

A SECONDARY TRANSITION PROGRAM IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL SETTING FOR  
STUDENTS WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES: PUTTING THE PROGRAM INTO  
EVALUABLE FORMAT AND EVALUATING THE PROGRAM'S USE OF BEST  
PRACTICES

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## ABSTRACT

The post-school outcomes for students with severe disabilities have been poor compared to individuals with less severe disabilities or those without disabilities. These young adults also require more supports and assistance during the stage of transition from school to work. Improved secondary transition programming is a way in which student outcomes can be enhanced. The present study set out to provide constructive and relevant information to administrators and educators involved in a Life Skills program in New Jersey. The Life Skills program is a secondary transition, public school- based program, for students with severe disabilities aged 18 to 21. The first research task was the creation of a Program Design document. This document put the program into an evaluable format using Maher's model of Program Planning and Evaluation (2012). The second research task was to answer the following program evaluation question: To what extent is the Life Skills Program implementing best practices? Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews with staff members involved in the program, and a review of program related documents. The Program Design Document and Best Practice findings provide information on strengths and recommendations to the educators and administrators involved in the Life Skills program, enabling sound decisions to be made about the program and contributing to program development and improvement. The current study also has implications for educators, administrators, and other professionals in the field who work with this target population.

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## Chapter I

### **Introduction and Overview**

#### **Transition Services For Students With Disabilities**

Up until the passage of the first federal laws governing the free and appropriate education of children with disabilities, there was a state-by-state patchwork of services for students with disabilities in the United States (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006). Public Law 94-142, referred to as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, was the first of these laws, which was passed in 1975. Since the first federal legislation there have been several expansions of coverage for students with disabilities in both public and non-public schools and three re-authorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 1990, 1997, and 2004)). One key provision of the 1990 amendment of IDEA was the mandate of transition services for students who are eligible for Special Education services (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006). With the passage of new acts and amendments to these acts, post-school outcomes for students with disabilities have improved slightly over the last 20 years. Even with this progress, there is a general consensus that there is room for improvement in the areas of student outcomes, employment, consistency of programming, meeting transition requirements, and use of evidence-based practices (Hasazi, Furney, DeStefano, 1999; Johnson& Sharpe, 2000; Morningstar& Liss, 2008; NJ DOE, 2010; Test et al., 2009).

Transition related services are mandated by law for students who receive Special Education and Related Services (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). There are many different types of transition services. For example, students with disabilities receive services for school-to-school transitions, such as transitioning from elementary to middle school and middle school to high school. Students also receive services for post-school transitions, such

as transitioning from high school to life after high school graduation. Students' post-graduation plans differ, therefore secondary transition programming needs to focus on the unique needs and goals of each student. For example, for some students they will transition from high school to college and for others they will transition to supported employment (SRI International, 2011).

For students with disabilities, secondary transition planning is a process that should begin as soon as a student enters school. Witte (2002) urges that: "Transition should not be viewed as a discrete event but as a life-long, never- ending process; a careful, well-planned process that will be years old before the intended outcomes begin to be reached; a process that over time will involve numerous individuals, several administrative teams, professionals from outside agencies, family members, along with the identified student; and a process with all involved parties have responsibility and all share accountability (pp.1588)." Levinson recommends that the transition process should incorporate a k-12 career development plan (2002, 2008), while the Individuals with Disabilities Education and Improvement Act (IDEIA) requires that secondary transition planning begin at age 16 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). It is the responsibility of the education system to equip students with requisite skills to survive and prosper after they graduate (DeFur & Patton, 1999).

IDEIA defines secondary transition services as a: "Coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that: (1) 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 postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment); continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or

community participation, (2) Is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests, and, (3) Includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).”

The National Longitudinal Transition Study- 2 (NLTS-2) has shed light on the topic of secondary transition for individuals with severe disabilities through an analysis of a national sample that were aged 13 to 16 at the start of the study in 2000 and were aged 21 to 25 at the end of the study (SRI International, 2011). According to NLTS-2, planning for secondary transition occurs for almost 90% of students with disabilities in secondary school and these transition planning rates increase with age (age 14 (75%) to age 17-18 (96.4%); (SRI International, 2011)).

Historically, the goal of transition programming was to help these students with vocational planning, but transition has evolved to include many more areas. The goal of transition programming is to enable individuals with disabilities to have a well-rounded life to the greatest degree possible, and this not only includes having a vocation, but also being a contributing member of society (deFur & Patton, 1999). The skills that are targeted in a secondary transition program for students with severe disabilities include: (a) Functional skills/ academics, (b) Occupational/ Vocational skills, (c) Learning job skills through un-paid work experiences and paid employment, (d) Independent/ Daily Living Skills, (e) Communication skills, (f) Public transportation mobility transportation skills, (g) Community Living Skills, (h) Personal/ social skills, and (i) Self-determination skills (Levinson, 2002, 2008; White& Weiner, 2004).

## **Students with Severe Disabilities**

A subset of the students who receive Special Education services are those who have severe disabilities. The label “severe disability” includes individuals who have cognitive challenges (below average IQ), as well as other diagnoses such as Autism, other Developmental Disabilities, and/or physical and health challenges. “Severe disability” is a grouping label that others in the field have used to describe this population, since individuals who belong to these disability categories tend to be more similar in their needs than those in other categories (White & Weiner, 2004). Under IDEA, students in this severe disabilities group may fall under the disability classifications of Multiply Disabled, Autistic, or Cognitively Impaired (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV-TR; 2000), this group of students may be diagnosed as having Mental Retardation or a Pervasive Developmental Disorder.

Classifications and diagnoses do not fully describe the individual, and even within a single label, individuals represent a vast degree of diversity in their skills, needs, abilities, strengths, and weaknesses. The label “severe disability,” and the other labels that are frequently given to individuals within this group, are being used in order to help to define a distinct group of individuals. These are young adults who are in need of improvement in the transition services that they are provided with and their needs for service delivery are much different from the needs of other groups.

The classification percentage by disability category is as follows: Autism 0.4%, Deaf-blindness <0.1%, Emotional disturbance 0.7%, Hearing Impairments 0.1%, Intellectual Disabilities 0.7%, Multiple Disabilities 0.2%, Orthopedic Impairments 0.1%, Other Health Impairments 0.9%, Specific Learning Disabilities 3.9%, Speech or Language Impairments

1.7%, Traumatic Brain Injury <0.1%, Visual Impairments <0.1% (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Although the percentage of individuals with severe disabilities is relatively lower than those with mild disabilities, individuals with such classifications are represented in the schools. It is also important to note that from 1996 to 2007, Autism was one of the largest growing disability categories (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). This is a disability group that has significant and varied needs, often requiring more specialized and intensive transition related support services.

According to the NLTS-2, supports provided by schools differ across disability categories, with the greatest percentage of students receiving transition related instruction being those with Mental Retardation (76%), Autism (71%), or Multiple Disabilities (69%; SRI International, 2011). This group of students is in greater need of such instruction. Overall, students with mild disabilities have different needs than those with severe disabilities and the transition to adulthood is not easy for them (Keogh et al., 2004). Students with disabilities lack necessary functional work and academic skills necessary for post-school employment or post-secondary education (Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997). Those with severe disabilities require more supports and assistance during this stage of their lives.

In terms of educational programming, schools usually identify young adults with severe disabilities as those needing additional years of schooling past the graduation requirement age of 18, in order to better prepare them for life after school. Under IDEIA, students who districts identify as needing a few more years (up to age 21 or 22) are provided with transition programming in either a public in-district placement or in an out-of-district placement (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Students with mild disabilities are students who usually do not need to continue their educational programming past the graduation requirement age of 18

(SRI International, 2011). According to the thirty-first annual report to Congress, in 2007, 8.8% (5,912,586 individuals) of the population ages 6 to 21 were being served under IDEIA, 2% of which were aged 18 to 21 (approximately 118,252 individuals; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). There are a significant number of young adults who are receiving secondary transition services past the age of 18, which makes the topic of the quality of services being provided very relevant to the field.

In terms of secondary transition planning, much of the literature has focused on students with mild disabilities. The distinction between different disability groups is important especially when it comes to interventions and programming. It is essential to caution against generalizing findings and recommendations made by studies with samples of students with mild disabilities to students with severe disabilities. If individuals with severe disabilities were not included in the sample, then it is uncertain if the intervention strategy under review would be appropriate for students with different abilities, needs, and goals than those who were included in the sample.

### **Description of Current State of Affairs for Young Adults with Severe Disabilities**

Post-secondary education is a common goal for young adults with mild disabilities, while studies have indicated that 14% or fewer of individuals with disabilities, such as Mental Retardation, Autism, or Multiple Disabilities pursue post-secondary education (Peraino, 1992; Wagner et al., 1992). According to NLTS-2, students with Mental Retardation, Autism, Multiple Disabilities, or Deaf-Blindness are more likely to be working towards supported or sheltered employment and are more likely to have goals of maximizing their functional independent living skills and social skills. Post-secondary education is less likely to be goal for students with Mental Retardation, Autism, Multiple Disabilities, or Deaf-Blindness. A

large percentage of students with Learning Disabilities, Speech or Other Health Impairments, or Emotional Disturbance have goals of attending college and/ or participating in vocational training. In summary, students with Mental Retardation, Autism, Multiple Disabilities, or Deaf-Blindness are more likely to have noncompetitive employment and maximization of functional skills as their post-school goals (SRI International, 2011).

Data were gathered on the exit plans of 400 students who either were graduated or aged out of school, among 15 states and 92 out- of-district special education programs (Medical disorder programs, PDD/ Communication Disorder programs, and ED/BD programs), who belonged to the National Association of Private Special Education Centers (NAPSEC). For students who exited from PDD/ Communication disorder programs (n=92), their plans following school were as follows: Supported employment 43.5%, Sheltered employment 25.1%, Nonvocational Day Program 17.3%, Vocational Rehabilitation Program 8.7%, Competitive Employment 2.2%, No Mainstream/ Program Activity 2.2%; Four-year college, Two-year college, Trade or technical school, Armed forces, and Adult partial care program were 0% (Kellner& Strickarz, 2003). Due to abilities and needs of this population, the post school plans were most likely to be supported employment, sheltered employment, and nonvocational day programs, which differed from the plans of those in other programs. For students from ED/BD programs (n=253), the most common exit plans were as follows: Competitive employment 28.9%, Two-year college 18.2%, Supported Employment 14.6%, and Vocational Rehabilitation Program 13%. For students from Medical disorders programs (n=55), the most common exit plans were as follows: Two-year college 23.6%, Four-year college 20.0%, Competitive Employment 16.4%, and Nonvocational Day Program 14.5% (Kellner& Strickarz, 2003).



Research studies, as well as national studies, on post-school outcomes for students with severe disabilities, have found that this population has low graduation rates, low social involvement, low levels of independence, and lower levels of life satisfaction when compared to individuals with less severe disabilities or those without disabilities (Keogh, Bernheimer, & Guthrie, 2004; La Plante, Kennedy, Kaye, & Wenger, 1996; National Organization on Disability, 2010; SRI International, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). New Jersey's Annual Performance Report findings further indicate that improvement is needed in post-school employment outcomes, since 16% of individuals with disabilities are neither enrolled in higher education, postsecondary education, a training program, competitive employment, or non-competitive employment (New Jersey Department of Education, 2010). Additionally, people with disabilities are two times more likely to be living in poverty (34% have income below \$15,000) than those without disabilities (15%; National Organization on Disability, 2010). In 1996, the employment rate for individuals with severe disabilities was 25% (La Plante, Kennedy, Kaye, & Wenger, 1996). Over 15 years later, the employment rate has remained low. Of all working-age people with disabilities (age 18 to 64), only 21% are employed, compared to 59% of people without disabilities who are employed (National Organization on Disability, 2010). Employment represents the largest gap (38 percentage points) between the two groups (disabled and non disabled).

One barrier to successful post-graduation outcomes for young adults with disabilities is the low completion rate and high drop out rate for this population. According to the thirty-first annual report to Congress in 2007, a total of 56% of the students ages 14 through 21 who exited *IDEIA*, Part B, and school graduated with a regular high school diploma (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The completion rate by disability category is as follows:

Autism 58%, Deaf-blindness 74.3%, Emotional disturbance 42.7%, Hearing Impairments 67%, Intellectual Disabilities 37.6%, Multiple Disabilities 45.5%, Orthopedic Impairments 59.9%, Other Health Impairments 62.4%, Specific Learning Disabilities 60.7%, Speech or Language Impairments 66.5%, Traumatic Brain Injury 62.6%, Visual Impairments 69.7% (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). According to the same report, a total of 25.7 percent of students ages 14 through 21 under IDEIA dropped out of school without a high school diploma (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The dropout rate by disability category is as follows: Autism 7.2%, Deaf-blindness 8.2%, Emotional disturbance 44.8%, Hearing Impairments 13%, Intellectual Disabilities 22.2%, Multiple Disabilities 19.1%, Orthopedic Impairments 13.3%, Other Health Impairments 23.2%, Specific Learning Disabilities 24.5%, Speech or Language Impairments 20.7%, Traumatic Brain Injury 15.4%, Visual Impairments 11.2% (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

In 2007, the national completion rate, for both individuals with and without disabilities ages 18 through 24 who are not enrolled in high school and who have earned a high school diploma or equivalent credential is 89%. The national dropout rate for this same population was 3.5% (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). These statistics illustrate that the dropout rates for individuals with disabilities is much higher than those without disabilities, and their completion rate is significantly lower. On a positive note, from 1997-1998 to 2006-2007, the graduation completion percentage rates have increased and the dropout percentages have decreased for all disability categories that have exited IDEIA and school. Although these rates have increased over time, most likely due to improved efforts on part of legislation and standards, there is still a large gap between the completion rates of those with disabilities (56%) and the national rate (89%), as well as the dropout rates of those with disabilities

(25.7%) and the national rate (3.5%). The implication of having a high drop out rate is that those students who drop out, they are not receiving transition related services, such as vocational training. This could further impede them from making a successful transition from school to work.

Young adults with severe disabilities require more supports and assistance during the stage of transition from school to work than students with less severe disabilities or no disabilities (Phelps& Hanley-Maxwell, 1997; SRI International, 2011) and under IDEA, services from the school end at age 21 (or 22) for individuals with disabilities (US Department of Education, 2004). This means that this is the last opportunity for the schools, through secondary transition programming to prepare these young adults for life after school. Due to their abilities and needs, the post-graduation goals of individuals with severe disabilities is different from individuals with less severe or no disabilities, as common goals of this population is related to maximizing their functional independent living skills and social skills and working in supported employment or sheltered employment settings (Kellner& Strickarz, 2003; SRI International, 2011). Currently, there is evidence that there are many barriers and challenges that are affecting the probability that students with severe disabilities will achieve success in the areas of employment, living, or community involvement after they graduate from high school. Improved secondary transition programming is a way in which student outcomes can be enhanced in all these areas.

Schools are in need of help with designing programming for their students with more severe disabilities so they can be successful after graduation. It is the responsibility of the education system to equip students with requisite skills to survive and prosper after they graduate (deFur & Patton, 1999). Levinson (2002) argues that, “many school-based

vocational assessment programs are not comprehensive, systematic, or effective because they have been developed without considering all factors related to program development.” Others in this field have expressed similar beliefs: “Progress in creating comprehensive and responsive secondary education and transition services has been slow and inconsistent across states and school districts nationwide despite supporting influences of federal legislation and mandates, availability of research on effective secondary education and transition models and practices, and emphasis places on interagency collaboration” (Hasazi, Furney, DeStefano, 1999; Johnson& Sharpe, 2000). Costs of young adults who do not receive appropriate services while in school are large, not only at the individual level, but when a transition program is not adequate it has financial costs for society (White& Weiner, 2004). When these young adults leave school there are a lot of challenges that they will be faced with. A way to support these young adults in this transition is high quality, appropriate transition programming at the secondary level.

### **Dissertation Task**

The purpose of this study was to provide constructive and relevant information to administrators and educators involved in a Life Skills program in New Jersey. The Life Skills program is a secondary transition, public school- based program, for students with severe disabilities aged 18 to 21. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews with staff members involved in the program, and a review of program related documents.

The information gathered from data sources was used to complete two tasks. *The first research task was the creation of a Program Design document.* This document put the program into an evaluable format using Maher’s model of Program Planning and Evaluation (2012). Putting a program into an evaluable format, through the creation of a Program Design

document, serves as a means to provide stakeholders with information to further develop and alter program goals, components, and activities.

In the literature on secondary transition for students with severe disabilities, there are best practices that have been indentified. These practices have been shown to lead to improved student outcomes. Research has also identified characteristics of exemplary transition programs. Organizations and the government have also set forth standards and recommendations for best practices in this area. *The second research task was to answer the following program evaluation question: To what extent is the Life Skills program implementing best practices?*

The Program Design document and best practice findings provides information to the educators and administrators who are involved in the Life Skills program, enabling sound decisions to be made about the program and contributing to program development and improvement. The current study also has implications for educators, administrators, and other professionals in the field who work with this target population.

## Chapter II

### Review of Relevant Literature

#### Legislation Related to Transition Services

In the area of secondary transition, starting in the seventies, but with an increase in the past two decades, there has been an array of legislation that is relevant to individuals with disabilities. This legislation was passed to address problems related to school and post-school outcomes of individuals with disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act have contributed to the development of school- based services. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Vocational Rehabilitation Act Section 504, and School to Work Opportunities Act have contributed to the development of community and work- based services.

The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990 was the first federal act to define the pivotal stage of transition. This federal legislation, as well as its amendments in 1997 and 2004, required state and local education agencies to address transition needs of student with disabilities for school (i.e., transitioning from middle school to high school) and post-school (i.e., transitioning from school to career) transitions (Levinson, 2002, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2004; Witte, 2002). See Appendix A for a list of regulations in IDEIA that are relevant to secondary transition. Each state also has a set of legal regulations that are relevant to secondary transition and reflect IDEA. Appendix B includes the regulations in New Jersey Administrative Code Title 6A Chapter 14 that are relevant to secondary transition. IDEIA's guidelines, as well as each state's code, are relevant to students who receive Special Education and Related Services. This can include students up to the age of 22. When students meet their graduation requirements and leave the education system at 18

or when they age out of Special Education at age 21 or 22, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Vocational Rehabilitation Act Section 504 are relevant.

