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THE USE OF
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A QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

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A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Tables (continued)

List of Figures

Abstract

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach to explore the relationship between the implementation of recommended transition education practices and perceptions of administrative support of transition education. Utilizing a web-based survey, I surveyed 120 secondary educators across Oklahoma to determine the extent to which they reported the use of the recommended transition education practices, the importance of the practices, and their perceptions of administrative support of transition education. Additionally, survey respondents indicated the importance of the transition practices and the administrative support behaviors. To further explore the relationship in-depth, I conducted interviews with seven teachers who completed the on-line survey, as well as with three special education administrators, to understand their experiences providing and supervising transition education.

Based on the results of completing the 1 to 6 Likert-type survey, teachers generally reported a high level of implementation of the transition education practices ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.81$) and an overall positive perception of administrative support ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.21$). Transition education practices related to the Individual Education Program meeting and documents received the highest ratings of implementation, while instructional practices received lower ratings of implementation. Teachers assigned the highest levels of importance to Family Involvement transition education practices and they also identified the top administrative support practices implemented as the most important practices.

Four areas of transition education practices—(a) Vocational/Employment Student Development, (b) Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Development, (c) Family Involvement, and (d) Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration had a small

significant correlation with the overall administrative support mean. Additionally, I utilized hierarchical cluster analysis to identify three transition education practices groups implementing practices at different levels—a higher level, moderate level, and lower level—and ANOVA showed statistically significant ($F(2,117) = 8.993$, $p < .001$) mean differences in perceptions of administrative support across the transition education groups. The post hoc power at .97 was strong and the effect size medium to large (partial $\eta^2 = .13$) (Green & Salkind, 2008). Tuckey's post hoc comparisons revealed a statistically significant difference between the means of the Higher-TEP group with the Moderate-TEP group ($p = .003$) 95% CI [0.2315,1.3848] and Lower-TEP group ($p < .001$) 95% CI [0.3664,1.6220].

Finally, the qualitative data revealed three themes: (1) Competing priorities: Balancing individual needs of secondary students with disabilities; (2) Partnerships: Collaborating to increase opportunities for transition education; and (3) Communication: Recognizing success, planning, and capacity building. Both special education teachers and administrators identified administrative support for instruction from the special education administrator, with teachers providing the ideas and drive for the program, while school site administrators provided building and management support, such as space and release time for training.

Self-reported data and the selective group of participants limit the generalization of the results, but provide an initial understanding of the recommended transition practices implemented and viewed as important by teachers. Additionally, these results provide a start to understanding how to assist administrators to provide the needed supports to educators in order to enable their use of recommended transition education practices.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The revisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESAE) emphasize "career and college readiness" as the goal for the reauthorization of the bill, aimed at improving educational outcomes for all of the nation's children attending public schools (U. S. Department of Education, 2010). Early follow-up research identified poor postschool outcomes for young adults with disabilities (Benz & Halpern, 1986; Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Edgar, 1987; Haring & Lovett, 1990; Hasazi, Gordon & Roe, 1985; Hasazi, Johnson, Hasazi, Gordon & Hull, 1989; Mithaug, Horiuchi & Fanning, 1985; Sitlington & Frank, 1993). Current research indicates that while outcomes for students with disabilities are improving, continued difficulties with school completion, employment, and postsecondary education affect the postschool success of young adults with disabilities (Dunn, Chambers & Rabren, 2004; Goldberg, Higgins, Raskind, & Herman, 2003; Newman, Wagner, Cameto, and Knokey, 2009; Wagner, Newman, Cameto & Levine, 2005).

The National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS-2) reported an increase in students with disabilities receiving a diploma or a certificate of completion from 53.5% in 1987 to 70.3% in 2003, however, specific groups of students with disabilities continued to graduate at rates significantly lower than the general population (Wagner et al., 2005). Another area of concern is the high dropout rate of students with disabilities, which remained higher than the general population rates. The NLTS-2 data indicated that in 2003, 29.7% of students with disabilities did not finish high school, and more recently, Planty et al. (2008) reported 26.2% of students with disabilities

between the ages of 14-21 years dropped out of school in 2006. Stillwell (2009) identified dropout for all public school students as 4.4% based on data reported in the Common Core of Data from the U. S. Department of Education for the 2005-2006 academic year.

Furthermore, studies indicated the number of students with disabilities attending postsecondary education programs continued to significantly fall behind peers without disabilities (Chambers, Rabren & Dunn, 2009; Curtis, Rabren, & Reilly, 2009; Newman et al., 2009). Curtis et al. (2009) found only 27% of students with disabilities in one southern state had attended some postsecondary education one year after leaving school. Newman et al. (2009) noted postsecondary enrollment differences between students with and without disabilities up to five years after completing high school and found that students without disabilities enrolled in four-year programs at almost four times the rate of students with disabilities. Finally, Newman et al. (2009) found only 57% of young adults with disabilities were employed when they participated in the interviews for the NLTS-2 data collection, compared with 66% of youth without disabilities. While the postschool outcome data support that students with disabilities are making slow progress toward better outcomes, overall, they continue to lag behind non-disabled peers completing high school "career and college ready."

Subsequently, the literature and results of current research suggest providing transition education and services improves the postschool outcomes of students with disabilities (Benz, Lindstrom & Yovanoff , 2000; Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Gerber, Ginsberg, & Reiff,1992; Goldberg et al., 2003; Halpern, Yovanoff, Doren & Benz, 1995; Newman et al., 2009; Rabren, Dunn & Chambers 2002). Kohler (1996) identified transition education best practices from the research and developed the *Taxonomy for*

Transition Programming, which includes five areas: student-focused planning, student development, interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration, family involvement, and program structure and attributes. To support the use of research-based transition education practices, the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) conducted an extensive literature review and identified 25 evidence-based practices and 16 in-school predictors (Test, Fowler et al., 2009; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009). Yet, even as researchers begin to identify evidence-based predictors and practices in transition education, the extent of implementation of the recommended transition education practices remains unclear in the literature.

One practice substantiated in the literature is the importance of the school administrator's role in supporting teacher utilization of effective instruction strategies related to improved student outcomes (Hallinger, Bickman & Davis, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003, Witziers, Bosker & Kruger, 2003). The research findings suggest that principal leadership impacts student achievement indirectly and the effects are mediated through their positive influence on improving teachers' instruction and behaviors (Hallinger et al., 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Robinson et al., 2008; Waters et al., 2003). Leithwood and Mascall (2008) found teacher behavior is influenced by their perceptions of the supports available for instruction and workloads. With the current focus on educational reform, academic achievement, and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), school leaders must be knowledgeable regarding students with disabilities, their unique instructional needs, and how to effectively support the implementation of effective instructional practices (Burello, Schrup & Barnett, 1992; DiPaola, Tschannen-

Moran & Walther-Thomas, 2004; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Lashley, 2007).

In order to support improved outcomes for students with disabilities, principal leadership must focus beyond academic accountability and recognize the importance of supporting community-based instruction, vocational/employment training, and opportunities for social development (Burello et al., 1992; Lashley, 2007). School leaders' limited knowledge about transition education and self determination (Wakeman, Browder, Flowers, & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2006), an emphasis of instruction on state standards, and school or district policies and structures interfere with teachers' ability to provide transition services and may contribute to teacher perceptions that transition education is viewed as unimportant (Eisenman & Chamberlin, 2001; Lubbers, Repetto, & McGorray, 2008). Klingner, Ahwee, Pilonieta, and Menendez (2003) explored teachers' continued implementation of evidence-based instructional practices following intensive professional development paired with extended, facilitated support. They found that teachers who continued to implement research-based practices at high levels cited "administrative support" as a primary facilitator of their continued use of the practices. Similarly, Hasazi, Furney, and Destefano (1999) conducted a cross-case analysis of five model transition school sites that uniquely sustained the provision of quality transition education policies and practices, and four other schools sites they characterized as typical secondary schools. Hasazi et al. (1999) described "a visionary, supportive, and inclusive form of leadership" (p. 558) as one of six factors common to the model sites enabling their continued implementation of supportive policies and practices. A key component to the continued success of effective transition instruction is the long-term support of an administrator (Benz, Lindstrom, Unruh, & Waintrup, 2004), yet the policies, structures, skills, and knowledge needed to provide effective

leadership supporting the provision of transition education remains unclear.

In conclusion, researchers are beginning to identify the evidence-based transition education practices and predictors influencing outcomes of students with disabilities. However, the extent to which those practices are implemented in secondary programs is unclear at this time. The literature suggests that teachers' perceptions of administrative support influence their use of recommended practices. Yet, while "administrative support" appears in the research as an important component of providing transition education, and teachers' perception of the lack of administrative support is identified as a barrier, a clear understanding of administrative support—educator perceptions of what is important—is lacking in relation to transition education and services. Therefore, a measure of educators' use of recommended transition education practices and an understanding of the relationship between their perceptions of "administrative support" and the implementation of recommended transition education practices is needed.

Purpose of the Study

This dissertation study explored the use of recommended transition education practices in Oklahoma high schools and sought to understand teachers' and special education administrators' perceptions of administrative support for implementing transition education.

Research Questions

The primary research question for this study is: How do special education teachers and special education administrators perceive administrative support in relation to teachers' use of recommended transition education practices and the provision of transition education and services?

The sub-questions are:

1. How do special education teachers in the high schools across Oklahoma report the implementation of recommended transition education practices? (QUANT)
    a. What levels of practice do the teachers report?
    b. What practices do teachers consider important?
2. How do special education teachers in the high schools across Oklahoma perceive administrative support of transition education? (QUANT)
    a. What supports do teachers perceive they currently receive?
    b. What supports do teachers consider important?
3. What are the relationships between the reported implementation of recommended transition education practices and special education teachers' perceptions of "administrative support?" (QUANT→Qual)
4. How do secondary special education teachers and special education administrators describe their experiences providing transition education and administrative support of transition education? (Quant→QUAL)
    a. How are their descriptions different?
    b. How are their descriptions similar?

Theoretical Perspective

In order to understand the relationship between teachers' perceptions of administrative support and the implementation of recommended transition education practices, I began with the perspective that leadership matters in education; that the practices implemented by teachers, the programmatic structures required to provide

effective instruction, and the outcomes of students are associated with effective leadership. To explain this perspective, a review of educational leadership theories ensues and culminates with a description of the educational leadership theoretical model that guides this exploratory study of leadership or "administrative support" and the provision of transition education practices. My discussion of early leadership theory development primarily relies on the writings of Hoy and Miskel (2008), and then incorporates more of the current educational leadership literature to specifically discuss educational leadership theory as well as the theoretical model that guided this study.

Educational leadership theory development. Educational leadership theories and constructs developed from multiple disciplines including sociology, psychology, philosophy, and organizational management theories (Bush, 2003; Davies, 2009). This includes organizational theory that developed with the industrialization of the United States in the early 1900's (Bush, 2003). As leadership theories evolved through continued research, Hoy and Miskel (2008) describe a relative consensus that "leadership involves a social influence process in which an individual exerts intentional influence over others to structure activities and relationships in a group or organization" (p. 453).

Trait-based leadership theory. Following a historical development of leadership theories, Hoy and Miskel (2008) first reviewed the belief in personal traits distinguishing effective leaders, and then described the move toward skills-based theories that purport learning and acquisition of effective leadership skills. To encompass the numerous concepts that emerged from their literature review, Hoy and Miskel (2008) proposed three categories they characterized as associated with leadership effectiveness. They suggested two trait-based categories, personality and

motivation, and included a third category containing a cluster of the skills aligned with effective leadership based on their review of the literature.

Hoy and Miskel (2008) discussed the early trait-based leadership theories to identify inherited traits differentiating leaders from non-leaders, or the idea of the "born-leader." They explained that current trait theory leadership investigations now examine the traits distinguishing effective leaders within specific contexts versus trying to predict the ability of a person to lead. Within the two traits-based categories they proposed—personality and motivation—Hoy and Miskel included the personality traits of "self-confidence, stress tolerance, emotional maturity, integrity, and extroversion" and the motivation traits "task and interpersonal needs, achievement orientation, power needs, expectations, and self-efficacy" (p. 424). The third group Hoy and Miskel included in their characteristics of effective leadership comprised the skills needed to effectively do the job. They again noted the abundance of skills required of education leaders and included technical skills, interpersonal skills, and conceptual skills as the three main categories within their leadership skills group. Hoy and Miskel advocated that leadership skills can be learned, and while traits are more engrained, they too can be recognized and enhanced to better understand strengths and weaknesses to further improve leadership effectiveness.

Recognition of context. Studies conducted following the traits-based theory phase of leadership research began in earnest to examine the relationship between effective leadership and the situations or contexts of the leader, possibly in response to the pronounced traits-based phase (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). With the recognition of the relevance of situation and its relationship to leader effectiveness, Hoy and Miskel described a dramatic move in leadership research toward examining effective leadership

based on situational factors—"structural properties of the organization, role characteristics, subordinate characteristics, internal environment, and external environment" (p.428). Hoy and Miskel acknowledged this phase of leadership theory research provided evidence of the context serving as an influence on effective leadership.

Of primary importance was the identification of the impact of context during changes in leadership due to the disruption and disturbance of the environment that can occur with leader turnover. However, Hoy and Miskel explained that limited empirical evidence contributed to this phase of educational leadership theory development, and stressed the meaningful interaction between situational and personal factors, both enabling and hampering effective leadership, stating, "to restrict the study of leadership to either traits or situations, therefore, is unduly narrow and counterproductive" (p. 429).

Behavior-based leadership theory. Hoy and Miskel described the early studies investigating leader behavior, primarily they cite the information that emerged from the leader behavior description questionnaire (LBDQ) developed by John K. Hemphill and Alvin Coons (1950) and revised by Andrew Halpin and B. Winer (1952). The LBDQ utilized descriptive ratings from the members of a group to indicate the occurrence of leader behaviors, and measured two constructs "initiating structure" and "consideration" (Halpin, 1957). Halpin describes these two constructs:

> Initiating Structure refers to the leader's behavior in delineating the relationship between himself and the members of his group, and in endeavoring to establish well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communication, and ways of getting the job done. Consideration refers to behavior indicative of friendship, mutual trust, respect, and warmth in relationship between the leader and

members of the group. (p. 1)

A more recent proposal by Yukl, Gordon, and Taber (2002) posited three "metacategories" composed of 12 specific leadership behaviors identified through empirical research and cross-referenced with prior leadership behavior measures for construct validity. Yukl et al. (2002) validated the taxonomy through confirmatory factor analysis, and categorized the leadership behaviors into one group representing task oriented behaviors, another for change behaviors, and the third for relations behaviors. Further, they cautioned that the taxonomy provides behaviors that have demonstrated effectiveness, but are not applicable to every leadership context. Hoy and Miskel (2008) emphasized the importance of not "concluding that the same style of leader behavior is optimal across all situations" (p. 430).

Contingency-based leadership theory. Finally, Hoy and Miskel (2008) highlighted the contribution of contingency models theories. These models, according to Hoy and Miskel, incorporated the previous aspects of prior leadership theories acknowledging traits and skills of leaders, situational effects, and leader behaviors. Additionally, they noted the contingency theory-based models included a measure of leader effectiveness described by Hoy and Miskel as "personal, organizational, and individual" indicators of effectiveness as part of the contingency models of leadership. A leadership model specific to educational leadership, Hoy and Miskel described instructional leadership as a contingency theory-based leadership model focused on "improvement of teaching and learning in the school's technical core" (p. 433).

While researchers acknowledge new frames for modern instructional leadership (Marks & Printy, 2003), early models of instructional leadership typically resembled the top-down, hierarchical structure seen in formal leadership models. Elmore (2000)

suggested large districts and schools adopted bureaucratic management structures, based on scientific management principals, structured to operate in the most efficient, cost-effective and output-based manner. Under these historical models, the role of the principal became more administrative and grounded in "management" principals (Bush, 2003; Elmore, 2000; Hallinger, 1992). Hallinger (1992) described the perception that early formal leadership models pulled principals out of the classroom and placed them in the role of an "administrative manager" (p. 1). This fostered concerns regarding their ability to provide direct instructional leadership in the schools. Amid reports of concerns about the outcomes of public schooling (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) and a renewed focused on achievement, numerous federally funded special programs and curricular reforms dominated policy toward the end of the 1980's, which resulted in an influx of funding to support research on instructional leadership (Hallinger, 1992). Early implementation of instructional leadership models required principals to utilize a task-oriented approach with direct, consistent involvement in the classroom, assisting teachers with improving instruction. This early model of instructional leadership reinforced the idea of the principal as the only leader in the school, solely responsible for directing, monitoring, and improving instruction, a type of "hero leader" (Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; Portin, Schneider, DeArmond & Gundlach, 2003; Robinson et al., 2008). However, the literature suggests instructional leadership theory continues evolving as a complex educational leadership model (Hallinger, 2005; Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Marks & Printy, 2003).

Distributed and transformational leadership. Two leadership theory models advancing in the literature are distributed leadership and transformational leadership. Literature discussing transformative and distributed leadership effects on student

outcomes abounds (Leithwood et al., 2004; Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Hallinger & Heck, 2009; Marks & Printy, 2003; Robinson et al., 2008) and an expanded discussion on the research procedures and findings is presented in Chapter Two.

Hoy and Miskel (2008) describe distributed leadership as a model embracing the sharing of leadership tasks across the members of an organization. Hallinger and Heck (2009), in their examination of distributed leadership in the school environment, explained their use of the terms "collaborative, shared, and distributive leadership interchangeably to refer to leadership that is exercised by the principal along with key staff members of the school" (p. 4). The literature advocating distributed leadership models maintains that the demands of the principalship far exceed the abilities of only one person and that prior images of the principal as the "hero leader" are unrealistic and not attainable (Gronn, 2009; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). Transformational leaders, as described by Leithwood and Jantzi (2009) engage as leaders by setting directions through clear goals, a sense of purpose, and vision; developing the people in the school through modeling and support; and redesigning the organization to sustain performance and build culture.

Hoy and Miskel (2008) depicted transformational leaders as "proactive, raise the awareness levels of followers about inspirational collective interests, and help followers achieve unusually high performance outcomes" (p. 446). They described the extensive amount of literature emerging on transformational leadership and its relationship to teacher practices and student achievement. Current debates over the effects of leadership on the outcomes of students seem to include the two models listed above—transformational and distributed—in comparison to instructional leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2009; Marks & Printy, 2003; Portin et al., 2003;

Robinson et al., 2008). In recognition of research results supporting instructional leadership effects on student achievement and the role of shared leadership described in the literature, Marks and Printy (2003) "reconceptualized" instructional leadership to include a shared model of instructional leadership paired with transformational leadership. They examined the relationship between school performance and shared instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and the use of both types of leadership. They found that schools engaged in "integrated leadership" (p. 392)—shared instructional leadership and transformational leadership—had teachers who demonstrated high levels of quality instruction and students obtaining high levels of achievement on authentic assessment measures.

Bolman and Deal (2008) suggested that leaders must approach leadership from different perspectives, considering different sources of problems, consequences of actions, and multiple solutions, by operating through different frames. Representative of a similar theoretical framework, some researchers proposed the integration of transformational and instructional leadership models or a type of hybrid leadership (Gronn, 2009; Hallinger, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003). Gronn (2009) explained that in expressing his support of distributed leadership, he perpetuated educational leadership models based on adjectives. Gronn explained hybrid leadership not as another type of leadership, but instead as based on the assumption that effective leadership will at times require different degrees of individual leadership and shared leadership. Leithwood et al. (2004) suggested "that we need to be skeptical about the 'leadership by adjective' literature" (p. 6) and notes that the labels may distract from the "two essential objectives critical to any organization's effectiveness: helping the organization set a defensible set of directions and influencing members to move in those directions" (p. 6).

Leadership model foundation. Previously, Leithwood et al. (2004) identified four core practices of successful school leaders and supported these practices with recent research (Seashore Louis, Leithwood Wahlstrom, & Anderson (2010):

1. **Setting directions**: building a shared vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals, creating high performance expectations and communicating direction (p. 68)
2. **Developing people**: providing individualized support and consideration, offering intellectual stimulation, and modeling appropriate values and practices (p. 68)
3. **Redesigning the organization**: building collaborative cultures, restructuring the organization to support collaboration, building productive relationships with families and communities, and connecting the school to the wider community, (p.68) and
4. **Managing the Instructional Program**: staffing the program, providing instructional support, monitoring school activity, buffering staff from distractions to their work, and aligning resources. (p. 69)

In their latest research, Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) affirmed more confidence in their statement "Of all the factors that contribute to what students learn at school, present evidence led us to conclude that leadership is second in strength only to classroom instruction" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 70), based on their comprehensive study spanning six years with data from nine states, 43 school districts, and 180 schools. Seashore Louis et al. (2010) noted that these skills seem to apply across contexts, and while not emphasized daily by principals, are applied in combination based on the leaders' sensitivity to the context. The theoretical leadership foundation for this study is framed by the core leadership practices identified by Seashore Louis et al. (2010) in their leadership model, and guides the exploration of special education teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the role of administrative support and the implementation of special education transition education and services.

Significance of the Study

While researchers begin to identify empirical evidence-based transition

education practices influencing outcomes of students with disabilities, the level of implementation of the practices in secondary programs is unclear at this time (Kohler, 1996; Test, Fowler et al., 2009). Furthermore, descriptions in the literature suggest that teachers' perceptions of administrative support may affect their use of recommended practices (Eisenman & Chamberlin, 2001; Klingner et al., 2003). However, exploration into the relationship between the implementation of recommended transition education practices and perceptions of administrative support of transition education are lacking in the literature. The exploration of this relationship serves as the foundation for this study.

This study addressed a primary research question—How do special education teachers and special education administrators perceive administrative support in relation to teachers' use of recommended transition education practices and the provision of transition education and services?—and four sub-questions: (a) How do special education teachers in the high schools across Oklahoma report the implementation of recommended transition education practices? (b) How do special education teachers in the high schools across Oklahoma perceive administrative support of transition education? (c) What are the relationships between the reported implementation of recommended transition education practices and special education teachers' perceptions of "administrative support?" and (d) How do secondary special education teachers and special education administrators describe their experiences providing transition education and administrative support of transition education?

While professional literature in transition education and services begins to identify research-based recommended transition practices known to improve postschool outcomes of students, researchers suggest the need to examine the implementation of the identified practices in transition programs (Test, Fowler et al., 2009; Test, Mazzotti

et al., 2009). The insight gained through exploring special education teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the transition education practices currently implemented and the importance they ascribe to specific practices may contribute to designing targeted professional development for teachers and administrators. Specifically, understanding the relationship between the reported implementation frequency of the practices and the importance noted may suggest the need to enhance dissemination of emerging research results identifying effective transition education practices to increase educators' awareness of the practices and the relation to improved postsecondary outcomes of students with disabilities. Additionally, exploring the experiences of the teachers and administrators may identify barriers they perceive inhibit the provision of quality transition education, the policies and practices contributing to these barriers, and methods to address the concerns.

In reviewing the transition education literature, no quantitative studies were located that investigated the relationship between the implementation of transition education practices and special educators' perceptions of administrative support. The qualitative literature described administrative support as both facilitative of and a barrier to the provision of transition education and services, however, the descriptions used general terms, or simply referred to "administrative support" of transition education. Therefore, this study utilized a mixed method approach to explore the relationship, collecting quantitative data to compare reported frequency of implementation to perceived levels of administrative support, and qualitative data to understand the shared experiences of special education teachers and administrators who provide transition education services. The use of both forms of data may provide different, unique results, as well as a richer, more in-depth understanding of the

relationship.

This study quantitatively and qualitatively examined the relationship between the implementation of recommended transition education practices with a basis in current literature and special education teachers' and administrators' perceptions of administrative support. First, I conducted statistical analyses between variables describing special educators' perceptions on two factors, degrees of administrative supports received and the implementation of recommended transition education practices. Next, I completed a phenomenological analysis to understand the experiences of special education teachers and administrators implementing transition education and the role of administrative support. This study was undertaken to expand the literature base by exploring reported implementation of the recommended transition education practices, the importance ascribed to those practices, and perceptions of administrative support that may play a role in the provision of transition education to students with disabilities. This insight may suggest practices helpful to educational administrators for providing leadership in support of teachers' efforts to utilize effective transition education practices to improve postschool outcomes of students with disabilities.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This study examined the relationship between special educators' perceptions of administrative support and the implementation of transition education practices identified in the literature that contribute to successful outcomes of students with disabilities. Therefore, to inform this study, I reflected on the historical and current postschool outcomes of students with disabilities, and then, framed within Kohler's Transition Taxonomy (Kohler, 1996), reviewed the relationship between secondary transition education practices and the postschool outcomes of students with disabilities described in the literature. Next, I considered the effects of educational leadership on student achievement, the suggested skills required for effective leadership of special education programs, and reviewed the relationship between educational leadership or administrative support and the provision of transition education and services.

Historical Outcomes For Students With Disabilities

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (PL 89-10) and the State Schools Act (PL 89-313) began the support of publicly funded education for children with disabilities by providing limited special funding to state operated schools for a small group of children with disabilities in 1966 (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996). However, most students with disabilities were not served in public school until, following two landmark court cases in 1971 and 1972, the passage of PL 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), in 1975 (Editorial Projects in Education Research, 2008). With this Act, the federal government endorsed a free, appropriate public education and an individualized education program for children with disabilities (Rossow & Stefkovich, 2005) and it remains one of the most significant

pieces of legislation affecting the education of students with disabilities (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1988). PL 94-142 not only guaranteed a free, appropriate public education for all students with disabilities in the United States, it granted to children with disabilities and their parents specific protections of educational rights, while providing assistance to states to meet the individual educational needs of children with disabilities. This legislation required states to make every effort to identify children with disabilities, to conduct confidential, non-discriminatory assessments to determine the presence of a disability with the consent of the child's parent, and upheld the right to impartial due process to resolve disputes. States were required to provide a free education outlined in a written individualized education program (IEP) with long- and short-term goals (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1988). With this Act, career and vocational objectives or goals contained in the IEP provided targeted outcomes for students with disabilities (Flexor, Baer, Luft & Simmons, 2008). However, as children with disabilities gained the right to receive a public education, rising concerns about the effectiveness of public education and the outcomes for all students developed.

Identifying concerns about educational outcomes. In April 1983, a report to the Nation and the U. S. Secretary of Education by the Commission on Excellence in Education titled, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* made suggestions for large scale changes to improve the quality of education in the United States for all students. The Commission, assembled to address the Secretary's concerns about "the widespread public perception that something is seriously remiss in our educational system" (p. 5) concluded "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people" (p. 5). The Commission suggested that the decline in U. S.

schooling if enacted by a hostile foreign government would be seen as an act of war (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). In this report, the Commission suggested schools establish high standards and discontinue accepting the norm of minimum requirements, while recognizing the diversity of student abilities, backgrounds, and personal goals. They emphasized "a common expectation: We must demand the best effort and performance from all students, whether they are gifted or less able, affluent or disadvantaged, whether destined for college, the farm, or industry" (p. 123), recognizing that all students need the skills to support employment or participation in postsecondary education.

Early postschool outcomes of students with disabilities. In 1983, along with the EHA amendments, Madeline Will, with the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, issued a document that described the OSERS policies and a model of transition describing the goal of employment for students with disabilities as the outcome of transition services (Will, 1983). At that time, Will reported U.S. Census statistics indicating 50 to 80 percent of adults with disabilities remained unemployed and stressed the need for initiatives to evaluate transition programs based on results. During this time period, key research emerged supporting the need to develop adequate methods of evaluating outcomes, evaluating the effectiveness of programs, and improving outcomes for students with disabilities (Edgar, 1987; Hasazi et al., 1985; Mithaug et al., 1985). These studies found low full-time employment rates, lower wages, and the importance of family and friends in finding employment (Hasazi et al., 1985; Mithaug et al., 1985). Mithaug et al. (1985) also noted the young adults they surveyed identified the importance developing social and independent living skills to aid in employment.

Mithaug, Horiuchi, and Fanning (1985) conducted one of the seminal follow-up studies of students with disabilities and noted that prior follow-up studies primarily focused on students with mental retardation (90% of the studies) and reflected smaller scale sampling and participation. Mithaug et al. interviewed 234 graduates with disabilities who graduated from schools in Colorado in 1978 and 1979. They concluded that overall the graduates with disabilities reported a positive view of life after high school (64%) with improved overall employment rates compared to prior studies, and with limited use of government subsidies. However, the adults with disabilities reported limited interactions in the community, limited financial independence, and marginal earnings, with 64% living with parents. Mithaug et al. also noted that while 82% of the graduates reported employment at one point following graduation, only 69% worked at the time of the interview, having held an average of three jobs since graduation. Finally, only 32% of those graduates worked full time.

Hasazi, Gordon, and Roe (1985) specifically examined employment outcomes of students with disabilities in Vermont through record reviews of 459 students and interviews with 301 students who graduated, dropped or left high school in 1979 through 1983. Hasazi et al. found the young adults with disabilities in Vermont demonstrated even lower levels of employment with only 55% in paid employment, while 64% resided with parents or guardians, similar to the Mithaug et al. findings in Colorado. Edgar (1987) noted comparable results when surveying 1,292 students with disabilities who left school during 1976 to 1981 in the state of Washington. Edgar reported 60% of the graduates with mild disabilities participating in employment, 75% holding a job at some point since graduation, with only 18% earning more than minimum wage.

Haring and Lovett (1990) examined the outcomes of 129 students with disabilities from a metropolitan area of a southwestern state. The students graduated between 1983 and 1985, following at least three years of instruction in self-contained special education classrooms in an integrated school. Haring and Lovett found 64% of the sample employed, with 59% of the students with learning disabilities employed compared to only 10% of the students with mild intellectual disabilities. These students worked an average of 27.5 hours a week, earning an average of $85, reflecting the limited successful employment experiences found by Mithaug et al. (1985). A little more than half of the students (52%) remained in the same job over the course of the year, while 27% engaged in postsecondary training. Haring and Lovett (1990) reported that 70% of the students continued to live with parents, guardians or relatives. Reflecting on the outcomes, Haring and Lovett (1990) questioned the expectation of successful postschool outcomes in the absence of community-based services and supports, given the intensive, individualized, and supported education the students required while in public school.

In the state of Iowa, Sitlington and Frank (1993) followed up with students with learning disabilities one year and three years after the students left high school in 1985. In comparing the results from the survey of students at year one and at year three, Sitlington and Frank found significant positive changes in the outcome data over the three year period. However, only 46% of the students with learning disabilities participated in some type of postsecondary education three years out of high school and only 51% obtained health insurance. Finally, Hasazi et al. (1989) followed up their study of outcomes for students with disabilities by comparing results to students without disabilities. They surveyed 133 young adults exiting high schools in Vermont, 67 with

disabilities and 66 without disabilities, who graduated in 1986 or 1987. Based on the results of Hasazi et al. (1989), students with disabilities continued to show lower rates of graduation, higher rates of dropout, and lower rates of employment than peers without disabilities.

The amendments to the EHA in 1986 extended the funding for the programs and included research grants examining outcomes for students with disabilities who dropped out of school (Sitlington, Neubert, & Clark, 2010). During this time period, rates of dropout emerged as another disproportionate outcome for students with disabilities and a critical factor influencing the postschool success of students with disabilities (Edgar, 1987; Rusch & Phelps, 1987). Kranstover, Thurlow, and Bruiniks (1989) suggested dropout in one midwestern school district substantially affected employment rates of 239 students eligible for special education services that exited school between 1977 and 1984. Kranstover et al. found that 20% of the students did not graduate and only 67.5% of these dropouts worked, while 81.4% of the graduates obtained employment. Expressing concern over the outcomes represented in the research, Edgar (1987) suggested that schools had failed to improve the outcomes of students with mild disabilities.

Educational restructuring and a national focus on outcomes. With the recognition that public education was not producing the outcomes intended for students with and without disabilities (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Will, 1983; Will, 1986) the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Madeline Will, put forth a proposal of a merger or partnership between general and special education (Will, 1986). Then in 1990, following Will's proposal for a general and special education merger, the EHA was amended, included a

name change to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act PL 101-476 (IDEA), and emphasized the focus on educating children with disabilities in general education classrooms within their neighborhood school, attending to one of the barriers identified by Will (1986).

The largest longitudinal study of student postschool outcomes mandated by OSEP, the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) began collecting data on students who received special education services in secondary school in 1985 and who were 13 to 21 years old. Blackorby and Wagner (1996) examined the outcomes for a subgroup of the NLTS sample, consisting of 1,990 students who had left school through 1987. Data collection occurred two times, in 1987 and again in 1990, with some of the students out of school for only a few months while others had been out for up to five years. The results supported prior studies on outcomes for students with disabilities, with 46% of the students employed two years after school and 56.8 % employed three to five years after high school (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). Only 14% of the students with disabilities interviewed attended postsecondary education programs within two years of high school, which increased to 27% three to five years after high school. Few students with disabilities lived independently two years after high school (11%) and at three to five years after school, 37% lived independently. Blackorby and Wagner (1996) further identified the significance of dropout rates for student with disabilities, as they found only 60% of the students who started high school completed; 30% dropped out, and 8% of those students dropped out before eighth grade.

Current Postschool Outcomes of Students with Disabilities

The IDEA was again reauthorized in 1997 as PL 105-17 and included a change in the age at which the IEP addressed transition services, making it a requirement at age

14 and emphasized that the statement address the child's "course of study," including academic or vocational programs (Sitlington et al., 2010). As well, the new law required students with disabilities participate in district and state assessments with modifications and accommodations, have goals and benchmarks linked to general education standards, and encouraged schools to educate students with disabilities in general education (Sitlington et al., 2010). Even further, IDEA 1997 contained a requirement of participation by the general education teacher in IEP meetings and regular reports of progress toward goals in the IEP to parents (Sitlington et al., 2010). With the passage of IDEA 1997, the special education laws began to mirror the general education laws, moving toward a focus on accountability and outcomes for all students.

Educational accountability and outcomes of students with disabilities. The No Child Left Behind Act-PL 107-110 (NCLB) of 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act-PL 108-446 (IDEA) of 2004 brought accountability and outcomes to the forefront of general and special education. NCLB extended the ESEA through 2007 and with a focus on "four key principles-stronger accountability for results; greater flexibility for states, school districts and schools in the use of federal funds; more choices for parents of children from disadvantaged backgrounds; and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been demonstrated to work" (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 9).

Incidentally, some of the provisions included in IDEA 2004 intended to align it with NCLB and extend accountability for special education services and programs. These provisions also included changes to transition services, required data collection, and reporting on outcomes of students with disabilities (Sitlington et al., 2010; U. S. Department of Education, 2007). IDEA 2004 suggested "providing effective transition

services to promote successful post-school employment or education is an important measure of accountability for children with disabilities" (20 U.S.C. §1400(c)(14)). The law goes further to describe transition services as:

> a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. (20 U.S.C. §1401(d)(34)(A))

IDEA 2004 mandated reporting for State Education Agencies (SEA) with State Performance Plans (SPP) and Annual Performance Reports (APR) to monitor implementation of the law. Specifically, IDEA 2004 requires "focused monitoring" and emphasizes "improving educational results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities; and ensuring that States meet the program requirements under this part with a particular emphasis on those requirements that are most closely related to improving educational results for children with disabilities" (20 U.S.C. §1416(a)(2)(A,B)). Based on these requirements, each state submitted a State Performance Plan (SPP) with clear measurable "targets" to assess implementation of IDEA requirements and describe improvements made over a six year time period. The SPP is based on baseline data over 20 indicators for Part B of IDEA, the part of the law that provides special education services to children and youth ages 3 – 21 years, and 14 indicators for Part C services provided to infants and toddlers with disabilities from birth to age 2. In conjunction with the SPP, states are required to submit to the U. S.

Secretary of Education the Annual Performance Report (APR) describing the progress made toward the SPP targets. In response to the APR, the Secretary then issues a "determination letter" that reports on the progress the state has made toward implementing the requirements of IDEA 2004 (U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, n.d.).

Reporting current outcomes of student with disabilities. One source of data generated to measure the outcomes of secondary students with disabilities and to monitor implementation of Part B in IDEA 2004 are four of the indicators in the APR report submitted to Congress by the U. S. Department of Education. The four indicators specifically monitoring outcomes for secondary students with disabilities and transition services are: Indicator 1: Graduation; Indicator 2: Dropout Rates; Indicator 13: Secondary Transition; and Indicator 14: Post-School Outcomes. States must provide data collected over these indicators to examine the outcomes for secondary students with disabilities, set targets for improvement, and identify areas not met and potential barriers (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, n.d.).

Another significant source of postsecondary outcomes data is the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS-2), a 10-year study through the U.S. Department of Education with the Institute of Education Science and the National Center for Special Education Research. This study incorporated data from a national sample of 13 to 16 year old youth who received special education services during 7th grade or above in the year 2000 (Newman et al., 2009). The post-high school outcomes report by Newman et al. (2009) included a subset of 2,670 students, ages 17 to 21, no longer in high school in 2005, and up to five years post high school, who participated in telephone interviews, mail surveys, or parent interviews if the student did not respond.

The revisions to the EHA and the implementation of the NCLB requirements, including an emphasis on accountability and effective teaching practices, leads one to question the impact of the changes on the outcomes of students with disabilities. A brief examination of the data generated in response to the three indicators described, the results reported by the states, as well as results reported in the literature provides a discussion of current post-high school outcomes for secondary students with disabilities.

Graduation rates. Current comparisons of graduation rates of students across districts and states is difficult and allows for limited generalization due to the multiple definitions of graduation, the different graduation requirements, and the various types of diplomas awarded by states and districts (National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities, 2008; Johnson, Thurlow & Stout, 2007). APR uses three different methods to calculate graduation rates; an event rate; a leaver method; or a cohort method. The NDPC-SD suggests that the graduation rates may be over-represented by event rates—a "single-year snapshot" (p. 2), and recommends using the cohort method for calculating graduation rates as a "more realistic description of the number of students who progressed through four years of high school and graduated" (p. 3), which is the method recommended by the NCES, the National Governors Association (Achieve, 2009), and Editorial Projects in Education Research Center (EPERC, 2008).

The event rate is the percentage of students who graduated meeting the individual state criteria for graduation. This is a one time picture of the particular year and ignores attrition over time so tends to over-represent graduation. The leaver method is the percentage of students with an IEP who received a regular diploma in the reporting year. This rate accounts for students with an IEP who graduated and met the

requirements for a regular diploma as defined by the individual states in the reporting year. The definitions and inclusions as far as obtaining a diploma vary from state to state. Finally, the cohort method includes the percentage of students with IEPs who entered as 9th graders and graduated with a regular diploma in four years, which is reported to be a "more realistic description." (National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities, 2008)

The data for Indicator 1 evaluated by NDPC-SD indicates for states using the cohort method for tracking rates of graduation (20 states, 33%) ranged from 0% to 100% graduation rate for students with disabilities in the 2006-2007 school year. However, caution at interpreting both of these extreme scores is recommended by the authors, as both of these extremes reflect data affected by low graduation eligibility. The distribution of percentages varied with two states over 80%, nine states between 70% and 79%, four states between 60% and 69%, three states between 49% and 55%, and one state at 0% (National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities, 2008). According to the NDPC-SD, 25 (42%) of the states attained the goal graduation rate in 2007.

Current data from the NLTS-2 reported an increase in students with disabilities receiving a diploma or a certificate of completion from 53.5% in 1987 to 70.3% in 2003 (Wagner et al., 2005). Graduation rates for students with learning disabilities (74%), intellectual disabilities (71.8%), and emotional disturbances (55.8%) showed the largest growth in school completion, showing statistically significant increase over the cohort in 1987. However, students with emotional disturbance (55.8%), other health impairments (58.6%), and multiple disabilities (50.8%) continued to graduate at rates significantly lower than the general population (Wagner et al., 2005).

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data (CCD) collects data by states reporting in the U. S. Department of Education. Reviewing the NCES-CCD, Planty et al. (2008) reported that in 2006 just over half (56.5%) of students 14 to 21 years with disabilities graduated with a regular high school diploma and another 15.3% received a certificate of completion. Total student graduation rates for the general population reported by the states in 2007 ranged from 41% for Nevada to 83.3% for New Jersey, an average of 68.8% according to EPERC (2010). The NCES (Stillwell, 2009) reports the average freshman graduation rate of 73.9% for the class of 2007, with Vermont reporting 88.6% and Nevada at 52%.

Dropout rates. The National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) also analyzed the data related to Indicator 2, which requires that states report "Percent of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school" (p. 1). Again, as with reporting graduation rates, inconsistency in the definitions of dropout—such as the inclusive ages, grades, dates of collection, and participation in a General Education Development (GED) program—confounds the comparison of data across and within states (NDPC-SD). Further, for most states the collection of dropout data occurs on December 1st, while others collect at different times during the school year.

The calculation for dropout rates reported also varied across three different methods: event rate, leaver rate, or true cohort rate (NDPC-SD). The NDPC-SD noted generally, the events rate produced the lowest rates, the cohort method indicated higher rates, and the leaver calculations showed the highest dropout rates. The NDPC-SD reports that 25 states (42%) met the goal set in the SPP while 34 (57%) states did not meet their target and that low enrollment or eligibility to graduate affects the extreme scores. Students with disabilities dropping out reported by four states using the cohort

method in the NDPC-SD report were 0%, 10.6%, 13.9% and 15.7% in 2006-2007. The states using the event rate ranged from 0.9% to 27.7%. Two states reported rates in the 20% range, five ranged from 10% to 19%, while 40 states reported dropout rates below 10%.

In *The Condition of Education,* Planty et al (2008) reported 26.2% of students with disabilities between the ages of 14-21 years dropped out of school. These students included dropouts, runaways, GED recipients, expulsions, unknowns and other exits, while excluding maximum age reached, moved, continued in education, died, received a diploma or certificate. This event rate includes students with disabilities between 14 and 21 years who enrolled during the 2007-08 school year, but did not complete school and are not enrolled in school at the end of the year. Similarly, the NLTS-2 data indicated that in 2003, 29.7% of students with disabilities had not finished high school, a large reduction from 46% in 1987 (Wagner et al., 2005).

Stillwell (2009) reported rates from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics and found that the national average event dropout rate for the general population of students in grades 9 -12 for the 2006-07 school year was 4.4%. The NCES event dropout rates include students who are not enrolled in school and have not earned a HS diploma, GED or other certificate. This rate reflects state level data indicative of students enrolled in school during a given year, but not successfully completing within that year.

Postschool outcomes and indicator 14. The National Post-School Outcomes Center (NPSO) analyzed the data collected, reporting the requirements of Indicator 14 that requires states to collect data and report the "Percent of youth who had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), are no longer in secondary school and who have

been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school" (20 USC §1416(a)(3)(B)). This indicator changed in 2010, but the information reported in the APR for FFY 2007 reflects the indicator described above. States submitted the first data collection for Indicator 14 in the 2006 SPP to establish baselines and set targets, and then reported target data in the 2007 APR for students leaving school in the 2006-2007 school year.

The NPSO used the term "engagement" to collectively refer to students competitively employed, enrolled in postsecondary programs, or both (p. 125). OSEP recommended, but did not require the states to use the Vocational Rehabilitation Act (VRA) definition to define competitive employment which included full or part-time work, integrated, paid at least at minimum or customary wage, and with the same level of benefits for similar employment as persons without disabilities. The report also required states to define postsecondary school by type, full or part-time enrollment, and requirements of full-time enrollment (National Post-School Outcomes Center, 2009).

The NPSO found that data reported demonstrated "potential problems" in "representing the population of all students who left school" (p. 131). They found states had large discrepancies in response rates (14% to 94%), did not always provide information regarding the relationship of the sample to the population, and did not provide actual numbers. In fact, NPSO using criteria they established to examine representativeness, found only 4 states met the reporting criteria in all four categories examined—disability, gender, race/ethnicity, and exit status.

According to the combined measure of "engagement" described above, the median rate was 78.26% ranging from 48% to 93.3%, with 35 (58%) of the states meeting the targeted goals and 24 (40%) not meeting the "engagement" targets (Part B

SPP/APR 2009 Analyses, FY 2007-08). Newman et al (2009) reported that the advisory board for the NLTS-2 endorsed the view of measuring "productively engaged in the community" (p. xvi), and using this global construct, reported that 85% of the 17-21 year old youths with disabilities surveyed in 2005 were "engaged" by being involved in education, employment, or training for employment.

With the changes in the indicator, states will not report information in February 2010, and will be required to submit baseline data in 2011 (Falls & Unruh, 2010). Also, the new indicator requires that states report three percentages (a) enrolled in higher education; (b) enrolled in higher education or competitively employed; and (c) enrolled in higher education or some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed or in some other employment (p. 1). While the data reported in the APR analysis continues to be developed to accurately reflect the postschool outcomes, a review of other sources of data found in the current research provides further insight into the postschool outcomes of students with disabilities in regards to postsecondary enrollment, employment, and independent living.

