of their part and helped them see that they have choices. They realize, now, that transition is more than just signing a lot of papers." The second teacher stated she would begin the fall semester with transition portfolios for the incoming 9th graders.

The students also expressed opinions about the portfolios. One student in the comparison group stated, "It made me think about a lot of things that I would never have

thought of on my own." A student in the experimental group said, "At first it was scary to make the phone calls, but it got easier."

In addition to personal comments that the students and teachers made to the researcher, the teachers were requested to keep anecdotal notes when the students made comments to them about the portfolio. Comments from students in the comparison group follow.

"This stuff makes you really think."

"The regular kids need this, too."

"I thought I knew more about this."

"I really need to get on the ball."

"I never thought about this."

"Should we know all this stuff, now?"

"I'm not ready to leave home yet."

As stated by a teacher who had a comparison group, "Many of the students did not like all of the work involved." Not all of the comments were positive: "I'm tired of this, let's do it when I am in the 11th grade."

One teacher who had comparison and control groups commented, "I truly feel that the 'Transition Planning Curriculum' is vitally important not only to the ESE students, but also the regular kids; they can benefit from this information. I will certainly include this in my curriculum for the fall."

Another teacher who had students in experimental and comparison groups said, "I will use this transition

portfolio again. I liked the fact that the students actually had to put forth effort to find information instead of just looking in a textbook."

The comments from the students in both groups were similar. Some statements from students in the experimental group follow.

"This helped me see the whole world."

"I like taking time out for me."

"I can use this when I get older to look back on."

"This helped me keep myself in line."

"I don't like calling."

"It was too long."

"This helped me get ready for the real world."

Perhaps the most appreciated comment was, "Thank you for allowing my students and me to take part in your study."

Limitations to the Present Study

The limitations to this study relate to time constraints and specific assessment. The most problematic limitation was time: (a) the length of time of the intervention and (b) the time of year. The length of time for the portfolio development was approximately four weeks. Many students and some teachers indicated that they would have liked more time. While one teacher who had experimental and comparison groups stated that the timing of the lessons worked very well in her classes, the other teachers all said they wanted time to go into more depth in many of the class discussions. As two students in the

comparison group said, "I wish we had more time to work at this." and, "I feel rushed."

The second component of the time limitation pertains to the time of year and the "history" that is inherent in the spring in high schools. Even a student noted, "We should have been working on this since the beginning of the year." One teacher said, "Next year, I will probably do the portfolio with my new 9th graders in the 1st semester. The 9th grade class is an exploratory class and an introduction to transition."

There are many activities during the spring semester in high schools that emphasize an awareness of transition skills and preparation for independence and that may have influenced the results of the study. High schools are supposed to prepare students for adulthood and that issue is much more in awareness as the seniors prepare for graduation and many students look for summer employment. Some examples of concrete transition awareness activities that took place during the spring include (a) a local representative of a service agency recruiting students for summer employment during the research study and (b) transition IEP meetings being held.

The second limitation pertains to more specific assessment (Pajares & Miller, 1995) and the need to include additional dimensions to evaluate student work (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1995). While the portfolios contained a variety of assessment measures (e.g., self-reflection, feedback from

teachers and peers, and demonstration of information gathering) additional assessment tools (e.g., multiple choice or short answer quizzes) specific to the transition tasks added to each unit might have provided additional assessment dimensions.

Suggestions for Future Research

Instruction in transition readiness would certainly not be limited to the time constraints of this study. The effect of long-term instruction in transition portfolio development deserves further attention and further research into the longitudinal effects of transition portfolio development is warranted.

Additional research that addresses specificity of assessment is warranted. Modifications to the portfolio intervention that include additional measurement components as part of the portfolio would provide additional dimensions to the portfolio and add to the concept of the portfolio as part of a total assessment package.

Because school-to-work transition planning is gaining recognition for students in general education, additional research which investigates applications of the intervention in general education is warranted. Additional research could determine the effect of transition portfolio development on the self-efficacy of students in general education classes.

Family involvement is a recognized part of the transition planning process. Additional research that

investigates the parents' perceptions of student transition readiness is needed. The effect of transition portfolio development on the parents' perceptions of student transition readiness and the relationship between transition portfolios, student self-efficacy and parents' perception deserves further attention.

Because increasing numbers of students with disabilities are attending post-secondary education programs, additional research on the effects of transition portfolios on the self-efficacy of college students is warranted. Further investigation could determine a relationship between transition portfolio development and self-efficacy of students with mild disabilities in post-secondary education programs.