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1990 is another relevant federal legislation for individuals with disabilities and secondary transition. Under this act, states can receive federal vocational education money to be used towards activities and programs to eliminate inequality and to ensure equal access by all individuals. According to this act, parents must be informed about vocational education that is available for their children one year before they are eligible, parents must be provided with information on vocational education such as eligibility requirements and details about programs offered, and technical training and education must be provided to students not planning to go to college. Once a student is enrolled in vocational education, students must be assessed in areas of interest, abilities, special needs, and other special services needed to assist in the transition from school to work (Levinson, 2002, 2008; National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004)

The American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) offers protections to prohibit hiring and employment discrimination against individuals with disabilities. It helped to create equal rights and opportunities for individuals with disabilities through mandating “reasonable accommodations” in the areas of employment, access to public facilities, transportation, telecommunications, and government services. Additionally, this act increased public awareness and acceptance of issues related to disability in the workplace (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004; Witte, 2002).

The Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and its 1998 amendments provide services to all individuals with disabilities in the areas of independent living, employability, and

integration in the community. The act has a focus on adults and youth transitioning into employment settings and it prohibits discrimination in employment based on disability. It requires vocational rehabilitation agencies to develop and implement formal interagency agreements with state educational agencies that provide transition services to students with disabilities (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

The School to Work Opportunities Act was passed in 1994 to address deficits in the skills that students needed to be competitive in global economy. It provided students with and without disabilities with school and work based learning in area of work related skills and experiences (Levinson, 2002, 2008).

With the passage of new acts and amendments to these acts, post-school outcomes have improved slightly over the last 20 years. Even with this progress, there is a general consensus that there is room for more improvement in the areas of student outcomes, employment, consistency of programming, meeting transition requirements, and use of evidence-based practices (Hasazi, Furney, DeStefano, 1999; Johnson& Sharpe, 2000; Morningstar& Liss, 2008; NJ DOE, 2010; Test et al., 2009).

IDEIA 2004 introduced accountability procedures by requiring states to write a State Performance Plan (SPP) and to provide an Annual Performance Report (APR) to the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education. The APR has two indicators that are relevant to secondary transition. Indicator 13 on Secondary Transition of the APR examines the compliance in including the 8 components that must be in a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) in relation to transition. It is expected that states report that 100% of students' IEPs (age 16 and older) contain the 8 components required in transition IEPs, but



results of New Jersey's APR in 2010 indicated that 78.3% of students age 16 and up had appropriate measurable post-secondary goals that met all the mandated components (NJ DOE, 2010). All transition IEPs in the state of New Jersey are not in compliance with federal legislation and this could have the potential to have a negative effect on post-school outcomes for these young adults. It is also worth noting that research has not yet answered whether a compliant transition IEP is equated to quality services and improved outcomes (Test & Grossi, 2011). In another study, student exit plans and the school's execution of IDEIA regulations was examined. Researchers noted that these schools, whom were all private, approved out-of-district placements, were following IDEIA regulations in regard to helping students make post-school plans and that students who exited these programs did make plans for involvement in a range of productive adult activities, but data does not specify what elements of the program contributed to the development of these plans and if these plans were carried out as intended (Kellner & Strickarz, 2003).

Based on the findings on Indicator 14 from the 2010 APR, which indicated that in New Jersey 16% of individuals with disabilities are neither enrolled in higher education, postsecondary education, a training program, competitive employment, or non-competitive employment, the NJ DOE is in the process of taking action to make improvements in these areas. Examples of efforts that are being made include enhancing strategies to increase interagency collaboration, providing assistance and training to districts, and promoting use of Curriculum Based Instruction (CBI). The 2010 APR findings for the state of New Jersey indicate that there is room for improvement in transition IEP compliance (including all 8 components in a transition IEP) and with post-school outcomes (increasing percentage of

individuals who pursue education, training programs, or employment following high school graduation) for young adults with disabilities.

Legislation is vital in providing the first step to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive the services that they need in order to lead to the most optimal transition outcomes. Since legislation outlines rights of individuals, it is important that students and their families are aware of what the law says. Since various forms of legislation exist to address the topic of secondary transition it is also important for young adults and families to know what mandates are relevant to them at different periods of time. For example, IDEIA provides services when in the schools, and ADA and Section 504 provides services after graduation. Transition programming should include providing resources to students and families on relevant information and legislation. In the following sections, standards and best practice recommendations for secondary transition programming will be discussed. These standards and recommendations are reflective of legislation in this area.

### **Career Development Theory and Vocational Assessment**

Multiple theories are available to explain the process of transition for individuals with disabilities. Applying theory to transition programming is essential in order to deliver comprehensive services. According to Levinson (2002), vocational services should be guided by both Vocational/ Career Development theory and the skills that individuals need that will enable them to make decisions about a job that they perform well in and enjoy. Levinson's Career Development theory, which was adopted by theories of Super, Ginzberg, Axelrad, and Herma, is composed of stages and sub-stages that an individual progresses through during the career development process. The first stage is the Growth Stage, which consists of Fantasy (ages 0-10), Interest (ages 11-12), and Capacity (ages 13-14). The second and final stage is

the Exploration Stage, which consists of Tentative (ages 15-17), Transition (ages 18-21), and Trial (ages 22-24; Levinson, 2002). During the Transition stage, young adults are given the task to choose a career/ vocation and work on acquiring necessary skills for entry- level employment. Levinson's theory guides educators in making developmentally appropriate recommendations and provides a timeline to determine a student's developmental level in relation to typical peers. Additionally, this theory helps with interpretation of assessment data and setting expectations.

Since the post-graduation plans of many students with more severe disabilities is to enter the work world, rather than attend college, the need for schools to address vocational skills is vital. Levinson (2002) recommends that a comprehensive vocational assessment is necessary in order to ensure that students are successfully progressing through vocational developmental stages and to also determine whether students require assistance in reaching goals associated with each stage. This assessment should consist of a record review, observations, interviews, paper and pencil tests to assess interests (i.e., Self-Directed Search, Strong Interest Inventory, Interest Assessment 2<sup>nd</sup> ed), aptitude tests, performance tests (evaluate specific abilities related to job performance), work samples, and situational assessments.

This multi-method approach to vocational assessment assesses skills related to: (1) *Psychological Functioning*: emotional stability, needs temperament, values, intelligence, behavioral tendencies; (2) *Social Functioning*: adaptive behavior, social/ interpersonal skills, independent living skills, hygiene; (3) *Educational/ Academic Functioning*: receptive/ expressive language (oral, written), reading skills, mathematic skills, range of knowledge (general information); (4) *Physical/ Medical Functioning*: vision, hearing, health, strength,

dexterity/ motor skills, endurance; and, (5) *Vocational Functioning*: vocational interests, vocational aptitude, work habits/ attitudes, vocational/ career maturity (Levinson, 2002). Much of this vocational assessment data can be gathered as part of a Child Study Team evaluation, and whatever information is not collected at that time should be by other means during Levinson's Exploration stage. Since various jobs require different skill sets in order to be a good employee and to also enjoy that profession, this assessment serves to help appropriately match a student with their prospective career.

### **Standards and Recommendations on Vocational Assessment and Secondary Transition**

Vocational Assessment provides information needed in order to assist in the appropriate educational and vocational planning of students that will allow them to acquire the skills they need to make a successful transition to work and community life (Levinson, 2002).

Vocational Assessment is a necessary component of transition programs at the secondary level. The Interdisciplinary Council on Vocational Evaluation and Assessment has identified four standards for Vocational Assessment: (1) Vocational assessment should be an ongoing developmental process linked to career development, (2) Vocational assessment should incorporate multiple assessment methods, (3) Vocational assessment should involve a variety of professionals, and (4) Vocational assessment should be an integral part of a larger service delivery system (Smith, Lombard, Neubirt, Leconte, Rothernbacher, & Sitlington, 1995). The vocational assessment process can be strengthened by incorporating multiple perspectives (i.e., teachers and parents) on students' strengths and needs (Carter, Brock, & Trainor, 2014).

Consistent with these standards, Levinson (2002) has outlined the best practices for establishing school-based Vocational Assessment Programs. The planning and implementing of vocational assessment programs should include three phases: (1) Planning and

Development, (2) Implementation, and (3) Evaluation. Assessment of students' progress in meeting their developmental objectives and referral concerns in regards to vocations is another recommended aspect of such a program. For students in high school who are soon to be transitioning from school to work, assessments should help to determine what skills a student may need in order to make a successful transition from school to work, community living, and/or post-secondary education. This assessment can be accomplished through a review of work samples and situational assessment in relation to specific training needed to obtain post school education or employment. Assessment questions could include: What services will the student need to make a successful transition to post school life? Has the student acquired job-seeking skills? What additional training does the student need in order to be employable? Lastly, Levinson indicates that Vocational Assessment Programs need to involve cooperation, collaboration, and consultation between school personnel, community agency personnel, state agency personnel, and students' parents (Levinson, 2002).

The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition has outlined eight challenges that are currently facing secondary education and transition services for youth with disabilities. These challenges are framed as recommendations that need to be addressed and they are based on findings from the research and they have congruence with national organizations, government reports, policy groups, and the courts on this topic. Secondary education and transition services for youth with disabilities needs to work to: (1) Promote students' self-determination and self-advocacy, (2) Ensure students have access to the general education curriculum, (3) Increase the school completion rates of students with disabilities, (4) Make high school graduation decisions based on meaningful indicators of students' learning and skills and clarify the implications of different diploma options for students with

disabilities, (5) Ensure students access to and full participation in postsecondary education and employment, (6) Increase informed parent participation and involvement in education planning, life planning, and decision making, (7) Improve collaboration and systems linkages at all levels, and, (8) Ensure the availability of a qualified workforce to address the transition needs of youth with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2004a).

### **Characteristics of Good Programming - Best Practices and Predictors**

Researchers have identified predictors of improved post-school outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Awareness of these predictors is important because they can be used to develop and expand programs, evaluate existing program, and improve the quality of students' IEPs. Through a literature review of 22 studies, with a total of 26,480 participants, Test and colleagues (2009) identified 16 evidence-based predictors of post-school outcomes in the areas of education, employment, and independent living. Of the sample, 23% of the study populations included all disability categories and 77% included some disability categories, with the majority of individuals having mild disabilities (i.e., Learning Disabilities). The identified predictors do not focus on outcomes disaggregated by disability label. Inclusion in general education, paid employment/ work experience, self-care/ independent living, and student support were the 4 predictors that led to improved outcomes on all 3 outcome areas. The following predictors led to improved outcomes on 1 or 2 of the outcome areas: career awareness, community experiences, exit exam requirements/ high school diploma status, interagency collaboration, occupational courses, parental involvement, program of study, self-advocacy/ self-determination, social skills, transition program, vocational education, and work study.

The original National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) identified transition planning as a key contributor to post-school success (SRI International, 1993). The most recent National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS-2) identified that a comprehensive transition program is 1 of the 16 predictors of improved post-school outcomes for students with disabilities (SRI International, 2011). Kohler (1993) found three critical model components when analyzing 46 transition studies. These components included vocational training, parental involvement, and interagency collaboration and service delivery. Then in 1994, Kohler and colleagues analyzed 15 studies that had identified effective or exemplary transition programs for students with disabilities. The analysis revealed 107 key elements associated with effectiveness or exemplary program status, including variables in career/vocational training, systematic interdisciplinary transition planning, curricula, integration, interagency collaboration, support services, and other program variables. Wagner and colleagues (1993) found that students who took vocational education courses in high school were significantly more likely to go onto postsecondary vocational training and/or obtain competitive employment.

Better outcomes are also associated with beginning the transition process earlier. In a matched group study (both groups n=453), the authors found that students in states that required transition services to be addressed by age 14 were more likely to be employed than students in states with a later age for transition services (age 16). The authors also found that students who received transition services earlier also earned higher wages (Cimera, Burgess, & Wiley, 2013).

Enhancing the self-determination of students with disabilities is another characteristic of good transition programming. Self-determination is a skill correlated with improved post-

school success for students with disabilities (Test et al., 2009). One way to improve a student's self-determination is to include them in the transition process. Konrad and Test (2004) identified four ways to involve students in the transition process: involve in planning the IEP, drafting the IEP, meeting to write the IEP, and implementing the IEP. When students take an active role in planning and leading their conferences or IEP meetings, it promotes self-determination skills like goal setting (Test& Grossi, 2011). Student Centered transition planning is another approach that can be used to help students be involved in process (OAR, 2006).

Although it is recommended that students be actively involved in the transition process, data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study shows otherwise, especially for individuals with severe disabilities: 80% to 95% of students in most disability categories, except students with Autism and Multiple Disabilities, are involved in planning in some way for transition. Students who are simply present, but provide little input and are less likely to take a leadership role, is highest for Autism, Multiple Disabilities, and Mental Retardation (SRI International, 2011). Another barrier to enhancing students' self-determination skills is that teachers have limited time to implement a self-determination curriculum, so researchers suggest that self-determination skills can be infused into language arts by teaching students to write paragraphs about their IEP goals (Test& Grossi, 2011).

The involvement of families in transition services is another characteristic of good transition programming. Family involvement was identified as a predictor of improved post-school outcomes in various studies (Hasazi, Gordan, & Roe, 1985). The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (2004) has identified that informed parent participation and involvement in education planning, life planning, and decision making is a best practice



in transition programming because it leads to better outcomes for students with disabilities. Although this is highly recommended, it is also considered a challenge and parent involvement is sometimes limited (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004; Winton, 1990).

Not only is family involvement fundamental during a student's time of transition, but also involvement and collaboration between various systems is vital. Involvement of multiple professionals and systems was identified as a predictor of improved post-school outcomes in various studies (cite them). The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (2004) has found that, "effective transition planning and service depend upon functional linkages among schools, rehabilitations services, and other human service and community agencies." The National Council on Disability (2000) defines effective transition planning programs as being characterized by the consistent involvement and participation of appropriate individuals. The National Longitudinal Transition Study found that professionals who participate in transition planning depends on students' goals and when a students' goals relate to expertise of a certain staff member, it is more likely that person will be involved in transition planning (SRI International, 2011). This same study found that students with Mental Retardation, Autism, Multiple Disabilities, or Deaf-Blindness are most likely are more likely to have schools contact a variety of employment programs and other service agencies on their behalf (SRI International, 2011). It is important for schools to collaborate with outside agencies, as well as to collaborate with employers and establish relationships with companies (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

On a national level, some state vocational rehabilitation programs have developed comprehensive services and strong collaborative relationships with special education

programs, but huge variation exists in the transition practices and resources committed to these practices (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Results of national survey by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services of 72 Vocational Rehabilitation agencies led to the identification of the most frequently used practices, the most effective practices, and the most significant barriers to these practices. In terms of transition services, the most effective policies and practices are as follows: (1) An IEP/ transition plan and individualized plan for employment (IPE) are coordinated for an eligible transition ages youth before the student completes high school, (2) Vocational rehabilitation agency personnel provide career counseling and guidance services to eligible transition-aged youths who are still attending high school, and, (3) Vocational rehabilitation agency personnel actively build rapport and personally encourage eligible transition-aged youths in their efforts at school and in the work experience activities. The most significant barriers to these practices include: (1) Local educational agencies do not effectively engage vocational rehabilitation agency personnel in the planning and provision of transition services for transition-aged youths, (2) It is difficult for vocational rehabilitation to pay for specific vocational services while eligible transition-aged youths are attending high school (e.g., job coaches, assessment, establishing community-based work experiences, or providing transportation, and, (3) Parent and family involvement is difficult to achieve (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Local agencies, like vocational rehabilitation agencies, are able to provide many beneficial services to young adults with disabilities in order to improve their transition from school to work. Unfortunately, young adults may not acquire the benefits of these agencies if they are not working in collaboration with the schools and their families. School-based transition

programs at the secondary level are in the unique position to help to bridge these gaps if they make collaboration with outside agencies a component of their program.

There are various outside agencies that provide services to young adults with disabilities, they are involved in transition planning, and they also make recommendations and provide support services to enhance an individual's post-school experience. Examples of these agencies include: Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD), National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY), Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS), New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), and Autism New Jersey.

Another characteristic of transition programming at the secondary level that is related to improved post-school outcomes is providing students with work experience. When young adults receive vocational training and work experiences (Kohler, 1993; Kohler et al., 1994; National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, 2010), including paid employment (Test et al., 2008) it increases students' success for employment after they graduate from school. Individuals with severe disabilities often require increased supports in places of employment (e.g., job coaches, modifications, enhanced training) and supported work on the job site has been shown to have benefits compared to other work environments (e.g., sheltered workshops; Olney & Kennedy, 2001; Rusch & Hughes, 1989). Additionally, job-site training along and simulation training has been shown to lead to improved work related skills when compared to just job-site training for individuals with autism (Lattimore, Parsons, & Reid, 2006). For young adults with autism and other severe disabilities learning new work skills may be advanced if training is provided both on and off the job-site.

Witte (2002) has identified best practices to be used in the transition to post-secondary work programs: (1) There should be the expectancy in reaching for higher levels of proficiency in all life functional skill areas; high standards and proficiency advocated in all areas. (2) Service support must be extended beyond the secondary level. Witte writes that, “Seeking out and receiving professional assistance especially during period of work or life adjustment will be necessary for adults with special needs (pp.1591),” there these “help seeking” skills should be taught in the curriculum. Vocational training programs should have re-entry options for adults who seek additional job skills, taking on a life long learning perspective. Also, individuals need service and support for job related skill enhancement or help with new life adjustment issues. (3) Interagency collaboration and collaboration between school and the community is necessary. At age 16, representation on student’s team should broaden to include outside agency members (4) Individuation in transition programs must be provided since one size does not fit all. (5) There should be a multi-step process for developing and implementing individualized transition plans (ITPs). ITPs should include vocational skill profiles (strength oriented), actual transition goals for school and community, transition supports, and post-school follow-up procedures (see Inge, Wehman, Clees, & Dymond, 1996). Witte says that, “Each student requires an individualized, integrated service delivery model with genuine participation from family, school, and community (pp.1590).” (6) IEPs should have present functioning levels to make best educational decisions. (7) Goals of desired post-secondary outcomes should be developed in several areas. For example in, employment, continuing education, and adult living. Also, goals for functional life skills, social, and work skills, career exploration and training, post-secondary education etc., should be in ITP. (8) The ITP should be reviewed annually as part of IEP. (9) Witte writes that

transition programs should “help students understand their unique learning issues and responsive adaptive strategies allows them to gain valuable insight into their own learning process (pp.1590).” (10) Periodic failure is okay because it helps students create more realistic perception of themselves and keep standards high and avoid modifications and accommodations when possible; teaching how to handle failure and effective ways to avoid failure are important lessons to learn in school (pp.1590). (11) Important to identify students’ strengths and their challenges in order to focus on and target what skills need to continued to be developed. (12) Half year to full year paid work programs during senior year have been proven to be effective in increasing the likelihood of sustained employment after graduation. (13) Lastly, Work transition plans should include information packets for employers and business since employers may not be well educated on needs and legal safeguards of individuals with disabilities.