Postsecondary education enrollment rates. Most studies indicate the numbers of students with disabilities attending postsecondary education programs continued to significantly fall behind peers without disabilities (Chambers et al., 2009; Curtis et al., 2009; Newman et al., 2009). Newman et al. (2009) in examining data from the NLTS-2, found that 45% of students with disabilities attended postsecondary programs compared to 53% of students without disabilities. At the time of the NLTS-2 interview, students without disabilities enrolled in four-year programs at almost four times the rate of students with disabilities (29% and 8%). Curtis et al (2009) found that 27% of students with disabilities in one southern state had attended some postsecondary education one

year after leaving school. Students with intellectual disabilities demonstrated the lowest enrollment rates (4.6%) followed by students with emotional disabilities (5.5%) (Newman et al., 2009). Almost 35% of students with learning disabilities attended a two-year or community college program, while only approximately 20% of students with emotional disturbances or intellectual disabilities attended (Newman et al., 2009). Overall, students with disabilities tended to enroll in two-year colleges at a much higher rate than four-year college programs (Curtis et al., 2009; Newman et al., 2009). Newman et al. (2009) found 31.9% of students enrolled in two-year programs, while Curtis et al (2009) found 13% of students with disabilities in one state study enrolled in two-year programs one year after finishing high school.

However, some studies indicate improvements in enrollment at post secondary institutions by students with learning disabilities. Seo, Abbott, and Hawkins (2008) conducted a longitudinal study with the Seattle Social Development project and looked at data collected through a self-report from 60 persons with and without learning disabilities (LD). Collection of data occurred annually from grades 5 through 10, then again at grade 12, and every three years after high school at ages 21 and 24. A unique factor of the study by Seo et al. (2008) is the consistency inherent in a group from a single district who have all been identified for special education eligibility following the same criteria and educated based on the same district standards versus national studies sampling a variety of school districts with numerous methods of identification, and at various age levels. While students with LD attended school at lower rates then peers without LD at age 21, Seo et al. (2008) found significance only when comparing full-time enrollment to no enrollment, and no significant difference between these groups when examining part-time or no enrollment in postsecondary education. Newman et al.

(2009) found 47.3% of students with LD attend some type of postsecondary program up to five years after leaving high school.

Employment rates. At the time of interview, Newman et al. (2009) found 72% of the youth with disabilities had been employed at some point after exiting high school. These reflect increases in employment rates overall, yet 58.6% youth with disabilities were employed full-time for an average for 10 months, while non-disabled peers had significantly longer job consistency rate with 66.4% holding full-time jobs for an average of 15 months (Newman et al., 2009). In examining the postschool outcomes data collected in one southern state, Curtis, Rabren, and Reilly (2009) reported only 67% of the 1879 youth with disabilities who left high school between 2003 and 2006 had jobs, while Rabren, Dunn, and Chambers (2002), examining data generated within the same collection system for students between 1996 and 2000, found 87% of the students with disabilities working one year after high school. Newman et al. (2009) noted no significant difference in pay rates or benefits overall.

However, some data indicated an improvement of employment rates of students with learning disabilities. The longitudinal study conducted by Seo, Abbott, and Hawkins (2008) with the Seattle Social Development project found no significant differences in the employment, hours worked, or the income earned between adults with LD and their peers without LD at age 21 or 24, up to six years after leaving high school. Newman et al. (2009) found that youth with learning disabilities had the highest employment rate (77.2%) when compared with other disability categories.

While Chambers et al. (2009) also did not find significant differences in employment outcomes between students with disabilities and students without disabilities upon their leaving school or up to one year later, they cautioned that

longitudinal outcomes must be considered to fully understand the comparisons over time. Additionally, one barrier noted to employment of young persons with disabilities was transportation (Chambers et al., 2009; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003). Chambers et al. noted that few states addressed transportation as a part of the state capacity-building plan when considering areas on which to focus.

Independent living rates. Examining data from the Alabama Post-School Transition Survey, Chambers et al. (2009) reported that students with and without disabilities exiting high school in 2001 typically remained in dependent living situations. Newman et al. (2009) found similar results for the rates of living independently, reporting that 25% of the students with disabilities lived independently at four years after high school and 28% of the general population of youth did so. Yet, Chambers et al. noted the young people with disabilities expressed different goals for independent living when compared to the group without disabilities. The young adults with disabilities did not express a firm desire to move away from the dependent living situation, where the youth without disabilities indicated a goal of obtaining different living arrangements. Newman et al. (2009) noted that in their national sample of students with disabilities, approximately 32% of the young adults who lived independently, semi-independently, or as parents themselves also received public assistance at some time after high school, suggesting even when living independently, youth with disabilities continue to require financial assistance. In fact, when comparing rates of obtaining checking accounts and credit cards, financial independence for students with disabilities remained lower than peers without disabilities (Newman et al., 2009).

In summary, when *A Nation At Risk (1983)* reported our education system had

"lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling and the high expectations and disciplined efforts needed to attain them" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) p. 112), the country responded designing standards, implementing assessments, monitoring school performance and expecting all students to be provided the education needed to meet the standards. A review of postsecondary outcome data in the literature and in various state and federal government reports used for monitoring the implementation of IDEA suggests students with disabilities are slowly gaining in some areas (Chambers et al., 2009; Curtis et al., 2009; Newman et al., 2009; Seo et al., 2008). While clarity is needed around definitions and reporting of postsecondary school outcomes for students with disabilities to ensure comparability, the current monitoring requirements of IDEA 2004 and NCLB show changes as the post high school outcomes of all students, including students with disabilities, have become the focus of our nation.

Students with disabilities are graduating at increased rates according to the recent data reported in the Part B SPP/APR 2008 and 2009 Indicator Analyses, the Common Core of Data from the National Center of Education Statistics, and the Ideadata.org. This is supported in the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 in the data they collected from interviews of students with disabilities and their caregivers in 2003 (Wagner et al., 2005). Data indicate students with disabilities experienced improved postschool outcomes with increased employment and enrollment in postsecondary education programs (Chambers et al., 2009; Curtis et al., 2009; Newman et al., 2009; Seo et al., 2008). However, even with the gains in employment and postsecondary education enrollment, students with disabilities continue to lag behind peers without disabilities (Newman et al., 2009; Wagner et al., 2005), suggesting a continued need to examine educational practices that effectively support outcomes for

all groups of students. Additionally, though definitions and calculations make direct comparisons difficult, the overall pattern indicates students with disabilities continued to drop out at rates much higher than their non-disabled peers (Planty et al., 2008; Wagner et al., 2005).

Currently, 21 states require students to complete a "college and career ready" standards-based curriculum (Achieve, 2009) and eight more states plan to adopt these standards suggested by the American Diploma Now Project, 2010, an organization including state governors, leaders in education, and corporations. This organization proposes "college and career ready" expectations and suggest that higher standards without "opt out provisions" (p. 13) will allow students traditionally excluded to have access to education that will enable them to succeed after high school. They also emphasize the need for an accountability system able to monitor student progress and college and career readiness with the ability to link to postsecondary programs to adjust and improve instruction. The U. S. Department of Education's *A Blueprint for Reform, The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (2010)*, emphasizes that all students, regardless of disability, graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills ready for college and a career. Yet, the question of how to enable secondary schools to provide a rigorous "college and career" readiness curriculum focused on the common core standards that provides appropriate educational opportunities for all students and meets the individual needs of students with disabilities to successfully transition into postschool environments still remains.

Transition Education, Predictors, and Recommended Practices

The revisions of the EHA provided some guidance for the provision of transition education, and began a more mandated approach to providing the services. Madeline

Will, with the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) proposed one of the early models of transition in 1983 in conjunction with the EHA amendments. Will issued a document that described the OSERS policies and a model of transition education targeting the goal of employment for students with disabilities as the outcome of transition services (Will, 1983). The 1983 amendments to the EHA, provided OSERS with $6.6 million per year to fund grants improving transition of students with disabilities, which included funding the development of model transition programs and establishing the Secondary Transition Intervention Effectiveness Institute (Rusch & Phelps, 1987). Halpern (1985) recommended further expansion of the transition model proposed by OSERS to include "living successfully in one's community" (p. 480) as the outcome of transition education. He included employment, as well as "social and interpersonal networks" and "residential environment" (p. 481) in his model of outcomes for students with disabilities, which he based on a statewide survey undertaken to look at transition outcomes in the state of Oregon and to suggest future policies for improving services (Benz & Halpern, 1986; Halpern, 1985).

Several events, including the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) PL 101-336 that outlawed discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, the emergence of studies supporting the relationship between transition education and improved outcomes for students with disabilities, and the limited numbers of available skilled adult workers promoted a renewed focus on transition education (Kochar-Bryant & Greene, 2009). In 1990, the EHA amendment included a name change to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, PL 101-476 (IDEA), mandated the provision of transition services including a "statement of needed transition services" in the IEP by age 16, and defined transition as "A coordinated set of

activities for a student, designed within an outcome oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities" (20 U.S.C. §1401(a)(19)). At the same time, the law required consideration of students' interests, preferences and needs, involving students in transition planning, and supporting the developing understanding of self-determination as part of the education of students with disabilities (Sitlington et al., 2010). Additionally, this amendment required districts and schools to develop agreements with agencies available to continue support of the student and family after high school (Kochar-Bryant & Greene, 2009). The IDEA was again reauthorized in 1997 as PL 105-17 and emphasized the need to address the child's "course of study," including academic or vocational programs (Sitlington et al., 2010), again, accentuating the connections between the student goals and preferences and the courses and services provided to enable the student to reach those goals.

Then, with reauthorization in 2004, IDEA described transition services as "a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to postschool activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation" (20 U.S.C. §1401(d)(34)(A)). With this revision in the law governing the education of children with disabilities, the "results-oriented" focus of transition services, including outside agencies written into the IEP document, emphasized the intent of the law to move the student into independent living, postsecondary education, and employment (Kochar-Bryant & Greene, 2009).

Transition education and postsecondary outcomes. As the changes in law shifted the focus to outcomes, researchers began to recognize the need to identify the practices contributing to improved post-school outcomes. Transition education literature identified the need for empirical research and identification of practices linked to improved outcomes for students with disabilities (Kohler, 1993). I reviewed a select variety of transition education studies identifying practices and predictors to understand the emerging variables and the impact of these variables on the outcomes of students with disabilities.

Transition education predictor studies. As part of a three-year follow-up study in Oregon and Nevada, and a replication of the study in Arizona as a two-year follow-up, Halpern, Yovanoff, Doren, and Benz (1995) found that students participating in "relevant transition planning" (p. 163) significantly increased the likelihood of enrollment in postsecondary education programs. Beginning with students in the last year of high school, then one-year post, Halpern et al. (1995) utilized five instruments to conduct interviews with 987 students. The researchers conducted interviews with students, teachers, and parents generating in-school data, and students and parents to generate postschool data. Utilizing multivariate logistic regression, Halpern et al. (1995) found six factors predicting postsecondary program enrollment of the students—functional achievement attainment, successful completion of relevant instruction, transition planning participation, parent and student satisfaction with the instruction delivered, and a perception of the parent that the student with a disability no longer required assistance. Halpern et al. applied a more liberal definition of postsecondary enrollment; however, these findings support the importance of transition planning,

providing relevant instruction to assist movement toward student postsecondary goals, and the involvement of the student and parent in the program.

Focusing on state collected transition data, Rabren, Dunn, and Chambers (2002) reviewed the postschool outcomes data for 1,393 former students with disabilities in Alabama. Utilizing hierarchical logistic regression, they identified three models for predicting postschool employment. In one model, they found that students employed at the time of high school graduation were five times more likely to continue being employed up to one year later. Other factors contributed to predicting employment status, such as attending a school in a rural area, ethnicity, gender, disability, and whether a student graduated with a diploma or certificate. Rabren et al. (2002) noted that odds of post school employment presented more favorably for students who did not have intellectual disabilities, who were male, attended schools in urban areas, and who had jobs when exiting high school.

Mixed methods transition education studies. While Halpern et al. (1995) examined postsecondary enrollment of students recently out of high school, Goldberg, Higgins, Raskind, and Herman (2003) and Raskind, Goldberg, Higgins, and Herman (1999) utilized a qualitative and quantitative approach in their longitudinal studies that followed prior students of the Frostig Center in California. The researchers utilized a quantitative and a qualitative follow-up study occurring at 20 years after leaving the program, to understand the changes and the factors contributing to the outcomes of these adults with disabilities. First, with 41 participants with learning disabilities who attended the center from 1958 until 1965, Raskind et al. (1999) conducted a follow-up study 10 years after the students exited the school to identify "success attributes (p.36)" typifying the students with learning disabilities who achieved success. The researchers

utilized questionnaires and in-depth interviews with the initial 50 participants and utilized qualitative analysis procedures to arrive at six success attributes: self-awareness, proactivity, perseverance, emotional stability, appropriate goal setting, and the presence and use of a support system" (p. 37) and eight outcomes measures: " current employment status, highest grade achieved, independent living status, participants' ratings of family relationships, total number of community involvements, incidence of arrest and/or (self-reported) substance abuse, current health status, and number and severity of mental health diagnoses" (p. 38).

Raskind et al. (1999) looked at the changes over time, the differences between the participants in the assigned groups of successful and unsuccessful, and the predictors of success utilizing multiple quantitative measures. Further, they included in the analyses demographic variables of age, gender, family SES, ethnicity, birth order, number of siblings, IQ, disability labels, and the time and services received at the center. Comparing the number of success behaviors and attitudes that occurred in the transcripts for both groups, Raskind et al. (1999) found significant correlation between the level of the success behaviors and the group membership. One characteristic Raskind et al. (1999) identified included four participants who demonstrated the success behaviors in high levels, but yet had not obtained success. The researchers explained these participants had incurred a physical disability in addition to their learning disability during the 20 year time period, which Raskind et al. (1999) found considerably affected the participants when coupled with the existing learning disability. Raskind et al. (1999), when comparing the groups of adults based on the success attributes—self-awareness, proactivity, perseverance, emotional stability, appropriate goal setting, and the presence and use of a support system—found these predictors more

powerful than any of the other predictors included in their model. Based on these findings, Raskind et al. (1999) recommended educators consider a program that not only supports academic learning, but also supports the learning and development of the skills, behaviors, and attributes identified in this research.

To follow-up on quantitative results and obtain an in-depth understanding of the success attributes that Raskind et al. (1999) identified, Goldberg, Higgins, Raskind, and Herman (2003) used qualitative ethnography focused on the participants' perspectives. The same constructs as defined in the Raskind et al. (1999) study defined the measures Goldberg et al. (2003) sought to understand and the same group of participants provided the qualitative data. The qualitative data confirmed the success attributes identified by Raskind et al. (1999) and expanded them. The successful adults described the ability to understand their disability, but not let it control them, by recognizing their strengths and weaknesses. They sought help when needed and accepted responsibility, as well as demonstrated persistence. They focused on realistic goals and the process needed to achieve those goals. Many of the successful adults with learning disabilities used peer and family supports to help them cope with stress. Additionally, Goldberg et al. (2003) emphasized the finding that the disability remained with these people into their adulthood, and affected them in varied contexts, but more so in childhood. Finally, Goldberg et al. (2003) stressed the important role families played in the successful adults development over time and continued to play over the 20 years.

Utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data as well, Benz, Lindstrom, and Yovanoff (2000) examined transition program components as predictors of students' graduation with diplomas and post high school employment or postsecondary education or training. The researchers examined data from the Youth Transition Program (YTP)

program in Oregon and included 709 participants between the ages of 15 to 21 years, all with disabilities. Benz et al. described the students participated in YTP due to a need for more support services above what is typically offered in the traditional program. Students entered the program for the last two years of high school and services extended beyond, during early transition. The researchers identify predictor variable categories including demographic information, transition barriers, program variables, and identified a category of "at-risk" variables, such as history of substance abuse or arrest. Utilizing logistic regression, Benz et al. found that when students' held two or more paying jobs while in the YTP, they increased their chances of graduating with a standard diploma and their involvement in employment or postsecondary education after graduation increased almost two times over students who were not employed or had only one paid job. Further, students who attained four or more of their transition goals were two times more likely to obtain a diploma and graduate and four times more likely to be employed or continuing education.

Benz et al. (2000) combined the use of focus groups within this same study to understand the program and staff components that students identified as important to their obtaining successful and meaningful outcomes. The researchers interviewed 45 young adults in six focus groups following a structured written guide developed and pilot tested for this study. Students answered questions about the barriers they perceived, the experiences in the program that were most significant to them, and accomplishments and insights about success. Themes identified from the focus groups included the importance of individualized, supportive services and staff provided, along with staff "persistence" to direct students to meet requirements of goals. The students reflected on the importance of career exploration, learning to set goals and high expectations, similar

to Goldberg et al. (2003) and Raskind et al. (1999).

Transition education replication studies. Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) focused on overall levels of self-determination and the effects on student outcomes. These researchers compared two groups of students with learning disabilities or mental retardation that had graduated or exited high school in 1994 and 1995, and prior to exiting had been assessed using *The Arc's Self-Determination Scale* (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995) to determine levels of self-determination, as well as another measure for locus of control. Then, Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) conducted follow-up surveys to determine the outcomes of these students related to employment, living arrangements, postsecondary education, and integration in to the community. The researchers collected information through interviews with parents and students, as well as requiring verification of salary and hours worked if data were collected from parents.

Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) found students with higher levels of self-determination were reported by parents to express a desire to live independent of their parents more than students in the group demonstrating lower self-determination. These same students with higher levels of self-determination were more likely to have checking and savings accounts, and to be employed. Further, these researchers found significant differences between the wages earned when employed. Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) argues that the fact that levels of self-determination demonstrated any difference, when considering all of the potential other variables that may affect adult outcomes, suggests the importance of the potential for this type of instruction. They recommend teachers work to include instruction in the component elements "(a) choice making, (b) decision making, (c) problem solving, (d) goal setting and attainment, (e) self-observation skills (f) self-evaluation skills, (g) self-reinforcement skills, (h) internal

locus of control, (i) positive attributions of efficacy and outcome expectancy, (j) self-awareness, and (k) self-knowledge." (p. 253).

Wehmeyer and Palmer (2003) completed a systematic replication of the ealier Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) study and looked at the outcomes at one and three years after leaving high school for additional students with disabilities as well as students included in the abovementioned study. They found students who exited high school three years prior and scored higher on measures of self-determination more likely to live independently, obtain financial independence, and experience employment with improved benefits when compared to students exhibiting lower self-determination skills. Wehemeyer and Palmer noted factors such as differing school experiences, self-reported data, and reports from other than the students themselves, serve as limitations to the study, but argued the general pattern illustrated more successful postschool outcomes for the students with higher levels of self-determination.

Hasazi, Gordon, and Roe (1985) specifically examined employment outcomes of students with disabilities in Vermont through record reviews and interviews with 301 students who received services in special classes and resource rooms or other settings, and graduated, dropped, or left high school in 1979 through 1983. The project staff interviewed the participants by phone and obtained information from 154 former students, 122 parents, and 25 others in direct contact with the former student. Hasazi et al. found significant relationships between students' graduation from school and employment, as well as participation in vocational education and paid employment during the school years. These researchers found that students reported using a network of family and friends or independently located employment opportunities. Hasazi, Gordon, Roe, Hull et al. (1985) conducted a second study in Vermont with similar

procedures and methods, but with 243 young adults with intellectual disabilities. Hasazi Gordon, Roe, Hull et al. (1985) obtained similar results to the Hasazi, Gordon and Roe (1985) study.

Transition education studies with national data. Making use of a large, national sample database to predict postschool group membership, Rojewski (1999) conducted a follow-up study utilizing the National Education Longitudinal Study:1988-1994 (NELS 88) data. The National Education Longitudinal Study:1988-1994 (NELS 88) database consisted of a national probability sample of 25,000 adolescents gathered as part of a series of nationally funded longitudinal studies examining the outcomes of young adults beginning in 1988, with data collection every two years, through 1994. Rojewski examined the postschool outcomes of 441 students with learning disabilities who were part of this national sample and had been out of high school for two years. He compared the postsecondary enrollment and employment rates of these young adults with disabilities to other former students without disabilities from the national sample, all who completed high school and participated in all four rounds of the survey.

Rojewski used predictive discriminant analysis to determine if occupational aspirations of the students when in 12th grade, socioeconomic status, type of high school program pursued, completion of high school, academic achievement, locus of control, self-esteem, and educational aspirations contributed to accurately predicting membership in one of three outcomes groups—enrolled in postsecondary education, employed or unemployed—based on a compilation of the eight categories contained in the NELS:88 data. He found two of the most important variables for predicting the postsecondary enrollment of students with learning disabilities included the successful completion of a college-prep high school program and the students setting of high

academic and career aspirations. However, Rojewski noted the relatively mediocre rates at which group membership was predicted, especially for the students participating in employment or unemployed at the time the data were collected. He suggested other unaccounted factors might affect the prediction ability, such as transition services received in high school or career guidance. Blackorby and Wagner (1996) also noted a positive relationship between students attending academic programs addressing higher-level academic skills and enrollment in postsecondary education. However, they caution interpretation of this finding, noting that without the proper support for students with learning disabilities to be academically successful in general education classes, these students may fail the courses, which may contribute to dropout (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996).

Transition education qualitative studies. Again, utilizing adults with disabilities as resources to identify what contributed to their successful outcomes, Thoma and Getzel (2005) conducted semi-structured focus group interviews with 34 adults with disabilities attending postsecondary institutions across the state of Virginia. The adults, between the ages of 18 and 48, were selected because they were successfully participating in postsecondary programs, had disclosed information about their disability and received services to support them in their programs. Thoma and Getzel found that these students with varied disabilities identified "problem solving skills, learning about oneself (and one's disability), goal setting and self-management" (p. 237) as important to their success in postsecondary education. The students interviewed described learning about their disabilities from the Internet, peers, parents, and doctors. They described the support of parents helping them to set high expectations and goals for themselves, as well as providing instruction to learn the skills they saw as important

to their success. The students with disabilities described the importance of understanding weaknesses and strengths, being able to talk about the disability and the accommodations needed to be successful, as well as the knowledge of services and supports that are available and the ability to access these resources.

Also, more recently, Lindstrom, Doren and Miesch (2011) conducted a case study to obtain an in-depth understanding of influences identified by successful young adults with disabilities as contributing to their postschool employment or continued education. The researchers interviewed eight young adults with learning disabilities, orthopedic impairments, or emotional disabilities, who participated in special education with school-to-work transition for a year and left school between 1996 and 2001. These eight participants were selected because the wages earned exceeded the poverty line and the living wage determined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Lindstrom et al. (2011) also interviewed parents, teachers or transition specialists, a rehabilitation counselor, and the job supervisor for triangulation of data sources. They found three themes that emerged from this case study. The students with disabilities identified as successful in this study obtained multiple work experiences during high school. One of the successful students reported the multiple experiences provided opportunities to learn persistence, in addition to learning related job and vocational skills. Further, individualized transition planning and services described by these young adults provided encouragement, support for activities, and plans for obtaining postschool goals. Finally, family support emerged as a theme in support of the young women in this study, by encouraging and supporting high expectations and goals.

Approaching her study from the perspective of the school transition program itself, Collet-Klingenberg (1998) conducted a qualitative study, utilizing grounded-

theory case study methodology to understand the transition education practices utilized in one school contributing to students' postschool experiences. Collet-Klingenberg collected qualitative data over a nine-month period, including 20 site visits, totaling over 80 field hours, to understand the model program purposively selected. Numerous staff interviews and observations took place, including the district superintendent, school site teachers and counselors, the transition coordinator, a local college resource, and the vocational rehabilitation person for the area. Collet-Klingenberg (1998) also interviewed six students and three parents of these same students. Further triangulation data included observation of meetings, document reviews, and follow-up interviews based on the other forms of data reviewed. Collet-Klingenberg found that while staff expressed a plan for the delivery of transition services, neither the parents of the students nor the students themselves demonstrated an awareness of this plan.

The students expressed satisfaction with the vocational instruction and reported a perception of the relevance of the instruction. The students made similar reports for the academic support and instruction provided by the special education teacher, and observations documented the support of opportunities to practice self-determination skills. Collet-Klingenberg (1998) described the transition planning activities, particularly the school site transition team and the community transition team. Both teams supported transition planning, and the community team included staff from around the district as well as community agencies. The staff reported the importance of administrative support and noted the collaboration among the staff and community as instrumental to the program, along with the level of commitment of the people involved. However, Collet-Klingenberg (1998) described limited and often passive involvement of students and families in transition planning, especially with relationship to parent

knowledge. Collet-Klingenberg (1998), based on her findings, emphasized the importance of parent and student involvement in transition planning, especially to support parent knowledge. Further, the researcher described the positive contribution to the transition program made by the unique transition teams, which she noted facilitated communication and collaboration in the program.

Transition education correlational studies. Also comparing transition program components and services to student outcomes, Repetto, Webb, Garvan, and Washington (2002) collected survey data on transition programs and services, using a checklist, as well as supporting documentation and other types of media, from all 67 districts in Florida. They compared this data, collected over a period of seven years at three different time points, to postschool outcomes data collected on students who exited the educational or training programs in the state. The researchers attempted to distinguish characteristics of the transition education programs offered to the students in Florida. Repetto et al. validated the coding sheets and the survey with input from the districts involved in the study as well as utilizing multiple raters. Based on the contents of the checklist, Repetto et al. developed five categories characterizing the transition education and services—composition of the transition team, transition services, transition supports, the interagency council, and program characteristics. The researchers examined the correlations between these five categories and the student outcomes of employment and postschool enrollment. Repetto et al. reported moderate (Lomax, 2007) significant positive correlations between transition services, transition supports, the interagency council, program characteristics, and students attending postsecondary education. While Reppetto et al. noted the limitations of self-reported data and the inconsistencies of terms used in transition education during their study, they also described the positive

changes in the transition programs during the study period. While no correlations resulted with employment, the researchers pointed out the lack of vocational training opportunities when this study was undertaken. Additionally, Repetto et al. reported a change with increased vocational training opportunities across the state at the conclusion of the study following school-to-work opportunities created through legislation.

Considering the employment outcomes for students with severe disabilities, White and Weiner (2004) examined predictors of successful integrated employment for students with severe disabilities who, after reaching the maximum age for services, exited high school programs in 20 different school sites in Orange County, California. Participants included 104 students with sever disabilities, with slightly over half Caucasian, 28% Hispanic, and slightly more males than females. The majority continued live with family members and during the last three years of public schooling, attended school in transitional school settings that range from separate segregated school sites to integrated school sites on college campuses. White and Weiner collected information through structured interviews with teachers and administrators, document reviews, and site observations to determine if disability traits, demographics, community based training time, including on-the-job training, amount of on-the-job-training, and integration correlated with integrated employment.

White and Weiner (2004) found community-based training time with on-the-job training, the amount of time spent in on-the-job-training, and attendance at an integrated school site with same age peers significantly correlated with integrated employment. Students participating at sites integrated on college campus with same age peers were more likely to be employed. Also, as students received less community-based training

and more on-the-job training, they were less likely to be employed after transitioning out of school. However, White and Weiner noted a possible interaction between students training for a job closer to their living situation, which may require more time for transportation, thereby reducing on-the-job training time.

Variables identified in the transition literature. To summarize, the research reviewed supported the relationship between the provision of various components of transition education and improved postschool outcomes for students with disabilities. Variables such as paid employment in school, family and student involvement in transition planning, individualized planning, learning to set and monitor goals, self-awareness, vocational and career education predicted group memberships distinguishing between groups of successful adults and unsuccessful adults in quantitative studies, or correlated with postschool outcomes, and emerged as themes in qualitative research. Table 1 lists the studies reviewed and the variables identified in the studies as contributing to postschool outcomes of students with disabilities. As well, Table 1 presents the categories of Kohler's Taxonomy (1996) aligned with the variables identified in the reviewed transition education literature. Discussion of Kohler's taxonomy and the evidence-based practices and predictors identified by Test, Mazzotti et al. (2009) and Test, Fowler et al. (2009) occurs following Table 1.

Table 1

Variables Identified in the Transition Literature Aligned with Kohler's Taxonomy Categories (1996)

		Kohler's Taxonomy				
Citation	Variables	SFP	SD	FI	PSA	IC
Halpern, Yovanoff, Doren, & Benz (1995)	Functional achievement attainment		x			
	Successful completion of relevant instruction	x	x			
	Transition planning participation	x				
	Parent and student satisfaction with instruction			x		
	Parent perception student no longer required assistance			x		
Collet-Klingenberg (1998)	Importance of parent and student involvement	x		x		
	Use transition teams-school and community					x
	Work Experience		x			
Gerber, Ginsberg & Reiff (1992)	Goal oriented	x	x			
	Reframing of the learning disability		x			
	Fit with ability and environment	x				
	Personal supports			x		
Hasazi, Gordon, & Roe (1985)[a]	Graduation		x			
	Vocational Education		x			
Hasazi, Gordon, Roe, Hull et al. (1985)[a]	Employment during high school		x			
Wehmeyer & Schwartz (1997)	Self-determination		x			
Rabren, Dunn & Chambers (2002)	Paid work experience		x			
Raskind, Goldberg, Higgins & Herman (1999) [a]	Proactivity		x			
	Perseverance		x			
	Goal setting	x	x			
Goldberg, Higgins, Raskind & Herman (2003)[a]	Use of support systems		x			
	Self awareness		x			

Table 1 (continued)

Variables Identified in the Transition Literature Aligned with Kohler's Taxonomy Categories (1996)

		Kohler's Taxonomy				
Citation	Variables	SFP	SD	FI	PSA	IC
Repetto, Webb, Garvan & Washington (2002)	Interagency council characteristics					x
	Programs					
	Services					
	Supports					x
Rojewski (1999)	High aspirations		x			
	High school program (college prep)		x		x	
	High school outcome (diploma)		x			
Thoma & Getzel (2005)	Problem-solving		x			
	Understanding disability		x			
	Goal setting	x	x			
	Self-management		x			
	Parental involvement			x		
Blackorby & Wagner (1996)	Enrollment in higher level academics programs					x
	Vocational Training		x			
	Academic					x
Lindstrom, Doren & Miesch (2011)	Variety of work placements		x			
	Relevant work placements	x	x			
	Individual transition services	x				
	Supportive services				x	
	Family support				x	
	Expectations (girls)				x	
Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff (2000)	Goal setting		x			
	Two or more paid jobs in school		x			
	Transition goal attainment		x			
	Individualized services	x				
White & Weiner (2004)	Community-based training with on-the-job training		x		x	
	Integration with same age peers				x	

Note: SFP = student-focused planning; SD = student development; FI = family involvement; PSA = program structure and attributes; IC= interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration

[a] = combination of two studies

Kohler's Taxonomy and evidence-based practices and predictors. Initially, Kohler (1993) examined follow-up studies, theory-based, and quasi-experimental research to determine best practices for the provision of transition education. Kohler reviewed the empirical research that existed at the time, as well as the literature related to transition outcomes and practices. She identified transition education practices with research-based support and practices recommended based on author recommendations in other types of literature, such as theoretical or opinion-based articles. Kohler identified practices as substantiated if research results supported the practice as affecting student outcomes and classified the practices as implied if recommended in opinion papers or theory-based. Kohler identified 17 follow up studies, 11 theory or opinion articles, and 18 quasi-experimental studies that yielded 21 substantiated or implied transition education practices. Within this review, Kohler identified vocational training, parent involvement, and interagency involvement and service delivery supported in over half of the literature she analyzed. However, of the 21 practices identified by Kohler in her review of the transition literature, only four—vocational training, parent involvement, social skills training, and paid work experience—contained substantiated results based on research in follow-up studies and quasi-experimental studies. Kohler emphasized in her conclusion the need for the practices in transition education to be subjected to more empirical research to identify evidence of practices that affect the postschool outcomes of students with disabilities.

Next, Kohler (1996) developed the *Taxonomy for Transition Programming*, incorporating the areas identified in the literature to begin to map out best practices for transition education. The taxonomy incorporates five areas: student-focused planning, student development, interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration, family

involvement, and program structure and attributes (Kohler, 1996). Within each of these areas, transition education practices supported in the literature and socially validated by a group of transition experts outline a plan for the provision of transition education.

Recently, the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) conducted an extensive literature review to identify the evidence-based secondary transition education and services predictors identified as improving postschool outcomes for students with disabilities (Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009). In conjunction with this undertaking, Test, Fowler et al. (2009) also began identifying transition education evidence-based practices. Both studies, conducted with the support of NSTTAC, worked to build capacity in states to provide effective transition education services and improve the postschool outcomes of students with disabilities.

To identify evidence-based predictors, Test, Mazzotti et al. (2009) searched the literature and identified 162 articles for review. To begin, articles that were not correlational in nature, for example theory or position papers, were not included in the review. This resulted in 63 articles from which Test, Mazzotti et al. eliminated 35 based on the variables measured, the participants, or if correlations were conducted based on demographic characteristics. This left 28 articles that the reviewers subjected to the quality indicators checklist developed by the research team based on recommendations from Thompson, Diamond, McWilliam, Snyder, and Snyder (2005) and resulted in a total of 22 reviewed articles. From this review of 22 articles, Test, Mazzotti et al. identified 16 categories of predictors based on the studies they reviewed. Predictor variables received ratings as having a moderate level of evidence if reviewers located two a priori studies with effects sizes included or calculable. Otherwise, Test, Mazzotti et al. labeled the predictor as a potential predictor with one a priori study and one

exploratory study, or with two or more exploratory studies. The categories will be discussed in further detail as applicable within the review guided by Kohler's Taxonomy (1996). Of the 16 categories identified by Test, Mazzotti et al. four—inclusion in general education, paid employment/work experience, self-care/ independent living, and student support—correlated with improved postschool outcomes for students with disabilities in all three outcomes areas—independent living, employment, and postschool education—and four demonstrated moderate levels of evidence based on the criteria utilized by the authors—vocational education, inclusion in general education, transition program services, and paid employment /work experience.

The second study conducted by Test, Fowler et al. (2009) employed a similar rigorous process to identify the evidence-based practices in transition education. Test, Fowler et al. conducted an extensive electronic, hand, and reference search to locate articles published in 1984 through March 2008 and contained variables that reflected Kohler's Taxonomy practices or clearly were postschool-outcome oriented. After the initial reviews, 1,306 articles reduced to 240 systematic literature reviews, meta-analyses, group or single subject research articles. Lastly, based on the type of study reviewed, Test, Fowler et al. applied a final inclusion criteria utilizing quality indicator checklists developed by the research team based on recommendations from Gersten et al. (2005) or Horner et al. (2005), as well as a third checklist based on recommendations from the researchers working with the *What Works in Transition Research Synthesis Project*. This resulted in a total of 63 studies that provided the evidence-based practices identified. The practices identified by Test, Fowler et al. will be discussed further within the taxonomy areas and the discussion of other research supporting transition education

The five taxonomy areas identified by Kohler (1996) serve as the framework for the review of recommended practices and predictors in transition education.

Student-focused planning. Kohler and Field (2003) suggest this category encompasses the IEP development based on the student's goals, preferences, current assessment, and self-directed monitoring of progress. One variable included in the Student-Focused Planning (SFP) component of the taxonomy is the development and content of the student IEP. Students setting goals and providing input for their future, paired with transition assessment and self-monitoring of progress with adjustment based on feedback all contribute to student focused-planning.

Goal setting, monitoring, and adjusting. Test, Mazzotti et al. (2009) identified self-determination as a predictor with a potential level of evidence for students engaging in employment, and a moderate level of evidence for participating in postsecondary education. Dunn, Chambers, and Rabren (2004) examined the factors contributing to the dropout of students with disabilities, an area reported in the outcomes as continuing to affect the postschool outcomes of students with disabilities. The participating former students with disabilities identified the importance of believing that the school program is preparing them for their futures, based on their own goals. Students learning to set goals, to monitor their progress toward those goals, and achieving those goals increase their chances for improved post school outcomes (Benz et al., 2000; Goldberg et al., 2003; Raskind et al., 1999; Thoma & Getzel, 2005) Benz, Lindstrom, and Yovanoff (2000) found that students involved in the Youth Transition Program in Oregon who met four or more of their transition goals significantly increased their chances of graduating with a diploma, and noted from interviews that students wanted the

opportunity to participate in a program that offered instruction that they perceived as relevant to their futures.

Student participation in the IEP. Test, Mazzotti et al. (2009) identified the involvement of the student in the IEP meeting as an evidence-based practice with a moderate level of evidence supporting the use of the *Self-Advocacy Strategy* and the *Self-Directed IEP* (Test, Fowler et al., 2009). Further, student engagement in the development of the IEP may also factor into reducing the significant dropout rates of students with disabilities (Newman et al., 2009). Lindstrom, Paskey, Dickinson, Doren, Zane, and Johnson (2007) conducted interviews with 33 young adults with disabilities and found young people overwhelmingly wanted educators to listen to them, to consider their ideas for the future rather than deciding for them, and the IEP team to use the information from the student to drive the transition services.

Kortering and Christenson (2009) suggested the use of appropriate transition assessments to increase students' knowledge of themselves and to link student learning to their goals for their future. In fact, Rusch, Hughes, Agran, Martin, and Johnson (2009) suggest engaging students in leading their program in middle school. Finally, Cobb and Alwell (2009) conducted a synthesis of the "scientifically-based research" spanning the last 20 years and found studies on student-centered planning produced a large statistically significant effect size, suggesting "student-focused planning appears to hold great promise on important outcomes for students" (p. 77).

Karvonen, Test, Wood, Browder, and Algozzine (2004) qualitatively examined six school sites seen as exemplary in promoting self-determination. The researchers found that all of the sites included high levels of student participation in their educational planning and developed processes for integrating student planning into the

IEP—meetings to talk about goals, students writing their own goals for the IEP, preparing statements to read at meetings or conducting the meetings, and the use of person-centered planning strategies or programs.

Student development. Kohler (1996) included instruction in life skills, employment, and career/vocational awareness in the student development category, as well as the use of support services and structured work experiences based on student assessments. Test, Fowler et al. (2009) found much supporting research for evidence-based practices in the area of student development. While only two of the practices met the criteria of a strong level of evidence, 22 practices demonstrated a moderate level of evidence. Test, Mazotti et al. (2009) in examining studies of outcome predictors found inclusion in general education, paid work experience or employment, instruction in self-care or independent living skills, and receiving supports from educators, family, and friends significantly correlated with all three areas of postschool outcomes—employment, postsecondary education, and independent living.

Inclusion in general education. Test, Mazzotti et al. (2009) reported this predictor category as the one most often reviewed in the studies they considered. They found three a priori studies provided a moderate level of evidence for inclusion in general education as a predictor for postsecondary education enrollment. Additionally, Test, Mazzotti et al. indicated a moderate level of evidence for participation in general education as a predictor of employment and independent living. Rojewski (1999) examined the NELS:88 national database and found high aspirations, along with a college preparation program related to students with disabilities enrolling in postsecondary education. White and Weiner (2004) suggested integrated programs on college-campuses with same age peers correlated with integrated employment for

students with severe disabilities.

Career/vocational education, and employment. Research continues to support the importance of career and vocational education, and especially paid work experiences to the future employment of students with disabilities (Benz et al., 2000; Hasazi et al., 1985; Hasazi et al., 1989; Rabren et al., 2002; Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). Test, Mazzotti et al., (2009) identified career awareness as a predictor of postschool employment with a potential level of evidence supported by one study with small effect sizes. They found paid employment and work experiences substantiated in the literature as predictors of postsecondary education and employment with moderate levels of evidence and potential evidence level as a predictor of improved independent living. Also, vocational education, according to Test, Mazzotti et al., emerged as predictor of education and employment with moderate level of evidence based on five studies reviewed by these researchers. Finally, work study obtained moderate levels of evidence as a predictor of post school employment.

Development of self-determination. A second significant practice supported in the literature as improving outcomes for students, especially the transition to postsecondary education, is instruction supporting self-determination skills—including self-awareness, self-advocacy, and goal setting (Gerber et al., 1992; Goldberg et al., 2003; Halpern et al., 1995; Lindstrom et al., 2007; Raskind et al., 1999; Thoma & Getzel, 2005). Successful adults with disabilities are self-aware with the ability to define realistic goals, persevere toward accomplishing goals, and obtain the support of friends and family in order to accomplish the goals set (Goldberg et al., 2003; Raskind, et al., 1999). Further, students with higher levels of self-determination are more likely to be employed and earning higher wages, express goals of living independently, and

maintain checking and savings accounts (Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997).

Independent living/Life skills development. Test, Fowler et al. (2009) identified teaching life skills and teaching purchasing skills as evidenced-based practices with strong levels of evidence with multiple studies supporting this instruction. Grigal, Dwyer and Davis (2006) described successful transition programs in Baltimore and reported the importance of integrating students with intellectual disabilities into the community for the instruction of these skills. Students with severe disabilities participating in community-based training and job training correlated with obtaining integrated employment (White & Weiner, 2004).

Alwell and Cobb (2006) conducted a review of 50 studies targeting the efficacy of interventions teaching self-care, domestic, recreation and leisure skills, as well as community skills. The studies included interventions with a total of 482 participants, the majority of which were students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities. Alwell and Cobb (2006) defined their review as evidence-based adhering to the standards of the What Works Clearing House (WWCH) and the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and coordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre). They found that while the empirical evidence limited conclusions and generalizations, especially in relationship to students with more mild disabilities, life skills instruction resulted in improved skills for the groups of students involved in the studies they reviewed.

Family involvement. Support for the involvement of families in transition planning appears in the qualitative research of exemplary sites (Collet-Klingenberg 1998; Karvonen et al., 2004; Hasazi et al., 1989; Repetto et al., 2002) and through interviews with service providers, young adults with disabilities, and their families

(Lindstrom, et al., 2007; Gerber et al., 1992; Goldberg et al., 2003). The majority of young people with disabilities remain in living situations with family members after completing high school (Haring & Lovett, 1990; Hasazi et al., 1985; Hasazi et al., 1989; Newman et al., 2009). Research supports the significance of family assistance in locating employment, with young adults indicating that family and friends helped find employment (Haring & Lovett, 1990; Newman et al., 2009; Sitlington & Frank, 1993). Test, Mazotti et al. (2009) found that parent involvement emerged as a potential predictor of increasing students' with disabilities employment after high school.

In their review of studies on evidenced-based transition practices, Test, Fowler et al. (2009) reported instruction to the families and parents as a practice with a moderate level of evidence. Research describing exemplary transition education programs reflects the involvement of families in the program and the importance of this aspect to promote postschool success (Collet-Klingenberg 1998; Hasazi et al., 1989). Cobb and Alwell (2009) in a systematic review of transition research noted that the influence of families on students' career choices, goals, and the support required in the students' daily lives, coupled with living situations during and after high school, substantiate the importance of involving families in the transition planning process.

Interagency collaboration. Interagency collaboration emerged as a potential predictor of postschool education and employment (Test, Mazotti et al., 2009) and Kohler (1993) suggested interagency collaboration received implied support in the literature. Lindstrom et al. (2007) found students, parents, and support providers all noted the importance of students with disabilities accessing community resources and making connections to support postschool outcomes. Repetto et al. (2002) reported the interagency council characteristics—such as "parent networks, agreements, business

advisory boards—positively correlated with the enrollment of students with disabilities in postsecondary education programs in Florida" (p.134). Hasazi, Furney and Destephano (1999) reviewed nine sites—five known as effective and four as progressing through challenges—and found stakeholders reported interagency collaboration produced positive student outcomes by increasing the number of students in employment, community programs, concurrent enrollment, and adult agency services. As well, Hasazi et al. noted that three of the sites with existing outcome data collection systems reported increased postschool employment rates and increased enrollment in postsecondary education and training programs.

However, while the literature revealed the potential of interagency collaboration as a predictor of postschool outcomes, Test, Fowler et al. (2009) found no studies meeting their criteria for inclusion to suggest evidence-based practices in this area. Benz et al. (2004) noted the importance of the relationship that developed between the school, the students, and the community in implementing the model transition program in Oregon. Additional literature from the field of vocational rehabilitation described interagency collaboration and communication as integral to the success of programs actively facilitating the transition of students with disabilities (Grigal et al., 2006).

Program structures and attributes. This component of transition education in Kohler's (1996) model encompasses the overall transition education program and supports for the other areas of the taxonomy. Within this component, Kohler included the philosophy and policies supporting the program, the use of strategic planning and evaluation to guide transition education, and human resources development and support, as well as financial resources allocation. Test, Fowler et al. (2009) identified two transition education evidence-based practices—incorporating community-based

instruction into the program structure and extending services beyond high school—demonstrating moderate levels of evidence. Test, Fowler et al. (2009) identified independent living skills as a predictor affecting outcomes in employment, postsecondary education, and independent living and Grigal, Dwyer, and Davis (2006) suggested much of the instruction should be provided in the community. Research reflected the importance of a program supporting high expectations and general education instruction with appropriate supports to improve outcomes for students with disabilities (Rojewski,1999; Test, Mazotti et al., 2009; Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). Transition education programs require flexibility to meet the needs of individual students (Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Kohler & Field, 2003, Lindstrom et al., 2011).

Rabren and Johnson (2010) emphasized the importance of a cohesive method of collecting data, focused on the student outcomes, guiding program evaluation and improvement in order to bring about positive changes for students with disabilities. Subsequently, Test, Fowler et al. (2009) and Test, Mazotti et al. (2009) suggest utilizing the identified practices and predictors identified in the NSTTAC studies as components on which to evaluate transition education programs.

In conclusion, these predictors and practices identified in the transition education research and literature begin to outline the recommended and evidence-based practices needed to support improved outcomes for students with disabilities, a clear understanding of the extent to which the recommended practices are used by teachers in their instruction is not evident in the reviewed literature. Test, Mazotti et al. (2009) suggested districts and schools structure transition education programs to ensure opportunities for students to participate in the four predictor areas—inclusion in general education, paid employment and work experience, independent living skills, and

individual student support—that correlate with employment, independent living, and postsecondary education outcomes. Incorporation of many of the taxonomy areas identified within the program structures and attributes (Kohler, 1996) may be directly affected by the policies and procedures supported by the school administration. Moreover, research supports teacher perceptions of support from the school principal may affect their use of the recommended practices.