Summary

This study was conducted to examine the effect of a student-developed transition portfolio on student self-efficacy related to transition readiness. Results indicated that while there was no significant difference among treatment groups between the pretest and posttest of self-efficacy related to transition readiness all treatment groups made significant gains.

The results did not indicate a significant difference on the final evaluation score of a transition portfolio between two methods of instruction in portfolio development. Additionally, the results did not indicate a significant relationship between the final evaluation score of the

transition portfolio and the final self-efficacy of transition readiness between the treatment groups.

However, the results of further analyses did indicate a positive relationship for the students in the experimental group between portfolio development and self-efficacy of transition readiness. The significant difference in the final self-efficacy for all groups in the study and the positive relationship for the students in the experimental group indicates there was an influence on the high school students with mild disabilities that increased their self-efficacy of transition readiness between the pretest and the posttest.

These findings hold educational implications for instruction in transition-related areas. In the theory of self-efficacy, Bandura (1986) postulated that students' self-efficacy or judgments of their own abilities are important predictors of performance and motivation because their beliefs in their abilities influence their perseverance and effort. Teachers and others involved in the transition planning process should understand the potential to influence the self-efficacy of the students. Teachers should further understand that increases can be made in the perceived self-efficacy of high school students with mild disabilities within a relatively short time period (approximately four weeks).

While the results of the present investigation did not significantly support transition portfolio development as a

more effective method to increase self-efficacy, there was a relationship demonstrated between developing transition portfolios and self-efficacy for the method of instruction that involved student-initiated community contact. Therefore, the transition portfolio may still serve as an important tool in the overall transition curriculum package. Students, especially those in high school varying exceptionalities classrooms, can benefit from a variety of presentation and assessment techniques. The high degree of approval reported by the teachers who implemented the intervention and many of the students who took part in the study substantiates its potential to enhance existing transition curricula. One student said I can use this transition portfolio for "school, work, and my life." Ongoing research into methods to increase student participation in transition planning is essential to fulfill the intention of the IDEA legislation for transition services to be based on the dreams, interests, and desires of each student with a disability.

APPENDIX A
PARENTAL CONSENT FORM



Department of Special Education
College of Education

G315 Norman Hall
PO Box 117050
Gainesville, FL 32611-7050
(904) 392-0701
Fax: (904) 392-2655

Letter to Parents of Students in ESE Classes

March 7, 1996

Dear Parents,

My name is Elizabeth Gibbs and I am a graduate student in the Department of Special Education at the University of Florida. As part of my doctoral research I need to gather information on transition portfolios. I will need to examine student developed portfolios and administer one questionnaire on how ready the student feels for transition. I will administer the same questionnaire two times. I am asking your permission for your child's participation.

The purpose of the research is to evaluate a new way to help students learn transition planning. Transition planning is thinking about and preparing for life after high school. The teachers will introduce transition portfolios as part of their regular transition classes. As they develop a portfolio, the students think about what they want to do after they finish high school and find out information about how to do that.

Whether your child participates in this study or not will not affect his or her grade or status in the class. The questionnaires should take about 20 minutes each. Your child does not have to answer any question that he or she does not wish to answer. Students not participating in the study will spend that twenty minutes working independently in the classroom.

Your child's name will be kept confidential through recording data using a numerical coding system. You and your child have the right to withdraw permission for participation or for the use of the data at any time. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions at (352) 392-0701 extension 269. Any questions or concerns about the research participants' rights can be directed to the UFIRB, PO Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250.

Students who return the bottom of this form signed by a parent or guardian will receive a pencil or a homework pass.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Gibbs

Approved by the University of Florida Institutional Review Board for use through March 7, 1997.

I have read the procedure described above.

I agree to allow my child, _____, to participate in Elizabeth Gibbs' Personal Transition Portfolio study, and I have received a copy of this description.

I do not wish for my child, _____, to participate in Elizabeth Gibbs' Personal Transition Portfolio study, and I have received a copy of this description.

Parent or Guardian

2nd Parent / Witness

Date

Date

APPENDIX B
SUMMARY OF THE PERSONAL TRANSITION PORTFOLIO GUIDE

The Personal Transition Portfolio Guide (PTP-G) implements transition curriculum within a portfolio framework to give students the opportunity, support, and motivation to explore their dreams. The concept is to teach students how to explore options for themselves through community contacts and portfolio development. The portfolios provide the structure for students to develop responsibility and ownership for short- and long-term transition goals. Moreover, the completed Personal Transition Portfolio (PTP) can serve as a transition resource guide for future use.