Stroebel and colleagues (2008) emphasize the importance of the following best practices: (1) There should be external and internal team collaboration in the transition process. The internal team includes professionals in the school, such as teachers, psychologists, and administrators. The external team includes representatives in the community and from local businesses, (2) A transition coordinator is recommended to coordinate efforts between both of the teams, (3) The importance of work experiences in the field should be emphasized since it will help students acquire skills more quickly than classroom learning, (4) External agencies should be invited to the school because if students are exposed to services while in school, they are more likely to use them in the future. For example, social security, rehabilitative services, public or mental health centers, and/or independent living centers, (5) Student interest surveys should be administered to gain

information on vocational interests and career goals, and, (6) Students should create individual portfolios with summaries of their vocational training experiences. These portfolios will help students to advocate for themselves on job interviews.

Most recently, in a critical review of the literature, Wehman and colleagues (2014) have identified the following recommendations for transition programming: (1) Increased access to internships and employment in school, (2) Opportunities to challenge students educationally and also involve them in transition planning, (3) Inclusion with nondisabled peers, (4) Provide social skill instruction, and, (5) Provide systematic instruction in functional literacy, independence, and self-determination. Although the focus of the review was on individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder, the recommendations have implications for other populations.

### **Evaluation of Secondary Transition Programs**

The National Collaborative on Workplace Disability – Youth (NCWD; National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, 2010) compiled a list of transition programs that serve individuals with disabilities and which are considered “exemplary or promising programs.” In order to be considered an exemplary or promising program, it must provide workforce preparatory experiences, provide youth development and leadership opportunities, tailor services to individuals, demonstrate awareness and attention to serving youth with disabilities, and have quantitative or qualitative outcome data in which effectiveness of the program must be validated by an outside source within past 5 years.

White and Weiner (2004) conducted a program evaluation of a transition program in Orange County, CA with a sample of 104 students with severe disabilities who exited school at 21 or 22 years of age. They identified that variables that predicted successful integrated

employment at time of transition (a paid job with non-disabled co-workers at graduation) were duration of Community-Based Training (CBT) that included on-the-job training and age appropriate physical integration with non-disabled peers. Transitioning students who were in an integrated age appropriate school setting, who received CBT and on-the-job training, demonstrated a 69.2% integrated employment rate post-graduation.

Multi-component transition programs incorporate several components that are shown by research to be predictors of improved post-school outcomes. Beyond High School and Teaching All Students Skills for Employment and Life (TASSEL) are considered to be multi-component transition programs that are supported by the research. The purpose of the Beyond High School program is to promote self-determination and student involvement in transition planning for students with severe disabilities. In a study that evaluated the program (include more info on study), results indicated that students were able to achieve more goals, based on the Goal Attainment Scale, and there were significant differences between the pre- and post-intervention scores on the Autonomous Functioning Checklist (Wehmeyer et al., 2006).

Teaching All Students Skills for Employment and Life (TASSEL) is a transition program that provides students with disabilities the opportunity to pursue a functional course of study paired with a variety of on-campus and off-campus vocational training experiences. Students who want to pursue post-secondary education can pursue an academic course of study, while students wanting to enter employment after graduation may choose an occupational course of study. The model also assists students in meeting post-secondary goals for living arrangements and recreation/leisure activities. The TASSEL model focuses on student-centered transition planning and its success relies on interagency coordination and business partnerships. Emphasis is placed on student involvement in the transition planning

process, and training in self-determination is provided. Program evaluation results of TASSEL indicate high level of satisfaction for students, parents, employers, and adult service providers. There is also a 70% employment rate, about 1/3 of students attend post-secondary educational institutions, and the majority of students live at home (Aspel et al., 1998).

The Working at Gaining Employment Skills (WAGES) is an example of a school-based intervention program that can be used to foster vocational and social skills in individuals with disabilities. In a recent study, when compared to a control group (n=100), the intervention group (n=122) had greater occupational skills and greater social skills (empathy, cooperation, assertiveness; Murray & Doren, 2012). Although students in the sample were in grades 9 through 12 and had mild to moderate disabilities, the impact of a curriculum like WAGES has implications for students ages 18 to 21 with severe disabilities.

Project SEARCH is another example of a model transition program that can be implemented to help individuals with disabilities to gain competitive employment. The SEARCH program combines full day work experiences for a school year, employability training, independent life skill training, and placement assistance through ongoing collaboration between the school, employers, and local vocational rehabilitation agency (Wehman, Schall, McDonough, Molinelli, Riehle, Ham, & Thiss, 2012). Some of the key components of the SEARCH program that research has shown to lead to improved outcomes include: setting employment goals, having an internship in a business in the community, and having collaboration between school and adult service professionals (Wehman et al., 2012).



## Chapter III

### **Description of Program Evaluation Approach**

Program evaluation is the use of social research procedures to systematically investigate the effectiveness of programs (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). Evaluators use research methods to study, review, and help improve important aspects of programs. For example, an evaluation can look at the problems addressed by a program, the conceptualization and design, a program's implementation and administration, the outcomes, and/or a program's efficiency (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). Program evaluation is not just about discovering new knowledge, but its focus is on helping to make decisions. Program evaluations are not uniform; rather the methods and purpose of an evaluation are customized to the program's needs at the time of the evaluation. Overall, the purpose of an evaluation is to provide program stakeholders with information can be used to make decisions about the program.

In the field of psychology there are many different types of evaluation outlooks and approaches. Program evaluators must choose an approach that is not only adequate in scientific rigor, but that is also appropriate and feasible to the program being examined. Scientific, quantitative approaches have been applauded for their strong technical defensibility provided by their psychometrics, but pragmatic, qualitative approaches also offer utility for program decision makers and they tend to be more practical (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). In sum, quantitative methods include using instruments, such as questionnaires, surveys, tests, or rating scales that have good validity and reliability. Members of a population are sampled and conclusions are drawn using data and statistical analysis. Qualitative methods include focusing on subjective experiences or meanings people use. Methods include

studying text, such as field notes, interviews recorded and transcribed, focus groups, web pages, stories, tapes, copies of documents, narratives, and/or dairies (Mertens, 2010; Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004).

Wholey (1994) recommends that evaluators consider conducting an Evaluability Assessment prior to conducting a Program Evaluation. This assessment would determine the extent in which a program is ready for a useful evaluation to take place, it could help to identify program theory and goals, help stakeholders agree on evaluation criteria, and help with determining the intended uses of the evaluation information. Evaluability Assessment methods can include observations, review of program documents, and interviews with program stakeholders. This pre-evaluation assessment can lead to more useful information gained in future evaluations.

The process of conducting a program evaluation is critical for an array of reasons. Maher (2012) gives the following explanations for why the Evaluation phase is important: (1) Make sure that investment of resources is adding value to target population in some way, (2) Improvement can be facilitated by program evaluation, (3) Determine if program needs to be adjusted to add value or expanded in some way, (4) Can help assure continuation of program funds and operation, and, (5) Program evaluation is reflected as an important element of design of program and is means for involving implementers in continuous improvement. The CDC's four possible goals of an evaluation also highlights the importance of program evaluations: (1) To gain insight about a program and its operations in order to see where it is going, where it came from, to find out what works, and what does not work, (2) To improve practice by either modifying or adapting practices to enhance the success of activities, (3) To assess program effects in order to see how well the program is meeting objectives and goals,

how the program benefits the community, and/or to provide evidence of effectiveness, and lastly, (4) To build capacity through increasing funding, enhancing skills, and/or strengthening accountability.

Feasibility and practicality are especially relevant to the evaluation of programs in schools, since resources, such as time, personnel, and funding tend to be sparse. In fact, combining qualitative and quantitative methods in the evaluation process has many benefits: (1) Validity from corroborating quantitative and qualitative data, (2) Able to offset weaknesses of a single approach (quantitative or qualitative) and draw on strengths of each approach, (3) There is a more comprehensive account than qualitative or quantitative data alone, (4) Quantitative examines outcomes and qualitative examines the processes, (5) Qualitative may explain quantitative results or vice-versa, (6) When there are unexpected results from one approach, the other may explain it, (7) Qualitative may be employed to design an instrument, (8) Both approaches enhance integrity of findings, and, (9) Utility of information gathered from both approaches combined is generally more useful to practitioners (Greene, Caracelli, & Graphm, 1989).

Maher's model of Planning & Evaluating Human Services Programs (2012) offers flexibility in the evaluation process, taking into account that there is no one size fits all approach to the evaluation process. Rather, Maher's Evaluation Phase allows the evaluator to decide such things as the program evaluation questions, data collection variables, and data collection methods, instruments, and procedures. The flexibility in Maher's model also allows for the process of program evaluation to be something that can be done feasibility by those in the field.

A sound program evaluation should possess the following qualities: Practical, Useful, Proper, and Technically Defensible (Maher, 2012). The evaluation plan should be able to be *practically* implemented by people in the organization in a manner that is not disruptive to organizational routines. Information generated from evaluation should be *useful* in that it allows the client and other stakeholders to make informed decisions about the program and how to improve it. Program evaluation should occur in ways that *properly* adhere to all relevant ethical standards and legal requirements that are pertinent to the program. Lastly, program evaluation should include *technically defensible* methods, procedures, and instruments that may be justified as to their reliability, validity, and accurateness, given the program evaluation questions (Maher, 2012).

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers a framework to guide program evaluations (2012). First, the goal of an evaluation should be identified, which can be to gain insight, improve practice, assess effects, or build capacity. Next, stakeholders should be identified. Stakeholders can include those involved in program operations, those served or affected by program, and/or users of evaluation findings. Relatedly, these identified stakeholders should be engaged at each step of the evaluation process. Engagement can be promoted through involving stakeholders in describing program activities, context, priorities, defining problems, selecting evaluation questions and methods, as data sources, interpreting findings, disseminating information, implementing results, or identifying program goals and objectives. The following stages in the CDC's framework are as follows: (1) Describe the program, (2) Focus the evaluation design, (3) Gather credible evidence, (4) Justify the conclusion, and (5) Ensure use and share lessons learned.

Maher's model of Planning & Evaluating Human Services Programs (2012) is based on a Systems Framework for Program Planning and Evaluation which discusses four phases that compose the planning and evaluation process: Clarification, Design, Implementation, and Evaluation. Maher (2012) writes that, "For all programs at all levels to be provided to a target population, the program can benefit from a sound program design, that is based on a well understood and clarified situation, that is implemented according to design, and that is evaluated routinely and in a technically defensible manner (pp. 5)." These four phases can be conceptualized as separate tasks since during each phase a specific set of activities is required, but it is also key to recognize that the phases and tasks during the phases are interrelated and dependent on each other (Maher, 2012).

Maher defines three distinctive activities of this process (planning, evaluating, and revising): "Planning means the using of evaluation information for program improvement. Relatedly, evaluating denotes gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evaluation information, as a basis for program planning. Furthermore, revising refers to purposeful and routine activity that occurs throughout the planning and evaluating process (Maher, 2012, pp. 5)." According to Maher's framework, which aligns with the Systems approach, a program can be conceptualized as a configuration of resources which work together to be useful or significant to any of the three program levels: organization, group, individual. Resources are a broad term to define particular methods, instruments, and procedures used, such as, human resources, technological resources, informational resources, financial resources, temporal resources, or physical resources (Maher, 2012). At each phase and within each of the program levels, Planning and Evaluation Technology is employed, which includes procedures, methods, and instruments used to carry out the various activities in the process of planning and evaluating

programs. The four stages of the process are the same at all program levels (organization, group, individual), but technology will be different at each level of process (Maher, 2012).

The purpose of each of the four phases described by Maher (2012), as well as activities included under each of those phases, are presented in Table 1. Information included in the table is from Maher’s text, *Planning & Evaluating Human Services Programs* (2012).

Table 1.  
Purpose and Activities for Phases of Maher’s Model of Program Evaluation

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Activities</b>
Clarification	Clarify and understand current situation of concern (needs of target population, context of needs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Specify the target population</li> <li>▪ Determine needs of target population</li> <li>▪ Delineate the relevant context</li> </ul>
Design	Helps those involved have clarity in what needs to be done. Documents the program in terms of essential program design elements, based on Clarification and Design phase data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Describe program purpose and goals</li> <li>▪ Consider program design alternatives</li> <li>▪ Develop the program</li> <li>▪ Document the program design</li> </ul>
Implementation	To assure that the program that has been designed operates, over time, as expected, and that necessary modifications in how the program occurs are made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review the program design</li> <li>▪ Facilitate program implementation</li> <li>▪ Monitor program process</li> </ul>

Continued – Table 1.

<p>Evaluation</p>	<p>Assure that data are gathered and analyzed with respect to important program evaluation questions, with the resulting evaluation info enabling sound judgments to be made about the worth/value of the program, contributing to continuous program development and improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify the client</li> <li>▪ Determine the client’s needs for program evaluation</li> <li>▪ Place the program to be evaluated into “evaluable” form</li> <li>▪ Delineate program evaluation questions</li> <li>▪ For each program evaluation question, specify the data collection variables</li> <li>▪ Describe the data collection methods, instruments, and procedures</li> <li>▪ Describe the methods and procedures for data analysis</li> <li>▪ Specify program evaluation personnel and responsibilities</li> <li>▪ Delineate guidelines for communication and use of program evaluation information</li> <li>▪ Construct program evaluation protocols</li> <li>▪ Implement the program evaluation</li> <li>▪ Evaluate the program evaluation in terms of Practicality, Utility, Propriety, and Technical Defensibility</li> </ul>
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The current state of affairs in secondary transition programming for students with severe disabilities demands that programs be evaluated and improved in order to enhance student outcomes post-graduation (Levinson, 2002). The current dissertation task will utilize Maher’s Program Planning and Evaluation Framework (2012) to put a Life Skills Program into an evaluable format, which is a task that must be accomplished prior to evaluating a program. This format can be achieved through carrying out activities in Maher’s Design phase. This task reflects the principle that program planning and evaluation is a process that is composed of multiple interrelated phases and activities. A program cannot be properly evaluated until other activities are carried out. The creation of a Program Design document, will serve as a means to develop and improve the Life Skills program that is under study.

## Chapter IV

### **Evaluable Program Design**

#### **Procedures for Placing the Life Skills Program into Evaluable Form**

In order to conduct a program evaluation, the Life Skills program needed to be placed into an evaluable format (Maher, 2012). The evaluable format will allow for further program development and improvement. The decision was made to put the Life Skills program into evaluable format because no program design documents exist. Program activities are not conducted in a coordinated manner due to the lack of this document, therefore the Director of the program thought it would be beneficial to create such a document. The first research task was to place the program into an evaluable format through the creation of a Program Design document for the Life Skills program.

#### **Data collection variables.**

The data collection variables that were used to document the design of the Life Skills program, included: information on the target population, needs of the target population, program purpose and goals, eligibility standards and criteria, policies and procedures, methods and techniques, materials, equipment, facilities, components/ phases/ activities, budget, personnel, incentives, and a program evaluation plan (Maher, 2012).

#### **Data collection methods, instruments, procedures.**

See Appendix C for the Program Design Instrument that will be used to gather information on the data collection variables. This instrument was developed by the evaluator based on information and suggested questions provided in Maher's (2012) Resource Guide, Planning and Evaluating Human Services Programs. Information on the variables on this instrument was taken from program documents, interviews with staff members, and



observations of the program. The school district's Director gave permission for the evaluator to have access to these data sources. All information gathered was kept confidential. No information was collected that identified students.

**Methods and procedures for data analysis.**

In order to create a Program Design document for the Life Skills program, a combination of staff responses to interview questions, observations, and review of program documents were utilized to gather information to fill in items on the Program Design Instrument. Staff responses, observation notes, and information in program documents were synthesized and written in sentence form, resulting in the Program Design document for the Life Skills program.

**Program design personnel and responsibilities.**

The evaluator was responsible for conducting interviews with staff members. The evaluator collected program related documents from staff members. Also, the evaluator conducted observations of the program.

**Guidelines for communication and use of program design information.**

Results will be communicated to the Director upon completion of the evaluation. Dissemination of the evaluation information to administrators, staff members, and parents will be at the discretion of the Director.

## Chapter V

### **Program Evaluation Plan**

#### **Program Evaluation Question**

To what extent is the Life Skills program implementing best practices?

#### **Data Collection Variables**

The data collection variables that were used to evaluate the implementation of best practices in the Life Skills program included: current educational strategies, practices, activities, and components being implemented in the Life Skills program.

#### **Data Collection Methods, Instruments, Procedures**

The Assessment of Best- Practices Framework (see Appendix D) contains questions regarding the use of best practices in the field of secondary transition for students with severe disabilities. This framework was created by the evaluator, who synthesized the literature on recommended best practices in this field. Items on the Best Practice Framework are cited to reflect the source of the evidence. Information on the variables and their relation to best practices on the Framework document was gathered from program documents, interviews with staff members, and observations of the program. The school district's Director gave permission for the evaluator to have access to these data sources. All information gathered was kept confidential. No information was collected that identified students.

#### **Methods and Procedures for Data Analysis**

In order to assess this program evaluation question, a combination of staff responses to interview questions, observations, and review of program documents were utilized to complete the Assessment of Best Practices Framework. Staff responses, observation notes,

and information in program documents were synthesized for each item on the Framework, regarding implementation of best practices.

**Program Evaluation Personnel and Responsibilities**

The evaluator was responsible for conducting interviews with staff members. The evaluator collected program related documents from staff members. Also, the evaluator conducted observations of the program.

**Guidelines for Communication and Use of Program Evaluation Information**

Results will be communicated to the Director upon completion of the evaluation. Dissemination of the evaluation information to administrators, staff members, and parents will be at the discretion of the director.