Educational Leadership Practices

With the current emphasis on standards-based education and accountability for outcomes, multiple large-scale, longitudinal and meta-analyses examining the effects of leadership on the achievement of students emerged in the literature (Hallinger et al., 1996, Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004; Portin et al., 2003; Robinson et al., 2004, Waters et al., 2003; Witziers et al., 2003). Previously, Leithwood et al. (2004) in their review of empirical research and related literature concluded, "Of all the factors that contribute to what students learn at school, present evidence led us to conclude that leadership is second in strength only to classroom instruction" (p. 70). Their comprehensive study spanned six years with data from nine states, 43 school districts, and 180 schools, yet Wahlstrom, Seashore Louis, Leithwood, and Anderson (2010) acknowledged the lack of a single case of a school improving student achievement without talented leadership.

Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996) found the socio-economic status of the school, the level of principal involvement, and gender acted as antecedents of leadership, influencing principal leadership. They found instructional leadership had an effect on reading achievement through an organization's clear mission that affected teachers' expectations for students, which in turn influenced students' opportunities to learn.

Hallinger et al. proposed that principal leadership indirectly affected student outcomes through mediating variables and furthered support of this with a meta-analysis, including articles published between 1980 and 1995, concluding that principals' effect on school effectiveness and student achievement, while small and indirect, is significant (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Witziers, Bosker and Kruger (2003) conducted a meta-analysis examining the direct effects of school leadership and found only small direct effects in elementary schools and virtually no direct effects of leadership in secondary schools. Witziers et al. conducted a second meta-analysis within this study and examined studies measuring the specific independent components of leadership. They noted the importance of a clearly defined and communicated mission, while demonstrating a weak relationship, continued to show a significant effect on student achievement.

Many studies only examined academic effects, while Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) reported small, indirect, yet significant effects of leadership on student engagement in school with their study of 110 schools in Canada. Leithwood and Jantzi investigated leadership from the perspective of teachers and principals sharing leadership or distributed leadership. While teacher leadership did not produce significant effects, principal leadership indirectly influenced the school conditions, which demonstrated small but significant effects on student involvement in school, one component of engagement measured in the study. Yet Leithwood and Jantzi note an important result in the significant influence of family educational culture on students' participation and involvement in school. They utilized family educational culture as a substitute for a socioeconomic status measure and found a strong relationship with large and significant effects between family educational culture and student engagement.

They highlight the importance of family-school partnerships to support student engagement in school and found that highly effective schools have high involvement of parents and students (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999).

However, at the same time when examining collective leadership on student achievement, Leithwood and Mascall (2008) reported that teachers continue to perceive limited influence in schools from parents and students, and emphasized that leadership continues to be traditional and structured hierarchically. They found that collective leadership significantly affected student achievement through mediated variables of teacher motivation and work setting. Because of the constructs of the study however, Leithwood and Mascall reported limited findings related to the effect of principal leadership, except with supporting teacher capacity—which they defined as professional development—recognizing the need to support teachers' continued learning. Further, they suggested that this research might indicate that schools continue to experience limited success in forming significant partnerships with families.

Portin et al. (2003), based on the results of a longitudinal qualitative study, support the idea of "rather than looking for principals with the powers and attributes of a Renaissance figure, policymakers and district leaders should recognize that a variety of leaders and leadership models can work within schools" (p. 1). Portin et al. point out the significance of the rules and regulations that bind principals and how they may support or bind effectiveness. They suggest that schools require different types of leadership and that not all leaders have the qualifications to effectively meet the needs of every type of school. They identified seven critical leadership areas—instructional, cultural, managerial, human resources, strategic, external development, micropolitical—and noted principals remain responsible for ensuring leadership in all seven areas, but

may utilize the expertise of others to provide the direction. One role unique to this investigation included the needed skill of "diagnostician" (p. 9). Portin et al. defined this critical skill as working to understand the needs of a school through the use of multiple forms of data, and then providing a clear focus of direction. Further, Portin et al. supported the continued strength of the hierarchical structure in schools, but noted that other "*de-facto*" leaders in the school environment contribute to the diagnosis of school needs, the school environment, and meaningful change through support or sabotage.

Marks and Printy "reconceptualized" instructional leadership as a shared model of leadership, with teachers and school administrators collaborating to address the instructional needs of the school. In a study with 24 elementary, middle, and high schools nominated as part of a larger study of schools undergoing reform, Marks and Printy (2003) investigated the relationship between transformational and shared instructional leadership and the effects on teaching quality and student achievement. They combined observations, student work samples, teacher assessment samples, and interviews to develop measurements of instructional quality and student achievement. They measured school performance based on two constructs, pedagogical quality—derived from teacher instructional observations and student assessment samples—and academic achievement—a measurement combing three measures of student performance. They measured the two leadership constructs through gathering and coding of qualitative data to create case studies and through teacher surveys. They suggest that "strong transformational leadership by a principal is essential in supporting the commitment of teachers" (p. 393), and overall concluded that a combination of transformational and shared instructional leadership produced the most impact on

teaching and achievement. Marks and Printy found that schools engaged in this construct of "integrated leadership" (p. 392)—transformational and shared instructional leadership—had teachers who demonstrated high levels of quality instruction and students obtaining high levels of achievement on authentic assessment measures. These results supported the observations of prior researchers suggesting principals affect instruction through mediated or indirect effects (Hallinger et al.,1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2008)

Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) conducted a meta-analysis to examine research conducted during a 30-year time span that examined leadership practices and the effects on student achievement. Similar to the role of diagnostician identified by Portin et al. (2003), Waters et al. identified two primary leadership variables that impact—positively or negatively—student achievement. These variables included the ability of the principal to identify school and classroom practices most likely to have a positive impact at their school, and to understand change and the effects of that change on the stakeholders in order to adjust leadership practices. Waters et al. developed a leadership framework titled "Balanced Leadership" (p. 2) and incorporated the 21 leadership responsibilities found to be most significantly correlated with student achievement.

Integration of theory and research to identify variables. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders framework, first written by representatives from states and professional associations in 1994-1995, were then further researched, revised, and adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration in 2008. Forty-four states incorporate the ISLLC standards into their principal standards. Cooner, Tochterman, and Garrison-Wade

(2004-2005) applied the ISLLC standards to the preparation of principals as special education leaders and found that principal preparation programs and professional development may not provide the experiences that are needed in order for principals to be effective leaders of special education programs. Also, educational leadership researchers indicate these standards do not address all of the competencies supported in the research outlined above (Waters et al., 2003; Portin et al., 2003). The National Association of Secondary School Administrators (NASSP) suggest the ISLLC standards provide guidance about the desired performance of principals, while the NASSP provides a framework of skills, *The 21st Century School Administrator Skills,* to give direction on developing the skills needed to lead effectively. NASSP indicates they relied on over three decades of assessing and studying leaders and an extensive job analysis of the principalship to identify the skills.

In my review of the educational leadership theoretical models, the literature on the relationship between leadership and student achievement, and the professional standards, I found the following practices repeatedly identified across the sources: communicating school culture through values, vision, and goals; ensuring effective instruction of all students; encouraging professional development; collaboration and communication between principals, teachers and families; and instructional and organizational management skills. These areas align with the model of educational leadership proposed by Leithwood et al. (2004), and reaffirmed by Seashore Louis et al. (2010) that guides the leadership portion of this dissertation. Table 2 contains the variables I identified, aligned with the research citations and Appendix A contains detailed information regarding the research reviewed regarding the relationship between leadership and student achievement. Additionally, within Table 2, I labeled the

categories or groupings of these variables to specify my groupings of the administrative support behavior variables I measured to explore the leadership of transition education.

Table 2

Leadership Practices Identified and Aligned with the Administrative Support of Transition Education Grouped Variables

Administrative Support Variables	Leadership Practices	Research
Providing Instructional Leadership of Transition Education	Instructional Leadership Accountability Plan, coordinate, monitor and evaluate teaching and curriculum Knowledgeable about curriculum, instruction, assessment	Hallinger, Bickman & Davis (1996) Jacobson, Johnson, Ylimaki & Giles (2005) Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe (2008) Portin, Schneider, DeArmond & Gundlach (2003) Waters, Marano & McNulty (2003) Witzers, Bosker, & Kruger (2003) Littrel, Billingsley, & Cross, (1994)
Valuing Transition Education and Services	Defining and communicating a clear mission, purposes and goals Focusing the school/teachers on goals for student achievement Focusing the teachers' attention on expectations for student achievement Intellectual stimulation Consumer oriented vision Organizational Culture Ideals and Beliefs Affirmation Organizational Climate	Hallinger, Bickman & Davis (1996) Hallinger & Heck (1998) Jacobson, Johnson, Ylimaki & Giles (2005) Waters, Marzano & McNulty (2003) Witzers, Bosker, & Kruger (2003) Summers, Gotto, Zuna, Marquis, Fleming, & Turnbull (2005) Littrel, Billingsley & Cross (1994) Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach (2003)
Encouraging the Teachers Providing Transition Education and Services	Supporting staff, recognition, approachable, seeking new ideas, developing human resources Caring Promoting and monitoring teacher learning and professional development	Hallinger & Heck (1998) Jacobson, Johnson, Ylimaki & Giles (2005) Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach (2003) Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe (2008) Waters, Marzano & McNulty (2003)

Table 2 (continued)

Leadership Practices Identified and Aligned with the Administrative Support of Transition Education Grouped Variables

Administrative Support Variables	Leadership Practices	Research
Encouraging the Teachers Providing Transition Education and Services (continued)	Situational Awareness Visibility Contingent Rewards Relationship Providing general support Providing backup for teachers for discipline and with parents Providing mentoring opportunities for new teachers	Witzers, Bosker, & Kruger (2003) Littrel, Billingsley & Cross (1994)
Facilitating a Collaborative and Structured Environment for Transition Education and Services	School structure and social networks Cooperation, work together, shared leadership, parental involvement Managerial Flexibility Orderly and supportive environment Instructional Resources aligned w Purposes Listen to teachers concerns Accessibility Involving teachers in decision making Instrumental Support (Resources, time for duties) Creating structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate	Hallinger & Heck (1998) Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach (2003) Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe (2008) Waters, Marzono & McNulty (2003) Summers, Gotto, Zuna, Marquis, Fleming, & Turnbull (2005) Billingsley, Gersten, Gillman, & Morvant (1995) Littrel, Billingsley & Cross (1994)

Review of "How leadership influences student learning." Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) in preparation for their longitudinal, nationwide leadership study undertaken with the Wallace Foundation conducted an

extensive review of the educational leadership literature. They organized their review around a leadership framework containing 10 independent variables with complex relationships: (a) state leadership, policies, and practices (b) district leadership, policies and practices, (c) leaders professional learning experiences, (d) student/family background, (e) school leadership, other stakeholders, (f) school conditions, (g) teachers, (h) classroom conditions, and (i) student learning. They identified the critical role of school leaders "identifying and supporting learning, structuring the social settings, and mediating the external demands" (p. 18). An important concept central to the model proposed by Leithwood et al. (2004) is the tenant that leadership is shared, or distributed among the district-level leaders, school site leaders, and others involved in the organization, such as teachers, parents, and community members.

They note that leadership definitions generally include two behaviors, "providing directions and exercising influence" (p. 20) but remind us that defining leadership is complicated. Leithwood et al. (2004) reviewed three different types of research (a) qualitative studies, (b) large-scale quantitative studies examining overall leadership effects on student learning, and (c) quantitative studies examining the effects of specific leadership behaviors or traits on student achievement. The researchers note that qualitative studies typically examined outliers, schools performing exceptionally well or making considerable progress toward change and improvement. Therefore, the qualitative results generally indicate large leadership effects on learning, while the large-scale quantitative studies demonstrated small, indirect results, and the specific practices studies showed large effects, albeit over numerous leadership behaviors. Yet, Leithwood et al. (2004) describe caution with interpreting effects from all three types of leadership studies. First, qualitative studies, while providing resources and information

lack generalizability. The third type of quantitative study above may show large effect sizes, but with the number of skills (eg. Waters et al., 2003) and some of the ideals or traits identified, Leithwood et al. (2004) question the reasonableness of implementing changes in all the areas to affect student learning. Based on this, Leithwood et al. argue that leadership research must focus on the flexibility of leaders in responding to different contexts and incorporate the involvement of other factors such as school mission, goals, shared leadership responsibilities, and parental and community involvement. These researchers identified three basics of successful leadership—setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization.

Leithwood et al. (2004) incorporate sharing vision, goals and high expectations as part of setting directions. They describe leaders support developing people through modeling, providing support tailored to individuals, and facilitating opportunities to develop intellectually. Lastly, redesigning the organization included a focus on the culture of the school and district, changing the structures present, and collaboration to change with the context of the school. Based on their review, Leithwood et al. noted principals' success requires them to adjust based on the unique characteristics of a school and district, but also note the current administrative policies related to accountability impacting leaders' responses, as well as the needs of diverse student populations.

In order to respond to the accountability challenges, Leithwood et al. (2004) suggest principals need to (a) "create and sustain a competitive school," (p. 26) (b) "empower others to make significant decisions," (p. 27) (c) "provide instructional guidance, "(p. 27) and (d) "develop and implement strategic school improvement plans" (p. 27). They argue school leaders must ensure policies and practices supporting

historically underserved groups of students are in place, as well as equitable implementation of these polices and practices to meet the needs of each unique situation. Additionally, Leithwood et al. propose that school leaders must incorporate a shared or distributed leadership model in order to seek assistance and utilize the talents of others.

Leithwood et al. (2004) continued with a description of the literature related to state and district leadership, but as my study focused on school site leadership, I will review the contextual factors identified by these researchers as impacting school leadership. First, Leithwood et al. note the support in the literature for the influence of student and family backgrounds on successful student outcomes. However, they describe the conflicting ideas on how to incorporate this variable into the study of educational leadership. Based on their review, they posit four claims about the family background variable and the effect on educational leadership. First, they claim multiple studies support that family socioeconomic status (SES) is related to behavior and learning, as well as school completion, postsecondary enrollment, employment, and income. They describe an "iron circle" (p. 47) created by the difficult conditions families living in poverty must face that binds schools serving families in high-risk communities.

Next, they claim SES shapes the educational culture of the home, which in turn affects student achievement. Leithwood et al. (2004) describe the educational culture as "the assumptions, norms, and beliefs held by the family about intellectual work in general and school work in particular" (p. 47). Additionally, they note that if the educational culture is strong, students' chances of success in school are increased and they claim that other aspects of support for education may be found in the community and contribute to student learning and success. They emphasize the significant obstacles

to successful learning confronting students who must face challenging educational cultures as well as limited community cultures.

Another contextual factor affecting student learning identified by Leithwood et al. (2004) includes school conditions, which these researchers define as "policies and practices concern the school's structure, culture, instructional services, and human resources" (p. 51). Additionally, they found 14 other policies and practices contributing to these categories. In considering the impact of human resources on school conditions, Leithwood et al. (2004) describe "competing demands and conflicting priorities" (p. 57) creating increases in the hours teachers work, especially to address school reform initiatives. While the researchers noted the importance of teachers participating in decision making, they caution leaders to be sensitive to the changing demands placed on teachers. Additionally, Leithwood et al. found moderate support for a variety of working conditions affecting the work of teachers.

Leithwood et al. (2004) described the individual instructional knowledge and skills of a teacher influencing student outcomes as well as the "mental models" (p. 64) or previously developed and constructed ideas about teaching and learning through which teachers filter new information. These researchers argue that the literature supports the mental models teachers posses may dictate the changes in instruction they will or will not make. In addition, Leithwood, et al., describe the importance of the "professional learning community" (p. 66) and the importance of an administrator supporting the development of individual teachers, as well as opportunities for dialogue and collaboration.

"Learning from leadership" study. Following the review of literature, Seashore Louis et al. (2010) conducted a research study to "identify the nature of successful

educational leadership and to better understand how such leadership can improve educational practices and student learning" (p. 7). They utilized multiple theoretical and methodological approaches and included quantitative and qualitative data. The national study included participants from nine states, 43 school districts, s school and involved 8,391 teachers and 471 school administrators. The researchers utilized a 131-item survey and state assessments to investigate leadership and student learning. The study consists of three parts, first a focus on school leaders and student achievement, second district leadership, school improvement and student learning, and third, state leadership and district leadership. With the focus of my study specifically on secondary teachers and leadership of transition education, I limit my review to two sections contained in the first part of the study focused on school leaders; first, "Leadership Practices Considered Instructionally Helpful by High-Performing Principals and Teachers" and second, "Instructional Leadership: Elementary vs. Secondary Principal and Teacher Interactions and Student Outcomes."

First, Seashore Louis et al. (2010) utilized a subsample of 12 principals and 65 teachers in 12 different schools to further expand on the core leadership practices utilizing qualitative data generated through interviews and observations. I reviewed these leadership practices in Chapter 1 and these practices guided the survey development. The teachers and administrators interviewed by Seashore Louis et al. (2010) described eight practices overall as important. The researchers report that large percentages of both teachers and administrators identified (a) "focusing the school on goals and expectations for student achievement," (b) "keeping track of teachers' professional development needs," and (c) "creating structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate" (p. 71). Additionally, they reported four practices identified as

important by a smaller, but still important percentage of teachers and principals that included (a) “monitoring teachers’ work in the classroom,” (b) “providing mentoring opportunities for new teachers,” (c) “being easily accessible,” and (d) “providing back-up for teachers with student discipline and with parents,” and noted principals identified “staying current” (p. 72) as important to instructional leadership.

Second, Seashore Louis et al. (2010) used qualitative observations and interviews as well as a subset of 17 items from the teacher survey they utilized in their larger study to understand teacher perceptions and principal behaviors in relation to instructional leadership and improvement. One component of this study compared the perceptions of elementary and high school teachers. Based on factor analysis of the 17 items, Seashore Louis, Leithwood et al. identified two factors, instructional climate and instructional actions that contributed to teachers’ instructional behaviors based on their review of research. They compared these to mathematics achievement scores to cluster schools based on achievement and to compare schools across teacher reported leadership scores obtained on the survey.

Seashore Louis et al. (2010) identified that principals scoring high on instructional climate emphasized vision, and value of research-based instructional strategies. Additionally, they found the instructional actions of high-scoring principals included the provision direct instructional support to teachers through involvement in instructional planning and encouraging collaboration with a goal of improving instruction and student achievement. Further, themes that emerged from the qualitative data supported these findings. However, of particular interest, an additional aggregation comparing responses of elementary and secondary teachers was used to identify differences in the instructional leadership role of principals. They found secondary

principals identified a lack of time in the school day in which to address all their responsibilities required them to give a lower priority to instructional leadership tasks. Further, the principals suggested that a leadership group of teachers provide instructional leadership and that through connection to this group of teachers, the secondary principal, while not directly providing support, assists in instructional leadership.

Yet, Seashore Louis et al. (2010) found in their interviews with secondary teachers that "instructional leadership actions at the secondary school level are generally not happening" (p. 88). However, Seashore Louis, Leithwood et al. discussed the unique position of secondary department chair teacher leaders to offer instructional leadership if utilized to do so. Further, they noted teachers expressed a preference to be allowed to operate their classrooms independently without regular and direct interaction with the school principal. Seashore Louis, Leithwood et al. concluded that the provision of instructional leadership actions by secondary school leaders was notably limited, and identified the need for school leaders at this level to incorporate methods to address this in order to improve student learning.

Administrative Support and Special Education Instruction

Suggesting the need to develop an instructional leadership framework that considered the needs of special educators and students with disabilities and to learn from effective principals, Burello, Schrup, and Barnett (1992) conducted an extensive literature review and a case study of five effective principals identified by the district special education directors. Based on the case studies, they suggested the effective principals demonstrated instructional leadership by modeling a positive attitude and acceptance of all students and programs in the school. They found in high schools the

involvement of the principal was “more symbolic” (p. 38), but suggested the visibility contributed to the culture and climate, which in turn contributed to perceptions of support for the students, staff, and programs. Further, Burello et al. (1992) found that the principals utilized collective decision-making, involving teachers in decisions affecting their programs. These principals acknowledged the important consultant role of the special education director when they lacked knowledge on specific special education topics.

Burello et al. (1992) adapted an instructional management framework proposed for general education to illustrate a theory of instructional leadership of special education programs. While the framework mirrored the same original seven factors of the previous research, Burello et al. (1992) added 29 elements specific to instructional leadership of special education. Three factors identified and expanded upon by Burello et al. (1992) included Instructional Climate, Instructional Organization, and Student Outcomes. Within the Student Outcomes factor, Burello et al. (1992) emphasized the importance of specific outcomes for students with disabilities and the support of teachers to provide the needed specialized instruction in community and job settings. Recently, Lashley (2007) noted the similar need of principals to focus on the ethical question of the “long-term effects of decisions” (p. 185) on the outcomes of all students. He emphasized the principals’ role to consider learning needs in social, emotional, and independent living when allocating resources in order to consider the needs of all students.

Bays and Crockett (2007) utilized grounded theory methods to describe leadership practices at the elementary level that influence the provision of special education instruction. They suggested “instructional leadership should improve special

education for students who have unique educational needs and enhance the success of their schools in meeting annual targets for improvement" (p. 145). Like Burello et al. (1992), they recognized the continued need to identify instructional leadership for special education as they found specific descriptions still lacking in the literature. In their study of nine elementary schools and three district offices, they suggested the demands of educational leadership often required sharing of special education instructional leadership between principals, teachers, and special education directors, but confirmed the role of the principal as the instructional leader responsible for overseeing the provision of special education instruction (Bays & Crockett, 2007). However, they found principals forced to address competing priorities, with instructional leadership often receiving lowered priority compared to other crisis type management needs and administrative deadlines.

Yet, they found principals and special education directors often relied on the teachers as instructional experts, and teachers reflected this reliance, as they regularly depended on peers for instructional support. Bays and Crockett (2007) expressed this may also be an unintentional result of principals'' lack of knowledge about special education, which may in turn "compromise the delivery of specially designed instruction" (p. 157). Finally, Bays and Crockett (2007) described "casual dispersal of instructional leadership that…threatens the quality of specialized instruction" (p. 158). They emphasized instructional leadership of special education requires an inclusive vision, trust and collaboration, meaningful support of teachers, and instructional monitoring. In fact, while Bays and Crockett (2007) observed cognizant teachers and administrators aware of individual student differences, they found no organized monitoring of special education, nor use of research-based practices.

Support of teachers' instructional practices. Research results suggest teacher perceptions of support from principals contribute to special education teachers' overall well-being, job satisfaction, and commitment to a school (Littrell et al.,1994; Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff & Harniss, 2001). Gersten et al. (2001) found an important role of school principals included provision of learning opportunities for special education teachers. Gersten et al. suggested role dissonance and stress for special education teachers decreased when administrators engaged in substantive conversations. DiPaola and Walther-Thomas (2003), based on their review of the literature, reported improved outcomes for students with disabilities when principals attend to instruction, ensure valuable professional development, and show support for special education. Further, DiPaola and Walther-Thomas purport this administrative support affects teachers' use of instructional practices.

DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran and Walther-Thomas (2004) suggest that instructional leadership of the principal is one important dimension needed to promote effective special education practices. They emphasize the role of the principal in keeping abreast of current research while setting high expectations for faculty and providing professional development guiding improvements. Also, DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran and Walther-Thomas (2004) note principals, acting as instructional leaders of special education programs, are visible in classrooms, supportive of professional development, assist teachers to analyze their own instruction and student performance, and nurture a supportive climate.

In fact, Jacobson, Johnson, Ylimaki, and Giles (2005) in their investigation of effective schools, noted that special education teachers particularly "felt marginalized" (p. 612) when they perceived principals focused more on test results than on the

individual needs of their special education students. Lyons and Algozzine (2006) examined the perceptions of principals in North Carolina and found that the state accountability testing highly influenced principals' sense of responsibility of "aligning the curriculum to the testing" (p. 11), which can result in a narrowed focus to teach only the skills on the tests and test completion strategies (Johnson et al., 2007). McGhee and Lew (2007) looked at teacher perceptions of principal support and effective writing instruction. While McGhee and Lew primarily intended to identify the relationship between principal training and teacher perceptions, one conclusion they noted through their use of open-ended written responses was the "powerful influence principals have on the work and school lives of teachers and their students" (p. 370). The teachers repeated remarks about the perception of principal support or the lack of support affecting writing instruction in schools. Further, McGhee and Lew noted that the same teachers suggested frustration when principals emphasized high state test scores instead of "sound writing instruction" (p. 372).

Klingener, Ahwee, Pilonieta and Menendez (2003) examined barriers and facilitators to teachers' sustained use of research-based practices learned through professional development. Using qualitative interviews, logs, and classroom observations, they found teachers implementing the practices at the lowest levels often cited a lack of administrative support as one barrier. Further, teachers who continued use of the recommended practices at high levels most frequently reported administrative support as an important facilitator to their use of the practices. The teachers suggested principals providing the needed materials as one factor of administrative support. Also, the majority of the teachers considered moderate level implementers indicated a perception that their administrators did not support their use of the practices. However,

Klingener et al. (2003) did not investigate further into the differences between the perceptions to understand why some felt support and others did not.

Transition Education and Perceived Administrative Support

Pocock et al. (2002) cited the importance of administrative support to overcome implementation barriers and to support the instruction of self-advocacy in their program called Learning and Education about Disabilities (LEAD). The program incorporated practices supported in the research to teach students with learning disabilities self-advocacy skills and other skills supporting self-determination. Support from the principal and eventually the district superintendent fostered changes in the culture of the school to promote opportunities for students to learn and exercise self-advocacy skills.

Integrating transition education. In fact, teachers reported one barrier to providing transition education was the perception that it was not a main concern in high school (Karvonen et al., 2004; Lubbers et al., 2008). Eisenman and Chamberlin (2001) examined the instruction and assessment of self-determination in a high school and found that teachers reported concerns about the emphasis of instruction on state standards limiting time to develop an integrated instructional model. This influence of the accountability system on principals may unintentionally contribute to the teacher perceptions that transition education is not an area of instruction supported by school administrators, limiting their use of recommended practices. However, a clear description of how principals communicate support of transition education is not provided in the literature.

Recognizing the need to integrate transition education into the general education curriculum, Izzo, Yurick, Nagaraja, and Novak (2010) conducted a recent study examining the outcomes of a 21st century curriculum. Designed to integrate reading,

writing, and technology instruction with transition education, students with or without disabilities explored careers, completed transition assessments, and developed their own plans for transition. Izzo et al. noted the lack of urban schools participating in the study as a limitation and suggested a barrier to recruiting the urban schools was a "lack of administrative support" (p. 103). Without the clear support of administrators, teachers may experience significant limitations in their ability to incorporate effective transition education practices into the general curriculum and into the school.

Transition education programs. Karvonen et al. (2004) studied six school programs considered model sites for promoting self-determination of students with disabilities, a practice identified in the literature as a predictor of successful postschool outcomes (Gerber et al., 1992; Goldberg et al., 2003; Lindstrom et al., 2007; Test, Mazotti et al., 2009; Thoma & Getzel, 2005). Karvonen et al. involved 355 people across the sites, including teachers, teaching assistants, school administrators, support staff, agency representatives, students, graduates, and their family members. Karvonen et al. identified the most common barrier identified at the sites as "lukewarm administrative support" (p. 36). They noted that school sites with strong support of an administrator experienced rapid changes throughout the program, while sites where teachers perceived a lack of support from administration experienced limited success in the spread of practices to promote self-determination of students with disabilities. However, the researchers did not provide further details of the administrative behaviors teachers perceived as supportive of these model programs.

Hasazi, Furney, and Destefano (1999), using cross-case analysis, investigated nine school sites across the United States to identify supports and barriers to implementing the requirements of transition education defined in IDEA. Interviews, site

observations and document reviews provided data suggesting specific factors supported the implementation of transition education policies and practices at the model sites, including "leading in visionary, supportive, and inclusive ways" (p. 560). Hasazi et al. (1999) noted the importance of leadership empowering teachers to adopt promising transition education practices, to try new instructional methods, form agency partnerships, collaborate with families, and obtain professional development. The researchers noted participants credited numerous administrators providing the critical leadership needed to support the programs. They described the creation of a common vision and structure, along with promoting awareness of policies and practices. However, while Hasazi et al. (1999) reported the importance of leadership in supporting the use of recommended transition practices, the specific leadership behaviors of the site administrator were not described, but incorporated into the overall leadership of the programs including district and state level administrators.

The literature indicates that transition education influences the outcomes of students with disabilities, yet limited information is available examining the programs and their use of the recommended transition education practices. While researchers began initial identification of specific predictors and practices, they recommended further examination of the transition program as a whole, investigating the inclusion of practices and predictors providing the most impact on independent living, employment, and postsecondary education. The research provides a general description of the school leadership role in supporting special education programs and instruction, and the importance of administrative support is described in model transition programs research. However, administrative support in relation to effective transition education programs and teachers' use of recommended transition education practices is not provided. Also,

the role of the principal, when leadership of transition education is included in studies, is not described with any detail that is useful to practitioners.

Chapter 3

Method

Philosophical Foundations

I acknowledge that I identify with the objectivist epistemology (Crotty, 1998) explanation that "meaning, and therefore meaningful reality, exists as such apart from the operation of any consciousness" (p. 8). Yet, in considering my beliefs about the nature of human experience and knowledge, I consider how my own experiences contribute to my knowledge, providing meaning through context. I support that we all encounter different cultures and perspectives that help us to construct meaning and therefore develop our own realities of the world. I place importance on identifying and understanding the multiple perspectives of different groups of people, a constructionist characteristic. Because of this, my epistemological stance is eclectic, and this mixture of my theoretical perspectives guides my choice to pursue mixed-methods research with school principals and teachers.

Objectively understanding the level of implementation of recommended transition education practices, and examining the relationship between their use and perceptions of administrative support answers initial questions. However, exploring teachers' perceptions of the support behaviors seen as most important to teachers and seeking an understanding of administrative support behaviors and transition education practices in context requires a subjective approach. Therefore, based on this eclectic view, I used a mixed methods approach to explore the complex concepts of educational leadership or perceptions of "administrative support" and implementation of recommended transition education practices. I approach this mixed methods research

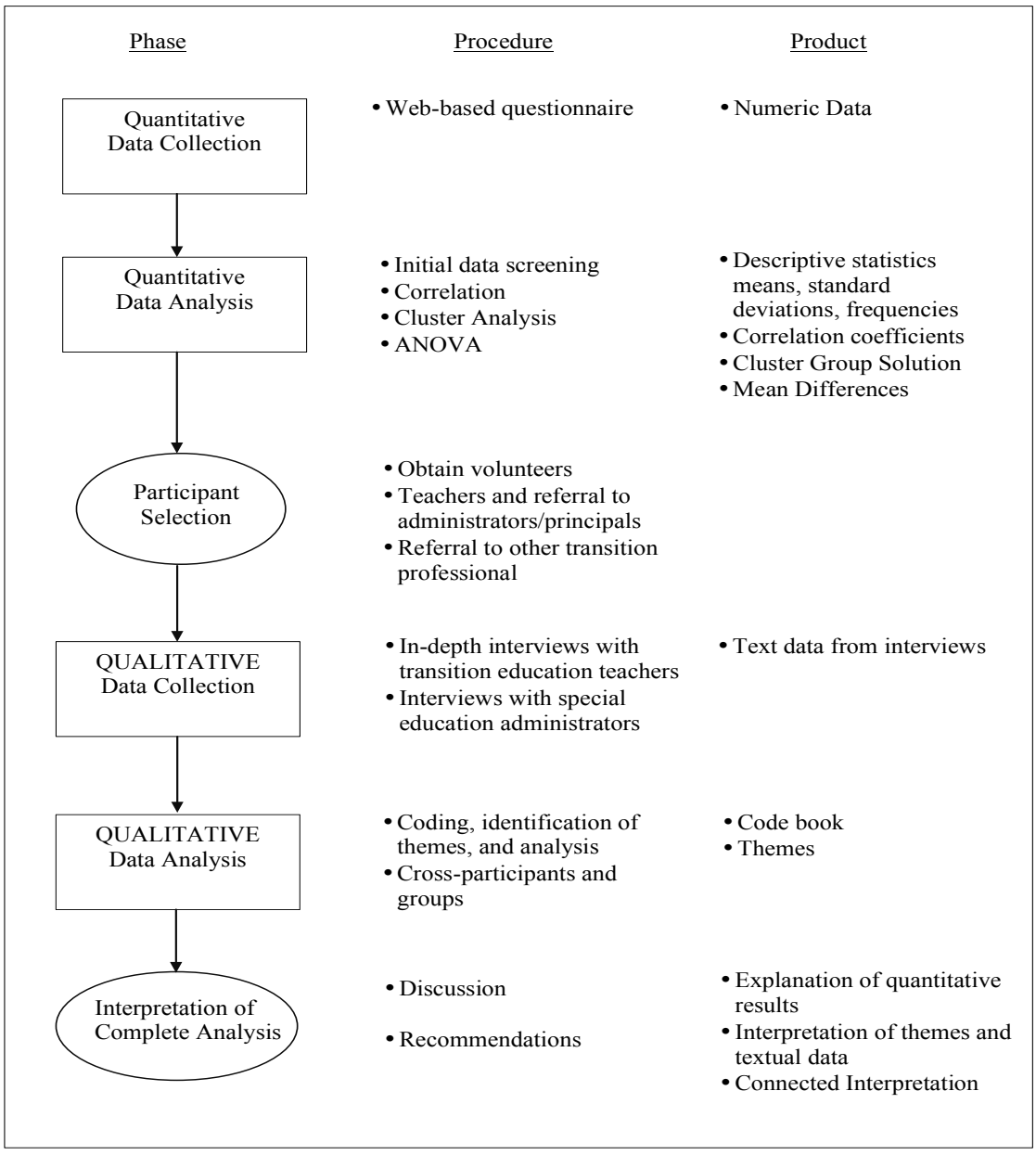
with the epistemological view (Crotty, 1998) or worldview of a pragmatist, as described by Creswell (2007), with the idea of examining a problem on multiple levels, using varied forms of data. In using the mixed-method sequential study, I seek definition and contextual understanding of the problem to identify aspects of potential solutions for future policy development and training. In educational research, I understand the value of both "objective and subjective" (p. 26) as suggested by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) and seek to use both quantitative and qualitative data to answer specific questions.

I find myself aligned with the postpositivist theoretical perspective (Crotty, 1998). I respect the positivist belief of being completely objective and absolute in findings and I support researchers following structured methods. However, I also acknowledge that there are limits to my research and there are multiple truths and meanings to be discovered. I recognize my limits as a researcher, and know that while I try to remain objective and discover meaning, I will be influenced by my own beliefs, experiences, and realities. The postpositivist theoretical perspective allows my research to build on my pragmatic epistemological stance, confirming the need to combine both quantitative and qualitative data to address the research questions proposed and provide for a deeper level of understanding of teachers' practices and principal leadership. With this belief, I identify most with the postpositivist perspective and the idea that my research findings will help me discover multiple meanings and truths, to guide me in gaining further insight and knowledge about the beliefs of teachers and principals. This in-depth understanding will shape my future research, influence the structure of future professional development for principals, and guide the support of teachers providing

transition education to students with disabilities to improve postschool outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Sequential explanatory mixed method design. This study follows a sequential explanatory mixed method design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) and a visual model representing the design of this study is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Visual Model for Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Design



In the first quantitative phase of the study, I developed and used a web-based survey to collect quantitative data from special education teachers at high schools in Oklahoma. I utilized the quantitative phase to explore the relationship between the implementation of recommended transition practices and their perceptions of administrative support, to identify the components of administrative support perceived as important by the teachers, as well as the transition practices the teachers identified as important. First, I analyzed the teachers' responses on the two parts of the survey and then, based on exploratory cluster analysis, I identified groups and examined the differences between the groups. I used the data gathered in the quantitative phase to further group and analyze the qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) gathered in the second phase of the study.

In the second phase, I utilized a phenomenological approach to generate qualitative data. I conducted semi-structured individual interviews to further explore the relationship between the implementation of recommended transition practices and their perceptions of administrative support. The use of a phenomenological approach provided further understanding of the teachers' and administrators' experiences providing or supervising transition education for students with disabilities.

In considering the weighting (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), I assigned the qualitative data slight precedence in this study because the qualitative data contributes to the in-depth explanation of the quantitative data based on the perspectives of the participants involved in supervising and providing transition education services. The initial quantitative phase occurred first in the sequence to explore the relationship between components of administrative support and use of recommended transition

education practices. Then, at the beginning of the second phase of the study, I used the quantitative data to develop the interview questions based on the results of the statistical analysis and to recruit volunteers for the qualitative phase of the study. Next, quantitative data identified groups of teachers with similar patterns of responses, which contributed to the qualitative analysis of the interview data collected in the second phase of the study. Finally, I integrated the results of both phases during the discussion of the outcomes.

Research Design

Mixed methods research. The combining of qualitative and quantitative data in studies, while used frequently in the past, only recently promoted discussions about the use of mixed methods (Creswell, 2007), multimethod (Schutz, Nichols & Rodgers, 2009), and multi-strategy (Bryman, 2006) as specific research design or methodology (Bryman, 2006, Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Schutz et al.,2009). While studies in the social sciences regularly combined qualitative and quantitative methods (Bryman, 2006, Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Schutz et al., 2009; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), debates continue in education about the mixed-methods research paradigms, typologies, and terminology (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

While researchers may not agree on the paradigms, typologies, and terminology of mixed methods research, definitions of mixed method research include the integration or mixing of both quantitative and qualitative data during the research process to better answer and understand the research problem (Bryman, 2006, Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Schutz et al., 2009; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) noted that mixed methods is the name most often used for the

integrated research approach, and this term will be utilized throughout this study.

The rationale for using the mixed methods approach is that "mixing" the data provides a clearer understanding of the research and allows the merger or connection of the two types of data, with one type of data expanding or building on the other (Creswell, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Schutz et al. (2009) suggested that combining the approaches, from their pragmatic standpoint, allows the research to be viewed as a "problem-solving activity" (p. 4) utilizing both research methods. They also noted that the use of both quantitative and qualitative data may "bring more to the researchers' understanding than they anticipated at the outset" (p. 111). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) proposed the use of mixed methods research to address specific types of research questions requiring both types of data.

Finally, Schutz et al. (2009) noted the complexity of social sciences research, using quantitative data collected through surveys to explain unobservable constructs. While Mertens (2005) suggested that qualitative research "consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (p. 229). Conducting mixed methods research provides the opportunity to integrate both types of data: quantitative data used to measure and compare the unobservable construct, and qualitative data obtained to allow the researcher to "see" or understand the construct through participant descriptions and meanings generated in context.

Bryman (2006) conducted a content analysis of 232 social sciences research articles in order to examine the research methods, designs, and justifications for combining quantitative and qualitative data. Bryman found the rationale for the use of both types of data provided before analyzing the data did not always match with the

actual practice employed in the study. Therefore, he suggests caution in the naming and structuring of the approach to combining quantitative and qualitative data, acknowledging that while it may provide "a sense of rigor…and guidance" (p. 98), it may also limit the designs used.

However, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) advanced a framework for combining quantitative and qualitative data, and suggested mixed methods research as a research design, a "plan of action that links the philosophical assumptions to specific methods" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Crotty 1998). They propose four types of mixed methods research designs: triangulation, embedded, explanatory, and exploratory. Utilizing a mixed methods design will allow for adjustments to design based on the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data in the two phases of the study as suggested by Bryman (2006), while following the framework of Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) to name and define the design for clarification of the process followed during the study.

Based on the research problem, researchers must consider the design variants and three specific factors: timing, weighting, and mixing (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Timing specifically requires consideration of "when the data are analyzed and interpreted" (p. 81) and may also suggest when the data are collected. Weighting reflects whether one method, quantitative or qualitative, will take precedence in the study. Lastly, mixing refers to the process used to join the different types of data and the mixing of the methods.

Procedures

The research questions drive the implementation order of the mixed methods

design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). My focus in this dissertation study was to begin the initial exploration into understanding transition education practices teachers identified themselves as using and to understand if a relationship existed between the use of the identified transition education practices and the perceptions of administrative support. As outlined in the literature review, educational leadership literature describes a relationship between educational leadership and student achievement, yet has not included transition education and postschool outcomes. Therefore, I approached the study wanting to first identify whether any type of relationship existed through the use of quantitative methods, and then to explore experiences for more in depth understanding of the relationship or lack of relationship, through the use of qualitative data. Further, the use of quantitative data in the first phase provided guidance for the questions utilized in the qualitative phase of the study. With the limited research on leadership of transition education programs and specifically school site leadership, the use of quantitative survey data for the initial phase of the study provided an broad overview examining the existence of a relationship, while the second phase utilized the qualitative data to provide detailed insight and support of the quantitative results, while suggesting future investigations.

In the first quantitative phase of the study, I developed and used a web-based survey to collect quantitative data from special education teachers at high schools in Oklahoma. I utilized the quantitative phase to explore the relationship between the implementation of recommended transition practices and their perceptions of administrative support, to identify the components of administrative support perceived as important by the teachers, as well as the transition practices the teachers identified as

important. First, I analyzed the teachers' responses on the two parts of the survey and then, based on exploratory cluster analysis, I identified groups and examined the differences between the groups. I used the data gathered in the quantitative phase to further analyze the qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) gathered in the second phase of the study.

In the second phase, I utilized a phenomenological approach to generate qualitative data. I conducted semi-structured individual interviews to further explore the relationship between the implementation of recommended transition practices and teachers' perceptions of administrative support. The use of a phenomenological approach provided further understanding of the teachers' and administrators' experiences providing or supervising transition education for students with disabilities.

In considering the weighting (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), I determined both phases as equally contributing due to the initial exploratory nature of this study. The initial quantitative phase occurred first in the sequence to explore the relationship between components of administrative support and use of recommended transition education practices. Then, at the beginning of the second phase of the study, I used the quantitative data to develop the interview questions based on the results of the statistical analysis and to recruit volunteers for the qualitative phase of the study. Next, quantitative data results were compared to the qualitative data collected in the second phase of the study. Qualitative data were analyzed in a phenomenological-like manner to understand the experiences and perceptions of the teachers and the administrators and expand upon the quantitative results. Finally, I integrated the results of both phases during the discussion of the outcomes.

Targeted Population and Sample

The target populations in this study consisted of high school special education teachers, school principals or assistant principals, and one other professional, such as the special education director or transition coordinator assigned to the high school during the Spring 2010 semester and involved in providing transition education and services to students with disabilities in Oklahoma. The survey target population included transition educators, such as teachers, transition coordinators or specialists, and other educators who may fill dual roles providing transition education and services.

Phase I quantitative questionnaire distribution and response. For the first, quantitative phase of the study, I used the electronic mailing list maintained by the OU Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment. The Zarrow Center electronic mailing list contains addresses for approximately 1,235 educators who have attended at least one professional development activity provided by Zarrow Center staff in cooperation with the Oklahoma State Department of Special Education. I screened this list for email addresses belonging to other entities, such as the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services, the Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Council, the Oklahoma State Department of Education, etc. I eliminated these addresses from the list to focus on the educators contained on the Zarrow Center electronic mailing list. This resulted in a list containing 775 email addresses.

I sent an email request to the 775 addresses inviting the high school special education teachers providing transition education in Oklahoma public schools, to complete the survey on Survey Monkey. The email invited all recipients who met the participation criteria to complete the online survey by clicking on a link contained in the

email that redirected them to the Survey Monkey website and the survey. Once the recipient indicated consent to participate the questionnaire became available for responses.

Also, in the final round recruiting, an additional list of 117 email addresses was generated using a list of mailing addresses for all public schools that is available online from the Oklahoma State Department of Education. This mailing list was used to search the Internet for publically available email contact information for the school principal or a general school email address. This invitation sent to only these 117 email addresses specifically requested the recipients forward the recruitment email to teachers involved in providing special education services in their school. Based on the recommendation from an employee of University of Oklahoma College of Education Center for Educational Development and Research (CEDaR), all emailed invitation requests contained 10 to 15 email addresses to compensate for email servers configured to block bulk emailing. I utilized this method to effectively sample all of the schools in Oklahoma.

For the initial round of recruiting, I sent emails to the remaining 775 addresses from the Zarrow Center electronic mailing list and eight emails were returned with an indication of failed delivery or no address. I received emails from five recipients indicating they no longer taught transition or were not teachers and two recipients requesting removal from the list. From the first emailing, 87 respondents attempted to complete the survey and two declined participation.

I sent the second round of emails to 706 email addresses. I deleted all email addresses that returned as invalid or ineligible in the first round, removed the ineligible

participants, and those requesting removal. I also removed the email addresses of all respondents who completed the survey and provided an email address. This second round of emails also included 18 newly added email addresses obtained for the Zarrow Center electronic mailing list. Round two returned three recipients who indicated they were not eligible to participate and five invitations returned as rejected emails. Round two resulted in an additional 39 participants, with two declining to participate, for a total of 126 responses.

I elected to extend the waiting period by one week as schools began mandated educational testing and sent out the third round of email invitations three weeks after the second round of invitations. I sent out the third and final round of email invitations to 670 email addresses from the Zarrow Center electronic mailing list. This email invitation also indicated this request was the final request for participation in the survey. From this emailing, one address returned as not existing, two recipients indicated they were not providing transition education due to student ages or other student needs, and one recipient requested removal from the list due to time constraints.