Rationale

Bandura's (1977a) theory of self-efficacy provided the theoretical basis for the development of the PTP-G. Bandura postulated that self-efficacy can be changed and the most influential way to increase perceived self-efficacy is through performance accomplishments based on personal mastery experiences. The PTP-G focuses on strategy instruction in developing an action plan to identify, research, and explore transition goals. The purpose is to provide the students with personal mastery experiences related to each of the five major areas of transition planning (employment, post-secondary education/training, community involvement, independent living, and adult services). Implementation of the PTP-G encourages students to initiate contact with community members to gather information for their transition portfolios.

Contents

The PTP-G is designed as a teacher's manual and is divided into three phases. Phase one includes the introduction, overview, and pretest. Phase two presents the five units on the five major areas of transition planning. Phase three concludes the portfolios with the evaluation and posttest.

Within the PTP-G each lesson follows the same instructional sequence of four parts (a) advance organizer, (b) discussion of the task, (c) supervised practice, and (d) independent practice (adapted from Mercer & Miller, 1993; Van Reusen, Bos, Schumaker, & Deshler, 1994). A brief summary of the contents of the PTP-G follows.

Phase One

The introduction includes the definition of pertinent terms (e.g., transition, portfolios, transition portfolios, and self-efficacy) and provides the rationale with the benefit to the student, the family, and the teacher. Additionally, the introduction covers the student commitment, identification information, and goals matrix.

Phase Two

At the beginning of each unit, the PTP-G lists the goals and objectives and provides a list of suggested materials and activities. At the end of the unit are topics for reflection, additional group activities, discussion questions, and issues to consider. A checklist for each unit helps guide the students in organizing and implementing their self-reflection, self-assessment, peer review, and teacher feedback.

The students are required to (a) discuss their goals with their parents, (b) identify ways to locate information about jobs, education sites, volunteer sites, residential choices, and agencies, and (c) establish an action plan to research their own questions about their goals by contacting community members. The transition curriculum is intended to provide the students with the opportunity to discover and explore the larger concept of transition as it applies to each of them as individuals.

Phase Three

Phase three is the evaluation component. The students review and reflect on the transition issues as a whole concept. They list personal and transition goals again, in light of the information they learned developing the portfolio.

A page of the PTP-G follows to provide an example of the style of presentation. Many activities and outside sources are included in the guide. As one student said, "It made me think about a lot of things I never would have thought of on my own."



Lesson 2

Further Education/ Training

► Goals

1. To encourage students to identify further education/training of interest to them.
2. To promote students' ability to independently locate potential further education/training sites.
3. To acquaint the students with the process of making the initial contact with an administrator in the educational community.
4. To promote students' ability to identify requirements for admission.
5. To support students' exploration of educational opportunities in the community.

► Objectives

1. The students will identify three ways to locate further education/training sites they could attend.
2. The students will identify a potential school or apprenticeship opportunity and discuss it with a parent or guardian.
3. The students will contact two people at the school or apprenticeship/training site about the program and accommodations and find out the requirements for the admission.
4. The students will research three issues about the further education/training sites.
5. The students will reflect on their experiences of contacting school administrators in the community.

Materials

The following materials and activities can be used in this lesson.

Postsecondary Guide for Students

Generate a list of possible further education/training sites

Community college

Job Corps

College or University

Career Colleges

Vocational Training

Apprenticeships

Post-secondary guide

College and vocational training bulletins

Military booklets

Private school brochures

Vocational Rehabilitation

Collect classified ads from the newspaper

APPENDIX C
PERSONAL TRANSITION PORTFOLIO
OUTLINE OF TEACHER INSERVICE

To locate teachers and classrooms to participate in this study the researcher contacted the director of exceptional student education or transition in each of the three school districts. A copy of the Personal Transition Portfolio Guide (PTP-G) was then sent to each director and the teachers in each district that were identified by the directors.

After the teachers had received the PTP-G and agreed to be involved in the study the researcher met with each teacher. The personal transition portfolio inservice was either conducted on an individual basis or in small groups of two to three, usually by district. The inservice meetings closely followed the PTP-G and lasted approximately 75 to 90 minutes. An outline of the personal transition portfolio teacher inservice follows.