## Chapter VI

### **Evaluable Program Design Document**

The Life Skills Program was first implemented in 2009, making the 2012-2013 school year (time current evaluation was conducted) the fourth year of implementation. Over these four years the program has not only grown in size, but also it has changed and adapted to the changing needs of the population served. The Program Design Document reflects these changes and describes the program as it currently exists. The following Program Design Document components are based on Maher's (2012) framework for *Planning and Evaluating Human Service Programs*. These components put the Life Skills Program into evaluable format, which will allow for the program to be evaluated continuously over time, therefore allowing for improvements to be made. Additionally, the following information creates a comprehensive document that will help all stakeholders of the program to be aware of all program components and efforts, which could have the potential to lead to more efficient and coordinated service delivery (Maher, 2012).

Information to compose this document was gathered by the evaluator through interviews with staff members involved in the Life Skills Program and through observations of the program.

#### **Target Population**

The target population served by the Life Skills Program includes students aged 18 to 21 who are typically classified in one of the following disability classifications: Cognitive Impairment (Mild to Moderate), Autism, or Multiply Disabled. These are students that schools have identified as needing additional years of schooling past the graduation requirement age of 18, in order to better prepare them for life after school. Students in the

target population are drawn from the district where the program is housed. In addition to being a public in-district school placement for students, the Life Skills Program also serves as an out-of-district placement for students from districts who do not have appropriate programming.

During the 2012-2013 school year, there were 18 students enrolled in the Life Skills Program (8 students in Life Skills I and 10 students in Life Skills II). This number has increased since the program was first implemented. In fact, during the first year of implementation 8 students were enrolled. Due to the growth of the population served by the program and the diversity in needs between students in the target population, the program created two divisions, known as Life Skills I and Life Skills II. Students in I and II are together for some shared activities (e.g., lunch) and for others they are taught separately (e.g., functional academics, vocations, life skills). See Eligibility Standards and Criteria and Components, Phases, and Activities sections for more information about the difference between these two divisions.

### **Program Purpose and Goals**

The needs of the target population encompass the educational domain in relation to academic achievement, functional living skills, and vocational development. The purpose of the Life Skills Program is to further develop and improve these areas. The Life Skills Program also recognizes students' need to further develop their social skills, so this is a focus of the program as well. The overarching mission of the program is to support students through transition programming in various areas so that they can be functional adults in the community. Being a functional adult encompasses having a job, social life, and performing daily living skills. The support provided by the program varies on a student-by-student basis.

Many in-district students in the Life Skills Program previously were in the district's Community Based Instruction (CBI) program during their high school years. Typically, once students in the CBI program turn 18 they go to the Life Skills program the following school year. Therefore many students attain the program through referral from the CBI program if the decision is made for the student to continue their education past the age of 18. In few instances (happened once thus far) exceptions can be made depending on circumstances and student needs, such as allowing a student to stay in the CBI program for an extra year rather than attending the Life Skills Program.

Out-of-district students attain the Life Skills Program through referrals made by their district. Their case manager submits an application to the Life Skill Program's school psychologist containing information about the student (e.g., assessments, school records). A tour of the program is conducted and an intake interview with the student occurs. This allows for the school psychologist to not only determine if the program is appropriate for the student, but it also provides the opportunity for the student, their case manager, and their parent/guardian to determine if the student is appropriate for the program. Then all the gathered information is shared with the Director of the program and a decision is made as to whether the student will be accepted to the program.

The goals of the Life Skills Program are directly related to the needs of the target population. It is important that goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and that there is a timeframe for goal attainment (Maher, 2012). The following table illustrates these characteristics for each of the Life Skill Program's current goals.

Table 2.  
Characteristics of Life Skill Program's Goals

<b>Identified Goal of Program</b>	<b>How Goal Measured</b>	<b>Is the goal attainable by students in program?</b>	<b>Is the goal relevant to students in program?</b>	<b>Timeframe that goal is likely to be attained</b>
1. Enhance students' job development and employability skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of checklist to assess students' on and off-site job skills: Assessment of Job Skills Evaluation (see Program Materials section for more information)</li> <li>• Skills taught in classroom are evaluated through homework and classroom participation</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes	By graduation from Life Skills Program
2. Enhance students' independent life skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of checklist to assess students' completion of life skills: Assessment of Students Independent Life Skills Checklist (see Program Materials section for more information)</li> <li>• Skills taught in the classroom are evaluated through homework, classroom participation, tests, and quizzes.</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes	By graduation from Life Skills Program
3. Enhance students' functional academic skills (math and language arts).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills taught in the classroom are evaluated through homework, classroom participation, tests, and quizzes.</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes	By graduation from Life Skills Program
4. Enhance students' participation in social activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not measured</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes	By graduation from Life Skills Program

Students are assessed quarterly on goals and objectives for academics, work, and related services. An annual review of student progress occurs where student IEPs are updated with skills gained and goals are updated based on what students have mastered. All students in-district receive a re-evaluation (updated assessment) from the school during the year they exit the program. The assessment results are shared with agencies who will be involved in the student's life after they graduate from the program. For example, information from the assessment on current levels are provided to agencies, such as, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).

### **Eligibility Standards and Criteria**

Students are eligible to participate in the Life Skills Program if they receive Special Education and Related Services and if the school determines they need additional years of schooling past the graduation requirement age of 18. Students in the program are typically classified as Cognitive Impaired, Autistic, or Multiply Disabled. Multiple factors are considered to determine if a student is appropriate for the Life Skills Program – IQ, adaptive functioning, and functional deficits. Students with average IQ or extreme problem behavior (i.e., non-compliance, defiance) are not appropriate for the Life Skills Program, so these factors serve as exclusion criteria.

In addition to determining if a student is eligible for the Life Skills Program, the decision is made if the student will be in one of the two divisions of the program- Life Skills I or Life Skills II. These two divisions were created based on diverse needs between students in the program, therefore students in the program are grouped based on ability levels related to academic and adaptive skills. This allows for students to attend different classes where material taught can be more appropriate to their ability level. Once a student is determined to



be eligible to attend the Life Skills Program, the decision to place a student in Life Skills I or II is made by a team of personnel in the district: CBI staff members, Life Skills Program teachers, Life Skills Program school psychologist, and the Director of the program.

Information about appropriate placement is based on a discussion of the students' behavior in regards to being able to be in a workplace (e.g., level of focus, energy), their academic performance, and their communication abilities.

Although there are no set criteria, students in Life Skills I tend (are usually, in most cases) to be categorized by having higher cognitive functioning and higher functional abilities (compared to students in section II), their post-graduation goal is usually employment, and they usually go off of the school site for job training while in the program (because higher functioning usually able to work independently). Again, although there are no set criterion, students in Life Skills II tend (are usually, in most cases) to be categorized by being lower academically and functionally (compared to students in section I), class material focuses more on functional skills rather than reading and writing, students usually participate in jobs in the school building and a few students go off the school site, students who do not go off-site for jobs will participate in more life skills and independent living activities, and the post-graduation goal for students is usually employment in a sheltered workshop and/or attending an adult day program. There are no set criteria that separates section I and II, but the above characteristics tend (are usually, in most cases) to describe students in each of these sections.

### **Program Policies and Procedures**

District wide documents are provided to personnel to provide information on how they should function in their role within the school district. For example, separate documents are provided to different staff members: teachers, case managers, behaviorists, classroom aides/

paraprofessionals. Documents are not provided on policies and procedures that are specific to their role in the Life Skills Program.

**Program Methods and Techniques**

The following methods and techniques are used by personnel to facilitate goal attainment: Use of texts and other written materials, computer assisted instruction with computers and videos, hands-on demonstrations, practicing, skits/ acting, application of skills to real life events (e.g., on the job site), community based instruction (e.g., travel training, purchasing, shopping). Paraprofessionals provide additional assistance to students with behaviors and/or lower intellectual functioning. Modifications and accommodations are also employed based on student deficits and abilities.

**Program Materials**

The following materials are used in order to contribute to student learning: textbooks, novels, worksheets, videos.

The following table depicts the forms and checklists that are used by the program. These checklists are used to assess individual student progress in meeting the program’s goals and they were developed by the program’s staff members.

Table 3.  
Description of Forms/ Checklists Used by Life Skills Program

<b>Name of Form/ Checklist</b>	<b>Who Uses It</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>How Used</b>	<b>Expected result(s) of using these forms and checklists in terms of program action</b>
<i>Assessment of Independent Life Skills Checklist</i>	Life Skills Teacher	Assess students’ mastery of life skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct observations of students and complete checklist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps teacher to identify what they need to work on with the</li> </ul>

Continued – Table 3.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For lower functioning students who do not fit on regular grading system (not able to attain skill mastery) base grade on working hard/ effort</li> <li>• For lower functioning students made checklist more meaningful to them by simplifying it and using pictures</li> </ul>	<p>student</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps student to identify what they need to work on</li> </ul>
<i>Assessment of Job Skills Evaluation</i>	Job Coach	Assess students' mastery of job skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct observations of students at job site (either off-site or at school depending on student)</li> <li>• Checklist is completed once per week</li> <li>• Number grade is given based on scale to 100</li> <li>• After administer checklist, job coach discusses it with student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps job coaches to identify what they need to work on with the student</li> <li>• Helps student to identify what they need to work on</li> <li>• Helps students to identify their strengths and weaknesses and identify a career that is appropriate for them</li> <li>• Checklists can be inserted into their Portfolios to highlight strengths</li> </ul>

## **Equipment**

The following equipment is used to help support program operations and methods: computers, printers, and smart board. Technological accommodations are sometimes used depending on student need, such as an overlay for the keyboard to make letters bigger and brighter. In the future, staff see potential benefit in using Ipads© since it is easier for students to use them compared to the computer and they can be used to assess students who do not have other skills.

## **Facilities**

The Life Skills Program primarily operates in the district's Administration building. Here the program's two classrooms, lounge/ lunch room, independent living area (room set up to resemble a bedroom, living room, and dining room), gym, and kitchen are located. Sometimes life skill development is fostered at places in the community, such as trips to practice using public transportation and shopping. Other places in the community where the program operates include the job sites, which comprise, but are not limited to Marshalls, Petco, Sisco Food Services (in high school cafeteria), Day Care Center, Town Library, and Senior Center.

## **Components, Phases, Activities**

Students in the target population have the potential to attend the Life Skills Program for four years. Sometimes students will be in the program for all four of these years, while others will only be in for one or two years. Duration of time in program is affected by individual factors, such as the parent and/or student's choice to attend another program. The main reason for students exiting the program is that they age out. If a student turns twenty-one before July 1<sup>st</sup> then the he or she graduates that school year and if a student turns twenty-one

after July 1<sup>st</sup> then he or she graduates the following school year (U.S. DOE, 2004b; NJ DOE, 2006).

The components and activities of the Life Skills Program, as represented by a schedule of a student’s typical day, are presented in the tables below. Program components are separated by Life Skills I and Life Skills II, since differences in students’ schedules exist depending on the division they are in.

Table 4.  
Schedule of Life Skills I Program Components and Activities

<b>Life Skills I Program Components</b>	<b>Activities of Each Component</b>
Students Arrive to School: 7:45-8:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hangout in lounge until all students arrive- can socialize with other students or staff, play games, or sit quietly</li> </ul>
Period 1- Vocations: 8:00-8:40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesson on Vocations taught by Vocations Teacher</li> </ul>
Period 2- Functional Academics: 8:45-9:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesson on Functional Academics taught by Functional Academics Teacher</li> <li>• Language Arts and Math rotate (taught on alternate days) or both subjects are combined</li> </ul>
Period 2 ½ - Life Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On days that students have Physical Education during the rotation, period 3 starts later and students stay with Life Skills teacher to do lesson on Life Skills</li> </ul>
Period 3 - Rotation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooking and Physical Education Rotate</li> </ul>
Period 4 – Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students sit at tables in lounge where eat lunch and/or socialize with other students (in Section I and II) or staff</li> </ul>
Work (Internship): 10:45-2/ 2:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students perform jobs at off-site job sites</li> <li>• Supervised by job coach</li> <li>• Job sites are rotated. Students can switch their job site mid year or they can be there for the entire year if they enjoy it and are doing well.</li> <li>• At job sites store employees let students know what they need to do that day and sets them up with required materials if needed. Tasks can change on a daily basis, depending on need of site, but usually tasks stay pretty similar. Job coaches identify which tasks match students’ skill levels and students are able to do these tasks independently. The job coach checks in, helps with certain tasks, and their support can decrease as students become more independent.</li> </ul>
Leave school to go home: 2:20	

Table 5.  
Schedule of Life Skills II Program Components and Activities

<b>Life Skills II Program Components</b>	<b>Activities of Each Component</b>
Students Arrive to School: 7:45-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hangout in lounge until all students arrive- can socialize with other students or staff, play games, or sit quietly</li> </ul>
Period 1: 8:00-8:40: Functional Academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesson on Functional Academics taught by Functional Academics Teacher</li> <li>• Language Arts and Math rotate (taught on alternate days) or both subjects are combined</li> </ul>
Period 2: 8:45-9:15: Vocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesson on Vocations/ Life Skills taught by Vocations Teacher</li> </ul>
Period 2 ½ - Life Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On days that students have Physical Education during the rotation, period 3 starts later and students stay with Life Skills teacher to do lesson on Life Skills</li> </ul>
Period 3- Rotation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooking and Physical Education Rotate</li> </ul>
Period 4- Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students sit at tables in lounge where eat lunch and/or socialize with other students (in Life Skills I or II) or staff</li> </ul>
Work: 10:45- 2/ 2:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority of students perform jobs in school building</li> <li>• A few students perform jobs at an off-site job site</li> <li>• Supervised by job coach</li> <li>• Jobs at the school include: snack cart, laundry, shredding, watering plants, stuffing and addressing envelopes, sorting papers, cleaning the apartment and lounge</li> <li>• Jobs at school: Find jobs that students are good at. Some students want to do same thing every day - decision based what student wants to do, on their behavior, and if teacher thinks student needs job variation; sometimes students can do multiple things per day.</li> </ul>
Leave school to go home: 2:20	

Similar vocations and life skills are taught each year in order to foster learning and generalization, so a student may be exposed to the same skills each year they are in the program (up to 4 years). Repetition of information is a technique used by teachers in order to encourage learning. Different materials and methods are used from year to year to teach similar skills depending on student needs. If students master material they can move on to work more independently or to help other students. The Life Skills Program also has an Extended School Year (ESY) program during the summer.

## Budget

The district develops the budget and provides funds to the Life Skills Program for staff, job coaches, materials/ supplies, and field trips.

## Personnel

The roles and responsibilities of personnel involved in the implementation of the Life Skills Program are presented in the table below.

Table 6.  
Life Skills Program Personnel and Responsibilities

<b>Personnel Role (Job Title)</b>	<b>Responsibilities in Implementation of the Life Skills Program</b>
<i>Vocations Teacher</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teaches Vocations classes</li><li>• Job Developer – forms relationships with job sites to create and sustain student internships.</li><li>• SLE Coordinator</li><li>• Every 10 days conducts a site visit of each of the job sites in order to make sure everything is going okay, that safety procedures are being followed, that the manager is satisfied, and to observe students</li><li>• Trains Job Coaches</li></ul>
<i>Functional Academics/ Life Skills Teacher</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teaches Functional Language Arts, Math, and Life Skills classes</li><li>• Community Based Instruction Coordinator</li></ul>
<i>Director of Pupil Services</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creator of Life Skills Program</li><li>• Hiring of program staff</li><li>• Approves admission of students into program</li></ul>
<i>School Psychologist</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Case manger of students in program – as case manager write IEPs, get to know students, there as a support throughout the program, and talk to students about post-graduation plan</li><li>• Provide counseling to students with this related service in their IEP</li><li>• Consult with paraprofessionals and teachers for students with behaviors</li><li>• Consult on behavior plans</li><li>• Coordinate what students do when they graduate</li><li>• Conduct exit evaluation (re-evaluation) during students’ final year in program in order to provide DDD or DVRS with relevant and up-to-date information</li><li>• Refer students to DDD or DVRS (whichever agency is applicable)</li></ul>

Continued – Table 6.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange for Life Skills Program students to attend meeting with DVRS when they visit the high school</li> <li>• Help students complete college applications (if applicable)</li> <li>• Future plans: Conduct a regular group with students where discuss relevant life related topics</li> </ul>
<i>Physical Education Teacher</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaches Physical Education classes</li> <li>• Coordinates participation of students in Special Olympics through conducting scheduled practices (currently some students participate in Bowling and Track and Field)</li> </ul>
<i>Cooking Teacher</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaches Cooking classes</li> </ul>
<i>Paraprofessionals</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class wide and for individual students</li> <li>• Majority are class wide paraprofessionals</li> <li>• Currently are 2 that focus on individual and also help with class</li> </ul>
<i>Job Coaches</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paraprofessionals are also considered job coaches</li> <li>• There are also job coaches out at job sites that do not work at the school</li> <li>• Trained by vocations teacher</li> </ul>
<i>Transition Coordinator (Counselor at High School)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writes Transition Plan for students in the Life Skills program. This document is first written when the student is 14 (transition coordinator consults with middle school in district on this) and is updated each year until age out (more comprehensive when turn 18); transition coordinator is also students' high school counselor for those students in district's high school</li> <li>• Attends IEP meetings of students graduating from Life Skills Program</li> <li>• Coordinates alignment of services with social services agencies like DDD and DVR by advising parents on the process so that students can receive transportation and job coaches once they graduate from the Life Skills Program</li> <li>• Inform parents on the process of the Transfer of Rights which occurs once the student turns 18</li> <li>• Talks with parents and students about driving and what it takes to get a drivers license</li> <li>• Provides parents with information on SSI benefits and who they need to contact to fill out the paperwork</li> </ul>
<i>Behaviorist</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducts observations, provides behavior consultation, and makes recommendations on strategies and interventions to use in the classroom or at the job site on an as needed basis</li> </ul>



Continued – Table 6.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducts Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) and creates Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs) for students on an as needed basis</li> <li>• Works with parents on home-school components, such as strategies (e.g., schedules, prompting) to help students gain daily living skills</li> <li>• Consults on Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) programming for students with Autism in the program</li> <li>• Conducts parent training workshops four times per year. Workshops are open to all parents with a student in Special Education, and invite parents of students in Life Skills Program. Focus on things such as ABA techniques, picture schedules, discrete trails, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), and understanding behavior.</li> </ul>
<i>Community Based Instruction (CBI) Staff Members (case managers and teacher)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps with determining students placement in either Life Skills I or II of the Life Skills Program</li> <li>• Arranges a tour of the Life Skills Program for students currently in CBI program</li> <li>• Helps with an evening orientation of the Life Skills Program for parents of students currently in the CBI program</li> </ul>
<i>Speech Therapist</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide speech therapy to students with this related service in their IEP</li> </ul>
<i>Occupational Therapist</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide occupational therapy to students with this related service in their IEP</li> </ul>

**Incentives**

No additional salary/ monetary reward, in addition to their contractual salary, is given to personnel for their involvement in the Life Skills Program. Personnel who were interviewed did convey that there is an intrinsic reward in the work they are doing with students in the Life Skills Program. They are invested and care very much about teaching their students so they can be as successful as possible when they graduate. Personnel often go beyond duties in their contract due to this intrinsic motivation, such as arranging social events and reunions.