At this same point in the recruiting process, I sent an additional 117 emails, one to each of the public schools on the second list generated from the internet and the Oklahoma State Department of Education public school mailing address list available on the internet. The email requested that the recipient forward the email to the special education teachers in that school. This resulted in six emails returned as rejected or not handled by that server, three returned failed or problems with delivery, and two returned due to no such existing address.

Teachers submitted a total of 161 surveys, with seven teachers declining to participate by indicating non-consent, for a total of 154 login attempts to complete the survey. Of the 154 surveys submitted, 21 contained no responses and 11 lacked enough responses to be utilized (responding to less than half of the questions). I eliminated all of these cases. Finally, two participants did not respond to one complete section in the Recommended Transition Practices section (similar to not completing a page). I eliminated these cases based on all the questions measuring one transition construct. Finally, after conducting reliability and item analysis, I utilized the SPSS feature of missing data analysis to examine the data for any patterns in missing responses that appeared to be random. This identified 11 cases with one item left blank in the perceived administrative support of transition education section of the survey, one case with seven left blank, and one person with three items blank. Little's MCAR test designated this as "Missing Completely at Random" (p = .28) data (SPSS Inc., 2010). Also, in the use of transition education recommended practices section of the survey, this identified 12 cases with one item blank and one case with two items blank in different sections. The results of Little's MCAR test indicated significance for this data (p = .04) suggesting the data "Missing at Random" requiring imputation based on expectation-maximization (EM) methods (SPSS, Inc., 2010).

Phase II qualitative recruitment. For the second, qualitative phase of the study, I asked participants responding to the survey to provide a contact email address to participate in follow-up interviews (Mertens, 2005, p. 319). Schutz et al. (2009) refer to this method as a nested design, where a smaller sample is selected from within the larger sample initially used in the first phase of the research. I selected transition

educators who had completed the survey and agreed to be interviewed to further discuss transition education practices and perceptions of administrative support. First, I contacted all 110 respondents to the initial survey who provided an email address and asked to each to volunteer for follow-up interviews. I also included a request that teachers forward the recruitment email to the principal or assistant principal supervising transition education to enlist administrative participation in an interview, or to provide me with a contact email address for the administrator.

Next, I contacted by phone or email, all survey participants who responded to my initial interview email request and had volunteered for an interview. I called or emailed based on their individual requests in their responding emails. Once contacted, we agreed to interview locations or to conduct the interviews via phone. Additionally, I requested recommendations from each teacher interviewed of another transition education professional—such as the special education director or transition coordinator—to contact other transition professional and one supervisor who provided.

This resulted in a total of 10 interviews, with two interviews conducted on the phone at the request of the participant. The volunteers included seven teachers and three special education administrators, which included one transition education coordinator. Although I initially intended to interview school site administrators in order to understand the supervisor's experiences providing administrative support, I did not interview any principals, as I did not receive any email responses from principals during the interview recruiting process. During the interviews with the teachers, when I inquired about interviewing another person knowledgeable about transition education and administrative support, the teachers suggested that I should talk to the transition or

special education coordinator and special education directors. Teachers responding to the request for interviews suggested the special education directors or transition specialists provided supervision and direction for teaching transition education. Teachers nominated two of the special education administrators interviewed and one responded to the initial email interview request. In order to understand the supervisors' administrative support experience I elected to interview all three volunteers. Finally, to protect confidentiality linkages between participants were not explored, nor were any survey responses linked to participating individuals.

Phase I Quantitative Data Collection

The initial phase of the study examined the relationship between the teachers' perceptions of administrative support and their use of recommended transition education practices based on a simple descriptive questionnaire design, a "one-shot survey for the purpose of describing the characteristics of a sample at one point in time" (Mertens, 2005, p. 172). I designed a specific questionnaire due to the limited literature addressing transition education and teachers' perceptions of administrative support. The questionnaire contained three sections: eight demographic items in the first section; 28 items addressing the use of Recommended Transition Practices in the second section; and 29 items addressing Teachers' Perceptions of Administrative Support for Transition Education in the third section. Teachers completed the questionnaire via a web-based format designed in conjunction with the University of Oklahoma College of Education Center for Educational Development and Research (CEDaR). For further detailed description of the questionnaire, see the "Measurement Tool" section below.

Variables in the quantitative analysis. In the first phase of the study, I

analyzed the quantitative data, using descriptive statistics, correlational and cluster analysis, as well as Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), generated from the survey to directly address the first three questions and sub-questions: (a) How do special education teachers in the high schools across Oklahoma report implementation of recommended transition education practices? (What levels of practice do the teachers report? What practices do teachers consider important?), (b) How do special education teachers in the high schools across Oklahoma perceive "administrative support" of transition education? (What supports do teachers perceive they currently receive? What supports do teachers consider important?), and (c) What are the relationships between the reported implementation of recommended transition education practices and their perceptions of "administrative support?" Then, I utilized qualitative data to address the fourth question and related sub-questions (d) How do secondary special education teachers and special education administrators describe their experiences providing transition education and administrative support of transition education? (How are their descriptions different? How are their descriptions similar?)

Mertens (2005) suggests questions regarding relationships typically utilize "measures of different variables obtained from the same individuals at approximately the same time to gain a better understanding of factors that contribute to a more complex characteristic" (p. 154). In order to explore the relation between teachers' reports the implementation of recommended transition practices and their perceptions of administrative support, I used a survey to collect demographic data and teacher self-ratings of their use of the recommended transition practices as well as their perceptions of administrative support of their transition program.

For the first quantitative portion of the study and to address questions one and two described above, I utilized descriptive statistics—means, standard deviations, and frequency counts. I calculated grouped means for the five variables—Student Focused Planning, Student Development, Family Involvement, Program Structures and Attributes, and Interagency Collaboration (Kohler, 1996)—that measured the teachers' "use of recommended transition education practices," which served as the independent or explanatory variable in the quantitative analysis. I calculated grouped means for the four variables—Valuing Transition Education and Services, Encouraging the Teachers, Facilitating a Collaborative and Structured Environment for Transition Education and Services, and Providing Instructional Leadership—that measured teachers' "perceptions of administrative support" to function as the dependent or criterion variable (Mertens, 2005).

In the second quantitative analysis, I used exploratory cluster analysis to identify clusters or groups of teachers with similar profiles based on the response to the transition practices portion of the survey. The three teacher clusters served as the grouping variable, and the perceptions of administrative support again functioned as the dependent variable. This enabled examination of mean differences between the three groups. Further detailed descriptions of the configurations of these variables follow and are included in Table 4 and Table 5.

Use of Recommended Transition Practices. Again, for the first quantitative analysis, the outcome or criterion variable was the extent of implementation of recommended transition education practices. In the second analysis, the level of implementation of transition practices served as the clustering variable for the cluster

analysis and functioned as the grouping variable for the second quantitative analysis, an analysis of variance.

Development of survey tool. Portley, Martin, and Hennessey (2012) developed the 25-item Transition Program Practices Survey (TPPS) based on an extensive review of transition education literature. Portley et al. (2012) identified transition program components through an extensive literature review of the practices and predictors supported in current transition education literature as influencing the postschool outcomes of students with disabilities. The researchers then designed the TPPS to measure the percentage of students on a teacher's caseload who participated in the identified transition education practices. This data was compared to extant data gathered for reporting on Indicators 1, 2, 13, and 14 to monitor implementation of Part B of the IDEA for New Mexico's reporting on State Performance Plans (SPP) and Annual Performance Reports (APR). This assessment was reviewed to identify the transition education practices identified and measured by Portley et al. (2012). Martin, Hennessey, McConnell, Terry, and Willis (2012) developed constructs and measures for the 75 item Transition Assessment and Goal Generator (TAGG), a project funded by the U. S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research in 2010. The TAGG is designed to specifically identify areas of needed transition instruction for IEP team goal planning to improve students' postschool success. Martin et al. (2012) developed 10 constructs defining the predictors of successful postschool transition for students with disabilities based on their in-depth review of the transition literature. These constructs succinctly define the skills identified in the literature as influential and needed for successful postschool transition. A review

of the constructs guiding the development of TAGG items, and a review of the question stems contributed to the development of questions to measure the transition education practices variables identified in the review of research in Chapter 2.

Morningstar (2006) developed the 80-item Quality Indicators of Exemplary Transition Programs Needs Assessment which was recommended for self-evaluation of transition education practices and to set goals for development of school, district and state programs in transition. The survey first identifies the practices recommended in the transition literature and requests that the participants indicate the level to which the identified practice is implemented in the program. Further, the assessment asks participants to assign a value level to each item. This assessment was also reviewed as a cross-check for the items developed for the transition portion of the questionnaire developed for this study.

The items of the TPPS (Portley et al., 2012), the constructs guiding the development of the TAGG (Martin et al. (2012), and the practices identified by Morningstar (2006) were reviewed and cross-referenced with each other and Kohler's Taxonomy (1996). In addition, a review of the transition education literature was conducted to identify recommended transition education practices. However, the literature supporting transition education, until recently, contained limited empirical evidence supporting the practices recommended to teachers. As noted in the literature review, the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center in a partnership with the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, undertook the challenge of identifying the evidence-based transition education practices and predictors. Two meta-analyses conducted by Test, Fowler, Richter, White, Walker, Kohler, and Kortering (2009) and

Test, Mazzotti, Mustian, Fowler, Kortering, and Kohler (2009) specifically identified the practices and predictors supported in the transition research as influencing postschool outcomes for students with disabilities. These two analyses evaluated each study based on stringent criteria checklists developed by the research teams for evaluating evidence-based practices and quality correlational research prior to inclusion into the analyses. Practices and predictors identified in these two analyses contributed to the questionnaire item development, as the empirical research base in transition education practices, while developing, continues to be limited. Appendix B contains a chart cross-referencing the transition education practices and predictors identified in the Test, Mazzotti et al. (2009) and Test, Fowler et al. (2009) analyses and the evaluation tools reviewed to prepare this survey with Kohler's Taxonomy. The table in Appendix B and Table 1 containing the review of transition literature variables cross-referenced with Kohler's Taxonomy categories contributed to the construction of the transition portion of the survey. Table 3 contains a condensed list of the Recommended Transition Education Practices identified and the related questionnaire items measuring these practices or variables. The practices are grouped into variables based on Kohler's Taxonomy (1996).

Table 3

Taxonomy Variables, Identified Transition Education Practices, and Related Questionnaire Items Measuring the Practices/Variable.

Variable	Transition education practices
Student Focused Planning	• Teaching students to be involved in the IEP • Involving students in the IEP • Using appropriate transition assessment for IEP goals • Considering individual student strengths, interests, and preferences to develop IEP
Questionnaire items measuring this construct	
1. Students' IEPs link transition services and a course of study to postsecondary goals. 2. Students participate in the selection of postsecondary goals and annual transition goals. 3. Students' transition IEPs contain postsecondary goals and annual transition goals that are based on appropriate transition assessments. 4. Students' transition IEPs are based on students' strengths, interests, and preferences. 5. Students are taught to actively participate in the transition IEP meeting (e.g. Express opinions or choices, discuss goals, preferences strengths and needs, lead meeting). 6. Students attend the IEP meeting and actively participate in the meeting (e.g. Express opinions or choices, discuss goals, preferences strengths and needs, lead meeting).	
Variable	Transition education practices
Student Development	Independent Living Instruction • Learning independent living/self-care skills • Learning social skills Employment Skills Instruction Participating in... • vocational and occupational courses • career awareness and exploration • job-finding instruction • job training, internships, apprenticeships • work-study, paid employment Self-determination Instruction • Self-awareness • Goal setting and planning • Goal monitoring and adjusting • Seeking out support • Requesting accommodations based on rights • Accessing services in the community

Table 3 (continued)

Taxonomy Variables, Identified Transition Education Practices, and Related Questionnaire Items Measuring the practices/variable.

Questionnaire items measuring this construct
7. Students are provided with appropriate instruction and opportunities to learn independent living and/or self-care skills aligned with postsecondary goals.
8. Students are provided with appropriate instruction to learn social skills and opportunities to actively interact with classmates.
9. Students are provided with opportunities to participate in vocational and occupational courses or experiences.
10. Students participate in career awareness and exploration instruction to learn about a variety of postschool job options.
11. Students participate in job-finding instruction, including job readiness, social skills, and job application skills.
12. Students are provided opportunities to participate in job training, internships, or apprenticeship programs.
13. Students are provided with opportunities to obtain paid employment or enroll in work-study programs.
14. Students are taught about their individual strengths and limitations, and how those strengths and limitations affect the student in academic and non-academic situations.
15. Students are taught about their disability, to recognize positive and negative aspects of it, to understand their disability in context while not letting the disability completely define them as an individual.
16. Students are taught to set goals based on their interests and skills, and to make a plan to achieve those goals.
17. Students are taught to monitor progress on their goals and to adjust their goals based on feedback they receive and opportunities that are presented.
18. Students are provided with opportunities to develop problem-solving skills and taught to utilize different strategies to achieve goals when goals are not met.
19. Students are taught to access information on support services or community agencies.
20. Students are taught to identify situations when they need support, to specify the type of support needed, and who to seek out for support.
21. Students are taught how to talk about their disability and to request appropriate supports or accommodations according to their rights.

Variable	Transition education practices
Family Involvement	Family members... • participate in the planning process • are provided with transition education information • attend transition IEP meetings

Table 3 (continued)

Taxonomy Variables, Identified Transition Education Practices, and Related Questionnaire Items Measuring the practices/variable.

Questionnaire items measuring this construct
24. Family members attend transition IEP meetings. 25. Family members are provided with transition information, including information about available community resources, to support the student. 26. Family members participate in the transition planning process.

Variable	Transition education practices
Program Structure and Attributes	• Providing Community Based Instruction • Providing opportunities to participate in general education • Scheduling flexible based on needs

Questionnaire items measuring this construct
22. Students are provided instruction and experiences in the community, including vocational education, independent living skills instruction, and postsecondary educational experiences. 23. Students are provided with opportunities to appropriately and actively participate in the general education program, including academic and social activities. 27. Students' class schedules and programs are flexible to meet individual student needs.

Variable	Transition education practices
Interagency Collaboration	• Opportunities for students and families to access community agencies

Questionnaire items measuring this construct
28. Structured opportunities are facilitated for students and families to access support networks, community connections, and employment support (e.g. agency referrals, transition fairs).

These variables were measured on a 6-point scale with each number corresponding to a frequency—never, rarely, occasionally, frequently, almost always, or always—that transition education practice occurs. The survey of Transition Education Practices asked teachers to consider the students on their caseload in responding to the questions.

Teacher perceptions of administrative support. Many surveys have been developed to measure theoretical constructs of educational leadership, however, the surveys focus on the leadership of the entire school. One survey identified in the literature compared general and special education teachers' perceptions of administrative support and the effects of those perceptions on a variety of personal factors, job satisfaction, school commitment, and remaining employed in teaching (Littrell et al., 1994). Littrell et al. sampled teachers in Virginia and utilized an extensive survey method investigating "support items, job satisfaction, school commitment, personal health, and intent to stay in teaching" (p. 299). Additionally, Dolar (2008) utilized a survey to again compare general and special education perceptions and followed up with a qualitative component to the survey. Both Littrell et al. and Dolar described a survey construct based on a leadership support framework citing House (1981) and adapted to measure perceptions of principal support. The survey, validated and identified as reliable in both studies, was the only survey located specifically incorporating special education teacher perceptions of principal support and designed incorporating aspects unique to providing special education instruction. Further, both studies asked teachers to rate the importance of the designated support behaviors based on a one to four scale. However, I determined that while the four constructs of principal support measured in this survey somewhat aligned with my definitions of support, I also wanted to incorporate instructional leadership aspects and to reflect the support behaviors affecting achievement that I identified in my review of the updated educational leadership literature.

Summers, Gotto, Zuna, Marquis, Flemming and Turnbull (2005) developed the

School Administrative Structures Survey to identify the policies and practices required of schools to effectively support teachers instructional practices. In preliminary research, Summers et al. (2005) used the survey in conjunction with other measures of teaching practices with kindergarten teachers in Kansas. However, in examining this measure, the focus on administrative structure and management did not encompass all of the leadership support constructs I identified in the literature and were included in the core leadership practices proposed by Seashore Louis et al. (2010). Therefore, I developed a specific questionnaire based on the constructs identified below. The leadership framework proposed by Seashore Louis et al. (2010) is the theoretical foundation for this questionnaire and in developing the questions, I considered the skills, traits, attributes, and behaviors described in the four educational leadership core practices. In addition, I reviewed the educational leadership literature for traits, skills, and behaviors identified as contributing to student achievement, and cross-referenced these with items contained on both measures described above. The identified components of "administrative support" are listed in Table 4. Below each defined construct, the questionnaire items measuring that construct are identified. Items closely related to items in existing measures are cited in this table.

Table 4

Variables Aligned with the Administrative Support/Leadership Practices, and Related Questionnaire Items Addressing the Construct

Variable	Administrative support/Leadership practices
Providing Instructional Leadership for Transition Education and Services	• Instructional leadership • Accountability • Plan, coordinate, monitor and evaluate teaching and curriculum • Knowledgeable of curriculum, instruction • Providing guidance to seek out support

Table 4 (continued)

Variables Aligned with the Administrative Support/Leadership Practices, and Related Questionnaire Items Addressing the Construct

Questionnaire items measuring this construct	
29. School administrators provide frequent, helpful feedback about my performance. (Dolar, 2008; Littrell et al., 1994) 39. School administrators understand the transition education program and what I do as a teacher. 46. School administrators actively participate in transition education meetings, including student IEP meetings and planning/evaluation meetings. 49. School administrators use data to monitor student outcomes and the effectiveness of transition education. 52. School administrators identify resources or support personnel to contact for specific problems that he/she is unable to solve. (Dolar, 2008; Littrell et al., 1994)	
Variable	Administrative support/Leadership practices
Valuing Transition Education and Services	• Defining and communicating a clear school mission, purposes and goals • Focusing the school/teachers on goals for student achievement • Focusing the teachers' attention on expectations for student achievement • Intellectual stimulation • Consumer oriented vision • Organizational culture • Ideals and beliefs • Affirmation • Organizational climate
Questionnaire items measuring this construct	
37. School administrators support the goals and expectations of the transition education program. 38. School administrators support flexible scheduling to address students' individual transition needs. 40. School administrators are knowledgeable of content standards related to transition education. 45. School administrators ensure students have access to all education options available. 47. School administrators do not allow state accountability testing to interfere with teachers providing quality transition education and services. (McGhee & Lew, 2007) 48. School administrators model a belief in or value of transition education. 56. School administrators provide sufficient financial resources to meet the individual transition education needs of each of my students. (Summers et al., 2005)	

Table 4 (continued)

Variables Aligned with the Administrative Support/Leadership Practices, and Related Questionnaire Items Addressing the Construct

Variable	Administrative support/Leadership practices
Encouraging the Teachers Providing Transition Education and Services	• Supporting staff, recognition, approachable, seeking new ideas, developing human resources • Caring • Promoting and monitoring teacher learning and professional development • Situational awareness • Visibility • Contingent rewards • Relationship • Providing general support/open door • Providing support for teachers with parents
Questionnaire items measuring this construct	
30. School administrators are supportive of my decisions and ideas. 33. School administrators recognize and appreciate the work I do. 34. I am encouraged by my school administrators to attend professional development. 36. School administrators act as a liaison and support me in my interactions with parents, as needed. 41. School administrators work with me to solve problems I experience associated with providing transition education and services. 44. School administrators promote an atmosphere of caring, trust, and cooperation among teachers and supervisors. 50. School administrators show appreciation for quality teaching, innovation, and new ideas. (Summers et al., 2005) 57. School administrators are a visible presence in the transition education program/ my classroom.	
Variable	Administrative support/Leadership practices
Facilitating a Collaborative and Structured Environment for Transition Education and Services	• Being easily accessible • Providing mentoring opportunities for new teachers • School structure and social networks • Cooperation, work together, shared leadership, parental involvement • Managerial • Flexibility • Orderly and supportive environment • Support for discipline • Instructional resources aligned with purposes • Listen to teachers concerns

Table 4 (continued)

Variables Aligned with the Administrative Support/Leadership Practices, and Related Questionnaire Items Addressing the Construct

Variable	Administrative support/Leadership practices
Facilitating a Collaborative and Structured Environment for Transition Education and Services (continued)	• Accessibility • Involving teachers in decision making • Resources for program, time for duties • Creating structures and opportunities for teacher collaboration
Questionnaire items measuring this construct	
31. School administrators are easy to approach, maintain an open-door policy. 32. School administrators take my opinion into consideration when making decisions that affect my work. 35. School administrators "create structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate" and plan together. (Seashore Louis et al., 2010, p. 72) 42. School administrators provide time and resources to evaluate and redesign the program to incorporate current recommended practices. 43. School administrators solicit my advice and opinions about transition education and services. 51. School administrators encourage and support the development of collaborative partnerships with agencies and businesses to improve the quality of transition services. 53. School administrators ensure the environment is orderly and supportive of teachers focusing on instruction 54. School administrators allot time for teachers to work with parents and students to conduct quality transition assessment and planning. 55. School administrators distribute resources equitably based on the unique needs of each program. (Dolar, 2008; Littrell et al., 1994)	

These variables were measured on a continuous 6-point Likert-type scale in the questionnaire, asking teachers their level of agreement—from strongly agree to strongly disagree—with each of the statements about the support they receive from their administrator.

Measurement tool. I developed a questionnaire for this study due to the lack of a specific instrument designed for use with secondary schools' transition education

programs and due to the limited literature investigating the leadership of transition education. The survey contains three sections: eight demographic items in the first section; 28 items addressing the use of recommended transition practices in the second section; and 29 items addressing teachers' perceptions of administrative support for transition education in the third section.

The first set of questions collected demographic characteristics and contained eight total questions. This included four single response multiple-choice questions that asked the respondents to identify the location of the school (rural, suburban, or urban), the total number of students in the school, the number of years of experience teaching, and the primary administrator responsible for supervising the transition program in which they worked. Two questions asked participants to select all of the options that applied so as to identify the grades to which they provided transition education and the professional development seminars attended. Finally, two open-ended questions required participants identify the number of special education teachers in the school and the total number of building administrators.

The second section of the questionnaire, measuring the use of recommended transition practices, asked teachers to select a number (1 to 6) indicating the frequency students on their caseload participate in each of the transition education activities. These variables were measured on a 6-point scale, with each number corresponding to a frequency—never (0), rarely (1%-25%), occasionally (25%-50%), frequently (50%-75%), almost always (75%-99%), or always (100%)—that transition education practice occurs. I elected to utilize a 6-point scale in order to eliminate a neutral choice option.

The third section asked teachers to indicate perceptions of the type of

administrative support received and the importance of that type of support to their teaching and use of recommended transition practices. The third section used a Likert-type scale and asked teachers to what extent they agreed or disagreed with specific statements about the leadership practices of the administrator. These variables were measured on a 6-point scale, with each number corresponding to a level of agreement—1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Moderately Disagree), 3 (Slightly Disagree), 4 (Slightly Agree), 5 (Moderately Agree), or 6 (Strongly Agree).

Each of the items in the Recommended Transition Practices section and the Perceived Administrative Support of Transition Education section asked the respondent to indicate if they believed the behavior or skill described in the question was important by selecting "yes" or "no." Finally, I requested the participants to enter an email address as a contact for a possible follow-up interview in order to recruit participants for the qualitative portion of the study.

Reliability and validity. I developed a questionnaire for this study due to the lack of a specific instrument designed for use with secondary schools transition education programs and due to the limited literature investigating the leadership of transition education. The items used to measure perceptions about transition education practices are based on my review of transition education literature, and the review of three existing transition education measurements: *Transition Assessment and Goal Generator* (Martin, Hennessey, McConnell, Terry, and Willis, 2012), the *Transition Program Practices Evaluation* (Portley, Martin & Hennessey, 2012) and the *Quality Indicators of Exemplary Transition Programs Needs Assessment* (Morningstar, 2006).

The items developed to measure perceptions about the importance and type of

administrative support are based on my review of the educational leadership literature, the leadership framework and research from *Learning From Leadership-Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning* (Seashore Louis et al., 2010) and review of two existing leadership surveys: *Survey of Principal Support* (Dolar, 2008; Littrell et al., 1994), the *School Administrative Structures* (Summers et al., 2005).

Validity. This survey was developed specifically for this study due to the limited literature investigating the leadership of transition education. This questionnaire was revised based on feedback from transition experts prior to IRB submission and approval. Five transition education experts currently working in the public schools or other state agencies, such as vocational rehabilitation or the Oklahoma State Department of Education, reviewed the transition portion of the questionnaire. Five educational leadership experts reviewed the administrative support section of the questionnaire for item clarity, content, and relevance. The five educational leadership reviewers all work in education administration or previously worked in education administration. The questionnaire was revised eight times prior to expert review, and then revised two further times based on the changes suggested by the reviewers. Finally, five educational committee members reviewed the questionnaire.

Item analyses. As a component of this study, I designed a survey instrument to provide initial quantitative insight into administrative support and implementation of transition education. I utilized item analysis to support the valid measurement of the constructs I defined based on my review of the literature. However, this tool contributed to the exploratory nature of this study and in depth assessment tool development statistical analyses were not needed nor the focus of this study.

I conducted item analyses on the 28 items hypothesized to assess the implementation of recommended transition education practices. Each of the items on this first section of the survey was correlated with its own scale (with the item removed) and with each of the other four scales measuring the use of recommended transition practices.

The items proposed to measure the construct Student Focused Planning (SFP) all correlated ranging from *r* =.67 to r =.80. Two items, "Students are taught to actively participate in the transition IEP meeting" and "Students attend the IEP meeting and actively participate in the meeting" also correlated somewhat highly (*r = .59)* with the Student Development (SD) variable. However, both items demonstrated stronger relationships with items in the Student Focused Planning (SFP) scale and based on construct definitions were retained within the original SFP measure. The SFP measure produced a coefficient alpha of .90.

All items were retained for the Family Involvement (FI) portion of the survey with correlations ranging from r = .66 to r = .73. One item, "Family members participate in the transition planning process," correlated with the SD measure (r = .59) however, inter-item correlations indicated stronger correlation with the FI variable and a significantly lower alpha for this measure if this item were removed. The Family Involvement variable Cronbach alpha was .83, suggesting satisfactory reliability for this exploratory study.

The other three measures of the of the Recommended Transition Practices portion of the survey: Student Development (SD); Program Structures and Attributes (PSA); and Interagency Collaboration (IC), required further analysis and consideration

of possible restructuring. Table 5 summarizes the original configuration of these sections. The items in italics correlated with other scales within the survey and therefore required consideration of restructuring within the survey.

Table 5

Correlations of Each Transition Item with Its Own Scale after Removing Item (in Bold Type) and with the Other Scales *items in italics correlated with other scales within the survey*

Survey Item	Variables				
	Student Focused Planning	Student Develop-ment	Program Structures and Attributes	Family Involve-ment	Interagency
1. Students' IEPs link transition services and a course of study to postsecondary goals.	**.76**	.49	.29	.20	.20
2. Students participate in the selection of postsecondary goals and annual transition goals.	**.67**	.45	.38	.26	.26
3. Students' transition IEPs contain postsecondary goals and annual transition goals that are based on appropriate transition assessments.	**.69**	.47	.36	.29	.30
4. Students' transition IEPs are based on students' strengths, interests, and preferences.	**.80**	.47	.33	.23	.23
5. Students are taught to actively participate in the transition IEP meeting.	**.73**	.59	.25	.21	.21
6. Students attend the IEP meeting and actively participate in the meeting.	**.70**	.59	.42	.30	.30
7. Students are provided with appropriate instruction and opportunities to learn independent living and/or self-care skills aligned with postsecondary goals.	.49	**.57**	.45	.37	.34
8. Students are provided with appropriate instruction to learn social skills and opportunities to actively interact with classmates.	.32	**.66**	.61	.38	.49

Table 5 (continued)

Correlations of Each Transition Item with Its Own Scale after Removing Item (in Bold Type) and with the Other Scales.

Survey Item	Variables				
	Student Focused Planning	Student Develop-ment	Program Structures and Attributes	Family Involve-ment	Interagency
9. Students are provided with opportunities to participate in vocational and occupational courses or experiences.	.37	**.53**	.47	.40	.39
10. Students participate in career awareness and exploration instruction to learn about a variety of postschool job options.	.49	**.74**	.51	.46	.43
11. Students participate in job-finding instruction, including job readiness, social skills, and job application skills.	.47	**.80**	.57	.44	.50
12. Students are provided opportunities to participate in job training, internships, or apprentice programs.	.34	**.67**	*.54*	.36	.50
13. Students are provided with opportunities to obtain paid employment or enroll in work-study programs.	.16	**.43**	.34	.23	.39
14. Students are taught about their individual strengths and limitations, and how those strengths and limitations affect the student in academic and non-academic situations.	.57	**.78**	.37	.44	.50
15. Students are taught about their disability, to recognize positive and negative aspects of it, to understand their disability in context while not letting the disability completely define them as an individual.	.59	**.79**	.34	.42	.42
16. Students are taught to set goals based on their interests and skills, and to make a plan to achieve those goals.	.62	**.81**	.53	.57	.45

Table 5 (continued)

Correlations of Each Transition Item with Its Own Scale after Removing Item (in Bold Type) and with the Other Scales.

Survey Item	Variables				
	Student Focused Planning	Student Develop-ment	Program Structures and Attributes	Family Involve-ment	Interagency
17. Students are taught to monitor progress on their goals and to adjust their goals based on feedback they receive and opportunities that are presented.	.54	**.81**	.51	.46	.51
18. Students are provided with opportunities to develop problem-solving skills and taught to utilize different strategies to achieve goals when goals are not met.	.57	**.81**	.58	.43	.58
19. Students are taught to access information on support services or community agencies.	.53	**.83**	.60	.51	.60
20. Students are taught to identify situations when they need support, to specify the type of support needed, and who to seek out for support.	.54	**.80**	.57	.45	.57
21. Students are taught how to talk about their disability and to request appropriate supports or accommodations according to their rights.	.51	**.79**	.52	.41	.52
24. Family members attend transition IEP meetings.	.36	.33	.48	**.66**	.28
25. Family members are provided with transition information, including information about available community resources, to support the student.	.44	.48	.49	**.73**	.39
26. Family members participate in the transition planning process.	.51	.59	.54	**.67**	.43
22. Students are provided instruction and experiences in the community, including vocational education, independent living skills instruction, and postsecondary educational experiences.	.39	.58	**.51**	.42	.53

Table 5 (continued)

Correlations of Each Transition Item with Its Own Scale after Removing Item (in Bold Type) and with the Other Scales.

Survey Item	Variables				
	Student Focused Planning	Student Develop-ment	Program Structures and Attributes	Family Involve-ment	Interagency
23. Students are provided with opportunities to appropriately and actively participate in the general education program, including academic and social activities.	.29	.47	**.55**	.57	.38
27. Students' class schedules and programs are flexible to meet individual student needs.	.28	.41	**.51**	.42	.55
28. Structured opportunities are facilitated for students and families to access support networks, community connections, and employment support (e.g. agency referrals, transition fairs).	.30	.63	.62	.43	*(1 item)*

Note. The items in italics correlated with other scales within the survey and therefore required consideration of restructuring within the survey.

After thorough review of the constructs and questions, I conducted further item analyses to determine if the scales required restructuring. Item 13, "Students are provided with opportunities to obtain paid employment or enroll in work-study programs" showed correlation with the Interagency Collaboration item (.39) and Program Structures and Attributes (.34). The same item demonstrated low correlations with the questions in the Student Development scale (.19 to .43) with the exception of item 12 "Students are provided with opportunities to participate in job training, internships, or apprentice programs. Item analysis indicated a slight change in Cronbach's alpha for the Student Development scale with the item removed (.947 to .951). However, the questions, while somewhat overlapping the construct of Program

Structures and Attributes, also measured employment or vocational opportunities and instruction. Therefore, I re-examined the items measuring vocational and employment opportunities and instruction within the Student Development construct scale. This scale contained the majority of the questions (15) based on the more numerous studies supporting these use of these practices. Of the 15 questions, five items—9, 10, 11, 12, and 13—all addressed employment and vocational opportunities, while the other 10 items reflected self-advocacy, self-awareness, independent living skills, and goal setting. Based on this, I conducted further item analysis and reliability measures to determine if the Student Development construct should be split into two scales or variables, one specifically addressing employment.

The Interagency Agreement measurement consisted of only one item, which correlated significantly with the Student Development scale (.63) and Program Structures scale (.62). Based on this and re-examining the constructs, I considered moving Item 28, "Structured opportunities are facilitated for students and families to access support networks, community connections, and employment support." This one item measured the Interagency Collaboration construct and may measure the structures of the school program allowing for the planning and time to provide interagency collaboration, as well as the support for an event, such as a transition fair. This reflects the Program Structures and Attributes construct more closely than the Student Development scale and therefore I added item 28, "Structured opportunities are facilitated for students and families to access support networks, community connections, and employment support" to the Program Structures and Attributes scale.

Finally, item 23, "Students are provided with opportunities to appropriately and

actively participate in the general education program, including academic and social activities" correlated with the Family Involvement construct (.57). This item may reflect the importance of family involvement in the IEP process to ensure student engagement in the general education program and school social activities. However, this does not appear to measure the actual involvement of the family in transition education and activities of their student. Therefore, this item remained with the original construct of Program Structures and Attributes.

I again correlated each item with its own scale (with the item removed) and with each of the other three scales minus Interagency Collaboration as it remained as a one-item scale. This reconfiguration resulted in all items correlating more highly within their own scale than with any other scale with the exception of two items. In the Program Structures /Interagency Collaboration scale, item 22 "Students are provided instruction and experiences in the community, including vocational education, independent living skills instruction, and postsecondary educational experiences" correlated highly with the Vocational-Employment Student Development scale (.62), but includes all instruction in the community, not just vocational. The first example of instruction in the community provided in the question "…including vocational education" might be misdirecting the respondents to consider and answer based on vocational/employment experiences and instruction. I maintained this item with the Program Structures, but for future uses of this survey, this question requires clarification.

In the reconfigured Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills scale, item 8 "Students are provided with appropriate instruction to learn social skills and opportunities to actively interact with classmates" continued to correlate highly with the

Vocational/Employment scale (.62) and the Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration scale (.62). This item specifies "instruction" but also suggests "opportunities" and the wording may contribute to the correlations with the other scales as it is measuring more than one construct. I deleted this item as it appeared to be poorly constructed. The results of the reconfigured construct measures are summarized in Table 6 below, with items I moved to different scales written in italics.

Table 6

Revised Correlations of Each Transition Item with Its Own Scale after Removing Item (in Bold Type) and with the Other Scales.

	Scales/Variables				
		Student Development			
Survey Item	Student Focused Planning	Goal Setting/ Self-Advocacy/ Living Skills	Vocational/ Employment	Program Structures/ Interagency	Family Involvement
1. Students' IEPs link transition services and a course of study to postsecondary goals.	**.76**	.51	.35	.29	.40
2. Students participate in the selection of postsecondary goals and annual transition goals.	**.67**	.44	.35	.38	.42
3. Students' transition IEPs contain postsecondary goals and annual transition goals that are based on appropriate transition assessments.	**.69**	.51	.31	.36	.34
4. Students' transition IEPs are based on students' strengths, interests, and preferences.	**.80**	.49	.33	.33	.39
5. Students are taught to actively participate in the transition IEP meeting.	**.73**	.63	.38	.25	.45
6. Students attend the IEP meeting and actively participate in the meeting.	**.70**	.59	.45	.42	.51

Table 6 (continued)

Revised Correlations of Each Transition Item with Its Own Scale after Removing Item (in Bold Type) and with the Other Scales.

Survey Item	Scales/Variables				
		Student Development			
	Student Focused Planning	Goal Setting/ Self-Advocacy/ Living Skills	Vocational/ Employment	Program Structures/ Interagency	Family Involvement
7. Students are provided with appropriate instruction and opportunities to learn independent living and/or self-care skills aligned with postsecondary goals.	.49	**.56**	.50	.46	.37
14. Students are taught about their individual strengths and limitations, and how those strengths and limitations affect the student in academic and non-academic situations.	.56	**.76**	.57	.45	.45
15. Students are taught about their disability, to recognize positive and negative aspects of it, to understand their disability in context while not letting the disability completely define them as an individual.	.59	**.82**	.48	.40	.42
16. Students are taught to set goals based on their interests and skills, and to make a plan to achieve those goals.	.62	**.83**	.58	.51	.53
17. Students are taught to monitor progress on their goals and to adjust their goals based on feedback they receive and opportunities that are presented.	.54	**.84**	.53	.48	.45
19. Students are taught to access information on support services or community agencies.	.53	**.80**	.64	.60	.51
20. Students are taught to identify situations when they need support, to specify the type of support needed, and who to seek out for support.	.54	**.85**	.48	.55	.46

Table 6 (continued)

Revised Correlations of Each Transition Item with Its Own Scale after Removing Item (in Bold Type) and with the Other Scales.

Survey Item	Scales/Variables				
		Student Development			
	Student Focused Planning	Goal Setting/ Self-Advocacy/ Living Skills	Vocational/ Employment	Program Structures/ Interagency	Family Involvement
21. Students are taught how to talk about their disability and to request appropriate supports or accommodations according to their rights.	.54	**.84**	.47	.52	.43
9. Students are provided with opportunities to participate in vocational and occupational courses or experiences.	.37	.46	**.61**	.48	.40
10. Students participate in career awareness and exploration instruction to learn about a variety of postschool job options.	.49	.65	**.74**	.53	.46
11. Students participate in job-finding instruction, including job readiness, social skills, and job application skills.	.48	.71	**.75**	.61	.45
12. Students are provided opportunities to participate in job training, internships, or apprentice programs.	.35	.51	**.77**	.59	.37
13. Students are provided with opportunities to obtain paid employment or enroll in work-study programs.	.15	.35	**.59**	.40	.23
24. Family members attend transition IEP meetings.	.36	.30	.33	.45	**.66**
25. Family members are provided with transition information, including information about available community resources, to support the student.	.44	.47	.38	.49	**.74**
26. Family members participate in the transition planning process.	.52	.59	.47	.55	**.67**

Table 6 (continued)

Revised Correlations of Each Transition Item with Its Own Scale after Removing Item (in Bold Type) and with the Other Scales.

Survey Item	Scales/Variables				
		Student Development			
	Student Focused Planning	Goal Setting/ Self-Advocacy/ Living Skills	Vocational/ Employment	Program Structures/ Interagency	Family Involvement
22. Students are provided instruction and experiences in the community, including vocational education, independent living skills instruction, and postsecondary educational experiences.	.35	.49	.62	**.59**	.42
23. Students are provided with opportunities to appropriately and actively participate in the general education program, including academic and social activities.	.29	.44	.41	**.52**	.57
27. Students' class schedules and programs are flexible to meet individual student needs.	.28	.38	.38	**.60**	.42
28. Structured opportunities are facilitated for students and families to access support networks, community connections, and employment support.	.30	.60	.55	**.62**	.43

Note. The items in italics were shifted to different scales.

I computed coefficient alphas for each of the scales as internal consistency estimates of reliability for each of the scales, which ranged from .77 to .95 (Table 7), suggesting satisfactory reliability for this exploratory study. The same sample was used to conduct the item analyses and to assess coefficient alpha, and may result in an overestimate.

Table 7

Coefficient Alpha and Inter-item Correlation for each of the Scales Measuring the Implementation of the Recommend Transition Education Practices

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Inter-item Correlations
Student Focused Planning	.89	6	.50 to .75
Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/ Living Skills (Student Development)	.95	10	.38 to .84
Vocational/Employment (Student Development)	.78	5	.28 to .58
Family Involvement	.82	3	.56 to .65
Program Structures and Interagency Collaboration	.77	4	.38 to .53

Next, I conducted item analyses on the 29 items hypothesized to assess implementation of recommended transition education practices. Again, each of the items on the second section of the survey designed to measure teachers' perceptions of administrative support for transition education, was correlated with its own scale (with the item removed) and with each of the other three scales. While the survey consisted of four scales purported to measure different constructs, each of the items within the four scales—Facilitating a Collaborative and Structured Environment, Encouraging the Teachers, Valuing Transition Education and Services, and Providing Instructional Leadership—demonstrated significant correlation with each of the other scales (.69 to .89). With all of the items correlating significantly, this portion of the survey did not measure the four different constructs defined based on the educational leadership literature and constructed to measure unique aspects of educational leadership. Instead, the high correlation suggested this section of the survey measured a single construct—administrative support—and that administrative support as measured by this

questionnaire was not composed of four separate constructs. Therefore, all analyses conducted incorporating the data collected on the Perceptions of Administrative Support for Transition portion of the survey included all 29 items as one scale and not as independent variables measuring multiple constructs. I conducted item analysis on the 29 items on the Perceptions of Administrative Support for Transition portion of the survey. Each of the 29 items was correlated with the total score for this section of the survey. All of the correlations were greater than .30 with a range of r =.61 to r =.88. All items were retained for the Perceptions of Administrative Support for Transition Education survey. The Coefficient alpha for this section of the survey was .98. Again, the same sample was used to conduct both analyses, which may overestimate.

Phase I Quantitative Data Analysis

Use of recommended transition education practices. I addressed the first research question "How do teachers in the high schools across Oklahoma perceive their use of recommended transition education practices differently?" using descriptive statistics—calculating means and standard deviations—for each of the survey questions. Then, I calculated grouped means for the five variables—Student Focused Planning, Vocational/Employment Student Development, Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Development, Family Involvement, and Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration—that measured the "use of recommended transition education practices," which served as the independent or explanatory variable in the quantitative analysis. Based on item analysis, I grouped and calculated a mean based on survey questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 to compose the Student Focused Planning variable. I calculated a combined mean for items 7, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21 to compose Goal

Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Development variable. Then, I calculated a combined mean for items 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 to compose the Vocational/Employment Student Development variable. I calculated the grouped mean for questions 24, 25, and 26 to compile the Family Involvement variable. I combined and calculated the mean for items 22, 23, 27 and 28 to form the Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration variable.

Perceptions of transition practices importance. Then, to respond to the sub question "What practices do teachers consider most important?" I calculated frequency counts for each of the items teachers responded indicating "yes" they perceived the prior skill described in the item question as important. While the questions provided the choice of "yes" or "no" for the response, the respondents rarely selected "no" as an option, and many elected to leave the response blank.

Administrative support of transition education. To address the second research question, "How do special education teachers in the high schools across Oklahoma perceive "administrative support" of transition education?" I followed the same procedures as I used for the transition practices survey. I again utilized descriptive statistics—calculating means and standard deviations—for each of the survey questions and calculating grouped means for the four variables—Valuing Transition Education and Services, Encouraging the Teachers, Facilitating a Collaborative and Structured Environment, and Providing Instructional Leadership—that measured "teachers' perceptions of administrative support," the dependent or criterion variable. Again, based on the previous item analysis, I grouped and calculated a mean for survey questions 37, 38, 40, 45, 47, 48, and 56 to compose the Valuing Transition Education and Services

variable. I calculated a combined mean for items 29, 39, 46, 49, and 52, to compose the Providing Instructional Leadership variable. I calculated the grouped mean for questions 31, 32, 35, 42, 43, 51, 53, 54, and 55 to compile the Facilitating a Collaborative and Structured Environment variable. I combined and calculated the mean for items 30, 33, 34, 36, 41, 44, 50 and 57 to form the Encouraging the Teachers variable.

Perceptions of administrative support importance. Then, to respond to the sub question "What supports do teachers consider most important?" I calculated frequency counts for each of the items teachers responded indicating "yes" they perceived the prior skill described in the item question as important. While the questions provided the choice of "yes" or "no" for the response, the respondents rarely selected the "no" option, and many elected to leave the response blank.

Use of recommended transition education practices and perceived administrative support. To answer the third research question "What is the relationship between the implementation of recommended transition education practices and their perceptions of the components of "administrative support" I utilized multiple statistical procedures. First, I used correlation to examine the relationships between the variables, then cluster analysis to explore the existence of identifiable groups within the data, and finally one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine differences between the groups emerging from the cluster analysis.

Correlation. I computed a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to assess the linear relationship between the five measures constituting the explanatory variable, "use of recommended transition education practices," and the criterion

variable, “teachers’ perceptions of administrative support.” The four measures contributing to the criterion variable correlated highly based on item analysis and therefore, I calculated an overall mean score for questions 29 through 57 to represent the variable, teachers’ “perceived administrative support of transition education.”

Cluster analysis. The relationship between teachers’ perceptions of administrative support and implementation of recommended transition education practices was examined further through the exploratory use of cluster analysis. I used cluster analysis to identify groups of teachers with similar profiles based on the responses or mean scores of the five variables comprising the implementation of recommended transition education practices portion of the survey—Student Focused Planning, Vocational/Employment Student Development, Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Development, Family Involvement, and Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration (Kohler, 1996). I selected the level of implementation of transition practices as the clustering variable to (1) examine differences in the groups that emerged from the cluster analysis on the basis of their perceptions of administrative support, (2) to qualitatively examine themes emerging from interviews with teachers across the different groups, and (3) to limit the number of variables used in the cluster analysis (Speece, 1994).