There were two copies of the PTP-G lesson plans, one for the experimental group and one for the comparison group. Each teacher had a separate set of lesson plans (PTP-G) for each group. For example if a teacher had two comparison groups and one experimental group that teacher had three sets of lesson plans. To further help differentiate the groups, the teachers' lesson plan books were colored coordinated with blue for experimental and gray for comparison. In addition, for any teacher who had more than one group working on PTPs the student portfolio notebooks were also color coordinated. Each student group had a different color and every student in the group had that same color. If a teacher had three groups of students completing PTPs, one group of students might have had green notebooks, the next group might have had blue notebooks, while the third group would all have had purple notebooks.

Three of the five teachers participating the study had students in more than one research group. The lessons plans follow the same format for the experimental group and the comparison group.

Personal Transition Portfolio Guide Inservice

- I. Introduction
 - A. Definition of Terms
 1. transition
 2. portfolios
 3. transition portfolios
 4. self-efficacy
 - B. Rationale
 1. benefit to student
 2. benefit to family
 3. benefit to teacher
- II. Contents of the PTP-G
 - A. Phase One
 1. introduction to the students
 - a. parent permission slips
 - b. student assent
 2. administration of pretest
 3. overview
 - a. student commitment
 - b. mission statement & "Who I Am"
 - c. goals matrix
 - d. student self-assessment (checklist of their accomplishments)
 - e. student reflection (thoughtful appraisal of self, work, and interactions)
 - f. peer review
 - g. teacher feedback
 - B. Phase Two
 1. transition areas
 - a. employment
 - b. education
 - c. community involvement
 - d. independent living
 - e. adult services
 2. basic requirements for each area
 - a. identify 3 ways to locate jobs, education sites, volunteer sites, residential choices, or agencies
 - b. identify a potential job, education site, volunteer site, residential choice, or agency
 - c. discuss that choice with your parent or guardian
 - d. research that choice
 - e. reflect on parent discussions
 - f. reflect on findings

THIS IS WHERE THE TWO RESEARCH GROUPS DIFFER!!

EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

3. contact two community members and interview them about the potential job, education site, volunteer site, residential choice, or agency
 - a. list three questions
 - b. list the answers from the interview

- c. In a situation where the student is determined to only research one potential job, education site, volunteer site, residential choice, or agency, the student may direct all the questions toward that one particular setting.

COMPARISON GROUP

- 3. identify two people (and their phone numbers) who know about the potential job, education site, volunteer site, residential choice, or agency, but research the desired information using the tradition classroom procedures and materials (e.g., newspapers, vocational information packets, texts, bulletins, newsletters, etc.)
 - a. list three questions
 - b. list the answers
 - c. In a situation where the student is determined to only research one potential job, education site, volunteer site, residential choice, or agency, the student may direct all the questions toward that one particular setting.

FOR THE REST OF THE PTP-G THE ACTIVITIES ARE THE SAME

- 4. classroom activities
 - a. practice telephone interviews
 - b. develop a telephone interview sheet
 - c. "Take Control of Your Time"
 - 1. worksheet for your time
 - 2. current schedule
 - 3. proposed schedule
 - d. "You Better Start Saving Now"
 - e. develop an agency brochure
- C. Phase Three
 - 1. list personal and transition goals
 - 2. reflect on goals matrix
 - 3. review portfolio
 - 4. reflect on portfolio
 - 5. student feedback form
 - 6. portfolio evaluation
 - 7. posttest (generalization)
- D. Instructional Sequence
 - 1. advance organizer
 - 2. discussion of the task
 - 3. supervised practice
 - 4. independent practice
 - a. self-assessment
 - b. reflection
- E. Questions or Concerns

APPENDIX D
LIST OF PANEL OF EXPERTS

1. Bill Parker A doctoral candidate in special education/transition
2. Cheryl Zeigert A doctoral student in special education/transition
3. Dollean Perkins A secondary ESE teacher, also a doctoral candidate in special education/transition
4. Beverly Thomas An ESE resource specialist also the facilitator for two district transition interagency councils
5. Ruthann Ross An ESE district administrator
6. Dr. Kristine Webb A professor of special education/transition

APPENDIX E
PORTFOLIO EVALUATION

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|----|
| Organization (15 points) | | | | | |
| logical presentation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| coordination throughout | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| coherence | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Content (20 points) | | | | | |
| requirements met | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| demonstrates communication | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| reflection | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| individuality | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Presentation (5 points) | | | | | |
| appearance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Overall Effect (10 points) | | | | | |
| impact on evaluator | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Elizabeth Herman Gibbs was born in Washington, DC, on June 4, 1953. Within two years her father completed his psychiatric residency in Washington and her family moved to Florida. Elizabeth grew up in Lakeland with her two older brothers. She was graduated from high school in 1971 and worked at Walt Disney World for one year before she attended Florida State University. She received her Associate of Arts degree in 1974 and her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1976 from Florida State University. She was graduated cum laude with a major in psychology and a minor in criminology and was invited to join Phi Beta Kappa.