The hypothesized incentives for participants in the program, are that students are motivated to participate in the program due to the opportunity to socialize with peers and be exposed to job training which could help them secure employment upon graduation (employment is the goal of many students in the program).

### **Program Evaluation Plan**

A formal procedure for ongoing evaluation was not developed, therefore to this point an evaluation of the program has not occurred.

## Chapter VII

### **Assessment of Best Practices**

In the literature on secondary transition for students with severe disabilities, there are best practices that have been identified. These practices have been shown to lead to improved student outcomes. Research has also identified characteristics of exemplary transition programs. Organizations and the government have also set forth standards and recommendations for best practices in this area (Kohler, DeStefano, Wermuth, Grayson, & McGinty, 1994; National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, 2010; Test, Mazzotti, Mustian, Kortering, & Kohler, 2009; Wagner, Blackorby, Cameto, & Newman, 1993; White & Weiner, 2004; Witte, 2002). Awareness of these best practices is important because they can be used to develop and expand programs and evaluate existing programs.

The Life Skills Program was assessed on its use of best practices in the field of secondary transition services for students with severe disabilities. The best practice categories used in this framework are based on predictors of improved post-graduation outcomes, characteristics of exemplary transition programs, and standards/ recommendations set by organizations and federal/state/local governments. See Appendix D for the Best Practice Framework that was used to collect this information. This framework was developed by the evaluator in order to guide questions asked and to organize information gathered from interviews, observations, and review of program documents.

It should be noted that the best practice framework includes an extensive list of categories and questions which may not be applicable for any one program. Also, this framework provides guidelines for best practices and there are no clear-cut “right” or “wrong”

answers. A program should use this framework as a means to identify areas of improvement based on categories that are relevant to the program under evaluation.

The Life Skills Program’s responses, which were collected from interviews, observations, and review of program documents, are *italicized*

**General Aspects of the Program**

- Inclusion in general education is a predictor of post-school outcomes in areas of education, employment, and independent living (Test et al., 2009).

**To what extent are students in the program with general education students?** Check the one category that applies:

- Less than 20%*
  - *Time spent with general education students in high school includes involvement in Parents and Exceptional Gathering of Students (PEGS) reunions/ events (group that links general education students in high school, special education students in high school, and students in Life Skills program; they engage in activities throughout the year; general education students get community experience for their participation.)*
  - *No time spent with same age peers (18-22)*
- 20 to 40%
- 40 to 60%
- 60 to 80%
- Greater than 80%

- Student support and the provision of support services is a predictor of post-school outcomes in areas of education, employment, and independent living (Kohler et al., 1994; Test et al., 2009).

**What support services are provided to students?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Occupational guidance*
- Educational guidance*
- Independent living guidance*
- Support on the job site*
- Support from families*
- Support from agencies*
- Support from friends*
- Other: Support from mental health professionals (school psychologist)*

- Individuation in the transition program and services should be provided to fit individual student needs (Aspel et al., 1998; National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, 2010; Witte, 2002).

**How does the program individualize services provided to students?** Narrate a description.

*All students in the program receive individualized services to meet their unique needs. Students are placed in Section 1 or Section 2, based upon their level of functioning. Within each of the sections, instructional methods are individualized to student ability.*

**In what way can services be adapted based on student' post graduation goals (i.e., academic versus occupational focus)?** Narrate a description.

*Students who have post graduation goals with an occupational focus will be placed at off-site internships at job sites in order to foster employability skills.*

- Higher exit exam requirements/ high school diploma status is a predictor of post-school outcomes (Test et al., 2009, U.S. Department of Education, 2004a).

**What exit requirements do students in the program have?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Completion of certain number of class credits earned in specific areas*
- Passing a competency test
- Passing a state high school exit exam
- Passing a local high school exit exam
- Passing a series of benchmark exams
- Passing a performance based assessment
- Creation of a portfolio
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*Students in the program meet state and district exit requirements, which includes having 125 credits and a certain number of credits in main subject areas (History, English, Physical Education, Math).*

*Many students are exempt from district testing based on their ability (HESPA). Instead students take the Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA).*

*At age 21 (or 22) students in the Life Skills program receive their high school diploma.*

**Do students in the program receive an alternative diploma or a standard diploma?**

Check the one category that applies:

- Alternative diploma
- Standard diploma*

- Students should have access to the general education curriculum (U.S. Department of Education, 2004a).

**To what extent do students have access to the general education curriculum?** Check the one category that applies:

- Less than 20%
- 20 to 40%

- 40 to 60%
- 60 to 80%
- Greater than 80%
- Other: Not Applicable – No general education curriculum exists for students over the age of 18. For the population in the Life Skills program, teachers use some aspects of an elementary general education curriculum (e.g., sight words, novels, fundamentals) for functional academics. There is no set curriculum used for vocations – teachers follow parts of a middle school and high school vocations curriculum and modify it to the ability of students.*

**What types of instructional accommodations and modifications are used to ensure access to the general education curriculum?** Check all the categories that apply.

- Differentiated Instruction*
- Strategy Instruction
- Textbook Organization
- Technology Use- computers*
- Other: Manipulatives*

- A transition program should increase the school completion rates of students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2004a).

**How does the program increase students' school completion rates?** Check all the categories that apply.

- A staff member builds trusting relationship with students to monitor at-risk indicators and helps problem solve difficult situations between student and school → staff understand triggers, sense frustrations, build rapport; this relationship helps teachers reach students while teaching and helps to integrate humor when know them on a personal level*
- Student engagement is promoted with the school → specifically in regards to participation in class*
- Flexibility exists with punitive disciplinary practices → not a lot of discipline problems, but when occurs sometimes have student call their parent or student has a “time out” to think, and if misbehave again teacher calls parent; no set discipline rules exist, so helps with flexibility*
- Curriculum is relevant to students*
- Other: Creation of job portfolio*

- A transition program should provide youth development and leadership opportunities (National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, 2010).

**How does the program provide youth development and leadership opportunities?**

Narrate a description.

*Higher functioning students take leadership positions with lower functioning students (e.g., peer mediation).*

*Extracurricular activities exist, such as the Special Olympics. Students can participate in*

*Parents and Exceptional Gathering of Students (PEGS) reunions/ events which links general education students in high school, special education students in high school, and students in Life Skills program; they engage in activities throughout the year; general education students get community experience for their participation.*

- A transition program should have quantitative or qualitative outcome data to make judgments on the effectiveness of the program (National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, 2010).

**How is the program evaluated?** Narrate a description.

*To date, the program has not been evaluated. No evaluation plan exists at this time.*

**How are student outcomes measured?** Narrate a description.

*The New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education is required by the Individuals with Disabilities and Improvement Act (IDEIA) 2004 to annually conduct a study of post-school outcomes of students with disabilities, ages 14-21, who leave public school. The school district collects information on post-school outcomes for all students 1 year after graduation. This survey gathers information on students' employment and education status. The school does not receive a summary of this data, rather it is sent to the state and used for reporting purposes.*

### **Skills Taught in the Program**

- Teaching self-care and independent living are predictors of post-school outcomes in areas of education, employment, and independent living (Aspel et al., 1998; Test et al., 2009; WestEd Center, 2011).

**What self-care and independent living skills are taught?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Purchasing skills → only practice purchasing with cash, not credit cards*
- Self-advocacy skills*
- Self-determination skills*
- Functional reading sight words*
- Functional math skills*
- Banking skills*
- Cooking skills*
- Food preparation skills*
- Grocery shopping skills*
- Home maintenance skills*
- Leisure skills*
- Restaurant purchasing skills*
- Safety skills*
- Social skills training*
- Other: Personal hygiene*
- Other: Nutrition*

- Other: Job skills*
- Other: Careers – finding a job, cover letter writing, interviewing, employability, how to keep a job*
- Other: Appropriate dress, grooming for work*
- Other: Speaking on the telephone*
- Other: Physical fitness (keeping healthy)*

**How are life skills taught?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Community-based instruction → travel training, purchasing, shopping*
- Computer-assisted instruction → use computers and videos*
- Self-management*
- Other: Hand on demonstrations*
- Other: Skits, practicing, acting out situations*
- Other: Texts/ Written materials*
- Other: Apply skills taught in class to the job site*
- Other: Practice skills in kitchen and living room space in school*

- Social skills instruction is a predictor of post-school outcomes (Life Centered Career Education; Test et al., 2009).

**What types of social skills are taught to students?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Achieving self-awareness*
- Acquiring self-confidence*
- Achieving socially responsible behavior*
- Maintaining good interpersonal skills*
- Achieving independence*
- Making adequate decisions*
- Communicating with others*
- Other: Problem solving/ conflict resolution with peers*
- Other: Manners*
- Other: Anger Management*
- Other: Articulating emotions/ feelings (and relating this skill to “why” it is important)*

### **Students’ Self- Determination and Self- Advocacy**

- Enhancing the self-determination and self- advocacy of students with disabilities is a skill correlated with improved post-school success for students with disabilities (Aspel et al., 1998; Test et al., 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2004a).

**How does the program enhance and promote students’ self-determination and self-advocacy skills (Aspel et al., 1998; OAR, 2006)?**

- Student centered transition planning*
- Practicing common situations where may have to use self-advocacy skills → use skits*



- Develop students' sense of strengths and weaknesses/ challenges → applies to higher functioning students in program*
- Develop students' sense of supports and accommodations they will require → specifically in regards to job skills, such as teaching students how to ask for accommodations at job site*
- Help students identify their goals*
- Help students identify what they need to do to reach their goals*
- Students should be able to identify and solve problems that may arise
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**How are self-determination skills infused into the curriculum?** Check all the categories that apply:

- In language arts write about IEP goals
- Other: used throughout the day*
- Other: unit in curriculum on this topic for higher functioning students*

- One way to improve a student's self-determination is to include them in IEP and transition planning process (Aspel et al., 1998; Konrad & Test, 2004; Test & Grossi, 2011).

**What ways are students involved in the IEP process?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Planning the IEP
- Drafting the IEP
- Meeting to write the IEP
- Implementing the IEP
- Leading the IEP meeting
- Writing their IEP goals
- Other: A proposed IEP (Present levels, goals) is brought to the meeting and it is explained to the student*
- Other: Student is able to ask questions at the meeting*
- Other: Student has input in making changes to the IEP if it is an appropriate change*
- Other: Student signs IEP if agree and understand*

*\*There is variation in student involvement on student-by-student basis based on ability.*

**What ways are students involved in the transition planning process?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Planning their transition plan
- Drafting the transition plan → Students contribute information through answering the following questions. Answers to their questions get reviewed at IEP meetings: 1. After high school do you want to continue your education? If yes, what do you want to study? 2. What kind of career do you want for the future? 3. Where would you like to live after graduation? (parents, residential dorm living, on your own) 4. Do you work now? If yes, where and what do you do? 5. Do you have your driver's license? If not, do you plan on obtaining it? 6. What chores do you do now at home? 7. Do you have any significant medical problems or take any*

medications? 8. Do you see a Doctor or Counselor regularly? 9. What do you do for fun? What do you do with your friends? 10. What special interests do you have? What clubs or activities including sports do you currently participate in?

- Meeting to write the transition plan
- Implementing the transition plan
- Leading the transition planning meeting
- Writing their transition goals
- Other: Contributing information at the transition planning meeting → depends on student ability: staff member may ask student questions to guide the discussion

*\*There is variation in student involvement on student-by-student basis based on ability.*

### **Students' Self- Exploration**

- A transition program should help students understand their unique learning issues and what adaptive strategies help them. A program should help students to identify their strengths and challenges in order to focus on target skills to be further developed (Witte, 2002).

**How does the program help students to understand their own learning, adaptive strategies, strengths, challenges, and skills to further target?** Provide a narrative description.

*Students understand their challenges/ weaknesses because these are the areas that they receive extra help in. Students are aware of their strengths in certain areas/ tasks, such as drawing, sports, shredding paper, and will take a leadership role in things that they know they can do independently. Students also help one another, so a student who knows what they are good at is able to help a student who is experiencing challenges in that area.*

- Periodic failure helps students create more realistic perceptions of themselves. By keeping standards high and avoiding modifications/ accommodations when possible, it teaches students how to handle failure and effective ways to avoid failure (Witte, 2002).

**How does the program teach students how to handle failure and ways to avoid failure?** Provide a narrative description.

*No information provided.*

**How does the program keep standards high and avoid modifications when possible?** Provide a narrative description.

*As teachers teach they pull back and let students work independently until see they need help. Teachers use benchmarks to see if students reached a certain area and if they can move on.*

*When staff see inappropriate behavior or social skills they help students to engage in problem solving rather than telling them what they should be doing. For example, staff will prompt students by asking questions like, "What cues can you use? When is this appropriate? When*

*is this not appropriate?”*

### **Individual Education Plan (IEP) Characteristics**

- There should be the expectancy in reaching for higher levels of proficiency in all life functional skill areas (Witte, 2002).

**How do IEP goals reflect high standards?** Provide a narrative description.

*No information provided.*

IEPs should have present functioning levels to make best educational decisions (Witte, 2002).

**How are functional levels kept present on IEPs?** Provide a narrative description.

*Teachers provide present functioning levels to school psychologist each year. The team (teachers, case manager, etc) make sure that they are targeting skills that they are supposed to target and indicate skill levels (how they are doing on the targeted skills) in addition to what they are working on.*

### **Individual Transition Plan (ITP) Characteristics**

- ITPs should include vocational skill profiles (strength oriented), transition supports, and post-school follow-up procedures (Witte, 2002).

**What things are included in students' ITPs?** Check all the categories that apply.

- Strength based vocational skill profile → Write about student strengths and who the student is and align these strengths with their post secondary plans*
- Transition supports → Plan helps to coordinate alignment of services with social service agencies like DDD, such as transportation and job supports (e.g., job coach). The school advises parents on the process and parents have to contact DDD. Currently, DDD is main agency relevant to students in the program; not a lot of students receive services from DVR.*
- Post-school follow-up procedures
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*The transition coordinator also discusses the following topics with parents of students in the Life Skills Program:*

- 1. Transfer of Rights: Relevant to students with low cognitive abilities. Tell parents of the process of transferring rights back to parents once the student turns 18.*
- 2. Driving: Discuss what it takes to get a drivers license.*
- 3. SSI Benefits: School is agent of information – tell parents the agency they need to contact. Agency then helps parents fill out paperwork. Transition coordinator makes sure this is done when in Life Skills Program if it hasn't been done before.*

*Goal of transition plan is to ensure successful transition to a job setting, which is usually set*

*up by student's involvement in Life Skills Program (e.g., students may be employed at job site that they were an intern at), and DDD helps with transportation and job coaches.*

- Goals of desired post-secondary outcomes and goals should be developed in several areas in the ITP. For example in: employment, continuing education, adult living, functional life skills, social skills, work skills, and career exploration and training (Witte, 2002).

**What areas are goals developed in for students in the program?** Check all the categories that apply.

- Employment*
- Continuing education*
- Adult living*
- Functional life skills
- Social skills
- Work skills
- Career exploration and training
- Other: Community Involvement*

*The exact areas that are included in the school's transition plans include:*

- 1. Post graduation education experience – no pose education or vocational training*
- 2. Employment goal- capacity and where*
- 3. Community involvement- what could do (e.g., church, special Olympics) and how to enhance community skills*
- 4. Living Arrangements- with parents until independent living or group home environment*

*Although goals are not specifically developed in the transition plan in the following areas, these are skills/ areas that are focused on in the Life Skills program:*

- *Instruction in post secondary education/ training*
- *Related services- provide info to families on providers if need these services post graduation*
- *Community experiences*
- *Employment*
- *Adult living objectives*
- *Daily living skills*
- *Functional education*

- The ITP should be reviewed annually as part of IEP (Witte, 2002).

**How often is the ITP reviewed?** Check the one category that applies:

- Annually as part of IEP*
- Annually, but not as part of the IEP
- Less than annually: \_\_\_\_\_
- More than annually: \_\_\_\_\_

- Work transition plans should include information packets for employers and businesses since employers may not be well educated on needs and legal safeguards of individuals with disabilities (Witte, 2002).

**Is any information in the ITP provided to employers and businesses? To educational institutions?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Needs of student
- Legal safeguards of individuals with disabilities
- Who to contact with questions or concerns
- Other: No information in the transition plan is sent to employers*

### Vocational Assessment

- A comprehensive vocational assessment provides information needed in order to assist in the appropriate educational and vocational planning of students that will allow them to acquire the skills they need to make a successful transition to work and community life. Data can be gathered as part of a CST evaluation, and whatever information is not collected at that time should be by other means during Levinson's Exploration stage (age 15-24). Since various jobs require different skill sets in order to be a good employee and to also enjoy that profession, this assessment serves to help appropriately match a student with their prospective career (Levinson, 2002).

*\*The life skills program does not refer to the assessment as a Vocational Assessment, but what is done as part of a re-evaluation and as part of the program before the student exits the program is what the literature describes as a Vocational Assessment.*

**Does the program conduct vocational assessments for students?** Check the one category that applies:

- Yes, for all students
- Yes, for some students: Indicate percentage: A complete re-evaluation is conducted for all students in-district.*
- No

- A comprehensive vocational assessment should consist of multiple assessment methods (Levinson, 2002; Smith et al., 1995).