I utilized Wards’ minimum variance hierarchical clustering techniques (Ward, 1963) with squared Euclidean distance to form the clusters. Ward’s method forms clusters by merging clusters at each step of the analysis, resulting in the smallest increase of variance. It is widely used in the behavioral and social sciences (Borgen & Barnett, 1987; Speece, 1994) and demonstrated the ability to produce viable cluster

solutions (Blashfield, 1976). I utilized a dendrogram to visually represent the cluster solutions and reviewed the agglomeration coefficients to determine when large increases in distances between members of clusters occurred.

Blashfield (1980) emphasized the need to validate a cluster analytic solution, as cluster methods will group respondents and produce a solution, yet the groups may not truly differ based on the variables, and the groupings may be "forced" (p.457) on the data. Once I identified potential cluster solutions, I used descriptive statistics to understand the structures of the potential solutions. Then, I used multivariate analysis to determine if significant differences existed between the clusters based on the five clustering variables—Student Focused Planning, Vocational/Employment Student Development, Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Development, Family Involvement, and Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration (Kohler, 1996)—comprising the level of implementation of recommended transition practices variable. Romesburg (2004) reviewed several methods for evaluating secondary validity of the cluster solutions, including the use of other multivariate methods, such as discriminant analysis. Using the cluster membership produced in the cluster analysis as the dependent variable and the five transition variables—Student Focused Planning, Vocational/Employment Student Development, Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Development, Family Involvement, and Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration (Kohler, 1996)—as the independent variables, I conducted discriminant analysis to compare how accurately the discriminant function identified the cluster membership, with a high percentage of correct prediction suggesting secondary validity. Finally, I calculated Cohen's Kappa to assess the percentage of correct classifications

beyond what would occur randomly by chance.

Analysis of Variance. Lastly, I used the groups identified through the cluster analysis procedure to conduct a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine if perceptions of administrative support differed significantly between the identified cluster groups. I reported all analyses in the discussion portion of the study and focused on the relationship between implementation of recommended practices and perceptions of administrative support. I completed all statistical analyses using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS), version 19.0.

Phase II Qualitative Phenomenological Design

Phenomenological design helps to define and add new meanings based on the "lived experiences" of several individuals (Crotty, 1998). The second phase of this study seeks to describe and understand the aspect of administrative support as it relates to secondary special education teachers and their use of transition education practices supported in the literature. The identified phenomenon described is the participants' shared experience of administrative support in order to understand the experiences of teachers and special education administrators providing and supervising transition education.

The phenomenological approach is specifically used to understand the common experiences. Once the research problem is identified as one requiring this type of understanding, the study must collect data from the participants experiencing the phenomenon, typically through in-depth interviews, and attempt to fully describe the views of the participants (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994a). While guiding questions may be developed to ensure the comprehensiveness of the interview, Moustakas

(1994a) recommended a relaxed atmosphere with variations to protocols to enhance the participants' descriptions of their experiences. Further, he recommended the use of general questions, asking participants to relay their experiences related to the phenomenon and the contexts in which it occurred.

Phenomenology analysis follows a typical pattern requiring the researchers to review the qualitative data, selecting significant quotes from the participants that emphasize how participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007), or horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994b). These significant statements are clustered into themes, or invariant constituents leading to the textural description of the participants' experiences. Then, the clustered themes are used to develop a structural description of the experience, based on the context or setting of the experiences. Finally, a textural-structural description is composed, reflecting the essence of the experience for each individual interviewed. These individual textural-structural descriptions are then analyzed to result in a composite description that portrays the essence of the experience for the group (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994b).

Phase II Qualitative Data Collection

Guiding the qualitative methodology for the mixed methods study is the theoretical perspective of phenomenology (Crotty, 1998) as I pursued an understanding of transition education and administrative support of transition education from the perspectives of the participants in the different transition programs (Creswell, 2007). I selected this approach as it allowed the opportunity to develop a better understanding of the experiences of the participants in relationship to the leadership role of the principal,

and may lead to further development of policies and practices based on understanding the shared experiences (Creswell, 2007).

Interviews. Phenomenological researchers typically rely on lengthy or multiple interviews described by Moustakas (1994a) as "an informal, interactive process" (p. 114). The interviews conducted were semi-structured, however, I posed open-ended questions to elicit further detailed descriptions from the individuals in order to develop a thick and rich understanding of secondary special education teachers' and special education administrators' perceptions of the use of recommended transition education practices and administrative support of transition education. The interviews were guided by questions based on the relevant transition and leadership literature and focused on explaining and exploring the results of the data gathered in the initial quantitative phase. Appendix D contains the interview protocols.

The qualitative data was used to address the fourth research question, "How do secondary special education teachers and special education administrators describe their experiences with transition education and administrative support of transition education?" and then integrated with the quantitative data to address the primary research question, "How do special education teachers and special education administrators perceive administrative support in relation to the teachers' use of recommended transition education practices?"

Teachers. Individual interviews were conducted with the teachers participating in the transition education program. The interviews varied in length, lasting between 30 minutes and 2 hours, were conducted in a semi-structured manner following an interview protocol, and were digitally audio recorded and transcribed. Two volunteers

elected phone interviews, while the other eight were conducted in person at a location of the participant's choice. I utilized open-ended questions with clarifying questions to expand upon responses. The interview protocol in Appendix D contains the general questions asked of each teacher participant, and examples include: (a) What have you experienced in terms of providing transition education? (b) What situations have influenced or affected your experience teaching transition education? and (c) How would you describe your experiences in terms of administrative support of transition education?

Administrators. I conducted individual, semi-structured interviews with the special education administrators recommended by educators or responding to the emailed invitation requests. I structured the interview questions around the information that emerged from the prior stages of this research. I digitally audio taped each of the interviews, used written notes, and then transcribed each interview. The interview format used open-ended and clarification questions to provide further depth and understanding of participant responses. The interview protocol in Appendix D contains the general questions asked of each special education administration participant and examples of interview question include (a) How would you describe your role and experiences in providing "administrative support" to special education teachers delivering transition education? (b) How would you describe your role and experiences now, compared to earlier in your career? (c) How would you describe your experiences with other agencies supporting transition education and collaborating with the school? and, (d) What situations have influenced or affected your experiences supervising transition education?

Phase II Qualitative Data Analysis

Hycner (1985) suggests beginning with detailed transcriptions of the interviews conducted with participants and the use of bracketing to limit the influence of researchers' perceptions and background experiences that might affect the interpretation of the participants' experiences. Therefore, I have carefully considered my own values regarding the role of the administrator in supporting teachers and the provision of transition education. I examined the positive and negative beliefs accrued from my experiences in teacher training, administrator support and consultation, and leading my own school. To bracket my thinking and remain open to the experiences of the participants, I recalled my own experiences and recognized the connections and influences of these on my beliefs. I then reflected upon my beliefs, worked to isolate and contain them, and then focused on actively listening to the participants, while not allowing my memories to cloud or impinge upon their experiences. I discussed my ideas, experiences, and values with my supervising committee members, professors, or colleagues to examine my possible biases. This provided me the opportunity to consciously set aside and bracket my own meanings, allowing me to carefully listen, limiting the influences of my own experiences as much as possible. I then focused on the experiences and ideas shared by each participant.

Hycner (1985) suggests, "reading the transcription a number of times" (p. 281) in order to understand the context of the experience as whole and to begin delineating individual meaning units. Therefore, I read and re-read each of the transcripts while forming a general and broad sense of meaning derived from each interview. I utilized NVivo 9 during this phase of the qualitative analysis to identify key points, phrases, and

statements made by participants that described their individual experience. I attended to repetition and key general units of meaning, and attempted to identify broad, unique statements in relation to my specific research questions, or horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994b). I utilized individual statements from the interviews to form groups or units of meanings in relationship to my research questions (Hycner, 1985). Once I identified units of meaning, I employed the questioning strategy suggested by Moustakas' (1994b) modification of the van Kaam method to identify the invariant constituents that reflected the key moments of participants' experience. I continued this process to eliminate redundancies as Hycner (1985) suggested, and clarified any vague expressions (Moustakas, 1994b) to identify the emerging clustered invariant constituents and themes emerging. I continued examination and reduction of the data to arrive at the final invariant constituents. Once I completed this process of horizontalization, I utilized spreadsheets in Microsoft Excel to continue examining the invariant constituents for commonalities or uniqueness, merging data and eliminating repetitions, until I identified the themes describing the experiences of the participants providing transition education and their experiences with administrative support of the transition education programs and services. Finally, I validated these as suggested by Moustakas (1994b) by confirming compatibility and explicit expression in the transcriptions, while constructing a summary of each individual participant's interview and the themes identified. I returned this summary with the themes identified, to each participant to obtain validation and clarification of the interpretations. I utilized a form I created contained in Appendix E.

Finally, I constructed textual descriptions of what the participants experienced in teaching transition education and their perceptions of administrative support in order to understand the "what" they experienced. Next, I constructed a structural account of the individuals' experiences by examining contexts or situations that influenced and affected the participants experiences with transition education and administrative support. Lastly, I scanned the data for unique specific factors influencing the experiences of each of the groups: (a) teachers and (b) administrators. Next, I compared the themes generated in the qualitative data across the participants and the two groups—secondary special education teachers and special education administrators—to identify similarities and differences. I reviewed the data for commonalities between the groups' experiences to construct the textural-structural descriptions of the data to reflect the common essence of the experience across the groups, as recommended by Moustakas (1994b).

Validation and trustworthiness. Creswell (2003) explained the need to evaluate the quality of qualitative research and the numerous perspectives on validation of qualitative research. Creswell suggested that validation in qualitative research is determining the "accuracy" of the findings (p. 206) and suggested the use of specific strategies to support the study. He recommended eight methods that may be used in any combination as "validation strategies" in qualitative research (p. 207). I utilized the methods described below to support validation and reliability of data interpretation.

Triangulation. I incorporated the use of different sources of data and multiple methods, including interviews from teachers and administrators selected for the qualitative phase of the study. As well, I examined the data across participants to verify

the themes that emerged in each of the interviews. These multiple data sources corroborate themes from different perspectives (Creswell, 2003) and further validate the data gathered through interviews. Additionally, the use of mixed methods may also serve to verify the qualitative themes emerging from the qualitative analysis, when integrated and linked to the quantitative data in the discussion.

***Clarification of bias*.** I examined my potential biases and provided a clarifying statement. The position statement clearly conveys influences, experiences, and biases with the potential to influence data interpretation.

Member checking. Creswell (2003) suggested solicitation of the participants' views of the data interpretation to ensure it accurately reflects their views. I shared summaries of the interviews and themes emerging from the interviews with the participants individually to obtain verification and clarification of data. Participants received the summary by email for verification. I listed each theme that emerged followed by a brief bulleted summary of key points from that participant's interview that contributed to the theme. Following each summary, I provided a space below to indicate consensus with the theme or to suggest changes on my interpretation of the interview. I included quotes from the interview that I determined supported the development of the theme and the experience of the participant. I received eight of the 10 member check forms returned with additional information provided by three of the participants. For example, one participant noted that six of her students now held employment, versus the five she originally described, and one administrator remarked on the meetings she held with multiple groups of employees in which transition education is discussed and that although it is difficult and time consuming, she felt that

it was critical to keeping everyone on the same page. No comments indicated any disagreement with interpretations.

Description. The use of "rich, thick description" (Creswell, 2003, p. 209) provides the ability to understand the participants studied in order to clearly understand the similarities to other settings and participants. This clear understanding supports transferability of the findings of the study (Creswell, 2003). I provided rich descriptions of the participants and their settings in order to better understand their perspectives and to identify similarities or uniqueness.

External audits. Creswell (2003) noted the literature suggests the use of audits conducted by a person not connected with the study to verify the procedures used, the themes emerging, and the final report of the data and results. Creswell recommends that the auditor review the connections between the process, themes, interpretation, and results. I used individual meetings, field notes, and data inventory for review to document the research process and to support the interpretation of the data. I reviewed my processes, the themes emerging, and summaries in meetings and written exchanges with my committee chairs. Further, a five-member committee experienced in research design and methodology guided this study.

Research Permission and Ethical Considerations

Both phases of the study addressed the ethical issues associated with research involving human subjects. First, I filed a complete Institutional Review Board (IRB) application with the University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board (OU-IRB) and with this application, included informed consent forms developed according to OU-IRB procedures.

Other than email addresses, I did not collect teacher personal identification in the web-based data collection questionnaire. During interviews, I did not refer to participants by name, and I assigned a fictitious name used when reporting results and during transcription. All data collected is secured on a password-protected computer or in locked file cabinets at the Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment. All data will be destroyed after the allotted time period required. The participants' responses will not be traceable to individuals responding to the questionnaire or the interviews.

Chapter 4

Results

Quantitative Data Analysis

Participants. In reporting survey response rates, Mertens (2005) referred to a definition and calculator provided on the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) website. The AAPOR developed specific guidelines and definitions in an attempt to assist researchers to better estimate and then evaluate the non-response to surveys. The AAPOR developed these specific disposition codes based the refinement of previous attempts in the literature to clarify response rates and recently included specific updated considerations for new methods of surveying, such as Internet surveys. I used these codes and the calculations provided by the AAPOR to report the response information of this survey contained in Table 8. I calculated this rate utilizing the 775 initial email addresses from the Zarrow Center email distribution list plus the eighteen additional email addresses that were added to list during the second round of recruitment emails. I did not include in this count the 117 principal email addresses as I was not able to ascertain if the recruitment email was forwarded to an appropriate participant and I did not receive any feedback from these contacts.

This effort resulted in 120 survey responses from educators in at least 68 of the 426 independent school districts in the state of Oklahoma, based on the email addresses participants volunteered and for which a school district could be identified. Personal email addresses were listed by 12 of the respondents and 17 participants elected to not include their email addresses.

Table 8

Survey Response Rate Calculation and Disposition Codes of the AAPOR

Disposition Codes	Survey Data
Interview (Category 1)	
Complete	94
Partial	26
Eligible, non-interview (Category 2)	
Breakoff/Implicit refusal (internet surveys)	13
Logged on to survey, did not complete any item	21
Read receipt confirmation, refusal	10
Unknown eligibility, non-interview (Category 3)	
Nothing returned	605
Mail returned undelivered (internet surveys)	14
Not eligible (Category 4)	
Out of sample-other strata than originally coded	10
Total email addresses used	792
I=Complete	94
P=Partial interviews	26
R=Refusal and break off	44
NC=Non Contact	0
O=Other	0
UH=Unknown (Household)	605
UO= Unknown other	15
e (AAPOR's estimated proportion of cases of unknown eligibility that are eligible)	.943
Response rate	
(I+P)/((I+P) + (R+NC+O) + e(UH+UO)	0.161 (16.1%)

Demographics. Demographic information is provided for the 120 participants who completed the majority of the survey responses, including all of the demographics questions. The majority of participants were from rural schools (51.7%), while 25.8% were from suburban districts and 22.5% from urban areas. The school enrollment varied

with 36.7% of the teachers responding indicating the school had 1,000 or more students enrolled, 25% had 500 to 999, 34.2% between 100 and 500 students, and only 4.2% with less than100 students enrolled. The schools employed varying numbers of teachers with 84 of the teachers working at schools having 10 or fewer special education teachers, 26 schools with 11 to 20 special education teachers, and four employed in schools with 21 to 25 special education teachers. Two participants declined to respond, and one indicated multiple sites as district personnel. The majority of teachers (27.0%) indicated their schools had only two site administrators, while 20.0% worked with three administrators, 16.5% worked with four, and 17.4% with five site administrators. Again, two participants declined to respond and three reported large numbers that appeared to be district numbers or errors (20, 46 & 16). The teachers also indicated that they primarily received support from the special education director (35.8%). The principal provided support to 20.8% of the teachers, while only 4.2% indicated they received support primarily from an assistant principal. Finally, 16.7% indicated they received support from a department chair or lead teacher, and 10.0% reported district transition specialists for support.

The majority of the teachers indicated they taught multiple grades, with the majority (64.2%) teaching four grade levels. The teachers responding indicated a higher level of experience with 35.8% teaching more than 20 years, 10.0% teaching 16 to 20 years, 22.5% for 11 to 15 years, 18.3% teaching for 6 to 10 years, and 13.3% teaching for less than 5 years. Along with higher levels of experience, the teachers attended transition education professional development seminars provided from two or three providers (77.5%). Table 9 contains further demographic information.

Table 9

Demographics of Survey Respondents

	Number	Percent
District location:	(n = 120)	
Rural	62	51.7%
Suburban	31	25.8%
Urban	27	22.5%
Total number of students in school:	(n = 120)	
Less than 100	5	4.2%
101 to 500 students	41	34.2%
501 to 1000 students	30	25.0%
1000 or greater	44	36.7%
I have been teaching for:	(n = 120)	
1 to 5 years	16	13.3%
6 to 10 years	22	18.3%
11 to 15 years	27	22.5%
16 to 20 years	12	10.0%
More than 20 years	43	35.8%
I provide transition education and services to students in the following grade levels:		
9^{th}	98	81.7%
10^{th}	101	84.2%
11^{th}	104	86.7%
12^{th}	106	88.3%
Beyond 12^{th}	18	15.0%
Total number of grade levels taught:	(n = 117)	
One	11	9.2%
Two	7	5.8%
Three	8	6.7%
Four	77	64.2%
Five	14	11.7%

Table 9 (continued)

Demographics of Survey Respondents

	Number	Percent
I have participated in transition professional development provided by:		
None	2	1.6%
Oklahoma Transition Institute	82	68.3%
University of Oklahoma Zarrow Center	88	73.3%
Oklahoma State Department of Education	86	71.7%
Other	20	16.7%
The primary administrator responsible for supporting transition education and services in my building is:	(n = 120)	
Principal	25	20.8%
Assistant Principal	5	4.2%
Special Education Director	43	35.8%
Transition Specialist	12	10.0%
Department Chair/Head Teacher	20	16.7%
Other	15	12.5%

Use of recommended transition education practices. The first research question to address with quantitative data is "How do special education teachers in the high schools across Oklahoma report the use of recommended transition education practices?" This required teachers to rate their use of recommended transition practices identified in the literature. I addressed the first research question using descriptive statistics—calculating means and standard deviations—for each of the survey questions. Then, I combined specific groups of questions to form constructs defined through my examination of the current transition literature and other measures of transition education practices and predictors. I calculated grouped means for the five variables that measured the use of recommended transition education practices: (a) Student

Focused Planning, (b) Vocational/Employment Student Development, (c) Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Student Development, (d) Family Involvement, and (e) Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration. Table 10 lists each of these constructs, the number of questions grouped to measure that construct, the overall grouped mean, and the standard deviation calculated for that construct.

Table 10

Recommended Transition Education Practices Constructs based on Kohler's Taxonomy (1996) Total Number of Survey Questions, Means (from a 1 to 6 scale), and Standard Deviations

Construct/Variable	Total Questions	Mean (n = 120)	Standard Deviation
Family Involvement	3	4.96	0.86
Student Focused Planning	9	4.91	0.84
Program Structures and Attributes/Interagency Collaboration	4	4.50	1.01
Vocational/Employment Skills (Student Development)	5	4.26	1.08
Goal Setting, Self-Advocacy, Living Skills (Student Development)	9	4.13	1.06
Overall Mean Transition Questions	27	4.48	0.81

Based on the self-reported data, the majority of the teachers indicated they implemented the transition education practices identified in the survey at a moderate to high level overall with mean response ranging from 3.77 to 5.24 and an overall mean of 4.48. Transition education practices with the highest reported usage reflected transition education activities related to the IEP document. In fact, of the recommended transition

practices on which teachers rated themselves, five of the top seven practices are a part of the IEP process. Table 11 depicts the means, standard deviations, and construct grouping for each of the items in the Recommended Transition Education Practices section of the questionnaire with the items listed in descending order based on the mean scores. Further discussion of the teachers responses continues below within the context of each of the five transition education constructs—Student Focused Planning, Vocational/Employment Student Development, Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Student Development, Family Involvement, and Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration—that measured the implementation of recommended transition education practices.

Table 11

Use of Recommended Transition Education Practices Construct Grouping, Means, and Standard Deviations in Descending Order by Mean Scores (from a 1 to 6 scale)

Survey Item	Construct	Mean (n = 120)	SD
1. Family members are provided with transition information, including information about available community resources, to support the student.	FI	5.24	0.99
2. Students are provided with opportunities to appropriately and actively participate in the general education program, including academic and social activities.	PS&IC	5.16	1.09
3. Students' transition IEPs are based on students' strengths, interests, and preferences.	SFP	5.13	0.91
4. Family members attend transition IEP meetings.	FI	5.05	0.86
5. Students' IEPs link transition services and a course of study to postsecondary goals.	SFP	5.04	1.01
6. Students' transition IEPs contain postsecondary goals and annual transition goals that are based on appropriate transition assessments.	SFP	5.00	0.99

Table 11 (continued)

Use of Recommended Transition Education Practices Construct Grouping, Means, and Standard Deviations in Descending Order by Mean Scores

Survey Item	Construct	Mean (n = 120)	SD
7. Students participate in the selection of postsecondary goals and annual transition goals.	SFP	4.97	0.98
8. Students are provided with opportunities to participate in vocational and occupational courses or experiences.	V/E (SD)	4.82	1.27
9. Students' class schedules and programs are flexible to meet individual student needs.	PS&IC	4.74	1.22
10. Students are taught to actively participate in the transition IEP meeting (e.g. Express opinions or choices, discuss goals, preferences strengths and needs, lead meeting).	SFP	4.71	1.16
11. Family members participate in the transition planning process.	FI	4.59	1.14
12. Students attend the IEP meeting and actively participate in the meeting (e.g. Express opinions or choices, discuss goals, preferences strengths and needs, lead meeting).	SFP	4.58	1.14
13. Students are provided with appropriate instruction to learn social skills and opportunities to actively interact with classmates. [a]	[a]	4.57	1.22
14. Students are provided with appropriate instruction and opportunities to learn independent living and/or self-care skills aligned with postsecondary goals.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	4.47	1.24
15. Students are taught to set goals based on their interests and skills, and to make a plan to achieve those goals.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	4.42	1.20
16. Students participate in career awareness and exploration instruction to learn about a variety of postschool job options.	V/E (SD)	4.41	1.31

Table 11 (continued)

Use of Recommended Transition Education Practices Construct Grouping, Means, and Standard Deviations in Descending Order by Mean Scores

Survey Item	Construct	Mean (n = 120)	SD
17. Students are taught about their individual strengths and limitations, and how those strengths and limitations affect the student in academic and non-academic situations.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	4.33	1.25
18. Students are taught to identify situations when they need support, to specify the type of support needed, and who to seek out for support.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	4.14	1.29
19. Students participate in job-finding instruction, including job readiness, social skills, and job application skills.	V/E (SD)	4.12	1.21
20. Students are provided with opportunities to obtain paid employment or enroll in work-study programs.	V/E (SD)	4.10	1.48
21. Students are provided with opportunities to develop problem-solving skills and taught to utilize different strategies to achieve goals when goals are not met.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	4.10	1.25
22. Structured opportunities are facilitated for students and families to access support networks, community connections, and employment support (e.g. agency referrals, transition fairs).	PS&IC	4.06	1.50
23. Students are provided instruction and experiences in the community, including vocational education, independent living skills instruction, and postsecondary educational experiences.	PS&IC	4.03	1.40
24. Students are taught about their disability, to recognize positive and negative aspects of it, to understand their disability in context while not letting the disability completely define them as an individual.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	4.02	1.30
25. Students are taught to access information on support services or community agencies.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	3.98	1.25
26. Students are taught how to talk about their disability and to request appropriate supports or accommodations according to their rights.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	3.91	1.29

Table 11 (continued)

Use of Recommended Transition Education Practices Construct Grouping, Means, and Standard Deviations in Descending Order by Mean Scores

Survey Item	Construct	Mean (n = 120)	SD
27. Students are provided opportunities to participate in job training, internships, or apprentice programs.	V/E (SD)	3.85	1.40
28. Students are taught to monitor progress on their goals and to adjust their goals based on feedback they receive and opportunities that are presented.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	3.77	1.32

Note: SFO = Student Focused Planning; PS&IC = Program Structures & Interagency Collaboration; GS/SA/LS = Goal setting/Self-advocacy/Living skills; V/E = Vocational/Employment skills; FI=Family Involvement

[a] Not used in calculations and analysis, means and SD reported only.

Family involvement. I calculated the grouped mean for questions 24, 25, and 26 to compile the Family Involvement variable. Based on the teacher responses to the survey, the construct measuring Family Involvement demonstrated the highest mean response (M = 4.96, SD = 0.86). Two of the three transition practices promoting family involvement exhibited the highest rankings by teachers. Of the teachers participating in the survey, 81.6% (n = 98) "almost always" or more than 75% of the time provided parents and family members of their students with information about transition and the resources in the community, and of those 98 teachers another 50.8% (n = 61) reported they provided this information to family members "always" or 100% of the time (M = 5.24, SD = 0.99). The family members regularly attend the IEP meetings as the majority of the teachers (n = 63 or 52.5%) indicated family members attended at least 75% of the time and 36 of the 120 teachers (30.0%) reported family members "always," or 100% of the time attended the transition IEP meetings (M = 5.05, SD = 0.86). The area supporting family involvement reported as lowest by teachers required the actual

participation of family members in the transition planning process (M = 4.59, SD = 1.14).

Student focused planning. I grouped and calculated a mean based on survey questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 to compose the Student Focused Planning variable. Teachers suggested activities constituting Student Focused Planning occurred at a level just below Family Involvement with a mean difference of 0.05 (M = 4.91, SD = 0.86).

Of the 120 teachers responding to the survey, 80.0% (n = 96, M = 5.13, SD = 0.91) indicated the transition IEPs are "always" or "almost always"—at least 75% of the time—based on the students' strengths, interests, and preferences. Further, 46 (38.3%) of these teachers reported that at least 75% of the time or more, the transition education services and a course of study link to the postsecondary goals contained in the IEP and another 46 (38.3%) reported linkage 100% of the time (M = 5.04, SD = 1.01). Lastly, another 70.0% (n = 84) of the teachers base those goals on appropriate transition assessments at least 75% of the time or more (M = 5.00, SD = 0.99). Yet, while the goals may incorporate the strengths and interests of the students, fewer teachers reported students' active participation in the IEP meeting (M = 4.58, SD = 1.14), with 47 (39.2%) teachers indicating students "almost always" participate, or more than 75% of the time, and 32 teachers or 26.7% reporting 100% active participation in the IEP meeting by students.

Finally, of these six questions, the five items addressing the contents of the IEP received responses ranging from "rarely" to "always" and none of the participants indicated a complete lack of occurrence. The remaining two questions asked about students receiving instruction to participate in the IEP, and then actively participating in

the meeting, which demonstrated lower mean scores (4.71 and 4.58, respectively). Further, two (1.7%) respondents indicated students are never taught to participate in the IEP meeting and eight (6.7%) reported students "rarely" actively participated in the meeting, the highest number in this range for this group of questions.

Program structures and attributes/Interagency collaboration. I combined and calculated items 22, 23, 27 and 28 to form the Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration variable that produced an overall combined mean of 4.50 (SD = 1.01). While the family members regularly receive information from teachers about transition services and the agencies in the community, they may have fewer opportunities facilitated by the schools and teachers to access these resources (M = 4.06, SD = 1.50). While 45% of the teachers responding to the survey reported these opportunities occur at least 75% of the time or more, another 35.9% (n = 43) reported facilitated opportunities for students and families to access community services occurred at rates of 50% or less of the time, and eight of these teachers (6.7%) indicated this never happened.

Almost 51% of the teachers (n = 61) perceived students with disabilities at their schools "always" received opportunities to participate in the general education program, including socially and academically (M = 5.16, SD = 1.09). However, opportunities for students to receive community-based instruction, including activities involving vocational, independent living skills, and postsecondary experiences occurred at a lower rate (M = 4.03, SD = 1.40). However, teachers perceived the schedules of students as "almost always" flexible (M = 4.74, SD = 1.22) with the majority of teachers suggesting this occurred at least 75% of the time or more (n = 75, 62.5%).

Vocational/employment skills (Student development). To compose the Vocational/Employment Student Development variable, I calculated a combined mean for the survey items 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13. Teachers' responses ranged from a mean of 3.85 (SD = 1.40) to 4.82 (SD = 1.27) for an overall grouped mean of 4.26 (SD = 1.08). Teachers reported opportunities for students to participate in vocational and occupational courses at a higher rate (M = 4.82, SD = 1.27) than specific job-finding, job-readiness, and social skills instruction occurred (M = 4.12, SD = 1.21). Two items reflecting the lowest occurrence ratings from teachers included opportunities to participate in paid employment or work study (M = 4.10, SD = 1.48) and opportunities for students to participate in job training, internships, and apprenticeships (M = 3.85, SD = 1.40).

Goal setting/self-advocacy/living skills (Student development). I calculated a combined mean for items 7, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21 to compose the Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Student Development variable. While teachers indicated practices related to the IEP document are employed regularly and family members are provided with information and resources regarding transition, individual student instruction regarding their goals, self-advocacy, and accessing support agencies in the community demonstrated the lowest reported levels of implementation (M = 4.13, SD = 1.06).

First, although teachers suggested the transition resources information was regularly provided to family members, students received instruction on how to access these resources and agencies less frequently (M = 3.98, SD = 1.30). Of the teachers responding, 31 (25.8%) reported teaching these skills to students "occasionally"—50%

or less of the time, while another 25% noted they "frequently"—50%-75% of the time—taught the skills. Second, while teachers identified that IEPs contained goals based on student preferences and appropriate transition assessments, their responses to the survey acknowledged students less frequently receiving instruction to learn to monitor their progress on their goals and to adjust their goals based on feedback received (M = 3.77, SD = 1.32). While 26.7% (n = 32) of the respondents confirmed teaching students to monitor their progress on goals more than 75% of the time, another 39.9% (n = 48) indicated this type of instruction occurred less than 50% of the time.

Lastly, the survey contained four questions that asked teachers about self-advocacy and self-awareness instruction and two of these questions obtained lower reported rates of occurrence. Forty-seven (39.2%) teachers indicated lessons for students about their disability and the positive and negative aspects occurred 75% or more of the time. However, 73 (60.8%) of the responding teachers reported this type of lesson occurred at rates of 75% or less, and 42 (35%) of those suggested this instruction occasionally occurred 50% or less of the time. The next level of self-advocacy instruction, talking about one's disability and requesting supports and accommodations, occurred at a rate of less than 50% as reported by 42.5% (n = 51) of the teachers responding to the survey (M = 3.91, SD 1.29).

Teachers' perceptions of the importance of each transition practice. Each question on the survey contained a separate question, or a "part B," asking, "Is this important to you?" in regards to the previously identified transition education practice. Teachers selected "yes" to indicate importance of the skill or "no" to indicate they did not believe the skill was important. I calculated the frequency teachers indicated a "yes"

or a "no" for each question. Also, with the ability to select "yes" or "no," survey respondents left many of these questions blank. This may indicate a lack of belief of the importance of that particular skill or practice by not responding "yes," a non-position of importance or lack thereof, or a decision to not respond to that question. Without a clear understanding of why the participants elected to not respond, I included the non-responses along with the summary of the teachers' responses in Table 12.

Table 12

Teachers Designations of Importance of the Transition Education Practices Listed in Rank Order of Yes Important/Not Important

Survey Item	Construct	No Response	Yes Important	Not Important
Family members are provided with transition information, including information about available community resources, to support the student.	FI	21	99 (100%)	0
Family members attend transition IEP meetings.	FI	21	99 (100%)	0
Family members participate in the transition planning process.	FI	21	99 (100%)	0
Students participate in the selection of postsecondary goals and annual transition goals.	SFP	22	98 (100%)	0
Students participate in career awareness and exploration instruction to learn about a variety of postschool job options.	V/E (SD)	21	98 (99.0%)	1 (1.0%)
Students are taught to set goals based on their interests and skills, and to make a plan to achieve those goals.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	21	98 (99.0%)	1 (1.0%)
Students are provided with opportunities to appropriately and actively participate in the general education program, including academic and social activities.	PS&IC	21	98 (99.0%)	1 (1.0%)

Table 12 (continued)

Teachers Designations of Importance of the Transition Education Practices Listed in Rank Order of Yes Important/Not Important

Survey Item	Construct	No Response	Yes Important	Not Important
Students are provided with appropriate instruction to learn social skills and opportunities to actively interact with classmates. [a]	[a]	22	97 (99.0%)	1 (1.0%)
Students are provided opportunities to participate in job training, internships, or apprentice programs.	V/E (SD)	21	97 (98.0%)	2 (2.0%)
Students are taught to identify situations when they need support, to specify the type of support needed, and who to seek out for support.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	20	97 (97.0%)	3 (3.0%)
Students' transition IEPs are based on students' strengths, interests, and preferences.	SFP	22	96 (98.0%)	2 (2.0%)
Students' IEPs link transition services and a course of study to postsecondary goals.	SFP	22	96 (98.0%)	2 (2.0%)
Students attend the IEP meeting and actively participate in the meeting (e.g. Express opinions or choices, discuss goals, preferences strengths and needs, lead meeting).	SFP	22	96 (98.0%)	2 (2.0%)
Students' class schedules and programs are flexible to meet individual student needs.	PS&IC	21	96 (97.0%)	3 (3.0%)
Students are provided with opportunities to develop problem-solving skills and taught to utilize different strategies to achieve goals when goals are not met.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	20	96 (96.0%)	4 (4.0%)
Students are taught to access information on support services or community agencies.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	20	96 (96.0%)	4 (4.0%)
Students are taught how to talk about their disability and to request appropriate supports or accommodations according to their rights.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	20	96 (96.0%)	4 (4.0%)
Students are provided with opportunities to participate in vocational and occupational courses or experiences.	V/E (SD)	23	95 (97.9%)	2 (2.1%)

Table 12 (continued)

Teachers Designations of Importance of the Transition Education Practices Listed in Rank Order of Yes Important/Not Important

Survey Item	Construct	No Response	Yes Important	Not Important
Students participate in job-finding instruction, including job readiness, social skills, and job application skills.	V/E (SD)	23	95 (97.9%)	2 (2.1%)
Students are provided instruction and experiences in the community, including vocational education, independent living skills instruction, and postsecondary educational experiences.	PS&IC	21	95 (96.0%)	4 (4.0%)
Students are provided with opportunities to obtain paid employment or enroll in work-study programs.	V/E (SD)	21	94 (94.9%)	5 (5.1%)
Students are taught about their disability, to recognize positive and negative aspects of it, to understand their disability in context while not letting the disability completely define them as an individual.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	20	94 (94.0%)	6 (6.0%)
Students are taught about their individual strengths and limitations, and how those strengths and limitations affect the student in academic and non-academic situations.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	24	93 (96.9%)	3 (3.1%)
Students are provided with appropriate instruction and opportunities to learn independent living and/or self-care skills aligned with postsecondary goals.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	22	93 (94.9%)	5 (5.1%)
Students are taught to monitor progress on their goals and to adjust their goals based on feedback they receive and opportunities that are presented.	GS/SA/LS (SD)	20	93 (93.0%)	7 (7.0%)
Structured opportunities are facilitated for students and families to access support networks, community connections, and employment support (e.g. agency referrals, transition fairs).	PS&IC	23	92 (94.8%)	5 (5.2%)

Table 12 (continued)

Teachers Designations of Importance of the Transition Education Practices Listed in Rank Order of Yes Important/Not Important

Survey Item	Construct	No Response	Yes Important	Not Important
Students' transition IEPs contain postsecondary goals and annual transition goals that are based on appropriate transition assessments.	SFP	22	92 (93.9%)	6 (6.1%)

Note: SFO = Student Focused Planning; PS&IC = Program Structures & Interagency Collaboration; GS/SA/LS = Goal setting/Self-advocacy/Living skills; V/E = Vocational/Employment skills; FI=Family Involvement

[a] Not used in calculations and analysis, means and SD reported only.

The majority of the participants indicated a belief in the importance of the transition education practices described in the questionnaire with the frequency of responses ranged from 99 participants (82.5%) indicating a practice as "important" to 92 participants (76.7%) selecting a practice as "important." The highest frequency rate of a practice designated as unimportant occurred with seven teachers (5.8%) selecting one transition education practice as not important. I also calculated an overall percentage rate for each of the five transition education constructs by averaging the totals for each of the individual items within that construct. Further discussion of the individual items and the overall averages occurs below within the context of each of the five transition education constructs.

Family involvement. Survey respondents designated all three questionnaire items designed to measure the construct of family involvement—Family members are provided with transition information, including information about available community resources, to support the student; Family members attend transition IEP meetings; and Family members participate in the transition planning process—as important at higher rates than any of the other practices described in the survey (n = 99) or 100% of those

responding. Furthermore, none of the teachers responding to the survey designated any of these items as not important. Overall, 100% of the teachers responding designated the transition education practices comprising the Family Involvement construct as important, while no one selected these practices as unimportant, and an average of 21 participants elected to not respond.

Student focused planning. Of the teachers responding, 100% (n = 98) indicated students' participation in the selection of postsecondary goals and annual transition goals as an important transition education practice (n = 98) and this skill received no ratings as an unimportant practice. However, basing the IEP goals and postsecondary goals on appropriate transition assessments obtained "not important" ratings from six participants (6.1%) and 92 respondents (93.9%) designated it as an important practice, making it one of the lowest rated based on both of these frequencies. Overall, an average of 97.5% of the teachers selected the transition education practices grouped under the construct of Student Focused Planning as important, an average of 2.5% selected these practices as unimportant, and an average of 22 participants elected to not respond.

Program structures and attributes/Interagency collaboration. The one item reflecting support of Interagency Collaboration—"Structured opportunities are facilitated for students and families to access support networks, community connections, and employment support (e.g. agency referrals, transition fairs)"—was designated by five respondents as not important (5.2%), and 92 (94.8%) teachers responding indicated a rating of important, the lowest occurring importance designation frequency. This item also received one of the lowest designations based on the two frequencies. Teachers

assigned the highest importance designation to "students participation in general education" with 98 of the responding teachers (99.0%) indicating their belief of its importance and only 1 responding participant (1.0%) disagreeing. Overall, of the responding teachers, an average of 96.7% selected the transition education practices grouped under the construct of program Structures and Attributes/Interagency Collaboration as important. Also, an average of 3.3% of the responding teachers selected these practices as unimportant, and an average of 21 participants chose to not respond.

Vocational/employment skills (Student development). Of the responding teachers, 99% (n = 98) selected "Students participate in career awareness and exploration instruction to learn about a variety of postschool job options" as an important skill, a higher rate than any of the other practices contributing to the Vocational/Employment Skills construct. Additionally, 98.0% of the responding teachers indicated the importance of students having the opportunity to participate in apprenticeships, job training, and internships (n = 97). Overall, an average of 97.5% of the responding teachers selected Vocational/Employment Skills Development as important skills, while an average of 2.5% of the teachers indicated a lack of importance.

Goal setting/self-advocacy/living skills (Student Development). Responding teachers identified the importance of students being taught to set goals and develop a plan to achieve their goals at a higher rate with 99.0% (n = 98) denoting this skill as important, and only 1 participant (1.0%) indicated a lack of importance. In contrast, participants identified "Students learning to monitor their progress on their goals and to adjust their goals based on feedback" as not important (n = 7 or 7.0%) more frequently

than any other transition education practice, while 93 (94.9%) of the teachers who responded selected this as an important skill. Furthermore, two other transition education practices within the self-advocacy/self-awareness portion of the Student Development construct received "not important" designations from six teachers (6.0%), and 94 (94.0%) respondents selected these same two skills as important transition education practices. Overall, the transition education practices grouped under the Goal Setting, Self-Advocacy and Living Skills Student Development construct received the lowest average designation of importance from teachers (96.2%) and the highest average designation as not important practices (3.8%).

Teachers' perceptions of administrative support for transition education. The second research question asks, "How do special education teachers in the high schools across Oklahoma perceive "administrative support" of transition education?" I addressed this question again by examining the data generated from the web-based survey. The third section asked teachers to indicate perceptions of the type of administrative support received and the importance of that type of support to their teaching and use of recommended transition practices. The third section used a Likert-type scale and asked teachers to what extent they agreed or disagreed with specific statements about the leadership practices of the administrator. I measured these variables on a 6-point scale, with each number corresponding to a level of agreement—1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Moderately Disagree), 3 (Slightly Disagree), 4 (Slightly Agree), 5 (Moderately Agree), or 6 (Strongly Agree). Overall, teachers indicated higher agreements with the statements measuring perceptions of administrative support with the results presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Teacher's Perceptions of Administrative Support of Transition Education, Construct Grouping, Means, and Standard Deviations in Rank Order by Mean

Survey Item	Construct	Mean (n = 120)	Standard Deviation
1. School administrators are easy to approach, maintain an open-door policy.	FCSE	5.18	1.24
2. School administrators are supportive of my decisions and ideas.	EncTch	5.12	1.23
3. I am encouraged by my school administrators to attend professional development.	EncTch	5.02	1.40
4. School administrators ensure the environment is orderly and supportive of teachers focusing on instruction.	FCSE	4.99	1.19
5. School administrators recognize and appreciate the work I do.	EncTch	4.99	1.45
6. School administrators ensure students have access to all education options available.	Val	4.87	1.39
7. School administrators take my opinion into consideration when making decisions that affect my work.	FCSE	4.85	1.52
8. School administrators promote an atmosphere of caring, trust, and cooperation among teachers and supervisors.	EncTch	4.81	1.42
9. School administrators show appreciation for quality teaching, innovation, and new ideas (Summers et al. 2005).	EncTch	4.79	1.61
10. School administrators act as a liaison and support me in my interactions with parents, as needed.	EncTch	4.73	1.52
11. School administrators support the goals and expectations of the transition education program.	Val	4.70	1.40
12. School administrators provide frequent, helpful feedback about my performance (Dolar 2008; Littrell et al. 1994).	PIL	4.70	1.49

Table 13 (continued)

Teacher's Perceptions of Administrative Support of Transition Education, Construct Grouping, Means, and Standard Deviations in Rank Order by Mean

Survey Item	Construct	Mean (n = 120)	Standard Deviation
13. School administrators actively participate in transition education meetings, including student IEP meetings and planning/evaluation meetings.	PIL	4.55	1.52
14. School administrators support flexible scheduling to address students' individual transition needs.	Val	4.55	1.46
15. School administrators "create structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate" and plan together (Seashore Louis et al., 2010).	FCSE	4.36	1.47
16. School administrators work with me to solve problems I experience associated with providing transition education and services.	EncTch	4.32	1.53
17. School administrators understand the transition education program and what I do as a teacher.	PIL	4.24	1.55
18. School administrators model a belief in or value of transition education.	Val	4.23	1.52
19. School administrators encourage and support the development of collaborative partnerships with agencies and businesses to improve the quality of transition services.	FCSE	4.20	1.56
20. School administrators identify resources or support personnel to contact for specific problems that he/she is unable to solve (Dolar, 2008; Littrell et al., 1994).	PIL	4.08	1.60
21. School Administrators are knowledgeable of content standards related to transition education.	Val	4.08	1.53
22. School administrators distribute resources equitably based on the unique needs of each program (Dolar, 2008; Littrell et al., 1994).	FCSE	3.93	1.59

Table 13 (continued)

Teacher's Perceptions of Administrative Support of Transition Education, Construct Grouping, Means, and Standard Deviations in Rank Order by Mean

Survey Item	Construct	Mean (n = 120)	Standard Deviation
23. School administrators do not allow state accountability testing to interfere with teachers providing quality transition education and services.	Val	3.88	1.62
24. School administrators allot time for teachers to work with parents and students to conduct quality transition assessment and planning.	FCSE	3.84	1.61
25. School administrators solicit my advice and opinions about transition education and services.	FCSE	3.84	1.69
26. School administrators are a visible presence in the transition education program/ my classroom.	EncTch	3.73	1.76
27. School administrators provide time and resources to evaluate and redesign the program to incorporate current recommended practices.	FCSE	3.71	1.66
28. School administrators provide sufficient financial resources to meet the individual transition education needs of each of my students. (Summers et al. 2005)	Val	3.69	1.70
29. School administrators use data to monitor student outcomes and the effectiveness of transition education.	PIL	3.67	1.64

Note: FCSE = Facilitating a Collaborative and Structured Environment; EncTch = Encouraging the Teachers; PIL = Providing Instructional Leadership; Val = Valuing Transition Education and Services

Facilitating a collaborative and structured environment for transition education and services. Teachers reported a perception that the site administrator is easy to approach (M = 5.18, SD = 1.24) with the majority of the teachers (n = 67 or 55.8%) indicating strong agreement. On the contrary, teachers perceived administrators solicited their advice and opinions at a lower rate (M = 3.84, SD = 1.69) with 28

(23.3%) participants indicating "slight" agreement and 24 indicating "moderate" agreement. Yet, the teachers' higher levels of agreement (M = 4.85, SD = 1.52) suggest they perceived their opinions were considered when decisions affected the work they do and 58 teachers (48.3%) "strongly" agreed with this statement. The teachers responding to the survey perceived support from school administrators with the maintenance of an orderly environment allowing them to focus on transition education instruction (M = 4.99, SD = 1.19) with the majority of teachers indicating strong agreement (n = 54, 45%). These leadership questions both contributed to the construct of Facilitating a Collaborative and Structured Environment for Transition Education and Services as part of the survey design.

Encouraging the teachers providing transition education and services.