After graduation, Elizabeth traveled around the United States and held a variety of jobs. When she returned to Lakeland she worked at Oscar Pope Elementary School as a Title One Math Tutor. At Oscar Pope, Elizabeth worked with students with learning disabilities, students with physical disabilities, students with emotional disabilities, and students in general education. She also took the sign language classes offered after school and began her master's program at the University of South Florida in Tampa. After the first term, Elizabeth went to school full-time and worked part-time as a graduate research assistant. In addition to her course work in the College of Social

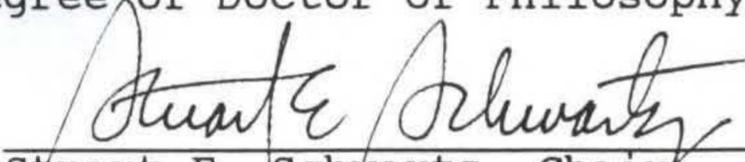
Sciences and the College of Education, she completed the certification requirements to teach students with hearing impairments. She accepted a position as an aural rehabilitation teacher at Van Buren Junior High School in Tampa, after she completed her internship there in social science education.

In 1982, Elizabeth married James Harrison Gibbs and in 1983 she was graduated with a master's degree from the University of South Florida. The next ten years were devoted to home and family. Jim and Elizabeth had a son and a daughter and managed their farm in western North Carolina. They moved to Gainesville, Florida, in 1989, so Jim and Elizabeth could continue their education.

In 1993, with both her children in school, Elizabeth began her doctoral program at the University of Florida. Her program included studies in transition and educational leadership as well as learning disabilities. As a graduate research assistant with the Florida Network in the Department of Special Education, Elizabeth had excellent support and numerous educational opportunities. Her experiences included (a) statewide research and analysis of transition programs and dropout prevention programs, (b) presentations at statewide educational inservices for teachers and parents and at international conferences, (c) publication of research findings, and (d) management of the Florida Network Resource Library. Additionally, Elizabeth completed an internship with the Director of Student

Services in Levy County, Florida, and attended an intensive workshop at the University of Kansas on including students with disabilities in secondary content areas. She served as a graduate teaching assistant, a supervisor of intern teachers, and two years as an editorial assistant for the journal, Teacher Education and Special Education. Elizabeth hopes to continue her work in the area of the empowerment of students with disabilities.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.


Stuart E. Schwartz, Chair
Professor of Special Education

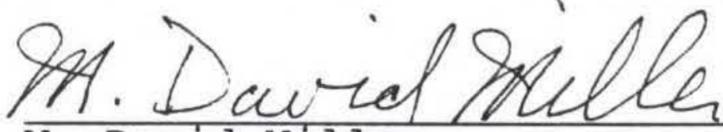
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Jeanne B. Repetto, Cochair
Assistant Professor of Special
Education

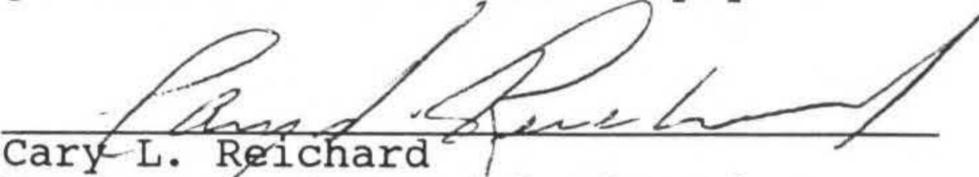
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Cecil D. Mercer
Professor of Special Education

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

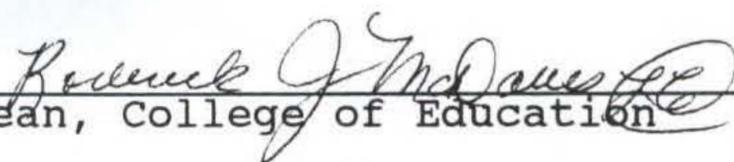

M. David Miller
Professor of Foundations of
Education

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.


Cary L. Reichard
Professor of Special Education

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the College of Education and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

August 1996



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