**What is included in the vocational assessments conducted by the program?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Record review*
- Observations*
- Interviews*
- Paper and pencil tests to assess interests (i.e., Self-Directed Search, Strong Interest Inventory, Interest Assessment 2<sup>nd</sup> ed) → done as part of program: Career Interest Survey*
- Aptitude tests → IQ and Educational*
- Performance tests (evaluate specific abilities related to job performance) → Students are assessed every 10 days through use of checklists to rate job performance; these rating are put in file and put in system for grading*

- Work samples*
- Situational assessments
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

- A comprehensive vocational assessment assesses skills related to many areas (Levinson, 2002).

**What skills are assessed in the vocational assessments conducted by the program?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Psychological Functioning*
- Social & Emotional Functioning*
- Educational/ Academic Functioning*
- Physical/ Medical Functioning*
- Vocational Functioning*
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

- Vocational assessment should involve cooperation, collaboration, and consultation a variety of professionals (Levinson, 2002; Smith et al., 1995).

**Who is involved in the program's vocational assessment process?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Teachers*
- Other school professionals: School psychologist, LDTC, nurse, PE teacher, transition coordinator*
- Community agency personnel
- State agency personnel
- Students*
- Parents*
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

- Assessment questions should encompass services needed, skills acquired, and what training is needed to acquire other skills (Levinson, 2002).

**What assessment questions are part of the program's vocational assessment process?**

Check all the **categories that apply:**

- What services will the student need to make a successful transition to post school life?*
- Has the student acquired job-seeking skills?*
- What additional training does the student need in order to be employable? → This is done as part of the Life Skills Program (NOT part of vocational assessment); look at potential job site and train/ teach skills required*
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Vocational/ Work Education, Training, and Experience**

- When students receive vocational education and training/ work experience at the secondary level are more likely to have better post- school outcomes, such as in areas of postsecondary vocational training or competitive employment (Aspel et al., 1998; Kohler, 1993; Kohler et al., 1994; National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, 2010; Test et al., 2009; Wagner et al., 1993). Career awareness is a predictor of post-school outcomes (Test et al., 2009).

**What types of vocational/ employment skills are students taught?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Job specific employment skills*
- Computer assisted Job specific employment skills*
- Completing a job application*
- Employment skills using community based instruction*
- Self-management for employment skills*
- Job-related social/ communication skills*
- Other: Show how to send emails*
- Other: Writing a resume*
- Other: Writing a cover letter*
- Other: Mock interviews*
- Other: Writing thank you notes after an interview and addressing envelopes to send the note or how to send it via email*

*\*Program does not teach students how to navigate the internet, since those with skill ability already know how to use the internet.*

**What types of training experiences are provided to students in the program?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Paid employment/ work experience
- Non-paid employment/ work experience*
- Classroom training experiences
- Community training experiences*
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*Students in the program receive training experiences by either having non-paid employment (internship), go to a sheltered workshop, or community based instruction in the building. Some students work 3 days and then spend 2 days doing life skills/ CBI, while other students will work 5 days a week. While working, some students work independently and some have a job coach. Several students get position at same off site job site after internship is over.*

**How is career awareness developed in students?** Provide a narrative.

*In the beginning of the year they discuss 16 career clusters. Teachers use Department of Labor videos to illustrate different careers. They read stories and answer questions, or color pictures and show videos, about different careers in order to learn more about them. Job safety is also discussed. Career interest is assessed through a Career Awareness Interest Survey, which includes surveys from different books.*

- Community work experiences are a predictor of post-school employment outcomes (White& Weiner, 2004). The combination of duration of Community-Based Training (CBT) that included on-the-job training and age appropriate physical integration with non-disabled peers has been shown to predict successful integrated employment at time of transition (a paid job with non-disabled co-workers at graduation; White& Weiner, 2004).

**To what extent do students have work experiences in the community?** Check the category that applies to the percentage of student in the program who have these experiences:

**Life Skills Section 1:**

- 0 to 25 %
- 26 to 50%
- 51 to 75%
- 76 to 100% → 100%

**Life Skills Section 2:**

- 0 to 25 % → 25% get outside experiences 2-3 days per week
- 26 to 50%
- 51 to 75%
- 76 to 100%

*As a whole (section 1 and 2), 75% have student internship experiences and 25% have CBI experiences.*

*Some students may stay at school for life skills training, rather than working, if their parents want them to learn more independent living skills.*

**What is the duration of their community- based training?** Check and complete the category that applies:

- 3 hours per day → for about 3 hours per day, students either work at job sites or stay at school for CBI/ life skills
- \_\_\_ days per week
- \_\_\_ days per month
- \_\_\_ months per year
- \_\_\_ years
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**To what extent are students integrated with non-disabled peers?** Check the category that applies:

**Life Skills Section 1:**

- 0 to 25 %
- 26 to 50%
- 51 to 75%
- 76 to 100% → majority of students at off-site jobs work in environments with non-disabled employees



**Life Skills Section 2:**

- 0 to 25 % → when students work in jobs as part of CBI program at school they are working with other students in the Life Skills Program
- 26 to 50%
- 51 to 75%
- 76 to 100%

- Paid employment while in school is another predictor of post-school success (Test et al., 2008; Test et al., 2009). Half year to full year paid work programs during the senior year have been proven to be effective in increasing the likelihood of sustained employment after graduation (Witte, 2002).

**To what extent are students in the program paid for their work experiences?** For each category indicate the percentage of students in the program who apply to each category:

- Half year paid experiences - \_\_\_\_\_ percent
- Full year paid work experiences - \_\_\_\_\_ percent
- No paid work experiences – 100% percent

*During the school day students are not paid, but in some instances, students have been hired and paid by a job site after school hours (after 2:00pm) or after they graduate from school.*

- Individuals with severe disabilities often require increased supports in places of employment and supported work on the job site has been shown to have benefits compared to other work environments (e.g., sheltered workshops; Olney& Kennedy, 2001; Rusch& Hughes, 1989). Additionally, job-site training along and simulation training off the job site has been shown to lead to improved work related skills when compared to just job-site training for individuals with Autism (Lattimore, Parsons, & Reid, 2006).

**What supports are provided to students on and off the job site?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Job coaches → they provide hands on training, monitoring, review skills, and model appropriate skills by doing the tasks alongside the student
- Modifications
- Enhanced training
- Job-site training → Taught skills at the job site that are job specific
- Stimulation training off the job site → Teach general safety skills in the classroom. Teach general cleaning skills (i.e., dusting) at the school and sometimes students use that skill at their jobs.
- Other:

**Family Involvement**

- Family involvement and participation in educational planning, life planning, and decision making is a predictor of improved post-school outcomes. Programs should increase informed parent participant and involvement (Hasazi, Gordan, & Roe, 1985; Kohler,

1993; National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004; Test et al., 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2004a).

**How are families involved in the program, in students' education, life planning, and decision making?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Helping with planning
- Helping to draft the plan
- Meeting to write plan
- Helping to implement the plan
- Attending meetings (IEP)*
- Leading meetings
- Helping to write goals → make suggestions about goals*
- Helping students make decisions*
- Phone or face-to-face conferences with school staff*
- Other: Participate in PEGS activities*
- Other: Participate in Program Reunion Dinners*
- Other: Attend tour of program*
- Other: Teachers frequently communicate with parents through communication logs, emailing, phone calls, sending home notes*

**How does the program try to enhance informed parent participation?** Provide a narrative description.

*Through conferences, emails, and phone calls with teachers.*

*Some parents attend SEPA meetings/ groups.*

**What are the barriers to family involvement?**

- Stress on families
- Unable to attend meetings due to other obligations
- Lack of family understanding or knowledge of the process
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*\* About 50% of families are involved. There is a range of involvement with some more involved than others.*

### Interagency Collaboration

- Involvement and collaboration between various systems (i.e., programs, businesses, agencies) is a predictor of improved post-school outcomes (Aspel et al., 1998; Kohler, 1993; Kohler et al., 1994; National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004; National Council on Disability, 2000; Test et al., 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2004a; U.S. Department of Education, 2007). At age 16, representation on student's team should broaden to include outside agency members (Witte, 2002).

**What agencies or systems collaborate with the school and the student?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Other programs: \_\_\_\_\_
- Businesses*
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)*
- Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD)
- National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY)
- Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)*
- New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE)
- Autism New Jersey
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*DVR or DDD is involved depending on the student. These agencies are not involved for all students.*

**Of the agencies that collaborate with the school and the student, what is their involvement in the transition process?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Attend student IEP meetings → DVR or DDD will attend students last IEP meeting*
- Attend student transition planning meetings
- Observe student in school
- Observe student in workplace
- Provide resources to student and their families → school has resources from agency that they give to parents*
- Provide resources to school*
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**How is it determined which agencies and outside systems will be involved in the transition process?** Provide a narrative description.

*Based on student's post graduation goals and the support(s) that they will require and who will be able to provide them with those supports.*

**How are relationships established between the school and other systems? How are business partnerships formed?** Provide a narrative description.

*Vocations Teacher develops job sites for students through cold calling and asking to speaking to a manager. She tells them about the program, goals (that students gain real life experiences), how insured by school, and that it is an unpaid internship.*

**What are barriers to interagency collaboration?** Provide a narrative description.

*There are a lot of retail businesses that are interested, which is good, but some students have other interests so it is harder to find job sites for certain interests. It is harder for smaller businesses to have internships because there is not a lot to do. There are job sites that are interested and available but students cannot be placed there because there are not enough job coaches to work there due to funding. Location is another barriers, since students can only travel so far in the amount of time allocated to work. Transportation can also be a barrier, since need buses/vans to transport students to different job sites.*

- Based on the most effective policies and practices for agency involvement in transition services (U.S. Department of Education, 2007):

**Is an IEP/ transition plan and individualized plan for employment (IPE) coordinated before the student completes the Life Skills Program?** Check the one category that applies:

- Yes, all the time
- Some of the time: \_\_\_\_ percent of the time
- No, never

*\*Do not have information in IPE*

**Do vocational rehabilitation agency personnel provide career counseling and guidance services to eligible transition-aged youths who are still attending Life Skills Program?**

Check the one category that applies:

- Yes, all the time
- Some of the time: \_\_\_\_ percent of the time
- No, never

**Do vocational rehabilitation agency personnel actively build rapport and personally encourage eligible transition-aged youths in their efforts at school and in the work experience activities?** Check the one category that applies:

- Yes, all the time
- Some of the time: \_\_\_\_ percent of the time
- No, never

**What are the barriers to these practices?** Provide a narrative description.

### **Post- Graduation Support**

- Adults with special needs often need support beyond the secondary level (Witte, 2002).

**How are help-seeking skills for this period of their life taught in the program's curriculum?** Provide a narrative description.

*During the last IEP meeting, DVR or DDD representative attends, and they discuss possibilities in terms of supports that can be provided. While the student is in the program, they are encouraged to be as independent as possible and to ask family members for help. School helps parents set up transportation, and provide with resources and help, but sometimes parents may not follow through. All students who get jobs after they graduate is because their parents helped in the process (arranging transportation and getting them a medical exam). If parents do not have the capacity to help in the process then the student is unable to be successful.*

**Does the program provide services or have re-entry options for adults who graduated from the program who need additional job skills, skill enhancement, or other services and support for new life adjustment issues? Provide a narrative description.**

*Students are able to attend program reunions, which is a social event.*

**What resources on information are students provided with? Where they can find these services and supports once they graduate? Provide a narrative description.**

*While in the program students create a Job Portfolio, which can include the following documents. What is in the portfolio can vary depending on the student since they create it themselves and some students put in more information than others. This portfolio can be shown to DVR and DDD. While on job interviews, the visuals in the portfolio provide students with cues to help them discuss their previous experiences.*

1. *Resume*
2. *Sample interview follow-up note*
3. *Interview questions and responses*
4. *Pictures and narratives of work experiences*
5. *Selected Job coach evaluations*
6. *Cover letter*
7. *Personal history*
8. *References*
9. *Career clusters questionnaire results*
10. *Addressing a letter*
11. *Common abbreviations used in help wanted advertisements*
12. *Sample application filled in*
13. *W4 and W2 Forms filled in*
14. *What to do if they need help*
15. *ADA guide for seeking employment*
16. *What to do and not do on an interview*

## Chapter VIII

### **Analysis of the Program Design Document**

In Chapter VI, the Life Skills Program was put into an evaluable format through the creation of a Program Design Document. In this current chapter, the document will be analyzed in terms of strengths of the program design as well as recommendations for improvement. Please note that not all elements of the Program Design Document have identified strengths and/or recommendations. Recommendations in this chapter are meant to provide guidance to program stakeholders who are interested in taking steps to improve the program. Recommendations should be considered within the goals, context, and resources of the district.

#### **Strengths of Life Skills Program’s Design Document and Recommendations for Further Development**

##### **Program purpose and goals.**

##### ***Strengths.***

The goals and purpose align with the literature on what is recommended as a focus for this age group and population (e.g., literature recommends enhancing above mentioned skill areas through continued instruction and opportunities for practice; see Chapter VII on Assessment of Program’s Best Practices for more information on how the program aligns with the literature). The goals of the Life Skills Program are directly related to the needs of the target population, which is the need for additional preparation for life after school. Lastly, all the goals are attainable and relevant.

##### ***Recommendations.***

For each program goal, there should be a quantitative indicator that will allow stakeholders to decide whether or not the goal has been attained (Maher, 2012). For example, since checklists are currently being used to assess some of the goals, an indicator could be linked to this measure, such as, “After being at a job site for 1 semester, students will score between 80 to 100 (out of 100) points on the Assessment of Job Skills Evaluation.” Since three of the goals are also measured through the combination of homework, classroom participation, tests, and/or quizzes, specific indicators should be set in order to determine if students reach desired levels of goal attainment. Lastly, the fourth goal of enhancing student participation in social activities is not being measured, so a checklist or observation form can be created in order to collect data and measure this goal.

### **Program Eligibility Standards and Criteria**

#### ***Strengths.***

It is a program strength that Special Education classification does not solely determine placement into the program, rather eligibility is determined by a variety of factors.

Determining eligibility based on IQ, adaptive functioning, and functional deficits, takes into consideration the fact that Special Education classifications do not necessary describe a person’s abilities and that there is a lot of variation within each disability classification.

Additionally, having no set criteria or no set exclusion criteria for eligibility, rather having flexible guidelines, allows personnel to examine many aspects/traits of a student to determine her/his appropriateness for the Life Skills Program or for placement in one of the two divisions.

The creation of two divisions of the Life Skills Program is also a strength. It has enabled the program to meet the unique needs of its students in a more appropriate manner.

Although the target population shares similar characteristics and has similar needs, variation still exists. Therefore, having the Life Skills I and II divisions allows for teaching and training experiences to be tailored to student needs and abilities. It is also a strength that placement decisions for division I or II are determined by a group of individuals, including those familiar with the student and those familiar with the Life Skills program.

***Recommendations.***

Parents may be included in the decision to place students in either Life Skills I or II, since they represent another stakeholder in students' lives who are familiar with their needs and abilities.

**Program Policies and Procedures**

***Strengths.***

It is a strength that staff members who fulfill different roles in the district (e.g., teachers, aides, case managers) are provided with guidelines for their role expectations.

***Recommendations.***

Since documents are not provided on policies and procedures that are specific to their role in the Life Skills Program, it could be even more beneficial for staff members to have a set of policies and procedures that are specific to their role within the Life Skills Program in addition to the district wide document. The Personnel Table in Chapter VI: Program Design Document could be utilized for this purpose.

**Program Methods and Techniques**

***Strengths.***



It is a strength that teachers use multiple methods and techniques to facilitate student goal attainment since it helps to address the unique learning needs of students in the Life Skills Program.

***Recommendations.***

Personnel in the Life Skills Program should continue to stay up to date on the education instructional literature on best ways to teach these skills to this target population. This can be achieved through attending professional development workshops and/or reviewing recent publications in the literature base.

**Program Materials**

***Strengths.***

Multiple types of materials are used to contribute to student learning. Students in the Life Skills Program are assessed on a regular basis, with the use of forms/ checklists, which provide a format for staff observations of life skills and job skills.

***Recommendations.***

While forms/ checklists are being used to monitor students' skill development, it would be beneficial to record and collect data over time. For example, weekly ratings on the Job Skills Evaluation could be entered into a database (such as Excel) and progress, strengths, and weaknesses over time could be noted. For example, patterns in categories that student scored low in could be a target behavior to focus on.

**Program Facilities**

***Strengths.***

Mock environments (e.g., living room, bedroom) aide in teaching and practicing independent living skills. Also, trips into the community are also beneficial in providing

students opportunities to practice life skills (e.g., using buses, ordering food at restaurant). The Life Skills Program has relationships with many businesses in the community, which allows for students to have internship experiences in various settings and for the opportunity to work in settings that relate to their areas of interest and skill level.

***Recommendations.***

Since the Life Skills Program is housed in the district's Administration building, students do not have ongoing opportunities to be exposed to same age, typical peers (see Chapter VII on Assessment of Program's Best Practices for more information on the literature on inclusion).

**Program Components, Phases, Activities**

***Strengths.***

All students in the Life Skills Program have the opportunity to be exposed to academic instruction, vocational instruction, socialization with peers, and work training on a daily basis. Another strength is that students have the opportunity to perform jobs at off-site job site locations in the community up to five days per week. There is also flexibility in the program to meet student needs in regards to job placements, since depending on student abilities, they can work at a off-site job site everyday, perform jobs in the school building everyday, or a combination of both off-site and on the school site job training. Additionally, the repetition of skills and material taught in the program is beneficial to encourage generalization of skills and knowledge.

***Recommendations.***

Due to evidence in literature on positive outcomes for students who work at job sites, it should be considered to give all students in the program an opportunity to go to a job site

while enrolled in the Life Skills Program. For example, working at a job site one day per week, twice a month, and/or with increased supervision (see Chapter VII on Assessment of Program's Best Practices for more information on literature on on-the-job training).

### **Program Personnel**

#### ***Strengths.***

There are many individuals in the district who are involved in the Life Skills Program, which means there are numerous skill sets available to address student and program needs.

#### ***Recommendations.***

The Program Design Document for the Life Skills Program could be provided to all personnel who are involved in the program (everyone listed in Personnel Table in Chapter VI). Awareness of their own and others roles within the program could enhance program activities.

### **Program Evaluation Plan**

#### ***Recommendations.***

A formal procedure for ongoing evaluation of the Life Skills Program should be developed. The program evaluation plan should address the needs of the program, the students, the staff, and other stakeholders (e.g., parents). Program evaluation data will help guide future programmatic changes in order to improve student outcomes.