Additionally, the teachers responding to the survey indicated a perception of support for their decisions and ideas (M = 5.12, SD = 1.23) with 58 teachers indicating "strong" agreement and 41 "moderate" agreement for a total of 81.6% within that range. Teachers perceived recognition and appreciation from their administrators for the work that they do (M = 4.99, SD = 1.45) with 55% (n = 66) of the teachers denoting "strong" agreement. Likewise, 55% (n = 66) of the teachers perceived their administrators encouraged attendance in professional development activities as well, indicating "strong" agreement, and another 18.2% (n = 22) reported "moderate" agreement. Finally, within this construct, respondents indicated the lowest rate in regards to their perceptions of the administrators' visibility in their transition program (M = 3.73, SD = 1.76). However, responses to this item ranged across all the levels with 21 teachers (17.5%) indicating "strong disagreement" and 23 teachers (19.2%) reporting "strong agreement." These

items contributed to the overall construct of Encouraging the Teachers Providing Transition Education and Services.

Providing instructional leadership of transition education and services. Using data to monitor outcomes of students participating in transition education and to monitor the effectiveness of the program obtained the lowest rating from teachers (M = 3.69, SD = 1.70). However, the teachers responding to the survey indicated administrators participated in the transition IEP meetings (M = 4.55, SD = 1.52) and perceived the feedback given as helpful (M = 4.70, SD = 1.49).

Valuing transition education and services. With 26.7% of teachers indicating "slightly agree," the provision of sufficient financial resources to meet the individual transition education needs of students got a mean score of 3.69 (SD = 1.69), one of the lower ratings, while teachers more strongly supported that administrators ensured access to all programs for students with disabilities (M = 4.87, SD = 1.89). Finally, teachers appeared to perceive some interference from state testing in their ability to provide transition education allowed by their administrators as indicated by a mean of 3.88 (SD = 1.62).

Overall, mean scores ranged from 3.67 to 5.18, indicating overall moderate to strong agreement, suggesting teachers generally perceive support for the transition programs from administrators. The survey of Teachers Perceptions of Administrative Support obtained an overall mean score of 4.40 (SD = 1.21). Each of the constructs designed to measure teachers' perceptions showed significant correlation during item analysis and reliability analysis. Therefore, this measure is interpreted as one construct. However, the overall grouped mean scores are listed below in Table 14. Means for each

of the constructs showed little variation, with a difference of only 0.44 between the highest and lowest mean.

Table 14

Teachers' Perceptions of Administrative Support for Transition Education Constructs Total Number of Survey Questions, Means, and Standard Deviations

Construct/Variable	Total Questions	Mean (n = 120)	Standard Deviation
Encouraging the Teachers	8	4.69	1.27
Facilitating a Collaborative and Structured Environment	9	4.32	1.24
Valuing Transition Education and Services	7	4.29	1.25
Providing Instructional Leadership	5	4.25	1.31
Overall Mean Administrative Questions	29	4.40	1.21

Teachers' perceptions of the importance of the administrative supports.

Survey participants again responded to "part B," of each question in the Administrative Support Survey asking, "Is this important to you?" in regards to the previously identified administrative support practice. Teachers selected "yes" to indicate importance or "no" to indicate they did not believe the support behavior was important. I calculated the frequency teachers indicated a "yes" or a "no" for each question. Also, with the ability to select "yes" or "no," survey respondents left many of these questions blank. This may indicate a lack of belief of the importance of that particular practice by not responding "yes," a non-position on the importance of the behavior or a lack of a strong feeling either way, or a decision to not respond to that question. Without a clear

understanding of why the participants elected to not respond, I included the non-responses along with the summary of the teachers' responses in Table 15 below.

Table 15

Teachers Perceptions of the Importance of the Administrative Support Actions in Rank Order of Yes Important/Not Important

Survey Item	Construct	No Response	Yes Important	Not Important
School administrators are supportive of my decisions and ideas.	EncTch	21	99 (100%)	0
School administrators are easy to approach, maintain an open-door policy.	FCSE	21	98 (99.0%)	1 (1.0%)
School administrators provide time and resources to evaluate and redesign the program to incorporate current recommended practices.	FCSE	20	98 (98.0%)	2 (2.0%)
School administrators take my opinion into consideration when making decisions that affect my work.	FCSE	21	97 (98.0%)	2 (2.0%)
School administrators support flexible scheduling to address students' individual transition needs.	Val	21	97 (98.0%)	2 (2.0%)
School administrators work with me to solve problems I experience associated with providing transition education and services.	EncTch	21	97 (98.0%)	2 (2.0%)
School administrators support the goals and expectations of the transition education program.	Val	20	97 (98.0%)	2 (2.0%)
School administrators recognize and appreciate the work I do.	EncTch	22	96 (98.0%)	2 (2.0%)
School administrators "create structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate" and plan together (Seashore Louis et al., 2010).	FCSE	21	96 (98.0%)	3 (2.0%)

Table 15 (continued)

Teachers Perceptions of the Importance of the Administrative Support Actions in Rank Order of Yes Important/Not Important

Survey Item	Construct	No Response	Yes Important	Not Important
School administrators understand the transition education program and what I do as a teacher.	PIL	21	96 (97.0%)	3 (3.0%)
School administrators ensure the environment is orderly and supportive of teachers focusing on instruction.	FCSE	24	95 (99.0%)	1 (1.0%)
School administrators act as a liaison and support me in my interactions with parents, as needed.	EncTch	22	95 (96.9%)	3 (3.1%)
I am encouraged by my school administrators to attend professional development.	EncTch	21	95 (96.0%)	4 (4.0%)
School administrators are knowledgeable of content standards related to transition education.	Val	21	94 (94.9%)	5 (5.1%)
School administrators provide frequent, helpful feedback about my performance (Dolar 2008; Littrell et al. 1994).	PIL	24	93 (96.9%)	3 (3.1%)
School administrators solicit my advice and opinions about transition education and services.	FCSE	20	93 (93.0%)	7 (7.0%)
School administrators promote an atmosphere of caring, trust, and cooperation among teachers and supervisors.	EncTch	27	92 (98.9%)	1 (1.1%)
School administrators ensure students have access to all education options available.	Val	26	92 (97.9%)	2 (2.1%)
School administrators show appreciation for quality teaching, innovation, and new ideas (Summers et al. 2005).	EncTch	27	91 (97.8%)	2 (2.2%)

Table 15 (continued)

Teachers Perceptions of the Importance of the Administrative Support Actions in Rank Order of Yes Important/Not Important

Survey Item	Construct	No Response	Yes Important	Not Important
School administrators actively participate in transition education meetings, including student IEP meetings and planning/evaluation meetings.	PIL	25	91 (95.8%)	4 (4.2%)
School administrators allot time for teachers to work with parents and students to conduct quality transition assessment and planning.	FCSE	25	91 (95.8%)	4 (4.2%)
School administrators encourage and support the development of collaborative partnerships with agencies and businesses to improve the quality of transition services.	FCSE	24	91 (94.8%)	5 (5.2%)
School administrators do not allow state accountability testing to interfere with teachers providing quality transition education and services.	Val	25	90 (94.7%)	5 (5.3%)
School administrators distribute resources equitably based on the unique needs of each program (Dolar, 2008; Littrell et al., 1994).	FCSE	24	90 (93.8%)	6 (6.3%)
School administrators provide sufficient financial resources to meet the individual transition education needs of each of my students (Summers et al. 2005).	Val	26	89 (94.7%)	5 (5.3%)
School administrators identify resources or support personnel to contact for specific problems that he/she is unable to solve (Dolar, 2008; Littrell et al., 1994).	PIL	25	89 (93.7%)	6 (6.3%)
School administrators model a belief in or value of transition education.	Val	28	86 (93.5%)	6 (6.5%)

Table 15 (continued)

Teachers Perceptions of the Importance of the Administrative Support Actions in Rank Order of Yes Important/Not Important

Survey Item	Construct	No Response	Yes Important	Not Important
School administrators use data to monitor student outcomes and the effectiveness of transition education.	PIL	27	85 (91.4%)	8 (8.6%)
School administrators are a visible presence in the transition education program/ my classroom.	EncTch	26	80 (85.1%)	14 (14.9%)

Note: FCSE = Facilitating Collaboration and Community Support; EncTch = Encouraging the Teachers; PIL = Providing Instructional Leadership ; Val = Valuing Transition Education and Services

The same two administrative support behaviors perceived by teachers as occurring at higher rates also received the highest indications of importance from teachers. Of the 99 responding teachers, 100% indicated a belief in the importance of administrators showing support for teachers' ideas and decisions, and 99% (n = 98) indicated the importance of projecting an easy-to-approach manner or open-door policy. The responding teachers also specified the importance of administrators allowing the time and resources for transition education program evaluation and redesign based on current best practices (n = 98) with only two (2.0%) respondents noting this as not important. In regards to Valuing Transition Education and Services, 98.0% (n = 97) of the participants that responded indicated the importance of supporting flexible schedules in order to meet individual student needs.

Additionally, 98% of the teachers responding indicated the importance of administrators considering their opinions in decision-making, and of collaboration to address problems encountered when providing transition education services (n = 97). Yet, seven respondents (7.0%) suggested school administrators seeking opinions and

advice about transition education and services was not important to them, with 93 (93.0%) specifying importance for this behavior. Finally, although administrators require observations and program or classroom visits in order to perform teacher evaluations, 14 (14.9%) of the teachers responding indicated this was not important to them, whereas 80 (85.1%) teachers designated the visible presence of a school administrator in the classroom or transition education as important.

Overall, the frequency of responses ranged from a low of 80 teachers to a high of 99 teachers specifying a particular administrative support item described an important behavior. While some items did not receive a designation of not important, 14 teachers designated that one skill lacked importance. Of the total 29 survey items, the frequency of participants opting to not respond ranged from 20 non-responses to 28 non-responses on one item for the entire survey.

Recommended transition education practices and administrative support. To address the third question, "What is the relationship between special education teachers' use of recommended transition education practices and their perceptions of "administrative support?" I first calculated the correlations between each of the grouped means for the five transition education constructs that measured the implementation of recommended transition education practices and the overall mean for the Administrative Support calculated by combining the means for all the items to total one mean score for this portion of the survey: (a) Student Focused Planning, (b) Vocational/Employment Student Development, (c) Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Student Development, (d) Family Involvement, and (e) Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration.

Assumptions for correlation. The three assumptions for Pearson Correlation Coefficient include the assumption of normal distribution of the variables, the assumption of independence of the sample, (Green and Salkind, 2008), and the assumption of a linearity (Lomax, 2007). The sample was obtained through email invitations to all teacher members of a University of Oklahoma transition electronic mailing list group. Participants individually completed the web-based surveys and one person's responses are independent of other participants' responses meeting the assumption of independence of the sample. Additionally, the use of a scatterplot to plot the data illustrated a positive linear relationship, albeit somewhat weak.

To check for normal distribution of the data, I first conducted tests of normality using SPSS. The overall Transition Education Practices mean score demonstrated a non-significant result (p = .055, df =120), while the other variables retained significant scores. Based on these results, I examined the skewness and kurtosis data for each of the variables as displayed in Table 16. Lomax (2007) suggested concern with skewness values greater than 1.5 or 2.0. All variables demonstrated skewness values below this range. The variable measuring Family Involvement demonstrated a Kurtosis value of 1.32, indicating a slight leptokurtic or peaked distribution (Lomax, 2007). Therefore, I also converted the mean scores to z-scores to detect the presence of outliers, or z-scores with an absolute value beyond three standard deviations beyond the mean (Stevens, 2007). While he suggests a z-value of greater than three as highly unlikely to occur, he also cautions that with a large sample size of above 100, an expectation exists that z-scores greater than absolute value of three may result from a couple participants simply by chance. Two scores fell outside of the absolute value of three in the Program

Structures/Interagency variable, as well as one score in the Family Involvement variable. Based on this, the assumption of normality is reasonably met.

Table 16

Skew and Kurtosis of each of the Transition Education Practices Measures and Perceived Administrative Support of Transition Education

Variable/Construct Measure	Skewness	Kurtosis
Student Focused Planning	-1.019	.858
Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Student Development	-.339	-.679
Vocational/Employment Student Development	-.495	-.030
Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration	-.710	.873
Family Involvement	-1.153	1.322
Transition Practices Overall Mean Score	-.355	-.581
Perceived Administrative Support Overall Mean Score	-.822	-.074

Correlation analysis. To examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of administrative support and the use of recommended transition education practices, I computed Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between each of the five variables measuring the participants' use of the recommended transition education practices and the overall mean score for their perceptions of administrative support of transition education. I computed all correlations requiring a p value of less than .05 for significance.

Of the five variables measuring the use of recommended transition education practices, four demonstrated statistically significant positive correlation. The Program

Structures/Interagency Collaboration, Vocational/Employment Student Development, and Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Student Development measures all demonstrated statistically significant positive correlation with the Perceived Administrative Support measure ($p < .001$). Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration showed a moderate relationship ($r = .40$), suggesting that Perceived Administrative Support accounts for 16% of the variance in Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration (Green & Salkind 2008). The correlations of both Vocational/Employment Student Development, and Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Student Development with Perceived Administrative Support displayed tended to be lower demonstrating a small relationship ($r = .27$, $p = .003$ and .25, $p = .006$, respectively), yet still significant relationship. Lastly, the Family Involvement measure displayed a small significant positive correlation with Perceived Administrative Support ($r = .18$, $p = .046$), whereas Student Focused Planning demonstrated a non-significant lower and almost non-existent relationship ($r = .16$, $p = .083$) with Perceived Administrative Support.

Cluster analysis. Next, I conducted a multivariate cluster analysis to identify groups of teachers with similar profiles based on the responses or mean scores of the five variables comprising the reported levels of implementation of recommended transition education practices portion of the survey: (a) Student Focused Planning, (b) Vocational/ Employment Student Development, (c) Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Student Development, (d) Family Involvement, and (e) Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration. I elected to form clusters using the transition variables based on my primary focus on transition education and the practices used by

the teachers. I wanted to examine the differences between these groups based on the reported levels of implementation of transition education practices and their perceptions of administrative support.

I utilized Ward's minimum variance hierarchical clustering techniques (Ward, 1963) with squared Euclidean distance to form the clusters. Ward's method forms clusters by merging clusters at each step of the analysis, resulting in the smallest increase of variance. Blashfield (1980) emphasized the need to validate a cluster analytic solution, as these methods will cluster the data and produce a solution that may be forced on the data, albeit inappropriately. Therefore, I examined multiple cluster solutions consisting of two, three and four cluster groups. I utilized a dendrogram to visually represent the cluster solutions and reviewed the agglomeration coefficients to determine when large increases in distances between members of clusters occurred. Based on the visual representation of the data, I continued evaluating the two and three group cluster solutions as viable solutions. Using the cluster membership produced in the cluster analysis as the dependent variable and five-transition education grouped mean scores as the independent variables, I conducted discriminant analysis to compare how accurately the discriminant function identified the cluster membership for the two and three group cluster results. Additionally, I conducted a second cluster analysis technique utilizing the K-means cluster technique forming groups based on the means of the cluster groups produced in the hierarchical cluster analysis. I compared the results of both the discriminant analyses and the additional clustering technique using Cohen's Kappa coefficient to determine the agreement rate for accurate predicted cluster membership above and beyond what would be expected to occur by chance. Based on

these analyses, the cluster solution identifying three groups appeared to produce the most viable cluster solution. Finally, as the last step in the cluster validation process, I used multivariate analysis to determine if significant differences existed between the means of each of the three groups identified in the cluster solution for the five transition variables used in the analysis to form the cluster groups.

Use of recommended transition practices profiles. To group teachers based on the reported use of the recommended transition education practices, I clustered teachers into the three cluster solution identified through the analysis based on their grouped mean responses for the five transition education measures: (a) Student Focused Planning, (b) Vocational/Employment Student Development, (c) Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Student Development, (d) Family Involvement, and (e) Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration. I validated the cluster solution utilizing discriminant function analysis and compared cluster classifications using Kappa coefficients (Romesburg, 2004). The discriminant analysis indicated cluster membership correctly predicted for 95.0% of the data and Cohen's Kappa coefficient of .923 signifies an agreement on the cluster classifications at a rate of 92.3% over what would be expected to occur by chance. Additionally, the K-means cluster solution resulted in a Cohen's Kappa coefficient of .910, indicating an agreement on the cluster membership at a rate of 91.0% over what would be expected to occur by chance.

The three-group cluster solution resulted in Cluster 2 (n = 50) with the highest mean scores on all five transition education measures (M = 5.05 to 5.45), while Cluster 1 (n = 4 0) demonstrated mean scores relatively in the middle range of the clusters (M =

3.77 to 5.15). The participants grouped into Cluster 3 retained the lowest range of self-reported mean scores in comparison to the other two clusters (M = 2.98 to 4.07).

Next, to further support the cluster solution as accurately producing differing clusters, I conducted a One-Way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) with the cluster membership as the independent variable and the five transition measures as the dependent variables. The three groups did not meet the assumption of equal variance-covariance matrices as indicated by significance of Box's *M* test, however Stevens (2007) noted when group sizes are equal, the analysis of variance is robust to this violation of assumptions. Therefore, using the SPSS function to select cases, I created a random sample of 30 cases from Cluster group 1 and Cluster group 2 to match the number of participants in the third cluster, the smallest cluster.

The three groups produced a statistically significant multivariate effect (Wilks' Lambda = .120, F(10, 166) = 31.329, $p < .001$). Further, the analyses of variances (MANOVA) showed statistical significance for each of the three groups on the five transition variables as well and this is illustrated in Table 17 below.

Table 17

Summary of MANOVA Results for Three Cluster Solution

Variable/Construct Measure	*(F 2, 87)*	partial η^2
Student Focused Planning	32.699*	.429
Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Student Development	88.148*	.670
Vocational/Employment Student Development	65.714*	.602
Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration	60.778*	.583
Family Involvement	62.942*	.591

*$p < .001$

I conducted Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) for post hoc multiple comparisons, a measure appropriate to understand how the means of the groups differed (Green & Salkind, 2008; Lomax, 2007). Also, because equal variances may not be assumed, I conducted Games-Howell post hoc measures, an appropriate post hoc multiple comparison technique (Lomax, 2007; Stevens, 2007). Tukey's post hoc comparisons revealed the three clusters differed significantly on four of the measures, while two of the clusters differed significantly on the Family Involvement measure (Table 18). The post hoc comparisons indicated Cluster 2 recorded mean scores statistically higher than Cluster 1 in the Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills, the Vocational/Employment, the Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration measures ($p < .001$), and in the Student Focused Planning measure ($p = .01$). In the Family Involvement, the mean difference between Cluster 2 and 1 was not significant ($p = .24$). Cluster 3 reported statistically significant lower mean ratings in all five areas of the transition variables when compared to Cluster 2 and Cluster 1 ($p < .001$). The same cluster comparisons resulted in statistical significance with the Games-Howell post hoc method.

Based on these results, I characterized Cluster 1 as reporting moderate use of the recommended transition education practices (Moderate-TEP), Cluster 2 as higher use for the recommended transition education practices (Higher-TEP), and Cluster 3 as lower use of the recommended transition education practices (Lower-TEP).

Table 18

Summary of Post Hoc Comparisons for Three Cluster Solution with Means and Standard Deviations

Variable /Construct Measure	Cluster 1 (Moderate-TEP) *M* (SD)	Cluster 2 (Higher-TEP) *M* (SD)	Cluster 3 (Lower-TEP) *M* (SD)
Student Focused Planning	4.94 (.62)[a*]	5.45 (.42)[b*]	4.07 (.88)[c**]
Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Student Development	3.83 (.68)[a**]	5.12 (.40)[b**]	2.98 (.75)[c**]
Vocational/Employment Student Development	4.13 (.72)[a**]	5.27 (.66)[b**]	3.13 (.78)[c**]
Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration	4.21 (.76)[a**]	5.36 (.46)[b**]	3.42 (.79)[c**]
Family Involvement	5.21 (.44)[a]	5.45 (.40)[a]	3.88 (.82)[b**]

Note: n = 30 for all three clusters. Maximum Score = 6.00
M-TEP=Moderate use of transition education practices; H-TEP=Higher use of transition education practices; L-TEP=Lower usage of transition education practices
[a,b,c] Differences in superscripts indicate statistically significant differences between groups; *$p < .01$, **$p < .001$

Cluster comparisons. With the validation of the three-group cluster solution, I then used the groups identified through the cluster analysis procedure to conduct a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine if perceptions of administrative support differed significantly between the identified cluster groups. Descriptive statistical analyses of the three cluster groups suggested comparable demographic characteristics across each of the cluster groups and Table 19 displays the information.

Table 19

Demographic Information for the Three Cluster Groups

	Cluster 1 (Moderate-TEP) n = 40	Cluster 2 (Higher-TEP) n = 50	Cluster 3 (Lower-TEP) n = 30
District Location			
Rural	16	31	15
Suburban	11	11	9
Urban	13	8	6
Total Number of Students in School			
Less than 100	1	2	2
100 to 500	14	16	11
500 to 1000	7	15	8
1000 or greater	18	17	9
Years Teaching Experience			
less than 1 year	0	0	0
1 to 5 years	2	7	7
6 to 10 years	7	13	2
11 to 15 years	11	10	6
16 to 20 years	6	5	1
More than 20 years	14	15	14
Administrator Supporting Transition Education			
Principal	10	11	4
Assistant Principal	3	1	1
Special Education Director	11	20	12
Transition Specialist	5	6	1
Department Chair/Head Teacher	9	7	4
Other	2	5	8

Table 19 (continued)

Demographic Information for the Three Cluster Groups

	Cluster 1 (Moderate-TEP) n = 40	Cluster 2 (Higher-TEP) n = 50	Cluster 3 (Lower-TEP) n = 30
Attended Professional Development Provided by			
None	0	2	0
Oklahoma Transition Institute	30	33	19
University of Oklahoma's Zarrow Center	31	35	22
Oklahoma State Department of Education	30	37	19
Other	5	11	4
Number of Grade Levels Taught			
1 Grade Level	2	3	6
2 Grade Levels	4	2	1
3 Grade Levels	4	3	1
4 Grade Levels	24	36	17
5 Grade Levels	5	6	3

Cluster 1 (Moderate-TEP) and Cluster 3 (Lower-TEP) contained the two participants who indicated no participation in professional development opportunities presented by the customary providers in Oklahoma. Also, Cluster 3 (Lower-TEP) contained a higher number of respondents that indicated the transition education program received supervision and support from an administrator in a position "other" than the typical administrator to whom program supervision is assigned based on the literature.

One-way analysis of variance. I continued with further descriptive statistical analyses to examine assumptions. First, using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality to examine distribution of the perceived administrative support of transition education within the three clusters, I found non-significant results for Cluster 1 (p = .074), while both Cluster 2 and 3 produced significant results (p = .005 and .013, respectively). I again examined the skewness and kurtosis for Clusters 2 and 3. Descriptive analyses reported Cluster 3 skewness of -.828 and kurtosis of .173, both within normal ranges (Lomax, 2007). Cluster 2 produced a skewness of -1.37 and kurtosis of 1.76, suggesting slight leptokurtic distribution or mild non-normality (Lomax, 2007). However, ANOVA is robust to moderate violations of the normality assumption with minimal effects (Stevens, 2007; Lomax, 2007), especially with larger sample sizes. The observations are not dependent and participants responded to the survey independently, meeting the independence assumption.

Lastly, to further explore the relationship between teachers' reported use of the recommended transition education practices and their perceptions of administrative support for transition education and services, I conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). I conducted the ANOVA to determine if statistically significant mean differences existed between the three groups of the independent variable—implementation of recommended transition education practices—and the dependent variable—their perceived administrative support of transition education. The independent variable consisted of the three groups—higher use of recommended transition education practices (Higher-TEP), moderate use of recommended transition education practices (Moderate-TEP), and lower use of transition education practices

(Lower-TEP)—identified through cluster analysis.

First, the Higher-TEP cluster produced a higher mean rating for perceived administrative support (M = 4.92, SD = 1.05) relative to the Moderate-TEP cluster (M = 4.11, SD = 1.28), which was higher than the Lower-TEP (M = 3.93, SD = 1.10). The homogeneity of variance assumption was met as Levene's indicated non-significance (p = .203) (Green & Salkind, 2008; Stevens, 2007). The ANOVA showed statistically significant ($F(2,117) = 8.993$, $p < .001$) mean differences in perceptions of administrative support across the transition education groups with a medium to large (partial $\eta^2 = .13$) effect size (small = .01, medium = .06, and large = .14, Green & Salkind, 2008). Based on the significant results of the ANOVA, I conducted post hoc analyses and the post hoc power at .97 was strong.

Tuckey's post hoc comparisons revealed a statistically significant difference between the means of the Higher-TEP group with the Moderate-TEP group ($p = .003$) 95% CI [0.2315,1.3848] and Lower-TEP group ($p < .001$) 95% CI [0.3664,1.6220] Therefore, teachers who reported the transition education practices implemented at highest levels also reported higher perceptions of administrative support and this differed significantly from the groups reporting lower levels of transition education practices implementation. The mean difference between the moderate transition education practices group and the low transition education practice group was not significant ($p = .780$).

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data generated through individual interviews were used to answer the fourth research question, "How do secondary special education teachers and special

education administrators describe their experiences with transition education and administrative support of transition education?" and was combined with quantitative data generated in the first phase of this mixed methods study to answer the overall research question, "How do special education teachers and special education administrators perceive administrative support in relation to the implementation of recommended transition education practices?"

Participants. Secondary special education teachers and special education administrators volunteered for individual interviews to describe their experiences providing transition education and their perceptions of the role of administrative support in being able to utilize the practices recommended in the transition literature. In phase one of this study, I used an email list of 775 email addresses generated through the University of Oklahoma's Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment, inviting volunteers to complete an online survey in which they were asked to provide an email address for contact in order to participate in an individual follow-up interview. From the survey participants, 110 volunteered email addresses and I sent an invitation email asking for interview participants and asking that the email be forwarded to the principal or assistant principal supervising the transition education program. I received seven teacher volunteers and no principal or assistant principal volunteers. During the interview process, I asked for recommendations of another transition education professional to interview about providing transition education and administrative support. I was referred to special education directors or special education transition coordinators as the most knowledgeable and most likely to provide me with useful information. I then contacted the special education administrators for interviews via

email. This resulted in seven teacher participants and three special education administrator participants, all described in Tables 20 and 21.

Table 20

Descriptions of Teacher Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Position	Years Teaching	Total Students/ Students with IEP	Special Education Teachers	Location
Harriett	Teacher	11	1200/240	14	Urban
Isabel	Coordinator and Teacher	6	200/33	1	Rural
Lesley	Teacher	32	2000/260	20	Suburban
Lydia	Teacher	4	320/75	3	Rural
Maurice	Teacher	29	1050/90	6	Suburban
Rachel	Teacher	27	750/95	6	Rural
Shelia	Teacher	20	95/20	1	Urban

Table 21

Descriptions of Special Education Administrator Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Title	Years Experience	Location of District
Nina	Special Education Transition Coordinator	• 25 years in education • 22 years teaching elementary/Jr. High • 3 years special education coordinator	Urban
Olga	Coordinator Special Education	• 30 years in education • 10 years teaching Jr. High/ High School	Suburban
Sylvia	Special Education Director and School Psychologist	• 30 years in education • 9 years teacher in rural co-op area • 1 year elementary principal	Rural

The seven teachers volunteering for an interview demonstrated a range of experiences in education. Shelia, in her 20 years as an educator, had worked with several different populations of students and settings, including a residential setting for students with intellectual disabilities and as a coordinator of services for infant and toddler programs. Her current program provided education at an alternative site that functioned as a district public school partnership site, serving students at risk of failure or with emotional and behavioral challenges. While Harriett taught for 11 years at the same public high school site, explaining that she entered teaching later in life, falling in love with high school as a last chance effort to prepare students for adulthood. She moved from teaching math and inclusion classes after becoming interested in better preparing students for life after high school. Harriett had experience as the department chair, the careers class instructor, and as the transition teacher, responsible for obtaining transition information for her school and providing support as well as information to the special education teachers there. Both of these teachers worked in settings located in urban areas.

Isabel and Lydia as well had both worked in only their current districts, and had the least amount of experience teaching. Isabel wore several hats in her position in a rural district, including special education and gifted education coordinator, as well as the academic coach for the district. She was the only special education teacher for the district and provided special education instruction for students in pre-K through grade 12 as well as general education instruction. Lydia provided transition assessment and wrote the IEP postsecondary goals and objectives for the students. She coordinated the work-study program for her rural high school and currently oversaw 20 students of the

total 75 students receiving special education in the school. Rachel, another participant who worked in a rural area school, had more extensive teaching experience, but like Lydia, worked in the same district and school for all of the 27 years she had been teaching. Rachel's experiences included teaching students ages 15 to 21 years with all types of disabilities in a self-contained classroom for 15 years. She elected to teach a financial literacy class for a year and continued to teach students with disabilities, albeit, in the general education environment.

Lesley worked at the largest school, located in a suburban area, with the most special education teachers. Early in her lengthy teaching career, she taught junior high school before moving to high school. She had experience teaching at two high schools, both in the same district. Lesley acted as the district transition team lead teacher and worked with others in the district to plan and evaluate transition education in the district. Maurice also worked in a suburban district and had a lengthy teaching career in special education. Early in his career, he taught a class classified as "trainable" before the terms and services for special education evolved into the modern terminology. Maurice taught numerous subjects and all grade levels at the high school, as well as serving as the department chair for special education.

The three special education administrators all had lengthy careers in education, with all over 20 years. Nina's administration career began most recently with only two years as a transition education coordinator, while both Olga and Sylvia had worked in special education administration for 20 years. Nina's urban district provided special education services to over 5000 students with IEPs, while Olga's suburban district

served over 2500 students, and Sylvia's rural district provided special education instruction for over 115 students with IEPs.

Qualitative Themes

While reading each transcript multiple times, I identified general units of meaning through multiple readings of each transcript. I utilized NVivo 9 during this phase of the qualitative analysis to identify key points, phrases, and statements made by participants that described their individual experience. I attended to repetition and key general units of meaning, and attempted to identify broad, unique statements or horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994b). I utilized individual statements from the interviews to form groups or units of meaning in relation to my research questions (Hycner, 1985) and merged or eliminated data to arrive at the invariant constituents that reflected the key moments of participants' experience. Once I completed this process of horizontalization, I utilized spreadsheets in Microsoft Excel to continue examining the invariant constituents for commonalities or uniqueness, merging data and eliminating repetitions, until I identified the themes describing the experiences of the participants providing transition education and their perceptions of administrative support for providing those services. Three themes emerged from the qualitative analysis and I listed the themes in Table 22 with specific statements from the participants supporting the theme.

Table 22

Themes and Evidence Statements Supporting the Themes

Theme: Competing Priorities: Balancing individual needs of secondary students with disabilities
Evidence in teachers' statements
"I think if your administrator is not open to transition, it's…it's almost impossible to do, …because if they don't think it's important, then it's not going to be important. If you need resources, you know, you're not going to get the funding for it, and just…if you need the time to do it, you're not going to get the time."
"I think special ed administrators…and we have had a transition specialist the last couple of years, but I feel like that position, um, even though there were some good ideas…there just wasn't the funding to follow through with a lot of that"
"we had administrative support… So, we try to do it early in the year while there's still sort of shuffling of classes going on and things aren't real set so the kids aren't going to miss out on a lot in their classes, but, um, the principals are fine with it."
"with our kids, if they're not college-bound, you know, they're taking classes at school that I don't think are going to benefit them, as far as a job goes"
" it's done for the benefit of the kids, not necessarily pass a test, you know, it's what they need."
"the support we get from our transition coordinator is phenomenal, incredible, and she has such a passion for it, she ignites other people….She has been able to get our principal on board, too, both with her enthusiasm and how it will benefit the school."
"for the most part, he kind of lets us do what we want to do, because he knows…he knows us, he knows that he's got a really good staff…a special ed staff, and he trusts us, and so that's really good."
"It just seems that we've got to have a way to allow more freedom for the IEP student to spend more time, more elective time, on transition."
Theme: Partnerships: Collaborating to increase opportunities for transition education
Evidence in teachers' statements
"there's a group of us that is what our passion is, is to get these kids prepared."
" I think what you're doing is important, what can I do to help you, what can the regular ed teachers do to help you also. That is huge, because it doesn't matter how much I want to do it or how much the administration stays behind you, if the regular ed teachers aren't willing to help, then it doesn't go very far, you know, it's kind of counter-productive."

Table 22 (continued)

Themes and Evidence Statements Supporting the Themes

Theme: Partnerships: Collaborating to increase opportunities for transition education (continued)
Evidence in teachers' statements
"I'm providing opportunities right now for my students to go to college and have it paid for and, you know, normally you don't see that in special ed…and that's one of those big bonuses of that work-study and voc-rehab"
"if it's done right…if everybody is on board, if you have some financing…it's a great experience for the family, for the student, and for you and your program"
"like our special ed administrators are pretty involved, as far as coming to…they always come to transition parent education meetings."
"because the teachers from my school…I bet I have six of them show up for our parent meetings every month, and that's not a required evening activity and it's nothing anybody gets paid for, but because of the enthusiasm that the teachers at our school have, they're willing to do that because that's what you need to do for the kids."
"it's the voc-rehab person that I call and say, let's brainstorm, what do you think this kid can do, and she will take all the time in the world. She'll do everything she can and she'll come up with something that works"
"we have a wonderful relationship with our tech program, and typically that's for our junior and senior students. For some of our ID students, there's a program that we're even working sophomores into, so they're getting 3 or 4 years of that type of training"
Theme: Communication: Recognizing success, planning, and capacity building
Evidence in teachers' statements
"I watch what she does and the passion she has for the kids and then, because we have monthly meetings…you know, our enthusiasm and our successes, we feed off of each other."
"for the most part, he kind of lets us do what we want to do, because he knows…he knows us, he knows that he's got a really good staff…a special ed staff, and he trusts us, and so that's really good."
"as legislation came down and we had to concentrate on…you know, we had to write better IEPs. Well, it's fine to write an IEP that looks good on paper, but can you really do it and get those kids prepared? And trying to figure out what kind of activities and training we could do to get them ready…and, we've moved more and more towards that"
"I think it's always affected me when we've had a successful transition, whether that's a student going on to college and having success or whether that's a lower functioning student having a daily job at a sheltered workshop and I've experienced all of that"

Table 22 (continued)

Themes and Evidence Statements Supporting the Themes

Theme: Communication: Recognizing success, planning, and capacity building (continued)
Evidence in teachers' statements
"I think he…he sees good things happening in our department. He hears about good things happening in our department, and he's kind of a principal that's all about the kids."
"Out of like the six that graduated this year on the work-study, five of them have active employment after graduation."
"then after the meeting would be over, all it would take would be that one parent that would come up to me and say, oh my gosh, thank you so much for doing this, I don't know where I would… and then, you know, ok…I'll do it next month so, it is appreciated by the few who do it"
"I want to have a cohesive program that takes them from, gee, what do I want to do with my life, all the way out the door and into whatever education or training they need to be successful and a career…to be able to identify a career that really matches their skills and abilities and desires."

Theme 1: Competing priorities: Balancing individual needs of secondary students with disabilities. All of the special education teachers and administrators described a balancing act to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities. Teachers and administrators noted the difficulty working to address the academic focused, standards-based or common core instruction while implementing the recommended transition education practices. Both groups noted competition for funding, resources, and time in providing individualized transition education and services. Lubbers, Repetto, and McGorray (2008) in their survey of teachers in Florida, identified a perception of teachers that transition lacked importance as a priority in schools, creating less meaning for transition planning. Further, these researchers noted teachers

reported “many competing priorities and overwhelming responsibilities” (p. 289) in trying to provide transition education and services.

Academic instruction and transition education. Maurice, an experienced secondary special education teacher, noted the change in special education services and transition in particular, as he recalled his experiences earlier in his teaching career, “Everybody that I…administrators, teachers, people, custodians, everybody was on board with helping these students gain some transition skills.” He goes on to describe the change and his feeling that,

> …now, with the higher functioning students and No Child Left Behind, the focus is now shifted to academics and gaining credits and taking tests and to try to fit in a transition type program into…with LD kids or our higher functioning ID kids, you know, the counselors and the principals and, I assume, from administrators on up, they’re all more concerned about what the transcript looks like, did they take the test, so it’s hard to fit transition services when you have to get your algebra credits and your English credits, social studies credits, it’s hard to fit in transition planning into that…into a program now.

One special education administrator likened finding the time to address both academics and transition as having a balanced diet and not leaving transition education out, because like with nutrition, it is important to not leave out a portion in order to make it work.

Harriet, a transition teacher at a large high school, noted her desire to develop elective courses specific to transition education, yet identified the need to have curriculum written and approved to make changes to course content. Describing her

experience implementing the electives, Nina, a special education coordinator in an urban district noted, "the administrators that are on board with the importance of transition and supportive makes all the difference, because we're also doing transition electives." As well, the majority of the teachers interviewed expressed the need for more elective courses specifically targeted to provide transition education to the students with disabilities. While Lesley, another lead transition teacher at her school site, described her excitement integrating into a study skills class and into special education senior English classes a new curriculum to teach students about their disabilities and how to self-advocate.

Access to students with disabilities. However, while some of the teachers described successful integration of the recommended transition education practices into special education courses, all described challenges with accessing students with disabilities who spend most of their day in general education classes. The teachers conveyed the necessity to make-up for missed instruction, or to plan transition education and services, such as instruction on leading an IEP meeting or self- advocacy instruction, around courses that were not tested or during times when instruction had not yet begun in earnest. Lydia and Isabel, both less experienced teachers working in small, rural settings, noted their concerns about identifying the students by removing them from the general education classroom, yet recognized the need for individual time to complete quality transition planning and assessments. Isabel explained her conflict, "I have to pull them out of their regular classes and…they're missing out on regular instruction…but also that, then everybody knows there's the special ed teacher, they're going with the special ed teacher." Shelia, an experienced teacher providing special

education services at an alternative school site, depicted her conflict as a competition for time with the students. She explained her difficulty in trying to remove students from general education classes due to the multiple providers also removing students with IEPs from classes to provide services or assessments.

Community-based instruction and training. According to the transition education professionals' experiences, transportation continues to challenge the provision of community-based instruction and access to jobs in communities. Maurice explained, "One particular district that I'm really envious of, in their town-city, they have transportation, they have buses where they live, you can actually teach a kid to catch the bus here, get off here, walk to that job, and then work there an hour, get back on the bus and come back to school." Special education administrators noted this need, and one described encouraging the teachers to obtain commercial drivers' licenses (CDL) in order to transport students to community-based instruction sites and job sites. Yet, even with the CDL, the administrator explained transportation continued to present a challenge, for example, with scheduling. Rachel, a teacher who previously drove a school bus and had a CDL described her thwarted intentions, explaining, "I mean, I'm willing to drive the bus to do it. I just need the time in the day, you know, that I can take the entire…it needs to be like a class. I can't take other kids that are just going…just dragging them along because they're part of my class, you know." In fact, one teacher expressed the belief that providing transportation to students with significant disabilities to access the transition education training and opportunities available in the community would enable their transition program to "encompass everything."

Administrative support. Sylvia, a special education administrator, described her role working with the principals in her rural district to gather their support for teachers implementing the recommended transition education practices, explaining, "they know that is very important and…and if the administrators are on my side, then it's just…it's just a matter of fact that it's going to happen." Lesley, a teacher who described successfully integrating the recommended transition practices into her classes and pulling students from general education courses, articulated a feeling of trust that allowed her to balance the competing demands, stating, "You know, he probably doesn't really know what's going on with transition with our kids, but he trusts us enough to know that we're doing our jobs and we're doing what we need to be doing." Harriet depicted a similar "trust," indicating, "I feel the support from the principal in the sense that he knows what we're doing is what needs to be done and what's best for the kids and best for the school."

One special education administrator explained the importance of administrators, "… letting the teacher know that you're interested, really interested in what they're trying to accomplish with these kids and then it may look little and insignificant, but to that kid it's a big deal." In support of this need, one teacher explained her perception that, "as an administrator of the school, he has to focus…and unfortunately, even more so than it used to be. I mean, they're driven by numbers…" a sentiment echoed by another teacher who explained, "the administrator didn't understand special ed and didn't really much care, if it didn't affect our API…you know, then it didn't affect him." While Lesley enthusiastically described her experience approaching her administrator about her invitation to participate in a monthly transition meeting,

> the first meeting that I was going to be asked to come to was on the very first day of EOI testing, which was an English and writing one, so it involved the whole school…but I went to him and said, what do I do, and he said, it's important that you go and be there, we'll make it work, you know, so he… he does understand that this will be a once a month commitment that he has to let me go for, and, you know, to him it's…it doesn't matter, it's important.

Theme 2: Partnerships: Collaborating to increase opportunities for transition education. Rachel, a teacher from a rural area shared, "You know, it's a school community and it doesn't take one person to raise a child, it takes the community to raise a child..." All of the transition education teachers and administrators recounted opportunities for students that existed in their programs based on partnerships with community agencies, businesses, and postsecondary education and training programs. Teachers and administrators shared collaborative experiences between teaching staff—general education and special education—as well as with other departments in the school district to implement recommended transition education practices and meet the needs of students with disabilities. Also, the special education teachers described their experiences partnering with parents, providing information and links to resources in the community. Collet-Klingenberg (1998), based on her findings in her case study, emphasized the importance of parent and student involvement in transition planning, especially to support parent knowledge. Further, the researcher described the positive contribution to the transition programs made by the unique transition teams, which she noted facilitated communication and collaboration in the program. Similarly, Lubbers et al. (2008) reported significant positive correlations between the interagency councils

utilized in some districts in Florida and students attending postsecondary education.

Community agency partnerships. Isabel, the special education teacher and director for a rural school district, talked about her experiences partnering with the technology centers leading to successful employment for students with disabilities, "I know that two of them went on to get a job in the career that they went to career tech for, and so I think it is a huge asset to a school." However, she also described a change in the access to this beneficial partner due to cuts in funding and the transportation from the rural district. Other transition teachers echoed Isabel's successful experiences and portrayed intense training for students, beginning for some as early as 10th grade. Some of the more experienced teachers noted changes in the admission requirements and the elimination of some programs that used to be available to assist in meeting the transition education needs of students with more significant cognitive disabilities. These teachers expressed a desire for more vocational-training opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities at school sites or in the community.

Another community agency partnership teachers described as contributing to their experiences providing transition education occurred with a local community college disability center in an urban area. This partnership, the teachers explained, provided assistance with applications, registration with disabilities centers, and even academic assessment and collaboration to guide further academic preparation.

Teachers described experiences with work-study partnerships through Department of Rehabilitative Services and spoke of the importance of those opportunities in supporting employment for students with disabilities. Lydia, the coordinator of the work-study program for her rural her school, explained, "I'm

providing opportunities right now for my students to go to college and have it paid for and, you know, normally you don't see that in special ed…and that's one of those big bonuses of that work-study and voc-rehab." While Shelia described her experience in terms of support from the vocational rehabilitation counselor to identify vocational training and education opportunities for individual students, "it's the voc-rehab person that I call and say, let's brainstorm, what do you think this kid can do, and she will take all the time in the world. She'll do everything she can and she'll come up with something that works." Additionally, these educators noted the importance of communication and the need for timely responses between partners in order to facilitate applications and services to students with disabilities.

Community business partnerships. Secondary special education teachers and administrators depicted district and personal experiences partnering with local businesses. One coordinator described a local business partnership with a non-profit community-based organization used to provide job-site training and paid employment to students with more significant disabilities. However, the participants providing transition education services to students in rural areas noted the lack of local businesses in their small communities limits job opportunities and these types of partnerships. Additionally, teachers noted that while business partnerships to provide job-training and employment opportunities exist outside of the local rural community, the limited transportation options prevent access to these.

School district partnerships. One experience described by Sylvia, a rural special education director, included working with the school district to facilitate opportunities for students. She described this as an option for smaller, rural districts with limited

access to local community businesses for partnerships, noting, “They have a willingness about them and they see how important it is for them to be able to do this stuff, so I see that part as being a great improvement.” Having vocational training partnerships with different departments within a school and a district, according to these special educators’ experiences, provided opportunities for students with disabilities to access a variety of positions, ranging from receptionist or office type positions to mechanical and maintenance training.

Teacher partnerships. The secondary special education teachers described their experiences in terms of partnerships with general and special education teachers. When working together with other special educators in the department, teachers described opportunities to provide different instruction in social skills, pre-vocational training, self-awareness and self-advocacy training, as well as training students to lead their own IEP meetings. The transition educators who worked as part of a team or group of teachers used the words, “we” or “our kids” and “our program,” to describe their experiences providing transition education opportunities to students. While teachers working independently described their experiences using “I” and “my kids” when discussing their experiences. Isabel, who was the only special education teacher for her district and also acted in the role of special education director described her experience: “I go to the trainings and I listen to what they say and it sounds great and then I get back here and I’m just like, how do I implement this?” She continued explaining, “as far as administrative support, whatever…I feel like whatever I wanted to do within reason, he would go for… he would support me, but it would be me that did it. I mean I would have to come up with a way to do it.”

However, Isabel noted the benefit of small class sizes and recounted her experience collaborating with the general education teachers to provide students with disabilities the opportunity to complete job applications and develop resumes. Shelia, the only special education teacher at her alternative school site, described how she got assistance with problem solving, explaining, "I think that…we're so small that I would probably discuss it in a teachers' meeting. We have 9 teachers and I…I would probably toss that out and say, are any of you aware of anything that has worked with this in the past?" Teachers emphasized the need to work with the general education teachers to identify content that supports students' transition education needs and collaborating to integrate instruction.