According to Maher's Model of Program Evaluation (2012), a program evaluation plan should delineate program evaluation questions, data collection variables, data collection methods, instruments, and procedures, methods and procedures for data analysis, program evaluation personnel and responsibilities, and guidelines for communication and use of program evaluation information. See Appendix F for three protocols that provide sample

program evaluation questions that could be used as part of the Life Skill Program's evaluation plan.

## Chapter IX

### **Analysis of Best Practice Framework**

In Chapter VII, the Life Skills Program was assessed based on the program's implementation of best practices. In this current chapter, the framework will be analyzed based on strengths of the program in terms of best practices and recommendations for further development. The best practices that have been identified by the research have implications for improved post-school outcomes in the areas of education, employment, and independent living (Kohler, DeStefano, Wermuth, Grayson, & McGinty, 1994; National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, 2010; Test, Mazzotti, Mustian, Kortering, & Kohler, 2009; Wagner, Blackorby, Cameto, & Newman, 1993; White & Weiner, 2004; Witte, 2002). Recommendations in this chapter are meant to provide guidance to program stakeholders to take steps to improve the program. Recommendations should be considered within the goals, context, and resources of the district.

### **Strengths of Program and Recommendations for Further Development**

#### **General Aspects of the Program**

##### ***Strengths.***

Students in the Life Skills Program have opportunities to interact with high school aged general education students through planned events and activities throughout the school year. Students are provided with support services in all the areas cited in the literature: occupational, educational, and independent living guidance, support on job site, support from families, agencies, and friends, and support from mental health professionals (Kohler et al., 1994; Test et al., 2009). The program provides individualized services to students, through placement in either Section I or II, through individualized instructional methods, and through

type of internship placement. The use of differentiated instruction, technology use (computers), and manipulatives are used in order to ensure access to the curriculum.

Exit requirements for students in the Life Skills Program are high, since students in the program must meet state and district exit requirements (completion of certain number of class credits earned in specific areas) and students receive a Standard diploma (rather than an Alternative diploma) upon completion of the program (Test et al., 2009). The program helps to increase students' completion rates by fostering the following: building staff relationships, student engagement promoted, flexibility within disciplinary practices, relevant curriculum, and creation of job portfolio (U.S. Department of Education, 2004a). The program provides youth development leadership opportunities by allowing higher functioning students to take leadership positions with lower functioning students, though encouraging students to participate in the Special Olympics, and though encouraging students to participate in PEGS activities.

### ***Recommendations.***

Due to the benefits of inclusion in general education, students in the Life Skills Program should have more opportunities to interact with general education students (Test et al., 2009; White & Weiner, 2004). Inclusion in general education may include participating in regular academics, taking academic courses in regular education placements, taking more hours of academic and occupational courses in regular education, participation in integrated school programs, integration in a regular school setting, and/or integration with same age peers (ages 18 to 22; Test et al., 2009; White & Weiner, 2004).

Due to the non-existence of a general education curriculum for students beyond grade twelve, access to the general education curriculum is not applicable. Strategy instruction and

textbook organization, are examples of additional instructional accommodations and modifications that can be used to ensure access to the curriculum (U.S. Department of Education, 2004a). Additional evidence-based practices that be employed to teach various skills include chaining, community based instruction, computer assisted instruction, prompting, and mnemonics. For a more detailed description of evidence-based practices to teach specific skills refer to the publication written by Test and colleagues (2012).

Additional ways in which the program may provide youth development and leadership opportunities is through adult mentoring opportunities, conducting activities related to decision making, citizenship, and community service, and through inviting presenters who are successful adults with disabilities (Epstein, Eddy, Williams, & Socha, 2006; National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, 2004).

Finally, it is recommended that the Life Skills Program conduct program evaluations and measure student outcomes in order to gather quantitative or qualitative data to make judgments on the effectiveness of the program (National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, 2010). Refer to Appendix F for recommendations for program evaluation of the current Life Skills Program. The district annually conducts a survey to study post-school outcomes of students with disabilities, ages 14 to 21, who leave public school (as per the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education is required by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEIA; 2004)), but the school does not receive a summary of these data, rather it is sent to the state and used for reporting purposes. Even if data from this survey were provided to the district, the questions asked either do not apply or are not specific enough to the outcome goals of the target population in the Life Skills Program. See Appendix G for a student outcome measure that is proposed as part of the program evaluation

process that is specific to the goals of the program and its students so that information gathered can be more useful to program stakeholders.

### **Skills Taught in the Program**

#### ***Strengths.***

Students in the Life Skills Program are taught self-care and independent living skills in many of the areas cited by the literature: purchasing, self-advocacy, self-determination, functional reading, functional math, banking, cooking, food preparation, grocery shopping, home maintenance, leisure skills, restaurant purchasing, safety, and social skills (Aspel et al., 1998; Test et al., 2009). In addition to those skill sets, additional self-care and independent living skill sets are covered as well in the program: personal hygiene, nutrition, job skills, career related skills, appropriate dress, telephone skills, and physical fitness/ health. Life skills are taught through community-based instruction and computer-assisted instruction, which are practices presented in the literature. Additionally, the program teaches skills through hands on demonstrations, skits/ practicing/ acting, texts/ written materials, application of skills to the job site, and practice of skills in school's kitchen and living room space.

Students in the Life Skills Program are taught social skills in many of the areas cited in the literature: achieving self-awareness, acquiring self-confidence, achieving socially responsible behavior, maintaining good interpersonal skills, achieving independence, making adequate decisions, and communicating with others (Test et al., 2009). In addition to those skills, additional social skill sets are covered as well in the program: problem solving/ conflict resolution with peers, manners, anger management, and articulating emotions/ feelings.

#### ***Recommendations.***



Other evidence-based methods of teaching life related skills and social skills that are presented in the literature include: Chaining (backward, forward, and total task), community-based instruction, computer-assisted instruction, constant and progressive time delay, prompting (least to most, most to least, simultaneous, and response prompting), self-management instruction, self-monitoring instruction, and simulations (Test et al., 2012). For a more detailed description of which evidence-based practices are recommended to teach specific skills refer to the publication written by Test and colleagues (2012). Due to increased use of credit cards and the internet in today's society, it also may be beneficial to teach students skills in those specific areas as well. Additionally, Witte (2002), recommends that students be taught how to get along with others. For example, how to listen to others, display respect for others, and how to collaborate, since they are necessary skills for social and work situations.

### **Students' Self-Determination and Self- Advocacy**

#### ***Strengths.***

The Life Skills Program enhances and promotes students' self-determination and self-advocacy skills though utilizing many of the techniques cited in the literature: practicing common situations where may need to use these skills, developing students' sense of strengths and weaknesses, developing students' sense of supports and accommodations they will require, helping students identify their goals, and helping student identify what they need to reach their goals (Aspel et al., 1998; Test et al., 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2004a). Self-determination skills are infused into the curriculum by being integrated throughout the day and there is a unit in the curriculum on this topic (for higher functioning students).

Students are involved in the IEP process in the following ways: proposed IEP is explained to students at the IEP meeting, students are able to ask questions at the meeting, students have input in making changes to the IEP, and students sign the IEP if they agree and understand. Students are involved in the transition planning process in the following ways: drafting the transition plan, writing their transition goals, and contributing information at the transition planning meeting.

Lastly, the creation of individual portfolios helps students to develop self-advocacy. Having a concrete collection of experiences and achievements will help students to advocate for themselves on job interviews (Stroebel, Krieg, & Christian, 2008).

### ***Recommendations.***

Other ways in which the Life Skills Program can enhance and promote students' self-determination and self-advocacy skills is through student centered transition planning and helping students to identify and solve problems that may arise. Self-determination skills can also be infused into the curriculum though having students write about their IEP goals as part of language arts (Aspel et al., 1998; OAR, 2006). In order for students to advocate for themselves, they should receive assistance in understanding their own strengths and weaknesses, education to understand their disability, and be provided with information on supports and accommodations they may require (OAR, 2006).

The literature suggests that involving students in the IEP process in any of the following ways may improve students' self-determination skills: planning the IEP, drafting the IEP, meeting to write the IEP, implementing the IEP, leading the IEP meeting, and writing their IEP goals (Aspel et al., 1998; Konrad & Test, 2004; Test & Grossi, 2011). The literature suggests that involving students in the transition planning process in any of the following way

can improve students' self-determination skills: planning their transition plan, meeting to write the transition plan, implementing the transition plan, and leading the transition planning meeting (Aspel et al., 1998; Konrad & Test, 2004; Test & Grossi, 2011). During meetings, students should be encouraged to speak about what they want to accomplish, about their interests, and students should also spend time planning what they would like to say prior to the meeting (OAR, 2006). For resources that can be used to help students advocate for themselves and to prepare for meetings see The Organization for Autism Research (OAR) Transition Guide (OAR, 2006). It is important to note that within the Life Skills Program there is variation in student involvement in the IEP and transition planning process on a student-by-student basis based on ability. Given a student's ability, it is important to find which ways are most appropriate for the student to become involved, while also challenging the student to increase their involvement (Aspel et al., 1998; Konrad & Test, 2004; Test & Grossi, 2011).

### **Students' Self- Exploration**

#### ***Strengths.***

The Life Skills Program helps students to understand their unique learning issues and what adaptive strategies help them through indirect techniques. For example, students understand their challenges/ weaknesses based on the areas that they receive extra help and students with strengths in certain areas are encouraged to help other students with those tasks. The Life Skills Program keeps standards high and avoids modifications when possible by allowing students to work independently until they need assistance and by prompting students to engage in problem solving (in social, academic, and job related situations), rather than telling the student the correct answer/ response.

### ***Recommendations.***

Students can be explicitly taught how to understand their own learning and also what specific strategies they can employ to enhance their learning and work performance (Witte, 2002). This philosophy can apply to an array of areas: academics, career planning, life skills, and social skills. Witte (2002) suggests that avoidance of modifications and experience of failure are two ways in which students can better understand their abilities. Witte (2002) cautions against over use of modifications since it could lead to “unrealistic views of learner’s abilities and performances (pp.1590).” Rather educators should help students achieve their highest level of skill development and allow students to experience failure, which will then lead students to form more realistic perception of their own abilities, the world, and it will teach them how to avoid failure in the future (Witte, 2002).

### **Individual Education Plan (IEP) Characteristics**

#### ***Strengths.***

Functional levels are kept present on IEPs through annual reporting of present functioning levels from students’ teachers, as well as monitoring of skills by the IEP team (Witte, 2002).

#### ***Recommendations.***

Witte (2002) recommends that IEP goals reflect high standards and proficiency in all areas to help students achieve their highest level of skill development.

### **Individual Transition Plan (ITP) Characteristics**

#### ***Strengths.***

Individual Transition Plans (ITP) that are created for students in the Life Skills Program include many of the characteristics that the literature recommends: strength based

vocational skill profile and transition supports (Witte, 2002). Additionally, the transition coordinator for students in the Life Skills Program discusses other relevant topics with students as part of the transition planning process: transfer of rights, driving, SSI benefits. Post-secondary goals in the ITP are developed in many of the areas that are recommended by the literature: employment, continuing education, adult living, community involvement (Witte, 2002). As recommended by the literature, the ITP is reviewed annually as part of the IEP (Witte, 2002).

### ***Recommendations.***

Other post-secondary goals that the literature recommends including in the ITP include: functional life skills, social skills, work skills, and career exploration and training. The literature also recommends that ITPs include post-school follow-up or follow-along procedures (Wehman, 1996; Witte, 2002). For example, a plan for where students can receive continued learning assistance or support services should be discussed. Some transition programs offer re-entry options for students who need additional job preparation or training after they graduate from the program (Witte, 2002). The literature also recommends that the ITP include information packets for employers and businesses since employers may not be well educated on needs and legal safeguards of individuals with disabilities. Such employer information packets can include any of the following information: needs of the student, legal safeguards of individuals with disabilities, and who to contact with questions or concerns (Witte, 2002).

### **Vocational Assessment**

#### ***Strengths.***

As part of the re-evaluation, before the student exits the Life Skills Program, a Vocational Assessment is conducted for some students (for all students in-district). This assessment is comprehensive as defined by the literature since it consists of multiple assessment methods: record review, observations, interviews, paper and pencil tests to assess interests, aptitude tests, performance tests, and work samples (Levinson, 2002; Smith et al., 1995). This assessment is also comprehensive in terms of skills assessed, since it assess all skills outlined in the Vocational Assessment literature: psychological functioning, social and emotional functioning, educational/ academic functioning, physical/ medical functioning, and vocational functioning (Levinson, 2002). The program's vocational assessment process includes teachers, other school professionals (school psychologists, LDTC, nurse, PE teachers, and transition coordinator), the student, and their parents. Vocational assessment questions also encompass services needed by the student in order to make a successful transition to post-school life and job seeking skills already acquired by the student, both of which are recommended by the literature (Levinson, 2002). The literature also recommends that as part of the assessment process the question be asked of what additional training is needed in order for the student to be employable – this is answered as part of the Life Skills Program's job- site training component, not as part of the vocational assessment (Levinson, 2002).

***Recommendations.***

Although, it may not be entirely in the program's control, a re-evaluation (with a Vocational Assessment component) should be recommended for all students prior to their exit from the program, even if the student is from another district (Levinson, 2002). The literature also recommends that as part of the Vocational assessment process, a situational assessment

should be included (Levinson, 2002). A situational assessment consists of observing and evaluating a student while they are in a work situation. If a student has an interest in pursuing a specific occupation then it is most valuable to conduct a situation assessment of a student in that specific occupation. The literature also recommends that community agency personnel and/or state agency personnel are included in the vocational assessment process (Levinson, 2002; Smith et al., 1995). For example, a Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) or Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) representative can cooperative, collaborate, and consult with the Life Skills Program, the student, and/or the family during the vocational assessment process.

### **Vocational/ Work Education, Training, and Experience**

#### ***Strengths.***

Students in the Life Skills Program are taught all the vocational/ employment skills which are recommended by the literature: job specific employment skills, computer assisted job specific employment skills, completing a job application, employment skills using community based instruction, self-management for employment skills, and job-related social/ communication skills (Kohler, 1993; Kohler et al., 1994; Test et al., 2009; Wagner et al., 1993). Additionally, the program teaches the following skills to its students: how to send emails, writing a resume, writing a cover letter, mock interviews, and writing thank you notes after an interview and addressing envelopes to send the note or how to send it via email. Career awareness is developed in the beginning of the school year through discussion of different types of careers, videos to illustrate careers, and reading of stories and answering of questions about different careers. Additionally, job safety is discussed and career interest is assessed through a survey. The program provides the following supports to students, which

have been shown to lead to improved work related skills: job coaches, modifications, job-site training, and stimulation training off the job-site (Olney& Kennedy, 2001; Rusch& Hughes, 1989).

Students in the program are provided with non-paid work experience and/or community training experiences. In Life Skills Section I, 100% of students receive training experience in the community, which is a definite strength of the program (Kohler, 1993; Kohler et al., 1994; National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, 2010; Test et al., 2009). Additionally, in Life Skills Section I, 76 to 100% of students at the off-site jobs work in environments with non-disabled employees. The duration of work experiences is three hours per day, five days per week. Students either spend these three hours at a job- site in the community or working at the school; also the number of days at each location varies – some students in Section I work in the community 5 days per week, others work 3 days per week. The literature shows that the combination of duration of training in the community with on-the-job training and age appropriate physical integration with non-disabled peers predicts successful integrated employment at time of transition (a paid job with non-disabled co-workers at graduation; White& Weiner, 2004).

All student work experiences through the Life Skills program are un-paid, but it should be noted that some students have been hired by the job-site and paid to work wither after school hours or after the student graduates from school (exact statistics were not available).

### ***Recommendations.***

Career awareness can also be developed through helping students to identify careers that exist that match their abilities and their interests. Inventories can be used to help students



to identify these careers. Additional supports that can be provided to students to enhance their work related skills include supplementing job-site training with off-site stimulation training (complete job-site tasks in school setting with instruction; Lattimore, Parsons, & Reid, 2006)). Students can be supported on the job-site with assistance in completing tasks and with navigating social situations (Olney& Kennedy, 2001; Rusch& Hughes, 1989).

In Life Skills Section II, approximately 25% of students receive training experience in the community for 2 to 3 days per week. Students in Section 2 who work at the school (approximately 75%), work with other students in the Life Skills Program. A recommendation would be that there be an increase in the percentage of students in Section II who gain community work experiences while in the program, which would also increase the extent to which students are integrated with non-disabled peers (White& Weiner, 2004).

Work experience is an extremely important component of transition programs due to a large evidence base that indicates that work experience gained while in school is predictive of better post-school outcomes (gaining and sustaining employment; Aspel et al., 1998; Kohler, 1993; Kohler et al., 1994; National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, 2010; Test et al., 2009; Wagner et al., 1993)). Paid employment while in school is another predictor of post-school success (Test et al., 2008; Test et al., 2009). Specifically, the literature has also shown that half year to full year paid work programs during a students' senior year are "effective in increasing the likelihood of sustained employment after graduation (Witte, 2002, pp.1591).

## **Family Involvement**

### ***Strengths.***

Families of students in the Life Skills Program are involved in students' education, life

planning, and decision making through attending meetings (such as IEP meetings), helping to write goals, helping students make decisions, participation in phone or face-to-face conferences with school staff, participation in activities (PEGS, reunion dinners), touring the program, and frequent communication with teachers through communication logs, emailing, phone calls, and sending home notes. The program tries to enhance informed parent participation through conferences, emails, and phone calls with teachers.

### ***Recommendations.***

Research has shown that transition effectiveness is enhanced when parents are involved in the process. Parents should be aware of assessment findings and post-educational options in order to make informed and appropriate decisions (Hasazi, Gordon, & Roe, 1985; Witte, 2002). Additional ways that families can be involved, as cited in the literature, includes helping with planning, drafting the plan, meeting to write the plan, and leading meetings (Hasazi, Gordan, & Roe, 1985; Kohler, 1993; National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004; Test et al., 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2004a).

### **Interagency Collaboration**

#### ***Strengths.***

Businesses in the community, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), and the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) collaborate with the school and the student. These agencies are not involved for all students, since it depends on the needs of the student. Of the agencies that collaborate with the school and the student, they are involved by attending student IEP meetings (DVR or DDD will attend students' last IEP meeting), they provide resources to students and their families, and they provide resources to the school. The

Life Skills Program has been able to form many positive relationships with various businesses in the community.