Parent partnerships. These transition educators, based on their experiences, emphasized the importance of involving and working with parents in order to provide quality transition education and services. They described different methods to promote those partnerships, and expressed the desire to be able to connect more with families of students. Lesley, a secondary teacher, described having monthly parent transition education meetings and explained her process, "I send out a letter at the beginning of the year that goes to everybody and it says, this is when the meetings will be, if you would like to be on our email list, but can't come to the first meeting, but still want to receive information, email me." She emphasized the importance of follow-up from the other teachers, "But, a lot of the teachers, like at my school, when they have IEPs or whatever, will talk to their parents about it and remind them, explain to them what it is, or if there's a speaker that they think is particularly good that the parents should come and hear, they will email that parent individually." Another teacher and coordinator

described a transition fair, attracting numerous vendors, parents and students, in which transition information was distributed and connections with community agencies, employers, and postsecondary training and education representatives were facilitated. Both emphasized their experience with this event as an important opportunity to involve students and parents.

Administrative support. Shelia recounted her experience recruiting business partnerships in her community, "I don't have time to go recruit businesses to do work-study and I am apparently not very good at it, because last year, last fall, I went to every business. I made a flyer. I talked to every owner or manager, and I thought I had a really good presentation, and I did not get one single one to do it, so…I don't know. Somebody better than me is going to have to do that…" She described this role as a school representative role, such as a principal, and teachers described school administrators having more contact with the parents and community, offering opportunities to engage business partnerships. Another teacher noted the support of special education administrators as they regularly attend monthly school parent transition education meetings, and explained how much she would appreciate school administrators attending to represent the school and model the importance of the planning meetings for the parents. Finally, one teacher explained her feeling about principal support for collaboration with general education, "That is huge, because it doesn't matter how much I want to do it or how much the administration stays behind you, if the regular ed teachers aren't willing to help, then it doesn't go very far, you know, it's kind of counter-productive." Another teacher echoed this sentiment, describing her wish to collaborate with general education English teachers, but

suggested that she would have to initiate it and explained, "I don't know how we're going to get met with that, because it will be a…probably a voluntary decision on their parts."

Theme 3: Communication: Recognizing success, planning, and capacity building. In describing their experiences teaching transition education to secondary students with disabilities, teachers and administrators shared stories of successes. Some of the educators recalled specific student successes, while others described programs or events with successful attendance, or parents indicating the helpfulness of a meeting. Teachers identified situations when school site or special education administrators recognized successful transition education instruction and programs, and special education administrators described obtaining support or "buy-in" as school site administrators and other teachers observed beneficial outcomes for students, families and the school community. Both the special education teachers and administrators both explained how the recognition of success provided opportunities for expanding and redesigning the transition education program as well as the sharing of ideas across schools and districts.

Recognizing success. Secondary special education teachers shared stories about successful employment of students after involvement in work-study programs, success at local community colleges, and success in technical training programs for individual students. Harriet, a teacher in an urban school excitedly described a teacher being recognized on television and the public recognition of the successful transition fair, stating, "of course, we got a little clip in the news and things like that, which always looks good."

The special education administrators and teachers suggested school administrators begin to "buy-in" as they see success with students, teachers, and programs. Nina, who has been a transition coordinator for two years, noted her beginning, "I get cooperation and this is working really well, then pretty soon they're going to want it over here because they're going to see how well this does, so that's…that's kind of what we've done and it has had that effect." Both teachers and administrators emphasized school administrators recognizing successes with students and seeing the benefit students receive from a quality program encourages their support.

Planning. In fact, secondary transition teachers and special education administrators emphasized the need to communicate and plan in order to successfully implement recommended transition education practices. One special education administrator described planning with a curriculum coordinator to implement transition education across all grades levels, while another described working with elementary and junior high school teachers to build pre-requisite skills in order for students to successfully lead their IEP meetings. These special education teachers and administrators, based on their personal experiences, identified the need to plan to avoid "over-lapping" of skills taught, and to ensure that students received instruction addressing all needed areas of transition skills, including general education teachers and families in the planning.

Capacity building. Maurice explained that, "any time you have success, it…you, you kind of see the need for it" as he described a change from special education teachers thinking transition was just "more stuff" required in the IEP, to understanding the real benefit of implementing the recommended transition practices.

The special education administrators shared their experiences, describing a "long process" to get teachers to realize the benefits outweigh the increased work, and noted that as IDEA changed and the state special education administration emphasized transition education, attitudes slowly changed, enabling training and implementation. Lesley, a teacher, described her experience, as other teachers observed changes in students after they had received instruction in leading their own IEP meetings, "when you get those kids, when the day they've been introduced to it and realize that they have power and they're all lining up in the counseling center, wanting to pick their schedules for the next year…I think the teachers see that and react…I mean, it's kind of positive reinforcement for them." She excitedly reported the implementation of this recommended transition education practice as occurring at all of the high schools in her suburban district. Special education administrators explained the importance of teachers communicating in order to be supportive of each other implementing the recommended transition education practices, to learn from each other, and to have opportunities to ask questions and get answers. They described "peer pressure" influencing other schools to implement recommended transition education practices as they observed successes with other teachers and school sites.

Isabel and Lydia, with six and four years experience respectively, noted their difficult experiences developing new programs independently. Lydia explained that she had to find information out on her own in trying to begin the work-study partnership for her school, and Isabel revealed, in her attempts to begin implementing recommended transition education practices, a feeling of expectation, "you're supposed to know how

to do it, you should know what to do…and I just don't know sometimes…and I hate that because I feel like I fail my students, because I don't do enough for them."

Administrative support. According to these special education teachers and administrators, building administrators need to see the transition education programs, the success the students are experiencing, and the goals they address. Maurice, a teacher, suggested, "it would probably do a world of good for me, as a special educator, if just once or twice a year, just enough so that they're aware of what we're doing, come to my room during a work-study time to see what the students are doing. Um, go visit a student on the job site or the…or the job-shadowing program…what are they trying to accomplish for these kids?" Special education administrators described superintendents and directors communicating the importance of implementing transition education. One shared her impression of her district administrators' recognition of this as she described funding challenges, yet explained that the transition teacher positions remained, "they valued what we were doing and they saw such significant changes in the sites and they were getting good reports from teachers and parents and administrators throughout the district as to what was going on with the kids and how the whole thing was developing that they felt like, that they needed to do anything they possibly could to keep the position."

Textural and Structural Descriptions

These teachers portrayed a group feeling of "passion" for teaching transition education, emphasizing the "enthusiasm" of the teachers. One teacher vividly recalled the support of a coordinator that "gets you fired up" about transition. An experienced teacher used the phrase "feel like a rock star" to illustrate the excitement and

satisfaction felt when recognizing multiple former students employed in a local business. While the secondary transition education teachers acknowledged the importance of students with disabilities being successful, passing mandated tests, and finishing school, one explained "it goes deeper than that" as she described the motivation to provide transition education.

When transition education teachers and administrators described teaching transition education and a supportive school site administrator, they described feeling the principal "knew" or "understood" students with disabilities. They spoke of the principal being able to "recognize the importance of transition education" because of wanting to "do what was right for kids," even if the building administrator's knowledge of recommended transition education practices was limited. Similar feelings of "trust" and "for the benefit of the kids" resonated throughout the statements made by the teachers who portrayed feeling enabled to address the individual student transition needs. Teachers described a feeling of autonomy, "lets us do what we want to" yet believed that the principal showed "interest" in the transition education program, and reinforced the teachers' belief that "good things happen in our department."

While teachers, when recalling situations when they experienced less support from school site or district administrators, described a sense of "pressure" or feeling "counter-productive." One teacher expressed feeling "undermined" when unable to implement new transition education practices, while another recounted feeling like "I fail my students."

When they perceived other priorities appeared to take precedence over implementing individualized transition education practices, these teachers characterized

the principal as “didn’t understand special ed” or had “preconceived notions.” The special education administrators recognized the “pressure” on secondary principals and teachers, yet stressed the importance of administrators demonstrating a “willingness to listen” and to provide validation for teacher ideas, even when not able to put it into practice. These special education directors described themselves as “encouraging” teachers, most notably when teachers expressed feeling unsuccessful or “discouraged.” Additionally, they described their experience supporting transition teachers; a “go-to” for problem solving for new ideas, “negotiating” to get “cooperation” when making requests of building administrators, and giving the “go-ahead” while “guiding” teachers to implement the recommended practices.

These secondary special education teachers portrayed transition education as instruction “fit” into sections of the school day that were not occupied with required academic instruction, integrated into other special education courses, such as an English course, a study skills, or a career education course, and scheduled around EOI academic content required to prepare students for mandated testing. The special education teachers described needing time, flexibility, “freedom” and understanding in order to provide instruction that may be “perceived as non-academic” or mistaken for “playing.” The experienced teachers noted a difference in special education with a shift to “academic” and “test” focus and expressed fewer opportunities available to assist in providing transition education to students who were “not college-bound” or needing “hands-on” type training.

Both special education teachers and administrators described limited “funding” and “resources” for transition education and noted the “pressure” on secondary

principals and teachers to provide instruction to cover all the academic standards. Conversely, special education administrators described working toward "cohesive plans" to provide transition education across grade levels integrated into the "common core." They emphasized goals for expanding programs and partnership, such as with the Department of Rehabilitation Services and the technology centers, to establish a community-based career-training program. Transition teachers described implementing more opportunities for parent trainings and the spread of other recommended practices, like student-led IEP meetings to other schools.

Both special education administrators and teachers described sensing a recent shift to "focus on transition" at the state level and in legislation. Special education administrators and teachers characterized the initial thinking that transition was simply "in the IEP" initially, but now understanding the importance of implementing the recommended practices and the "activities and training" students require to "get them ready." One teacher summed up the context of this experience, implementing the recommended transition education practices and the role of administrative support, emphasizing, "if it's done right…if everybody is on board, if you have some financing and…it's…it's a great experience for the family, for the student, and for you and your program."

Chapter 5

Discussion

This study quantitatively and qualitatively examined the relationship between implementation of the recommended transition education practices identified in the literature and teachers' perceptions of administrative support. I pursued this research to further an in-depth understanding of the transition education practices teachers identify themselves as using and their perceptions of the administrative support behaviors contributing to their ability to utilize the recommended practices identified in the research.

This study contributes to the research by providing further exploration into the implementation of the recommended transition education practices and how administrators support teachers using these practices. While research exists describing the importance of administrative support for transition education practices, limited descriptions of the support appeared in the literature. Additionally, the data generated from the survey, albeit self-reported data, illustrated the perceptions of secondary special education teachers in regards to their implementation of the transition education practices that are beginning to emerge as effective and influencing postschool outcomes of students with disabilities. As well, the examination of the level of importance teachers ascribe to some of the transition education practices gives direction for professional development and dissemination of research findings to increase teachers' awareness of the effective practices, the research that exists supporting the practices, and the impact on successful postschool outcomes. The mixed-methods approach utilized in this study enables the experiences of secondary transition education teachers

and special education administrators to provide a context for the survey data, further clarifying the transition education practices teachers implement and illuminating the support required from school site and special education administrators, as well as others in the school community.

Review Of Procedures

This sequential explanatory mixed methods study obtained statistical, quantitative results from a sample of teachers in Oklahoma, and then followed up with selected teachers and special education administrators to explain and explore the results in more depth. In the first quantitative phase of the study, I collected survey data from special education teachers at high schools in Oklahoma to address how perceptions of administrative support components related to the use of recommended transition education practices. I invited teachers to rate their use of the recommended transition practices and to indicate their belief of the importance or lack of importance of the practice described. I calculated grouped means for the five variables that measured the implementation of recommended transition education practices: (a) Student Focused Planning, (b) Vocational/Employment Student Development, (c) Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Student Development, (d) Family Involvement, and (e) Program Structures/Interagency Collaboration, and calculated frequencies and percentages to understand the importance teachers assigned to each of the transition education practices.

Additionally in the survey, I asked teachers to indicate a level of agreement indicating the occurrence of practices I identified as measuring administrative support. I calculated grouped means on the four constructs: (a) Facilitating a Collaborative and

Structured Environment; (b) Encouraging the Teachers; (c) Providing Instructional Leadership; and (d) Valuing Transition Education and Services. Each of these items also asked teachers to indicate importance or lack of importance of the behavior described, and again frequencies and percentages were calculated.

Next, I calculated the correlations between each of the grouped means for the five transition education constructs and the overall mean for the Perceived Administrative Support portion of the survey. I calculated the overall mean by combining the means for all the items to total one mean score for this portion of the survey. Lastly, I conducted a cluster analysis to examine the survey data for distinct groups based on the five transition education practices construct measures. Three distinct groups appeared present in the data. Lastly, I conducted an ANOVA to determine if any significant differences existed between the Perceived Administrative Support overall mean score of each group.

In the second qualitative phase, I interviewed seven special education transition teachers and three special education administrators to understand their experiences providing transition education and implementing the recommended practices, as well as their experiences receiving and providing administrative support of transition education and services. Three themes emerged from the interviews of these special educators: (a) Competing Priorities: Balancing individual needs of secondary students with disabilities; (b) Partnerships: Collaborating to increase opportunities for transition education; and (c) Communication: Recognizing success and capacity building. I integrated the results of the quantitative data and the qualitative data into this discussion to address the overall research question, "How do special education teachers and special

education administrators perceive administrative support in relation to the teachers' use of recommended transition education practices?"

Implementation and Importance of Recommended Transition Education Practices

Based on the self-reported data, the majority of the teachers indicated they implemented the transition education practices identified in the survey at a moderate to high level overall with mean response ranging from 3.77 to 5.24 and an overall mean of 4.48 on a scale from 1 (never) to 6 (always). These higher rates contrast somewhat with the findings of Benetiz, Morningstar, and Frey (2008) who found teachers reported planning and provision of transition education services rarely and occasionally (M = 2.70). However, Conderman and Katsiyannis (2002) found teachers reported their effectiveness in providing transition skills instruction higher than their strategies instruction skills, their content instruction, and their remedial instructional skills.

Further, many participants elected to not respond to the portion of the question that asked them to indicate the importance of a transition education practice. However, up to 99 participants elected to respond, and all 99 indicated the importance of three recommended practices, while the transition education practice receiving the lowest indication of importance obtained 92 designations. Conversely, seven respondents indicated one practice as not important, the highest occurrence, while three of the practices received no designations of not important. While the differences in the implementation mean scores and importance frequencies may be slight, when examined in conjunction and coupled with the experiences of the transition education teachers and special education administrators, the results demonstrated noteworthy patterns.

Implementation and the IEP document. First, the transition education practices with the highest reported usage reflected transition education activities related to the IEP document. Of the recommended transition practices on which teachers rated themselves, five of the top seven practices are specifically part of the mandated IEP process and the other two practices relate directly to the IEP process. These items address regulated practices such as attendance at the IEP, the contents of the IEP, the development of that content based on assessments, including students' interests, preferences and strengths, the relationship of IEP goals to the services outlined, and opportunities to participate in general education. All of these relate to mandates in IDEA 2004 and procedures addressed in the IEP document or meeting, such as consideration of the Least Restrictive Environment and access to the general education environment (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(5)(B)), consideration of the students' preferences and interests at transition IEP meetings (20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)(B)(d)(1)(D)), postsecondary goals based on assessments, and linkages between the transition services students receive and their goals (20 U.S.C. 1414 (d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII)).

As the special education teachers and administrators related their earlier experiences in education, they noted a shift in the special education legislation toward more of an emphasis on transition education and services. Both groups described sensing a renewed focus on transition services emanating from the state department of special education. However, the educators described the initial trainings and support revolving around the contents of the IEP document and "compliance."

But does compliance with the requirements for the IEP contents and meeting support implementation of the recommended transition education practices? The special

education administrators highlighted the influence of legislation and the need to be in compliance with mandates as creating an initial awareness of the importance of transition education for district and school site administrators. Yet, as one teacher acknowledged, the contents and procedures required for a compliant IEP do not necessarily equate to higher levels of implementation of the recommended instructional practices, or to successful student outcomes. In fact, Steele, Konrad and Test (2005) examined contents of IEPs from 28 graduates in two states to examine the specificity of the IEP transition contents, the postschool outcomes described in the documents, and the level these matched the outcomes of the graduated students. While they found the outcomes documented in the students' IEP matched in the area of employment, other transition education areas did not match, yet the students obtained atypical successful postschool outcomes when compared to outcomes described in the literature. Based on their results, Steel et al. question whether the IEP truly guides the provision of transition education and services, and debates the influence of the IEP on the actual program and the use of the recommended transition education practices. Yet, the educators participating in this study indicated the highest level of implementation for practices related to compliance with the IEP document and meeting, while indicating lower levels of implementation for instructional practices. Powers et al. (2005) in their review of the transition components of 399 IEPs found many of the transition requirements either not addressed or addressed minimally, and found little evidence these IEPs targeted the effective practices.

Conversely, with the exception of the Family Involvement measures, a moderate number of the teachers selected these practices as important. In fact, the teachers who

responded to the survey designated transition IEP goals based on transition assessment at the lowest level of importance with 92 participants selecting this practice as important and six indicating this as an unimportant practice. Even though, involving students in these types of assessments may increase their knowledge of self and help them link their learning to their goals for the future, factors that may promote continuing in school (Kortering & Christenson, 2009).

Family involvement. The Family Involvement construct obtained the highest importance ratings from the teachers and none of the participants indicated these practices as unimportant. Literature described the importance of involving families in transition planning (Collet-Klingenberg, 1998; Karvonen et al., 2004; Hasazi, et al., 1999; Repetto et al., 2002) and it is evident in interviews with service providers, young adults with disabilities, and their families (Lindstom, et al., 2007; Gerber et al., 1992; Goldberg et al., 2003). However, families frequently report feeling that they are not a part of the transition process (Cobb & Alwell, 2009) and observations at a model transiton site indicated limited family and student awareness as well as passive involvement (Collet-Klingenburg, 1998). Teachers' indicated the highest occurrence of providing family members with transition information, such as community resource information, followed by family member attendance at the IEP meetings, and at a slightly lower rate families actively participating in transition planning. With the requirements of transition services requirements in IDEA 2004, (20 U.S.C. 1401(34)) teachers may invite a representative of outside agencies to attend the IEP, and the Oklahoma State Department of Education Special Education Services (OSDE-SES) Policies and Procedures for Special Education in Oklahoma describes transition

planning including assistance to families in developing linkages to resources to assist students to progress toward their transition goals.

Yet, when asked about facilitating access to the community agencies, support networks, and employment connections that are available to assist students and families after high school, the responding teachers in this study indicated this occurred less frequently and assigned a slightly lower level of importance to this type of support for students and families. However, Test, Fowler et al. (2009) reported instruction to the families and parents as the one evidence-based practice supporting improved outcomes for students with disabilities. In fact, parents of children with disabilities interviewed for the U. S. General Accounting Office Report (July, 2003) reported that they often did not know how to locate and access resources for their children, nor did they possess knowledge about the laws protecting the rights of their children after high school.

While some of the special education teachers and administrators described transition fairs for students and parents in the district, monthly parent transition education meetings, and assisting parents with completing required paperwork, overall teachers expressed a desire to increase parent involvement in transition planning. The transition teachers recognized the difficult economical situations, limited education, lack of transportation, and employment obligations posed challenges for families. However, like the survey respondents, the special education administrators and teachers emphasized the importance of involving parents to support students achieving postsecondary goals. Lubbers et al. (2008) found teachers in their study perceived parents as not involved in transition, yet similarly noted the importance teachers placed on parent involvement, identifying the lack of involvement as a barrier to transition.

Implementation and student instruction. Looking at the overall survey and teachers reporting the level of implementation of the recommended transition practices, only three out of the 14 highest implemented transition education practices contained the word "instruction." Vocational/Employment Skills and the Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills, both measures contributing to Student Development, ranked the lowest in implementation (M = 4.26 and 4.13, respectively). However, Test, Fowler et al. (2009) found much supporting research for evidence-based practices in the area of student development. Specifically, two of the practices met the criteria of a strong level of evidence and 22 practices demonstrated a moderate level of evidence. Additionally, a minimum of nine of the 16 evidence-based predictor categories identified by Test, Mazzotti et al. (2009) that correlated with improved outcomes for students with disabilities contain skills that are taught and identified in the student development component of Kohler's Taxonomy (1996). Further, Test, Mazzotti et al. identified positive effects on the likelihood of postschool enrollment, independent living, and employment for students with paid employment or work experiences in high school, and students with high levels of self-care or independent living skills.

A larger number of teachers indicated importance for career awareness and exploration instruction, placing this practice in the top five practices identified as important by the teachers responding to the survey, a practice supported in the literature as well (Goldberg et al., 2003; Raskind et al., 1999). The responding teachers noted a higher level of access to vocational and occupational courses for their students, and secondary schools often include vocational and occupational courses that students in Oklahoma access through the Career Technology Centers. Teachers and special

education administrators described access to these opportunities through partnerships with community agencies. The importance of collaboration with technical centers, the Department of Rehabilitation Services, and postsecondary education programs resounded throughout the experiences of the special education teachers and administrators. Collaboration with other agency providers may provide additional opportunities for students with disabilities to access the community resources and improve outcomes (Collet-Klingenberg 1998; Repetto et al., 2002).

The transition education practice of providing students with instruction to learn independent living skills obtained the highest implementation rating of the items measuring the Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills construct, yet ranked only 14th out of 27 practices. Teachers also assigned a lower level of importance to this instruction, however research specifically supports this instruction as affecting the outcomes for students with disabilities with strong evidence (Test, Fowler et al., 2009).

Teachers noted the importance of students with disabilities knowing when they need support, the type of support needed, and from whom to get that support, and reported this instruction occurring at a moderate level (M = 4.14). However, teaching students to talk about their disability and ask for supports or accommodations, while ranked only slightly lower on importance (n = 96, 80.0%), showed a noticeable lower implementation level (M = 3.91).

One example of the mandated IEP meeting practices possibly prompting implementation of recommended instructional practices arose with one curious contrast between implementation and importance ratings. Teaching students to participate in their own transition IEP meetings obtained an implementation mean score (4.71), just

above the overall mean, and the literature supports involving students in the IEP and the use of the *Self-Advocacy Strategy* (VanReusen, Bos, & Schumaker, 1994), and the *Self-Directed IEP* (Martin, Huber Marshall, Maxson, & Jerman, 1996) as an evidence-based practice for improving the postschool outcomes of students with disabilities demonstrating a moderate level of evidence (Test, Fowler et al., 2009). Yet, even with a higher than average implementation rating, 94 teachers signified this practice as important and three indicated it was not important.

Even though teachers rated the instruction for actual participation in the IEP at lower importance level, teaching students to set goals based on their interests and skills and developing plans to attain those goals was seen as important to 98 of the teachers and only 1 indication of not important, placing this practice in the top fifth of the transition education practices ratings. One teacher interviewed stressed the importance of student awareness of opportunities in the community in order to set goals and develop a vision for the future; a vision this teacher believed would help students remain in school. However, instruction to monitor and adjust the goals received the lowest implementation rating and also was rated low on importance.

Previous literature noted the perception of needing to intensively concentrate instruction on state mandated standards may result in a narrowed focus to teach only the skills on the tests and test completion strategies (Johnson et al., 2007), limiting teachers to the mandated transition education practices with less flexibility to include instructional practices known to improve postschool outcomes for students. In fact, teachers expressed concerns about the emphasis of instruction on state standards limiting time to develop an integrated instructional model to address self-determination

instruction and assessment (Eisenman & Chamberlin, 2001). Similarly, Conderman and Katsiyannis (2002) found secondary special education teachers described a feeling of pressure from parents or administrators to ensure students passed tests, which the authors note may unintentionally limit the instruction to basic academic skills. Alwell and Cobb (2006) in their review of instructional interventions teaching life-skills or independent living skills noted a move away from this instruction and questioned the possible influence of general education and the intensive focus on academic and college preparation. They described "This tension in secondary schooling—teaching youth with disabilities the skills needed to function in and succeed beyond school, versus including these same youth in general education classrooms where the curriculum is largely focused on academics—is as much a philosophical as it is a practical conundrum" (p. 31).

Certainly this competing pressure or tension emerged in the initial theme of the qualitative data, recognizing the competing priorities of academic instruction and instruction that may not be traditionally perceived as academic, such as career exploration, vocational training, and work-study opportunities. These secondary special education teachers portrayed transition education as instruction "fit" into sections of the school day scheduled around standard academic content required to prepare students for mandated testing. The special education teachers described the need for flexibility, "freedom" in order to provide instruction that may be "perceived as non-academic" or mistaken for "playing." The experienced teachers noted a difference in special education with a shift to "academic" and "test" focus and expressed fewer opportunities available to assist in providing transition education to students who were "not college-

bound" or needing "hands-on" type training. Both special education teachers and administrators described limited "funding" and "resources" for transition education and noted the "pressure" on secondary principals and teachers to provide instruction to cover all the academic standards. However, even with these descriptions and lower implementation rates reported overall for the "instructional" transition practices, teachers indicated that schedule and program flexibility occurred relatively on a regular basis (M = 4.74). In fact, teachers discussed the ability to remove students from general education courses, to provide instruction within the special education courses or study skills classes, and spoke of goals to develop partnerships with general education teachers to integrate transition instruction and plan in order to address all of the transition skills efficiently and effectively.

Perceived Administrative Support of Transition Education

Again, teachers indicated they generally perceived support from the school administrators for implementing transition education practices (M = 4.40, SD = 1.21). The mean scores ranged from 3.67 to 5.18 on a six-point scale with a rating of six or "strongly agree" suggesting a support practice occurred on a regular basis. Incidentally, the two support behaviors teachers identified as most important—feeling supported by administrators in decisions and ideas, and a sense of being easy to approach—also received the highest rating of occurrence from the teachers. The special education administrators emphasized the importance of teachers feeling that they are listened to and that their ideas are of value. In fact, the special education administrators collectively agreed that the teachers are the "creative ideas" behind the successful transition practices implemented at the school sites. The special education

administrators perceived their role more as one of support, facilitation, and validation of the practices and ideas aligning with the mission of the district.

A higher number of teachers signified the importance of school administrators working with them to solve problems occurring when providing transition education (n = 97) and yet indicated that they perceived this as happening at moderate rates (M = 4.32). More teachers (n = 6) indicated they did not believe it was important for a school administrator to model a value of the transition education program and fewer indicated importance for this as well (n = 86), yet participants indicated this behavior occurred somewhat regularly. This appeared somewhat puzzling, considering the data generated supporting the theme of conflicting priorities and the limits teachers perceived these conflicts placed on their ability to implement transition education services.

Yet, when considered in the context of value possibly being modeled through visits to the classroom or program, one of the support activities that occurred at a lower rate (M = 3.75) and received the least amount of indications of importance (n = 80) and the highest rating of not important (n = 14) was the visibility of the administrator in the transition classroom. Seashore Louis et al. (2010) found secondary teachers specifically placed less importance on this instructional leadership practice and found in their in-depth longitudinal study that this happens less regularly at secondary schools when compared to the elementary schools in their study. The participating teachers expressed a belief that administrators regularly recognized and appreciated the work they do (M = 4.99), both also supportive behaviors that attained higher indications of importance as well.

However, both special education teachers and administrators indicated the need for school site leaders to understand the type of instruction provided in the different transition programs and classes. Several interview participants suggested school administrators participate in one or two visits to the different transition settings to see the activities, instruction, and training provided to the students with disabilities to gain insight as to the role and importance of this type of instruction. Further, teachers and administrators suggested by observing the transition instruction, principals might better understand the value of the programs for meeting the individual needs of the student with a disability in order to be successful after high school.

The responding teachers reported their administrators encouraged attendance at professional development (M = 5.02), yet fewer teachers noted this as important (n = 95) and four suggested this support lacks importance. However, special education administrators explained that collaboration with the school site administrator was essential in order to obtain the time away from the school for the needed trainings. A possible explanation emerged from the teachers, who suggested that typically if the district special education administrators indicate a need for training, principals recognize that importance and provide the time to attend.

Conversely, support for restructuring the transition program based on up-to-date current practices by providing time and resources obtained a higher rating of importance from the teachers (n = 98) with only two teachers suggesting this support behavior as not important, although teachers reported a lower incidence of this (M = 3.71) occurring. This type of response may indicate teachers believe they receive the support needed to attend the professional development and training, but are unable to implement the

transition education practices acquired in the professional development without the time and resources to redesign their programs. This supports the qualitative findings of Klinger et al. (2003) that some teachers felt supported to implement practices learned in professional development when administrators provided the needed materials.

Yet, with regard to resources distribution, while these teachers indicated a lower perception of equal resource distribution based on program needs, (M = 3.93), they also designated this type of support as less important. The lower importance rating for general resources, but higher indications of importance for specific resources to support improving the program reflects similar results in studies conducted by Summers et al. (2005) in examining teachers perceptions of administrative structures for special education early childhood programs. Further, participants readily acknowledged that recent budget cuts and funding limitations impacted all programs, yet described one of the conflicts contributing to the competing priorities theme as the competition for funds and resources to effectively meet the needs of students and provide a quality program with a variety of options and opportunities. Lubbers et al. (2008) reported teachers in Florida identified the limited resources as the top barrier to providing transition education and instruction. Lubbers found teachers noted lack of time, funding, and personnel as contributing to this barrier, as well as the number of students per teacher and the number of duties assigned to each teacher. Although the Florida teachers identified resources as a significant barrier, they indicated changes in policies and systems as the top priority for improving the provision of transition education and services, a theme noted in the responses of the participants in this study as well.

Areas of overlap with the Transition Practices portion of the survey resulted in thought-provoking responses from the participants. Flexible scheduling and programming received relatively similar ratings as far as importance and occurrence on both scales, which also aligned with higher ratings of student opportunities to participate in general education and in vocational or occupational courses. Further, the teachers indicated a perception that state testing somewhat interferes with transition education with a lower mean score of 3.88, yet five respondents indicated this as not important to them.

Lastly, teachers indicated the use of data to monitor outcomes and the effectiveness of the transition education program not only occurred at the lowest rate (M = 3.67), but also rated the importance of this type of support lower (n = 85) with more teachers (n = 8) signifying this as not important. This perception may change as performance monitoring shifts from compliance with the contents of the IEP, such as measured on Indicator 13 (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, n.d.), to measures of student outcomes as reported on Indicator 14 (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, n.d.).

Recommended Transition Education Practices and Administrative Support

The results showed small to moderate significant correlations between the teachers' reported use of transition education practices and their perceptions of administrative support in four of the five construct areas. However, sample size must be considered in interpretation of the correlation, as larger sample sizes tend to detect all but the weakest of correlations (Lomax, 2007).

While Family Involvement practices showed only a small correlation (Lomax,

2007) with perceptions of administrative support ($r = .18$, $p = .05$), the special education teachers and administrators clearly indicated a high value of family involvement practices. Again, involving families in the IEP meeting, providing information about resources, and involving in transition planning could be practices over which the teacher exerts more control and therefore with a high value, are practices regularly implemented. Teachers and special education administrators described transition education practices in place to support family involvement, such as transition fairs and monthly meetings, but also emphasized a goal of further collaboration with families to support the implementation of this construct. Research in school leadership highlights the importance of family-school partnerships to support student engagement in school and found that highly effective schools have high involvement of parents, groups of parents, and students (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999).

Additionally, the special education teachers suggested family and work schedules of parents, teachers, and students complicated transition planning, and often limited participation at weekend and evening events. Further, the teachers in rural areas noted limited employment, education levels, and awareness of opportunities outside of the community as barriers to parental involvement. One teacher explained her concern, that students confront homelessness and severely limited resources due to poverty and parental situations, which necessitates the students' vision of the future—the challenge of the next meal and a place to sleep.

One area, Program Structures and Attributes combined with Interagency Collaboration, demonstrated a moderate level of correlation (Lomax, 2007) with perceived administrative support ($r = 40$, $p < .01$). Program Structures and Attributes

with Interagency Collaboration addressed transition education practices that teachers may individually promote on a small scale, yet to fully implement at a high quality level, may require administrative support. For example, teachers may invite agency representatives to speak in classes, but the coordination of a transition fair with agencies, employers, educational representatives, and other transition sources represented may require a school site administrator and district administrator approval. Similarly, teachers working with schedules to meet individual student needs may exercise autonomy, but adding transition courses or curricula, and full involvement in community education, including transportation, would involve collaboration with special education and school site administration. Teachers suggested site administrators could support provision of transition education, specifically in the area of collaboration and partnerships, acting in the role of community liaison. Teachers described the principals and assistant principals assisting in the establishment of community partnerships with businesses through their regular contacts with parents and other professionals in the school community. Further, teachers suggested administrators attend parent transition education meetings in order to represent the school and demonstrate to parents and families the importance placed on successfully transitioning students into independent living, employment, and postsecondary education.

Transition education practices groups. The group clusters seem to align with the overall reporting of the use of the transition education practices. The three identified groups demonstrated the largest mean difference when compared across the two Student Development measures. The Goal Setting/Self-Advocacy/Living Skills Student Development variable and the Vocational/Employment Skills Student Development

variable reflected the largest mean differences between the three groups and these two areas also resulted in the lowest overall implementation mean scores reported on the teacher survey.

When comparing the groups and their perceptions of administrative support for transition education, the Higher-TEP group reported higher levels of implementation of transition education and demonstrated a significantly higher mean score for their perception of administrative support of transition education than both the Moderate- and Lower-TEP groups. Therefore, teachers who reported the transition education practices implemented at highest levels also reported higher perceptions of administrative support and this differed significantly from the groups reporting lower levels of transition education practices implementation. A notable discussion point to this finding relates to the instructional leadership of transition education. A majority of the teachers (35.8%) indicated the special education director was the primary administrator supporting the provision of transition education services, rather than the principal (20.8%) or assistant principal (4.2%). However, both groups of teachers—those who indicated they had administrative support for implementing transition education and those who indicated a perception that support was lacking—described both special education administrators and site administrators as providing support that facilitated the implementation of transition education, yet within different types of leadership roles.

Similarly, Seashore Louis et al. (2010) found the administrators in the secondary schools of their study acted less in the role of instructional leaders when compared to the elementary principals. According to the perceptions of the principals interviewed by Seashore Louis et al., the department chairs, teachers in a quasi-leadership role,

provided this direction to their peers. However, in observations of sites participating in their study, Seashore Louis et al. reported observing limited instructional leadership provided by the department chair or lead teacher.

Distribution of leadership responsibilities and support. In discussing the leadership of transition education, the special education secondary teachers and administrators indicated a specific division of leadership responsibilities, including teacher leadership, contributing to successful implementation of transition education. For example, three of the teachers interviewed all described perceptions of support from administrators. This group of transition teachers described the use of recommended transition education practices, citing multiple examples in their programs and instruction. When discussing their experiences with transition education and administrative support, they demonstrated enthusiasm and confidence in the direction of the transition program, their abilities to implement the practices, as well as expressing specific goals and objectives for future changes in the program to incorporate more of the recommended transition education practices. They worked with other teachers collaboratively and one described the site principal supporting this in staff meetings, when challenges arose. They described teacher leadership opportunities to expand the use of recommended transition education practices to other departments in the school or throughout the district.

As well, the special education administrators noted the district level of support they received to support the teachers and principals. They described collaboration with the teachers and, at a minimum, keeping site administrators informed with regular communication. They recognized that site administrators' responsibilities may prohibit

the hands-on type of instructional leadership described in some literature (Seashore Louis et al., 2010), but with site administrator collaboration and understanding, the special education administration and teachers were empowered to provide transition education programs and services, implementing the practices they thought most critical to improving the outcomes of students with disabilities in their districts.

A second group of teachers expressed a perceived level of support from one administrator. One teacher described receiving support to implement the transition education practices from her principal. This teacher described the ability to meet with parents, work with individual students in her classroom, and to work with community agencies that provided instruction to the individual students. However, she also reported less ability to implement transition education without support from the special education director. Without the perceived support of the special education director, she described not having opportunities to access the community with students, a limit on her ability to implement new strategies and practices she acquired through professional development, and no clear coordinated plan for the provision of transition education services to guide the movement of students into the post high school setting.

A second member of this group expressed a perception of support for providing transition education from the special education director, but did not note this feeling of support from the site administrator. This teacher explained that through her own initiative, she was able to find information to implement a new instructional program supporting student employment, but that expansion of this program to provide more access to students was limited because of scheduling flexibility. Further, the teacher described collaboration goals to work with the general education teachers to provide

and coordinate transition education and explained that this too would be self-initiated to seek the cooperation of the general education teachers.

The third member of this group described support of the site administrator, but used terms that did not demonstrate "active" support, but more an implied support; a perception that she could implement the transition practices that would help students, but that the ideas, design, implementation, and evaluation would all be left to her. The description of a limited ability to collaborate with teachers or administrators about implementing transition education, the requirement that one person be responsible for components of the program, seemed to limit the implementation of transition education practices for this teacher.

Lastly, one teacher described the perception that the implementation of recommended transition education practices remained over-shadowed with an emphasis on instruction traditionally perceived as academic and focused solely on students with disabilities passing the mandated tests. While the teacher suggested the special education administrators encouraged the provision of transition education and services to students with disabilities, the resources and influence of this support were constrained in this situation. This appeared to create a feeling of limited importance for transition instruction, although this veteran teacher described implementing numerous recommended practices, this seemed completely teacher-driven, based on the importance the teacher ascribed to extensive teaching experiences and successes with former students. One wonders how a less experienced or beginning teacher with limited background in transition education and the recommended practices would fair in this type of situation?

Jacobson, Johnson, Ylimaki, and Giles (2005) described similar perceptions of special education teachers, a feeling of less importance when academic testing was emphasized over the individual needs of the special education students. Teachers describe feeling limited in implementation if transition education is not valued and the integration of the instruction may be limited (Eisenman & Chamberlin, 2001).

Conclusions

Secondary special education teachers and administrators reported overall high levels of implementation of recommended transition education practices and high perceptions of support from administrators for provision of transition education services. Teachers reporting higher implementation levels of the recommended transition education practices demonstrated higher levels of perceived administrative support of the transition program. The group of teachers reporting on implementation of the recommended transition education practices showed differences in their levels of implementation that supported clusters of three different groups—higher, moderate, and lower—based on the transition education practices. These clusters, identified through hierarchical cluster analysis, while exploratory in nature, demonstrated notable differences in the reported levels of implementation of the recommended transition education practices. Additionally, the groups' mean scores on perceptions of administrative support differed significantly between the group of teachers who reported the highest levels of implementation of recommended transition education practices and the other two groups who reported lower levels of implementation. Teachers who reported the transition education practices implemented at highest levels

also reported higher perceptions of administrative support and this differed significantly from the groups reporting lower levels of transition education practices implementation.

Further, these differences, explored more in-depth through qualitative data analysis, were verified across three themes that emerged, and an interesting description of the shared roles of leadership emerged from the overall experiences described. The three themes that emerged—(a) Competing priorities: Balancing individual needs of secondary students with disabilities; (b) Partnerships: Collaborating to increase opportunities for transition education, and; (c) Communication: Recognizing success, planning, and capacity building—reflect the transition education experiences of the special education teachers and administrators interviewed, and incorporate descriptions of the administrative support within those areas to enable the use of recommended practices.

Common experiences emerged from the data based on the secondary education teachers and administrators shared experiences. In addition, special education teachers reflected different experiences within these three themes based on their reporting a perception of administrative support, either from school site administrators or from special education administrators. Additionally, interviews with special education administrators supported the need for collaboration and support from school administrators and other teachers as well as support from district administration, enabling special education administrators to support teachers and principals implementing the recommended transition education practices.

The special education teachers and administrators participating in this study overwhelmingly recognized the importance of family-school-teacher partnership to

involve the student and family in the transition planning process. These teachers worked to be in compliance with regulations, but may not perceive compliance and the mandates in IDEA as important for meeting the individual student transition education needs. While the literature consistently supports families not feeling informed or involved (Cobb & Alwell, 2009; U. S. General Accounting Office Report, July, 2003), these special education teachers and administrators expressed goals to improve and expand the student-family-school-district partnership to support transition education and services.

Overall, teachers reported transition education practices implemented at high levels and designated high levels of importance to the recommended practices. Practices related to the IEP contents and meetings received higher ratings of implementation, but not all received higher levels of importance ratings by teachers, suggesting as confirmed in an interview with one teacher, teachers know they must meet compliance regulations, but the IEP may not be the plan driving the actual provision of the services.

Components of the IEP supporting students' input into postsecondary goals appeared to be more important versus using evaluations to arrive at that input. This may suggest teachers' perceptions of transition assessment as a more formal process, involving commercially produced evaluations. Further, comments regarding the length of time needed to complete the assessments, coupled with the identification of the difficulty in accessing students reported by some teachers may limit teachers' use of these tools.

Participants appeared to demonstrate some ambivalence around practices supporting self-determination, indicating a higher importance for setting goals and

planning, for students identifying when support is needed and how to get it, but indicated a moderate level of importance for learning how to talk about disability and request supports or accommodations, as well as developing problem-solving skills and strategies. Further, these practices according to the teachers' self-ratings were implemented at the lowest levels when compared to other transition education practices. Teachers assigned lower importance for teaching students about their strengths and limitations and the effect of disability, the positive and negative aspects about disability, and teaching students to monitor goals and adjust based on feedback and opportunities, and reported lower levels of implementation of these practices.

Again, these teachers providing transition education and services to students with disabilities in Oklahoma indicated relatively high perceptions of support from their administrators. The teachers and special education administrators indicated the support of the school site administrator was not specific and direct instructional leadership, but more a need of support for time and flexibility around the implementation of transition education practices.

The group of special education teachers who perceived support for providing transition education reported the ability to work with principals and assistant principals to schedule individual instruction for students to lead their IEP meetings, to integrate instruction into study skills courses, career classes, English classes, and to plan different types of instruction and courses focused on supporting transition education. The teachers shared success stories and goals for improving services and opportunities within the program and within the district. They described leadership opportunities, collaboration, and recognition of their accomplishments and ideas. Further, they

described their principals as understanding the unique needs of students with disabilities and through this understanding, recognizing the importance of transition education.

Whereas, teachers who described limited support from an administrator referred to a feeling of pressure to focus on instruction deemed academically relevant to the mandated testing and standards. While they attended professional development, they explained feeling unable to enact the strategies and practices learned, either due to time constraints, limited flexibility with curriculum and instruction, or an inability to change the current structures in place. These teachers identified the competing priorities, and indicated transition education and services implementation was not a priority, a sentiment documented in the literature describing transition education programs (Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002; Eisenman & Chamberlin, 2001).

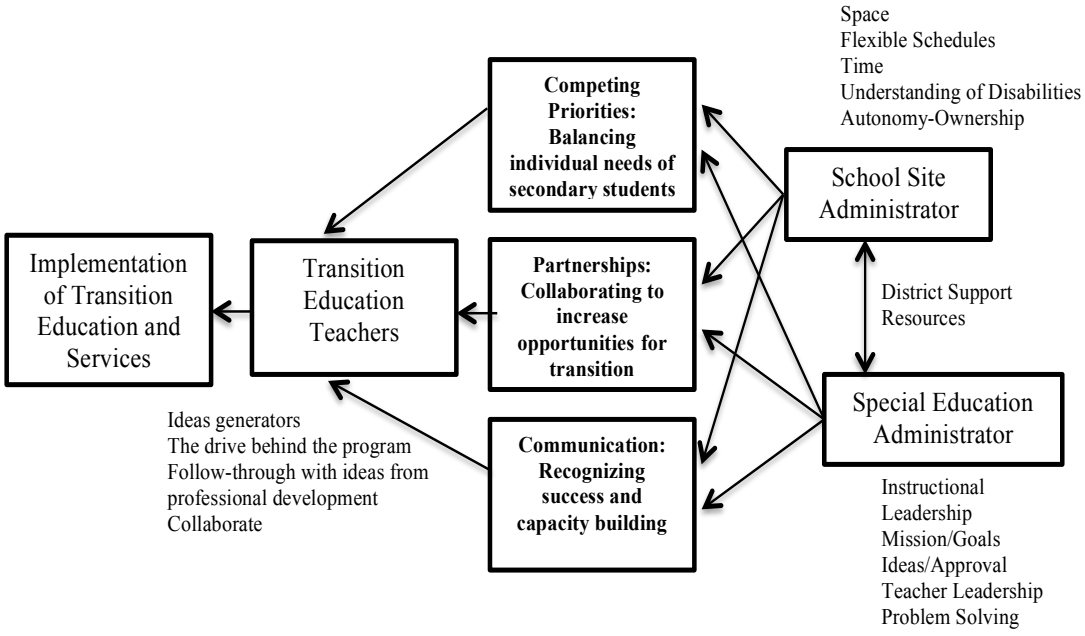
Recently, the literature suggested the instructional leadership of special education shifting away from the district office to the school site administrator instructional leadership of special education services (Bays & Crockett, 2007; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). While this may be a goal in leadership, the teachers responding to this survey indicated a perception of instructional leadership continuing to reside with the special education director with regard to transition education services.

In summary, this dissertation study only began the initial exploration of transition education practices and perceptions of administrative support. Based on this exploratory study, there appears to be a relationship between the implementation of recommended transition education practices and perceptions of administrative support for the transition program. This study begins to explore and describe this relationship based on small correlations between transition practices implementation and

perceptions of support reported by transition educators, the differences between groups implementing transition education practices at different levels and their reported perceptions of administrative support, as well as further clarification supported through the themes emerging from these special education teachers and administrators experiences.

However, as reflected in the educational leadership literature, leadership in schools and districts is a multifaceted concept and leadership resides with multiple people at varying levels throughout the school and district. Figure 2 illustrates my interpretations about the relationship between the implementation of transition education and services and perceptions of administrative support and how the leadership roles of teachers, site administrators and special education administrators connected to support the implementation of the recommended transition education practices for this group of special education teachers and administrators.

Figure 2. Administrative Support of Transition Education



I present this figure simply to conceptualize the leadership distribution reported by the special education teachers and administrators in this study in conjunction with the themes that emerged. The quantitative survey data respondents demonstrated differences in their level of practices and the majority of the participants indicated the special education administrator continued to provide leadership or supervision of the transition education program. Connected with this result, the teachers interviewed suggested I talk to special education administrators to investigate transition education and administrative support. Additionally, when asked specifically to identify the person who would address curriculum and transition program needs or challenges, the majority of teachers and special education administrators interviewed indicated the special education administrators would fill that role. The transition teachers also noted they would collaborate with other teachers to assist with individual and student-specific problem solving.

The three special education administrators confirmed this, yet emphasized the importance of collaborating with the school administrator for specific program needs related to management tasks, such as obtaining classrooms, release time for teacher training, and incorporation of transition-based electives into school schedules. Additionally, teachers emphasized the importance of the school site administrator understanding students with disabilities in general and encouraging the collaboration of teachers, providing flexible schedules and recognizing success, while providing autonomy for the teachers, or trusting their professional training and judgment to implement the recommended transition education practices.

Additionally, all three special education administrators reported teachers sharing ideas and generating the drive behind implementation of recommended practices. They described the importance of teacher leadership opportunities as encouraging the spread of the recommended practices to other classrooms and school sites. Also, these administrators acknowledged the importance of district level support, be it from a special education director or district superintendent, in enabling their ability to support the teachers and implementation of the recommended practices. They discussed the growth of program, staffing, resource allocation, and the system-wide planning as stemming from district level leadership support. Finally, the special education administrators and teachers contributed to the development of the themes and all reported aspects of their ability to implement recommended transition education practices impacted by competing priorities, collaboration, and communication.

Future Research and Limitations

I utilized self-reported survey data from secondary transition education practitioners to understand the implementation of recommended transition education practices, which while providing an initial look at the level of implementation, typically is artificially inflated. Also, while I utilized other transition and leadership professionals' opinions and input, as well as incorporated information from transition education and leadership literature, survey data is significantly limited by the content and construction of the survey, the clarity of questions and responses, and the individuals' ability to accurately report on their own knowledge, practices, attitude, perceptions, and behaviors (Mertens, 2005). However, for the purposes of this introductory exploration

into the topic, the survey data provides a starting point of information to suggest further research.

While the teachers reported higher levels of implementation, the quality of the implementation of these transition education practices should be further investigated through more in-depth survey methods as well as site observations, document reviews, and other resources. In addition, the gathering of data from parents and students, as well as site administrators, community agencies, and businesses would provide a more detailed and in-depth picture of the implementation quantity and quality of recommended transition education practices. For example, use of in-depth case study analysis might shed further understanding of the practices implemented in schools and direction for providing support to teachers. Additionally, leadership literature indicated the importance of context in relationship to understanding leadership. Further data regarding ethnicity, community and parent involvement, and socioeconomic status may provide further insight to leadership of transition education and the lack of this data limits this study.

The secondary special education teachers participating in this study reported overall generally higher perceptions of administrative support for transition education; however, the lack of site administrator participation significantly limits these findings. Both teachers and special education administrators noted the leadership role of the site administrator and the lack of data for this group leaves an area in need of further exploration and investigation. For example, the special education teachers and administrators recognized the increasing amount of responsibility and demands placed on school principals and assistant principals when discussing their role in support of

transition education. Understanding these changing responsibilities in relation to site administrators' ability to provide supervision and support of transition education implementation is an area in need of further study.

As well, due to the sampling procedures, this study is limited to educators who have attended transition education professional development and may typically demonstrate more confidence in their ability to provide transition education and services. This select group of participants reported higher levels of practices and perceived administrative support, which may represent a select group of educators. It would be expected that special educators with limited knowledge about transition education and the recommended practices may not respond to the survey simply based on the invitation and description of the study. Similarly, teachers who do perceive support of an administrator may not respond to a survey regarding education practices. While three attempts to engage volunteers occurred, as noted in the procedures, mandated state testing and preparations for nearing the end of the school year may significantly impact the participants responding to the survey. This select sample, coupled with a lower response rate, limits the results of this study.

Additionally, investigation of teachers' understanding of self-determination instruction for students, particularly self-awareness and self-advocacy instruction, and goal setting, monitoring and adjustment is needed. This is recommended based on the lower implementation levels reported in this survey and the lower levels of importance assigned to some specific recommended instructional practices for teaching self-determination. As well, it is recommended that research be conducted to further understand the "pressures" and "anxieties" described by the transition education

teachers related to their perception of a focus solely on academic instruction supporting the state standards and mandated tests affecting their ability to provide the individual transition education and services that students with disabilities may require. While transition education practices may be integrated into the academic instruction and the common core standards addressed (eg. Konrad & Test, 2007; Wehmeyer & Field, 2007), some practices require instruction in specific vocational or independent living skills, which may be seen as not being standards specific.

Further, the use of qualitative data provides in-depth understanding of the participating special education teachers' and administrators' experiences; nevertheless, it is not intended for generalization beyond providing a more in-depth understanding of the quantitative data gather in the first phase of this study. However, the qualitative data provides further direction for more in-depth exploration into transition education programs to understand the quality of the transition education practices implemented and the support teachers and administrators may require to utilize the recommended transition education practices.

Lastly, while sampling procedures, the sample size and region limit generalization of these findings, the exploratory nature of this study contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between transition education teachers' perceptions of administrative support for transition education and the implementation of the recommended practices. This study contributes to research attempting to identify practices supporting the provision of transition education, which may improve outcomes for students with disabilities. As well, the use of mixed methods provides a unique view that may be needed to further understand the provision of transition

education and how to support transition practices implementation in all the different settings, with all the needed partners and resources; a diverse type of educational program beyond a sole focus on academic achievement.

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Appendix A

Detailed Chart of Identified Leadership Practices Identified in Educational Leadership Studies of the Effects on Student Achievement

Table A1. Summary of studies examining the effects of leadership

Reference	Participants	Variables Examined	Data Sources	Conclusions
Hallinger, Bickman & Davis, 1996	87 elementary schools, principals, teachers, 3rd and 6th grade students	Context factors, personal characteristics of the principal, measures of principal leadership, in-school organizational variables, and student achievement (direct and indirect effects)	School Information Form, 275 Item questionnaire, criterion referenced reading test	Environment: SES and parental involvement influenced principal leadership; strong relation between instructional leadership provided by principal and clear school mission influenced students opportunities to learn and teachers' expectations for student achievement
*Hallinger & Heck, 1998		Variety of analytic techniques examining effect—compared across direct effects and mediated effects	40 journal articles, dissertations and papers presented at peer reviewed conferences	Direct effects-not significant Mediated effects-mixed or positive, small, significant effects related to organizational culture, people, purposes and goals, structure and social networks-
Jacobson, Johnson, Ylimaki & Giles (2005)	7 schools in New York: 5 elem., 1 middle, 1 high school	"School leaders who have been successful in improving student performance in high need challenging environments." (p. 607)	Case Study methodology around 2 frameworks of leadership of successful schools	All demonstrating the 3 core principals (Leithwood and Reihl, 2003) Identified three "enabling principles": accountability-used this to focus on goals and direction; caring-demonstrated to staff, students and families; and learning-central focus is the learning of all-students, teachers, parents and the school.

Table A1. Summary of studies examining the effects of leadership (continued)

Reference	Participants	Variables Examined	Data Sources	Conclusions
Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999	110 Schools=1762 teachers, 9,941 students	Teachers' perceptions of school conditions and leadership. Student engagement with school and family's educational culture.	Two survey instruments,	Small, significant effects of principal leadership on student engagement; no teacher leadership effects; significant effect of family educational culture as mediator variable
Leithwood & Mascall, 2008	9 states, 90 schools-2570 teachers (77%)	Examining indirect effects of collective leadership on teacher motivation, capacity, and work setting to affect student achievement	Teacher survey and student achievement on state mandated tests	Collective leadership significant direct effects on teachers: work setting (r=.58); capacity (r=.36), and motivation (r=.25) Indirect effect of leadership on student achievement significant for motivation (r=.30) and work setting (r=.25)but when controlling for SES-primarily motivation
Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003	21 schools: 5 elementary, 7 middle or K-8, 7 high school, 2 K-12 schools	2 year study examining distribution of leadership and management responsibilities, maintenance of instructional quality, identification and solving of problems as well as training of school leaders, experiences considered important, and deficient areas of preparation	In-depth, semi-structured interviews of principals, asst. principals, teachers	Principals must be skilled diagnosticians of school's needs and determining how to meet them. Seven critical areas of leadership—instructional, cultural, managerial, human resources, strategic, external development, micropolitical. Principals responsible for overseeing, but not providing leadership in all areas. The governance structure is important. Principals learn skills by doing.

Table A1. Summary of studies examining the effects of leadership (continued)

Reference	Participants	Variables Examined	Data Sources	Conclusions
*Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008		Effect sizes calculated from studies examining effects of instructional (IL) transformational (TL) and other leadership (OL) models	27 published studies: 22 calculated average effect size 12 calculated effect sizes for leadership components	TL:ES=0.11; IL:ES=0.42; OL: ES=0.30 Establishing goals and expectations ES=0.42; Securing resources aligned with instructional purposes ES=0.31; Planning coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum ES=0.42; Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment ES=
Water, Marzon & McNulty, 2003	70 studies, including dissertations, (2, 894 schools. 1.1 million students, 14,000 teachers)	Meta-analysis: examination of effect sizes of correlations between leadership and student achievement	Quantitative studies examining the effects of leadership on student achievement	Average ES=.25 Leaders can impact achievement positively or negatively. 21 specific leadership responsibilities: situational awareness, intellectual stimulation, change agent, input, culture, outreach, monitors/evaluates, order, resources, ideals/beliefs, affirmation, discipline, focus, knowledge of curriculum/ instruction assessment, communication, flexibility, optimizer, relationship, curriculum-instruction-assessment, visibility, contingent rewards

Table A1. Summary of studies examining the effects of leadership (continued)

Reference	Participants	Variables Examined	Data Sources	Conclusions
Witziers, Bosker & Kruger (2003)		Three meta-analyses: direct effect of educational leadership on student achievement 1-All studies 2-Studies with educational leadership measured as one construct 3-Studies with educational leadership measured as multiple components	37 journal articles and re-analysis of data available from the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) measuring effects on reading literacy in 25 countries.	1-small, positive and significant effect on student achievement 2-no relationship 3-Four dimensions of leadership had small, positive, significant effects: supervision and evaluation; monitoring; visibility; and defining and communicating mission "Secondary school leaders may have less opportunity to directly affect student outcomes than primary leaders" (p. 412)
Marks & Printy (2003)	24 schools: 8 elem., 8 middle, 8 high school across 16 states and 22 school districts	"Reconceptualized" instructional leadership (shared) and transformational leadership effects on pedagogical quality and student achievement	Interviews principal or group-"principal surrogate," district leaders and 25-30 school staff members. Two weeks of observations-ratings of classroom instruction of 144 teachers. Collection of teacher-made assessments and student assessment/work sample (5000)	Schools using integrated form of leadership scored: 0.6 SD higher on pedagogical quality which accounted for 26% of the variance between schools. student achievement and 0.6 SD higher on student achievement which accounted for 57% of the between-school variance.

Appendix B

Detailed Table Cross-Referencing Test, Fowler, Richter, White, Walker, Kohler, and Kortering, (2009) and Test, Mazzotti, Mustian, Fowler, Kortering, and Kohler, (2009), The Transition Program Practices (TPP) Survey (Portley, J. Martin, J. & Hennessey, M., 2012), The Secondary Teachers Transition Survey (STTS) (Morningstar, M., 2006), and The Transition Assessment and Goal Generator(TAGG) (Martin, J., Hennessey, M., McConnell, A., Terry, R., & Willis, D., 2012)

Table B1.

Identified transition practices and predictors linked to "Taxonomy for Transition Programming"(Kohler, 1996)

Test, D., Fowler, C., Richter, S., White, J., Walker, A., Kohler, P. & Kortering, L. (2009).	Test, D., Mazzotti, V., Mustian, A., Fowler, C., Kortering, L. & Kohler, P. (2009).	Portley, Martin & Hennessey, (2012)	Morningstar, M. (2006)	McConnell, A., Martin, J., Hennessey, M., Terry, R., Pannells, T. & el-Kazimi, N. (2012)
Student Focused Planning				
Involving students in IEP • Self-Advocacy Strategy • Self-Directed IEP	• Met Transition Goals • Satisfaction with instruction	• Selected IEP Transition Annual Goals • Selected IEP Transition Postsecondary Goals • Attended Transition IEP • Expressed Opinions at IEP meeting • Taught to express opinions at IEP • Adapted Behavior Assessments for IEP • Career Assessment for IEP	• Transition Plans based on person centered planning approaches-strengths, capabilities, interests, and preferences are identified • Students actively involved in developing transition IEP • Supported to lead transition IEP • Students invited to IEP • Students actively participate in planning process • IEP has goals based on assessments • Use Appropriate Transition Assessments • IEP post school goals based on student strengths, interests and preferences	• Students are taught to actively participate in the transition IEP meetings • Students are encouraged to recall transition goals outside of the IEP meeting

Table B1. (continued)

Identified transition practices and predictors linked to "Taxonomy for Transition Programming"(Kohler, 1996)

Test, D., Fowler, C., Richter, S., White, J., Walker, A., Kohler, P. & Kortering, L. (2009).	Test, D., Mazzotti, V., Mustian, A., Fowler, C., Kortering, L. & Kohler, P. (2009).	Portley, Martin & Hennessey, (2012)	Morningstar, M. (2006)	McConnell, A., Martin, J., Hennessey, M., Terry, R., Pannells, T. & el-Kazimi, N. (2012)
Student Focused Planning (continued)				
			• Transition assessment is individualized, ongoing, and includes multiple activities and areas	
Student Development				
• Teaching Life Skills CBI Safety Purchasing Banking Cooking Leisure Grocery Restaurant Shopping Purchasing	• Adaptive Skills • Self-Care Skills • Personal Finance • Daily Living Skills	• Taught to Manage Money • Taught Daily Living Skills	• Instruction on community functioning • Instruction in independent living • Recreational skills instruction	• Taught self-care and independent living skills
			• Instruction on accessing postsecondary education • Learn about a variety of post school outcomes	• Students are taught to use the internet to access information on possible support services or community agencies
• Self-determination	• Self-determination		• Taught decision making early in school	• Self-Determination • **Self-Awareness** • personal areas of mastery and limited ability • strengths and limitations and how those strengths and limitations affect the student in academic and non-academic situations

Table B1. (continued)

Identified transition practices and predictors linked to "Taxonomy for Transition Programming"(Kohler, 1996)

Test, D., Fowler, C., Richter, S., White, J., Walker, A., Kohler, P. & Kortering, L. (2009).	Test, D., Mazzotti, V., Mustian, A., Fowler, C., Kortering, L. & Kohler, P. (2009).	Portley, Martin & Hennessey, (2012)	Morningstar, M. (2006)	McConnell, A., Martin, J., Hennessey, M., Terry, R., Pannells, T. & el-Kazimi, N. (2012)
Student Development (continued)				
		• Taught to ask for help		• **Self-Awareness (cont.)** • act, develop and build upon personal strengths to compensate for limitations within various environments • **Self-Advocacy** • Taught about disability, how to talk about it with others to gain supports, and to recognize positive and negative aspects of it, keeping it in context. • request appropriate supports or accommodations according to rights • about the documentation needed to obtain services
	• Problem Solving Skills			• **Problem Solving Skills** • problem solve • identify situations when they need support, to specify the type of support and who to seek out for support.

Table B1. (continued)

Identified transition practices and predictors linked to "Taxonomy for Transition Programming"(Kohler, 1996)

Test, D., Fowler, C., Richter, S., White, J., Walker, A., Kohler, P. & Kortering, L. (2009).	Test, D., Mazzotti, V., Mustian, A., Fowler, C., Kortering, L. & Kohler, P. (2009).	Portley, Martin & Hennessey, (2012)	Morningstar, M. (2006)	McConnell, A., Martin, J., Hennessey, M., Terry, R., Pannells, T. & el-Kazimi, N. (2012)
Student Development (continued)				
			• Instruction on accessing postsecondary education • Learn about a variety of post school outcomes	• Students are taught to use the internet to access information on possible support services or community agencies
	• Taught Goal Setting	• Taught Transition Goal Selection • Taught Postsecondary Goal Selection		• **Goal setting and attainment** • utilize different strategies to achieve goals and to accept failure as a learning opportunity • define and prioritize goals matching their interests and skills • make a plan to achieve goals • monitor their progress toward goals and to adjust goals based on feedback and opportunities
• Vocational/Employment Skills Job Applications Employment Skills	• Career Awareness • Vocational Education • Occupational Courses • Paid Jobs-in high school and at end of high school • Vocational/Tech Course of Study	• Received Formal Career Exploration Instruction • Received School Sponsored Career Exploration • Opportunities Instruction in job-finding	• Vocational instruction provided	• Taught job readiness skills and attitudes • Participate in a job training program • Participate in unpaid internship or apprenticeship • Opportunities to obtain paid job/job placement

Table B1. (continued)

Identified transition practices and predictors linked to "Taxonomy for Transition Programming"(Kohler, 1996)

Test, D., Fowler, C., Richter, S., White, J., Walker, A., Kohler, P. & Kortering, L. (2009).	Test, D., Mazzotti, V., Mustian, A., Fowler, C., Kortering, L. & Kohler, P. (2009).	Portley, Martin & Hennessey, (2012)	Morningstar, M. (2006)	McConnell, A., Martin, J., Hennessey, M., Terry, R., Pannells, T. & el-Kazimi, N. (2012)
Student Development (continued)				
	• Occupational Guidance and Preparation • Technical Training • Work Study	• Had school sponsored opportunity to find a job • Had a paid job		
• Academic • Functional Math • Functional Reading	• Academic Skills • GPA • Diploma • Academic Courses Passed			
• Social Skills Job Related	• Social Skills • Behaving Responsibly		• Social skills instruction	• Students actively interact with their families, friends, and classmates. • Students learn about accessing positive sources of support in people and to identify sources that are not positive.
Family Involvement				
	• Parent participation in 11th and 12th grade IEP • Support from family, friends, and self • Spend time with family	• Had a parent at IEP • Assistance from parents to work on goals	• Family members attend IEP meetings • Transition Plan considers family as a whole • Family members involved in all decisions	• Students actively interact with their families, friends, and classmates.

Table B1. (continued)

Identified transition practices and predictors linked to "Taxonomy for Transition Programming"(Kohler, 1996)

Test, D., Fowler, C., Richter, S., White, J., Walker, A., Kohler, P. & Kortering, L. (2009).	Test, D., Mazzotti, V., Mustian, A., Fowler, C., Kortering, L. & Kohler, P. (2009).	Portley, Martin & Hennessey, (2012)	Morningstar, M. (2006)	McConnell, A., Martin, J., Hennessey, M., Terry, R., Pannells, T. & el-Kazimi, N. (2012)
Family Involvement (continued)				
• Teaching Families about Transition			• Families are involved in planning process and accommodations made • Families are provided with transition information • Parents provided information about self-determination and self-advocacy	
Program Structures And Attributes				
• Community Based Instruction	• Community Experiences • Community Access		• Opportunities to experience postschool environments • Instruction in age appropriate post-high school and community settings • Community-based vocational education	

Table B1. (continued)
Identified transition practices and predictors linked to "Taxonomy for Transition Programming"(Kohler, 1996)

Test, D., Fowler, C., Richter, S., White, J., Walker, A., Kohler, P. & Kortering, L. (2009).	Test, D., Mazzotti, V., Mustian, A., Fowler, C., Kortering, L. & Kohler, P. (2009).	Portley, Martin & Hennessey, (2012)	Morningstar, M. (2006)	McConnell, A., Martin, J., Hennessey, M., Terry, R., Pannells, T. & el-Kazimi, N. (2012)
Program Structures And Attributes (continued)				
• Services Beyond High School			• Process for collaboration on postschool needs with agencies • Support networks and community connections are facilitated • Students receive information about available community resources	• Students are provided with opportunities to seek assistance from community agencies.
• Check & Connect				• Students actively interact with educators and other adults.
	• General Education Receive Diploma		• Participate in general education • Postschool data is collected and used for program evaluation • Community-based vocational education	• Students actively participate in school or social activities.
		• A Complete Transition IEP	• IEP has IEP has transition services and course of study tied to postsecondary goals • IEP has postsecondary goals based on assessment	

Table B1. (continued)
Identified transition practices and predictors linked to "Taxonomy for Transition Programming"(Kohler, 1996)

Test, D., Fowler, C., Richter, S., White, J., Walker, A., Kohler, P. & Kortering, L. (2009).	Test, D., Mazzotti, V., Mustian, A., Fowler, C., Kortering, L. & Kohler, P. (2009).	Portley, Martin & Hennessey, (2012)	Morningstar, M. (2006)	McConnell, A., Martin, J., Hennessey, M., Terry, R., Pannells, T. & el-Kazimi, N. (2012)
Program Structures And Attributes (continued)				
			• Transition Planning begins early-no later than 16 • SOP is developed and shared • Consensus Process In Place • General ed and vocational ed teachers provided with assistance of sped services • Provided opportunities to make real life meaningful decisions • Appropriate transition assessments are available • Procedures in place to share assessments with students, families and staff for planning	
Interagency Collaboration				
None Found	• Engaged with 3-6 Community Agencies	• Used a community agency from IEP	• School-business linkages in place for employment • Interagency Collaboration are in place	

Appendix C

Questionnaire for Quantitative Data Collection

Special Education Transition Services In Secondary Schools

INFORMATION SHEET FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

My name is Karen Little, and I am a doctoral candidate in the College of Education, Educational Psychology Department at the University of the Oklahoma. I am requesting that you volunteer to participate in a research study titled *Understanding the Use of Recommended Transition Education Practices And Perceptions of Administrative Support*. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a secondary special education teacher providing transition education and services. Please read this information sheet and contact me to ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Purpose of the Research Study: The purpose of this study is to understand the transition education practices teachers use and their perceptions of the support needed and provided by administrators.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: Complete a web-based questionnaire consisting of three sections with a total of 64 items addressing: (a) demographic information (e.g. grade level taught, school enrollment, number of teachers, etc.), (b) secondary transition education practices, and (c) perceptions of administrative support needs.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: The study has no risks beyond normal risks encountered daily. There are no benefits to participants.

Compensation: Every participant that provides their email address will be entered into a random drawing for one of five amazon.com e-gift cards worth ten dollars each. Winners will be contacted by email. If no response from winners within 2 weeks, another winner will be selected. You will not otherwise be compensated for your time and participation in this study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Length of Participation: We believe it will take **no more than 15 to 30 minutes to complete** the survey. The time it takes to complete the survey may vary depending on how much time you spend on each question.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private and your supervisor will not have access to your responses. In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you as a research participant. Research records will be stored securely. Data will be stored on password-protected computers accessed by the researchers. All information will be stored at the University of Oklahoma Zarrow Center in locked file cabinets. For publication purposes, after 5 years all copies of the data will be destroyed. Only approved researchers will have access to the records.

Contacts and Questions: If you have concerns or complaints about the research, the researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at (405) 325-8951 or ksparker@ou.edu. or contact jemartin@ou.edu. In the event of a research-related injury, contact the researcher(s). You are encouraged to contact the researcher(s) if you have any questions. If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research or about your rights and wish to talk to someone other than the individuals on the research team, or if you cannot reach the research team, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at (405) 325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Please keep this information sheet for your records. By completing and returning this questionnaire, I am agreeing to participate in this study.

Special Education Transition Services In Secondary Schools

***BY CLICKING ON THE LINK BELOW AND COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE, I AM AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.**

- ○ I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY
- ○ NO, I DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE

THANK YOU FOR RESPONDING

If you enter your email address below, you will be entered into the drawing to win one of five $10.00 amazon.com e-gift cards. You will be contacted via email if selected.

Please contact Karen Little at ksparker@ou.edu or (405) 325-8951 if you have any questions.

Enter your email address to be entered into a drawing to win one of five $10.00 amazon.com e-gift cards.

Questionnaire Information and Instructions:

The purpose of this survey is to examine secondary special education practices, especially secondary transition education and services. All of your responses will be kept confidential.

Enter your email address to be entered into a drawing to win one of five $10.00 amazon.com e-gift cards. The email addresses will also be used to contact a few teachers for confidential follow-up interviews.

Demographic Information

Please complete the following items by marking the box next to the best answer and/or filling in the blank.

I would describe my school district as:

- ○ Rural
- ○ Suburban
- ○ Urban

What is the total number of students in your school, with and without disabilities?

- ○ Less than 100
- ○ 100 – 500
- ○ 500 to 1000
- ○ 1000 or greater

Including yourself, the total number of special education teachers at this school is:

Special Education Transition Services In Secondary Schools

The total number of administrators (principals + assistant principals) at this school is:

I provide transition education and services to students in the following grade levels (select all that apply):

- [ ] 9th
- [ ] 10th
- [ ] 11th
- [ ] 12th
- [ ] beyond 12th

I have been teaching for:

- ○ less than 1 year
- ○ 1 to 5 years
- ○ 6 to 10 years
- ○ 11 to 15 years
- ○ 16 to 20 years
- ○ More than 20 years

I have participated in transition professional development provided by (mark all that apply):

- [ ] None
- [ ] Oklahoma Transition Institute
- [ ] University of Oklahoma's Zarrow Center
- [ ] Oklahoma State Department of Education
- [ ] Other

The primary administrator responsible for supporting transition education and services in my building is (mark only one):

- ○ Principal
- ○ Assistant Principal
- ○ Special Education Director
- ○ Transition Specialist
- ○ Department Chair/Head Teacher
- ○ Other

Section 1

Special Education Transition Services In Secondary Schools

The questionnaire contains statements and questions about secondary special education teaching practices and services for high school students with disabilities. Please think about the students on your caseload, your own teaching practices, and transition education at your school. Check the box that most accurately reflects the extent to which the transition education practices and services described in the statement occur for your students on your caseload. Also, check the corresponding box if this specific statement is important to you.

1 = Never Occurs (0)

2 = Rarely Occurs (1%-25%)

3 = Occasionally Occurs (25%-50%)

4 = Frequently Occurs (50%-75%)

5 = Almost Always Occurs (75%-99%)

6 = Always Occurs (100%)

PLEASE RESPOND BASED ON YOUR TEACHING PRACTICES AND THE TRANSITION EDU OPPORTUNITIES FACILITATED AT OR THROUGH YOUR SCHOOL.

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Am
1A. Students' IEPs link transition services and a course of study to postsecondary goals.	○	○	○	○	
2A. Students participate in the selection of postsecondary goals and annual transition goals.	○	○	○	○	
3A. Students' transition IEPs contain postsecondary goals and annual transition goals that are based on appropriate transition assessments.	○	○	○	○	
4A. Students' transition IEPs are based on students' strengths, interests and preferences.	○	○	○	○	
5A. Students are taught to actively participate in the transition IEP meeting (e.g., express opinions or choices, discuss goals, preferences, strengths and needs, lead meeting).	○	○	○	○	
6A. Students attend the IEP meeting and actively participate in the meeting (e.g., express opinions or choices, discuss goals, preferences, strengths and needs, lead meeting).	○	○	○	○	
7A. Students are provided with appropriate instruction and opportunities to learn independent living and/or self-care skills aligned with postsecondary goals.	○	○	○	○	

Please mark yes or no to indicate if this skill or behavior is important to you.

	YES	NO
1B. Is this important to you?	○	○
2B. Is this important to you?	○	○
3B. Is this important to you?	○	○
4B. Is this important to you?	○	○
5B. Is this important to you?	○	○
6B. Is this important to you?	○	○
7B. Is this important to you?	○	○

Section 1 (Continued)

Please think about the students on your caseload, your own teaching practices, and transition education at your school. Check the box that most accurately reflects the extent to which the transition education practices and services described in the statement occur for your students on your caseload. Also, check the corresponding box if this specific statement is important to you.

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2 = Rarely Occurs (1%-25%)

3 = Occasionally Occurs (25%-50%)

4 = Frequently Occurs (50%-75%)

5 = Almost Always Occurs (75%-99%)

6 = Always Occurs (100%)

PLEASE RESPOND BASED ON YOUR TEACHING PRACTICES AND THE TRANSITION ED OPPORTUNITIES FACILITATED AT OR THROUGH YOUR SCHOOL.

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
8A. Students are provided with appropriate instruction to learn social skills and opportunities to actively interact with classmates.	○	○	○	○
9A. Students are provided with opportunities to participate in vocational and occupational courses or experiences.	○	○	○	○
10A. Students participate in career awareness and exploration instruction to learn about a variety of postschool job options.	○	○	○	○
11A. Students participate in job-finding instruction, including job readiness, social skills and job application skills.	○	○	○	○
12A. Students are provided opportunities to participate in job training, internships, or apprenticeship programs.	○	○	○	○
13A. Students are provided with opportunities to obtain paid employment or enroll in work-study programs.	○	○	○	○
14A. Students are taught about their individual strengths and limitations and how those strengths and limitations affect the student in academic and nonacademic situations.	○	○	○	○

Please mark yes or no to indicate if this skill or behavior is important to you.

	YES	NO
8B. Is this important to you?	○	○
9B. Is this important to you?	○	○
10B. Is this important to you?	○	○
11B. Is this important to you?	○	○
12B. Is this important to you?	○	○
13B. Is this important to you?	○	○
14B. Is this important to you?	○	○

Section 1 (Continued)

Please think about the students on your caseload, your own teaching practices, and transition education at your school. Check the box that most accurately reflects the extent to which the transition education practices and services described in the statement occur for your students on your caseload. Also, check the corresponding box if this specific statement is important to you.

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2 = Rarely Occurs (1%-25%)

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4 = Frequently Occurs (50%-75%)

5 = Almost Always Occurs (75%-99%)

6 = Always Occurs (100%)

**PLEASE RESPOND BASED ON YOUR TEACHING PRACTICES AND THE TRANSITION EDU
OPPORTUNITIES FACILITATED AT OR THROUGH YOUR SCHOOL.**

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	An
15A. Students are taught about their disability, to recognize positive and negative aspects of it, to understand their disability in context while not letting the disability completely define them as an individual.	○	○	○	○	
16A. Students are taught to set goals based on their interests and skills, and to make a plan to achieve those goals.	○	○	○	○	
17A. Students are taught to monitor progress on their goals and to adjust their goals based on feedback they receive and opportunities that are presented.	○	○	○	○	
18A. Students are provided with opportunities to develop problem-solving skills and taught to utilize different strategies to achieve goals when goals are not met.	○	○	○	○	
19A. Students are taught to access information on support services or community agencies.	○	○	○	○	
20A. Students are taught to identify situations when they need support, to specify the type of support needed, and who to seek out for support.	○	○	○	○	
21A. Students are taught how to talk about their disability and to request appropriate supports or accommodations according to their rights.	○	○	○	○	

Special Education Transition Services In Secondary Schools

Please mark yes or no to indicate if this skill or behavior is important to you.

	YES	NO
15B. Is this important to you?	○	○
16B. Is this important to you?	○	○
17B. Is this important to you?	○	○
18B. Is this important to you?	○	○
19B. Is this important to you?	○	○
20B. Is this important to you?	○	○
21B. Is this important to you?	○	○

Section 1 (Continued)

Please think about the students on your caseload, your own teaching practices, and transition education at your school. Check the box that most accurately reflects the extent to which the transition education practices and services described in the statement occur for your students on your caseload. Also, check the corresponding box if this specific statement is important to you.

1 = Never Occurs (0)

2 = Rarely Occurs (1%-25%)

3 = Occasionally Occurs (25%-50%)

4 = Frequently Occurs (50%-75%)

5 = Almost Always Occurs (75%-99%)

6 = Always Occurs (100%)

Special Education Transition Services In Secondary Schools

PLEASE RESPOND BASED ON YOUR TEACHING PRACTICES AND THE TRANSITION EDU OPPORTUNITIES FACILITATED AT OR THROUGH YOUR SCHOOL.

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	An
22A. Students are provided instruction and experiences in the community, including vocational education, independent living skills instruction, and postsecondary educational experiences.	○	○	○	○	
23A. Students are provided with opportunities to appropriately and actively participate in the general education program, including academic and social activities.	○	○	○	○	
24A. Family members attend transition IEP meetings.	○	○	○	○	
25A. Family members are provided with transition information, including information about available community resources, to support the student.	○	○	○	○	
26A. Family members participate in the transition planning process.	○	○	○	○	
27A. Students' class schedules and programs are flexible to meet individual student needs.	○	○	○	○	
28A. Structured opportunities are facilitated for students and families to access support networks, community connections, and employment support (e.g., agency referrals, transition fairs).	○	○	○	○	

Please mark yes or no to indicate if this skill or behavior is important to you.

	YES	NO
22B. Is this important to you?	○	○
23B. Is this important to you?	○	○
24B. Is this important to you?	○	○
25B. Is this important to you?	○	○
26B. Is this important to you?	○	○
27B. Is this important to you?	○	○
28B. Is this important to you?	○	○

SECTION 2

Consider the school administrator(s) at your site (principal and assistant/vice-principal) responsible for supervising the special education teachers who provide transition education services to students with disabilities. Select the box that most accurately describes to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement. Also, check the corresponding

box if this specific statement is important to you.

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Moderately Disagree

3 = Slightly Disagree

4 = Slightly Agree

5 = Moderately Agree

6 = Strongly Agree

PLEASE RESPOND BASED ON YOUR PERCEPTIONS OF YOUR SCHOOL SITE ADMINIST (PRINCIPAL OR ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL).

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moder Agr
29A. School administrators provide frequent, helpful feedback about my performance.	○	○	○	○	○
30A. School administrators are supportive of my decisions and ideas.	○	○	○	○	○
31A. School administrators are easy to approach, maintaining an open-door policy.	○	○	○	○	○
32A. School administrators take my opinion into consideration when making decisions that affect my work.	○	○	○	○	○
33A. School administrators recognize and appreciate the work I do.	○	○	○	○	○
34A. I am encouraged by my school administrators to attend professional development.	○	○	○	○	○
35A. School administrators create structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate and plan together.	○	○	○	○	○
36A. School administrators act as a liaison and support me in my interactions with parents, as needed.	○	○	○	○	○

Please mark yes or no to indicate if this skill or behavior is important to you.

	YES	NO
29B. Is this important to you?	○	○
30B. Is this important to you?	○	○
31B. Is this important to you?	○	○
32B. Is this important to you?	○	○
33B. Is this important to you?	○	○
34B. Is this important to you?	○	○
35B. Is this important to you?	○	○
36B. Is this important to you?	○	○

Section 2 (Continued)

Consider the school administrator(s) at your site (principal and assistant/vice-principal) responsible for supervising the special education teachers who provide transition education services to students with disabilities. Select the box that most accurately describes to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement. Also, check the corresponding box if this specific statement is important to you.

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Moderately Disagree

3 = Slightly Disagree

4 = Slightly Agree

5 = Moderately Agree

6 = Strongly Agree

Special Education Transition Services In Secondary Schools

PLEASE RESPOND BASED ON YOUR PERCEPTIONS OF YOUR SCHOOL SITE ADMINIST (PRINCIPAL OR ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL).

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moder Agr
37A. School administrators support the goals and expectations of the transition education program.	○	○	○	○	○
38A. School administrators support flexible scheduling to address students' individual transition needs.	○	○	○	○	○
39A. School administrators understand the transition education program and what I do as a teacher.	○	○	○	○	○
40A. School administrators are knowledgeable of content standards related to transition education.	○	○	○	○	○
41A. School administrators work with me to solve problems I experience associated with providing transition education and services.	○	○	○	○	○
42A. School administrators provide time and resources to evaluate and redesign the program to incorporate current recommended practices.	○	○	○	○	○
43A. School administrators solicit my advice and opinions about transition education and services.	○	○	○	○	○

Please mark yes or no to indicate if this skill or behavior is important to you.

	YES	NO
37B. Is this important to you?	○	○
38B. Is this important to you?	○	○
39B. Is this important to you?	○	○
40B. Is this important to you?	○	○
41B. Is this important to you?	○	○
42B. Is this important to you?	○	○
43B. Is this important to you?	○	○

Section 2 (Continued)

Consider the school administrator(s) at your site (principal and assistant/vice-principal) responsible for supervising the special education teachers who provide transition education services to students with disabilities. Select the box that

most accurately describes to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement. Also, check the corresponding box if this specific statement is important to you.

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Moderately Disagree

3 = Slightly Disagree

4 = Slightly Agree

5 = Moderately Agree

6 = Strongly Agree

PLEASE RESPOND BASED ON YOUR PERCEPTIONS OF YOUR SCHOOL SITE ADMINIST (PRINCIPAL OR ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL).

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moder Agr
44A. School administrators promote an atmosphere of caring, trust and cooperation among teachers and supervisors.	○	○	○	○	○
45A. School administrators ensure students have access to all education options available.	○	○	○	○	○
46A. School administrators actively participate in transition education meetings, including student IEP meetings and planning/evaluation meetings.	○	○	○	○	○
47A. School administrators do not allow state accountability testing to interfere with teachers providing quality transition education and services.	○	○	○	○	○
48A. School administrators model a belief in or value of transition education.	○	○	○	○	○
49A. School administrators use data to monitor student outcomes and the effectiveness of transition education.	○	○	○	○	○
50A. School administrators show appreciation for quality teaching, innovation and new ideas.	○	○	○	○	○

Please mark yes or no to indicate if this skill or behavior is important to you.

	YES	NO
44B. Is this important to you?	○	○
45B. Is this important to you?	○	○
46B. Is this important to you?	○	○
47B. Is this important to you?	○	○
48B. Is this important to you?	○	○
49B. Is this important to you?	○	○
50B. Is this important to you?	○	○

Section 2 (Continued)

Consider the school administrator(s) at your site (principal and assistant/vice-principal) responsible for supervising the special education teachers who provide transition education services to students with disabilities. Select the box that most accurately describes to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement. Also, check the corresponding box if this specific statement is important to you.

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Moderately Disagree

3 = Slightly Disagree

4 = Slightly Agree

5 = Moderately Agree

6 = Strongly Agree

Special Education Transition Services In Secondary Schools

PLEASE RESPOND BASED ON YOUR PERCEPTIONS OF YOUR SCHOOL SITE ADMINIST (PRINCIPAL OR ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL).

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	M
51A. School administrators encourage and support the development of collaborative partnerships with agencies and businesses to improve the quality of transition services.	○	○	○	○	
52A. School administrators identify resources or support personnel to contact for specific problems that he/she is unable to solve.	○	○	○	○	
53A. School administrators ensure the environment is orderly and supportive of teachers focusing on instruction.	○	○	○	○	
54A. School administrators allot time for teachers to work with parents and students to conduct quality transition assessment and planning.	○	○	○	○	
55A. School administrators distribute resources equitably based on the unique needs of each program.	○	○	○	○	
56A. School administrators provide sufficient financial resources to meet the individual transition education needs of each of my students.	○	○	○	○	
57A. School administrators are a visible presence in the transition education program/my classroom.	○	○	○	○	

Please mark yes or no to indicate if this skill or behavior is important to you.

	YES	NO
51B. Is this important to you?	○	○
52B. Is this important to you?	○	○
53B. Is this important to you?	○	○
54B. Is this important to you?	○	○
55B. Is this important to you?	○	○
56B. Is this important to you?	○	○
57B. Is this important to you?	○	○

THANK YOU FOR RESPONDING TO THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Be certain to click "DONE" to submit your answers and exit the survey.

Your email address will be entered into the drawing to win one of five $10.00 amazon.com e-gift cards. You will be contacted via email if selected.

Please contact Karen Little at ksparker@ou.edu or (405) 325-8951 if you have any questions.

Appendix D

Interview Protocol for Qualitative Data Collection

Appendix D

Interview Protocol for Qualitative Data Collection

Question will be open-ended to elicit response about participants' personal experiences and perceptions. Below are sample questions that may be used. These questions may be modified and clarifying questions may be required to elicit further explanations or to encourage a complete response based on participants' responses.

Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for time and willingness to participate. As you know, I am interested in the role of administrative support and the implementation of effective transition education practices. Particularly, I am interested in the transition education practices that teachers use and believe are most important for their students, the barriers and facilitators of transition education, and the role of administrative support in the provision of transition education and services. If the questions are general and abstract, you may volunteer any detail you wish. You also have the option of declining to answer – passing on – any of the questions. Do you have any questions before we start?

Teacher Questions

1. What have you experienced in terms of providing transition education?
    a. (Describe your experiences teaching transition education)
    b. (How would you describe your experiences now—compared to earlier in your teaching career—or—compared to what you thought they would be when you went through your teacher training training?)
2. How would you describe the "perfect" transition education program?
3. What situations have influenced or affected your experience teaching transition education?

4. Describe your experiences in terms of administrative support of transition education?
5. Do you think administrative support influences your providing transition education experiences and opportunities?
    a. (if yes) What administrative support situations or experiences have influenced or affected your experience providing transition education?
    b. (if no) What role does administrative support play in the provision of transition education and services?
6. How would you describe the "perfect" administrative support required for the "perfect" transition program you described previously?

Principal/Assistant Principal Questions

1. How would you describe your role and experiences in providing "administrative support" to special education teachers delivering transition education?
2. How would you describe your role and experiences now, compared to earlier in your career?
3. What situations have influenced or affected your experiences supervising transition education? (barriers and supports)
4. Who do you believe provides instructional leadership to special education teachers delivering transition education? How would you describe the role of the site administrator in providing this type of leadership?

IDEA 2004 and Transition Services questions

1. How would you describe your knowledge level regarding transition education and services as mandated by IDEA 2004?
2. How would you describe your training regarding special education transition services?
3. How would you describe your experiences in transition IEPs?
4. How would you describe your experiences with vocational and occupational courses for students with disabilities?
5. How would you describe your experiences with other agencies supporting transition education and collaborating with the school?
6. How would you describe your experiences with family involvement in transition services and education?
7. How would you describe your experiences with students learning skills to live independently after high school? Learning in the community?

Other Transition Professional

1. What have you experienced in terms of transition education?
    a. (Describe your experiences providing/supporting transition education)
    b. (How would you describe your experiences now—compared to earlier in your career—or—compared to what you thought they would be when you went through your training?)
2. How would you describe the "perfect" transition education program?

3. What situations have influenced or affected your experience working in transition education?
4. Describe your experiences in terms of administrative support of transition education?
5. Do you think administrative support influences the provision of transition education experiences and opportunities for students with disabilities?
    a. (if yes) What administrative support situations or experiences have influenced or affected your experiences working in transition education?
    b. (if no) What role does administrative support play in the provision of transition education and services?
6. How would you describe the "perfect" administrative support required for the "perfect" transition program you described previously?

Closing

Now that we are done, do you have any questions you'd like to ask me about this research project? If you want to contact me later, here is my contact information. Also, I may need to contact you later for additional questions or clarification. Can I also have your follow-up contact information?

Appendix E

Form for Member Checking in Qualitative Phase

Appendix E

Form for Member Checking in Qualitative Phase

Dear
First, I want to thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study and to emphasize how grateful I am for your willingness to share your insights on providing transition education and your perceptions of the role of administrative support. I wish to ensure I have generally captured the main ideas you expressed in the interview by having you confirm or clarify the summary, and I have provided a short form for your responses. You can confirm the summary by marking in the boxes or using the spaces provided to note any clarification of the ideas. I would appreciate your completing this form and returning it to me by March 15, 2012. You may simply attach it to an email sent directly to me at ksparker@ou.edu, or you may mail a paper copy confidentially to my attention at the Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment, 338 Cate Center Drive, Room 190, Norman, OK 73019.

- I have listed the main ideas or "themes" that emerged from the interview in bold.
- Below the bolded themes, I listed the key points I interpreted from our interview.
- I included quotations in *italics* that particularly contributed to the main idea or theme.
- After reading the summary of each theme you may
    - Indicate your confirmation of the summary by marking:
      ☑ I confirm this summary or …
    - Provide any clarification in the spaces below each theme summary

I wish to reflect your perceptions as accurately as possible, which requires your confirmation or clarification of my understandings. I appreciate your returning the form by March 15, 2012 and wish to again express my gratitude for your participation. Feel free to send me an email or call me with any questions at (972) 689-2720.

Thank you,

Karen S. Little
Doctoral Candidate
University of Oklahoma
College of Education
ksparker@ou.edu

Participant Background

- You have been a teacher for years:
  - taught
- At the time of the interview you:
  - taught in

☐ I confirm this summary.

Clarifications: (the area will expand as you type) _____

Theme 1. Competing Priorities: Balancing individual needs of secondary students with disabilities

-

☐ I confirm this summary.

Clarifications: (the area will expand as you type) _____

Theme 2. Partnerships: Collaborating to increase opportunities for transition education

-

☐ I confirm this summary.

Clarifications: (the area will expand as you type) _____

Theme 3. Communication: Recognizing success and capacity building

-

☐ I confirm this summary.

Clarifications: (the area will expand as you type) _____