### ***Recommendations.***

For all students who are eligible to receive DVR or DDD services, there should be collaboration between that agency and the school and the student. Other agencies or systems that can collaborate with the school and the student include: Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD), National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY), New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), Autism New Jersey. Other ways in which relevant agencies and/or businesses can collaborate with the school and the student is by attending transition planning meetings, observing the student in school, and observing the student in the workplace (Aspel et al., 1998; Kohler, 1993; Kohler et al., 1994; National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004; National Council on Disability, 2000; Test et al., 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2004a; U.S. Department of Education, 2007). There are some barriers to collaboration with businesses in the community, such as finding businesses that match student interests, having enough job coaches and transportation options to expand number of job sites, and finding business close to proximity of school. With increased funding, such as though grants, some of these barriers could be reduced.

### **Post-Graduation Support**

#### ***Strengths.***

Help-seeking skills for life after school are taught though encouraging students to be as independent as possible while in the program and by teaching students whom they can ask for help. The school helps parents set up transportation (for student employment after

graduation) through providing parents with information and answering their questions. After graduation from the Life Skills Program, students are able to attend social events (program reunions). While in the program, students are provided with an instrumental resource, referred to as a Job Portfolio, which contains resources with information they can use when they graduate. See Chapter VII: Assessment of Best Practices for a complete list of what is included in this portfolio.

### ***Recommendations.***

As previously discussed in the *Individual Transition Plan Recommendation section*, the program should help students identify systems of support for when they graduate from the program. Such supports can include identification of agencies that provide services for skill enhancement, teaching of additional job skills, or help with new life adjustment issues. Some Life Skills Programs provide re-entry options or supports for graduates of the program who need additional assistance or training after they graduate (Witte, 2002). Additionally, the program should provide students with information about basic civil rights and The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA; Witte, 2002)).

### **Summary of Recommendations**

- Students should have more opportunities to interact with general education students
- Evidenced-based practices should be employed to teach vocational, social, and life skills
- Provide youth development and leadership opportunities through adult mentoring, decision making activities, community service, and guest speakers
- Conduct program evaluations and measure student outcomes
- Promote students' self-determination and self-advocacy skills through student centered transition planning and teaching of problem solving skills

- Develop student self-advocacy through helping students understand their own strengths, weaknesses, disability, how they learn, and supports/ accommodations they require
- Involve students as much as possible in IEP and transition planning process
- Help students achieve highest level of skill development and allow them to experience failure
- Incorporate post-school follow-up procedures and/or re-entry options in student transition plans
- Provide information to employers on student needs, legal safeguards, and contact information for questions/ concerns
- All students should have a re-evaluation with a vocational assessment component prior to their exit from the program
- Situational assessments of students in an occupation of interest should be included in vocational assessment
- Community and/or state agency personnel should be included in vocational assessment process
- Increase amount of community work experiences for students in Life Skills Section II
- Explore paid work opportunities for students in the program
- Inform parents of assessment findings and post-educational options for their child
- Encourage collaboration between the program and DVR, DDD, local businesses, and other agencies by inviting representatives to transition meetings and having them observe students at school or work
- Help students to identify systems of support for when they graduate from the program

## Chapter X

### **Reflections, Limitations, and Recommendations**

The final chapter includes reflections, limitations, and recommendations, which relate to both aspects of the current dissertation task: placing the Life Skills Program into evaluable format (Maher, 2012) and evaluating the program based on the Life Skills Program's use of best practices.

#### **Reflections on Evaluation Process**

Maher (2012) emphasizes the importance of having a "sound" evaluation, thus reflections on the soundness of the current evaluation should be discussed. A sound program evaluation should possess the following qualities: Practical, Useful, Proper, and Technically Defensible (Maher, 2012).

The evaluation plan should be able to be *practically* implemented by people in the organization in a manner that is not disruptive to organizational routines (Maher, 2012). The current evaluation plan consisted of placing the Life Skills Program into evaluable format and evaluating the program based on the Life Skills Program's use of best practices. Both tasks were practical for the evaluator to conduct within the parameters of the evaluator's time and the evaluator's role in the organization. These tasks were also practical for staff members involved in the data collection process (i.e., interviewees) since it was within the parameters of their availability.

Information generated from the evaluation should be *useful* in that it allows the client and other stakeholders to make more informed decisions about the program and how to improve it (Maher, 2012). The information generated from the creation of the Program Design Document will be useful to the Life Skills Program's stakeholders because prior to its

creation, a Program Design Document did not exist. The evaluable format will allow for further program development and improvement and it will help stakeholders to perform program activities in a coordinated manner. The information generated from the analysis of the program's best practices will be useful to the Life Skills Program's stakeholders because it will provide guidance to program stakeholders who are interested in taking steps to improve the program.

Program evaluation should occur in ways that *properly* adhere to all relevant ethical standards and legal requirements that are pertinent to the program (Maher, 2012). Permission for the evaluator to have access to these data sources used for the current evaluation was given by an administrator in the school district. All information gathered was kept confidential and no information was collected that could identify students. The evaluation was approved for exemption by the Institutional Review Board (IRB; Protocol #E13-571). The current evaluation adhered to guidelines set by the IRB and staff who were interviewed by the evaluator read and signed the IRB's "Consent Form to Participate in a Research Study (see Appendix).

Lastly, program evaluations should include *technically defensible* methods, procedures, and instruments that can be justified as to their reliability, validity, and accurateness, given the program evaluation questions (Maher, 2012). The Program Design Instrument that was used was developed by the evaluator based on information and suggested questions provided in Maher's (2012) Resource Guide, Planning and Evaluating Human Services Programs. The Assessment of Best- Practices Framework that was used was created by the evaluator based on a synthesis of the literature on recommended best practices in this field. Items on the Best Practice Framework are cited to reflect the source of the evidence.

Another reflection that should be discussed is the concept of best practices. The literature outlines best practices as things that should be implemented in order to lead to better outcomes, but it is important to consider that there are other factors at play. Therefore, while interpreting the evaluation recommendations, it is important to consider that recommendations are meant to provide guidance to program stakeholders who are interested in taking steps to improve the program. Recommendations should always be considered within the goals, context, characteristics, and resources of the program and of the target population.

Additionally, best practices cannot always apply to all populations due to characteristics of target populations. For example, although the literature differentiates between moderately and severely disabled students, there is still much variation between the ability of individual students within these categories. Therefore it requires some best practices to be adjusted to take into account what makes the most clinical sense for a given student. Also, logistically, some best practices are not practical. For example, the literature cites benefits of inclusion with same age peers. This would mean that 18 to 21 year old students in a life skills program should be integrated with college aged students, which for students with disabilities, especially those who are lower functioning, is difficult to implement. The literature also cites the positive outcomes associated with students having paid work experiences, yet many programs experience difficulty with finding un-paid job sites in their community.

The process of evaluating the Life Skills Program, using a framework of best practices and the creation of the program design document, made what the program is doing very explicit. Although one of the main purposes of program evaluation is to guide the program in



terms of things that can be improved, the process also pointed out the wonderful and extensive things the program is already implementing. It is important to make note and reflect on this since much of what the program is doing is aligned with best practice and their practices should be continued.

Through the evaluation findings, it is also important to note the innovative things the program is doing, that serve a purpose and work, but may not necessary be cited specifically in the literature. Teachers and other staff members have great, creative ideas that they come up with based on unique student needs and they implement these ideas on a daily basis. For example, teachers help students create a portfolio, which is an ongoing collection of things they have learned and job experiences they have had, all of which will be invaluable to students once they graduate from the program.

While examining evaluation findings, it is important to see where there are gaps and room for improvement while also realizing that even practices that the literature recommends to lead to better outcomes for students, may not be necessary to change. The program leaders need to choose what they will change based on the context, resources, and student needs.

### **Limitations of Evaluation**

One limitation that should be considered while interpreting the findings is the lack of quantitative methods used for the evaluation. Rather, qualitative methods, such as observations, interviews, and review of program documents were the sources of data collection. Quantitative approaches have many benefits, including strong technical defensibility provided by their psychometrics. Although qualitative approaches are not measured with reliability and validity, they offer utility for program decision makers and they tend to be more practical than quantitative methods (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). Given

the current state of Life Skills Program, the qualitative methods that were employed were appropriate to the program's needs. In previous chapters, as part of the analysis of the program, the evaluator recommended that quantitative methods should be considered as part of the program's future program evaluation plan.

Another limitation that should be considered is the fact that someone who was not part of the system or of the program conducted the evaluation. The evaluator had to learn about the program as an observer and the evaluator was not present at the program everyday. Although the evaluator was not part of the system, it enabled the evaluation to be unbiased, since an outsider conducted it.

Lastly, the present evaluation could be limited due a lack of involvement from all stakeholders involved in the program. Therefore the evaluation may not address the needs and concerns of all stakeholders, since not everyone was included in program evaluation planning and data collection process. The evaluator consulted with administration and select program implementers (i.e., teachers) while planning the evaluation. While collecting data for the evaluation, all program implementers were consulted. Other program stakeholders who were not involved in the program evaluation include students in the program and parents of students in the program.

### **Guidelines and Recommendations for Practice**

The present dissertation's methods, assessment, and analysis have implications for other life skills programs, school administrators, school psychologists, educators, and parents. The Best Practice Framework, which was created by the evaluator can be a resource to similar programs. It summarizes the majority of the literature on the topic of best practices for transitioning students with disabilities. It is versatile in the sense that it can be used in its

entirety to evaluate a program, or sections can be used to look at parts of a program if the evaluator and stakeholders know which areas they would like to target for improvement.

As with the current Life Skills Program that was evaluated using this framework, when evaluating any program the findings are meant to provide guidance to program stakeholders who are interested in taking steps to improve the program. Recommendations should always be considered within the goals, context, and resources of the district.

Due to their training and knowledge, school psychologists are well suited for a role in a school's life skills programming, as well in the process of evaluating such a program. Witte (2002) highlights the following roles for school psychologists in helping students with disabilities to transition to post-secondary work: (1) Educate others on learning and development needs of transitioning students, (2) Serve as the school/ program's school transition specialist to ensure transitioning students have proper paperwork and documentation for their post-school needs, (3) Assist in design and evaluation of transition program, (4) Consult with businesses and employers on disability awareness, accommodations, laws, and protection, (5) Conduct formal and informal assessment measures to integrate into a student's transition plan, (6) Serve as a professional mentor or consultant for students who are transitioning, (7) Create welcoming environment for parents so they can be part of the transition process, (8) Provide mental health counseling to support transitioning students, (9) Provide direct instruction on personal management techniques to transitioning students, and, (10) Teach students about ADA, constitutional rights, and protections.

Additionally, there are general program evaluation guidelines that should be considered. According to Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman (2004), the following are skills needed for program evaluators: (1) Training in social science methodology, (2) Knowledgeable about

target problem area addressed by the program, (3) Findings related to problem area and previous evaluations, and (4) Understanding of context in which the program is situated. School psychologists commonly have these above mentioned skill sets. When planning an evaluation of a program the following tasks should be considered: (1) Identify specific questions that the evaluation will attempt to answer, (2) Who wants the evaluation, how will it be used, and what audiences will receive the evaluation, and, (3) Is the evaluation aiming to generate broader knowledge, identify a core component, or specific process that lead to outcomes (Rossi et al., 2004). Identifying this information will help the evaluator, such as a school psychologist, to create an evaluation plan that will be most appropriate and beneficial to a program and its stakeholders.

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Appendix A  
 IDEIA Regulations on Secondary Transition

<p><b>Federal Regulations on Secondary Transition: Individuals with Disabilities Education and Improvement Act (IDEIA; U.S. Department of Education, 2004b)</b></p>
<p>Termination of a child's eligibility under Part B due to graduation from secondary school with a regular diploma, or due to exceeding the age eligibility for FAPE under State law (age 21). [34 CFR 300.305(e)(2)] [20 U.S.C. 1414(c)(5)(B)(i)]</p>
<p>Children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living. [34 CFR 300.1(a)] [20 U.S.C. 1400(d)(1)(A)]</p>
<p>“Transition services” means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that: (1) 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 postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment); continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; (2) Is based on the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child’s strengths, preferences, and interests; and (3) Includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. [34 CFR 300.43 (a)] [20 U.S.C. 1401(34)]</p>
<p>For a child whose eligibility under Part B terminates, the LEA shall provide the child with a summary of the child’s academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child’s postsecondary goals. [34 CFR 300.305(e)(3)] [20 U.S.C. 1414(c)(5)(B)(ii)]</p>
<p>Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team, and updated annually thereafter, the IEP must include: (1) Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment and, where appropriate, independent living skills; (2) The transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals; and (3) Beginning not later than one year before the child reaches the age of majority under State law, a statement that the child has been informed of the child’s rights under Part B, if any, that will transfer to the child on reaching the age of majority under §300.520. [see 20 U.S.C. 1415(m)]. [34 CFR 300.320(b) and (c)] [20 U.S.C. 1414 (d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII)]</p>
<p>The LEA must invite a child with a disability to attend the child’s IEP Team meeting if a purpose of the meeting will be the consideration of the postsecondary goals for the child and the transition services needed to assist the child in reaching those goals under §300.320(b). [34 CFR 300.321(b)] [20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)(B)]</p>
<p>States may use funds reserved under §300.704(b)(1) for the development and implementation of transition programs, including coordination of services with agencies involved in supporting the transition of students with disabilities to postsecondary activities. [34 CFR 300.704(b)(4)(vi)] [20 U.S.C. 1411(e)(2)(C)(vi)]</p>
<p>If a purpose of a child’s IEP Team meeting will be the consideration of postsecondary goals</p>

for the child and the transition services needed to assist the child in reaching those goals, the LEA, to the extent appropriate, and with consent, must invite a representative of any participating agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services to attend the child's IEP Team meeting. However, if the participating agency does not attend the meeting, the LEA is no longer required to take other steps to obtain participation of an agency in the planning of any transition services. [34 CFR 300.321(b)(1) and (3)] [20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)]

To the extent appropriate, with the consent of the parents or a child who has reached the age of majority, in implementing the requirements of §300.321(b)(1), the public agency must invite a representative of any participating agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services. [34 CFR 300.321(b)(3)]



Appendix B  
New Jersey Code Regulations on Secondary Transition

<b>State Regulations on Secondary Transition: New Jersey Administrative Code Title 6A Chapter 14</b> (New Jersey Department of Education, 2006)
Beginning at age 14, or younger if appropriate, include assessment(s) to determine appropriate post-secondary outcomes. NJAC:6A:14-3.4(d)3
"Transition services" for students age 16 or older, is defined in accordance with the definition of the term set forth in IDEA and its implementing regulations, as amended and supplemented, incorporated by reference herein and reproduced at chapter Appendix D. For students under age 16, transition services is defined as set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(e)11. N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.3
The term "transition services" means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that— (A) 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; (B) is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests; and (C) includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. 20 U.S.C. §1401(34)
If the purpose of the IEP meeting is to consider transition services, the student with educational disabilities...shall be invited to attend the IEP meeting. N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3 (k)2x
If the student with educational disabilities does not attend the IEP meeting where transition services are discussed, the district board of education or public agency shall take other steps to ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered. N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(e)13
Notice of meetings shall indicate the purpose, time, location and participants. When a purpose of an IEP meeting for a student with a disability beginning at age 14, or younger, if appropriate, is a discussion of transition services, the notice of the IEP meeting shall indicate that: (1) A purpose of the meeting will be the development of the transition services of the student; and (2) The school district will invite the student. When a purpose of an IEP meeting for a student with a disability beginning at age 16, or younger, if appropriate, is a discussion of needed transition services, the notice of the IEP meeting shall: (1) Indicate that a purpose of the meeting is the consideration of transition services for the student; (2) Indicate that the school will invite the student; and (3) Identify any other agency that will be invited to send a representative. N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(k)5
To the extent appropriate, with the consent of the parents or a child who has reached the age of majority, ... the public agency must invite a representative of any participating agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services. CFR § 300.321 (B)(3)
If an agency invited to send a representative to the IEP meeting does not do so, the district shall take other steps to obtain the participation in the planning of any transition services. N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(h)
If an agency other than the district board of education fails to provide the transition services

included in the student's individualized education program, the district board of education shall reconvene a meeting of the IEP participants. Alternative strategies to meet the student's transition objectives shall be identified. N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(g)
When developing the IEP, the IEP team shall beginning at age 14, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team, consider the need for consultation from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Department of Labor and other agencies providing services for individuals with disabilities. N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(c)10
Beginning at age 14, a statement of the State and local graduation requirements that the student shall be expected to meet. The statement shall be reviewed annually. If a student with a disability is exempted from, or there is a modification to, local or State high school graduation requirements, the statement shall include: i. A rationale for the exemption or modification based on the student's educational needs which shall be consistent with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.11; and ii. A description of the alternate proficiencies to be achieved by the student to qualify for a State endorsed diploma. N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(e)9
Each evaluation of the student shall...Beginning at age 14, or younger if appropriate, include assessment(s) to determine appropriate postsecondary outcomes. N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(f) 5
The case manager shall...be responsible for transition planning. N.J.A.C.6A:14-3.2(c)4
Beginning with the IEP in place for the school year when the student will turn age 14, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team, and updated annually: i. A statement of the student's strengths, interests and preferences; ii. Identification of a course of study and related strategies and/or activities that: (1) Are consistent with the student's strengths, interests, and preferences; and (2) Are intended to assist the student in developing or attaining postsecondary goals related to training, education, employment and, if appropriate, independent living; iii. As appropriate, a description of the need for consultation from other agencies that provide services for individuals with disabilities including, but not limited to, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services in the Department of Labor; and iv. As appropriate, a statement of any needed interagency linkages and responsibilities. N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(e)11
Beginning with the IEP in place for the school year when the student will turn age 14, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team, and updated annually: i. A statement of the student's strengths, interests and preferences; ii. Identification of a course of study and related strategies and/or activities that: (1) Are consistent with the student's strengths, interests, and preferences; and (2) Are intended to assist the student in developing or attaining postsecondary goals related to training, education, employment and, if appropriate, independent living; iii. As appropriate, a description of the need for consultation from other agencies that provide services for individuals with disabilities including, but not limited to, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services in the Department of Labor; and iv. As appropriate, a statement of any needed interagency linkages and responsibilities. N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(e)11
Beginning with the IEP in place for the school year when the student will turn age 16, or younger if deemed appropriate by the IEP team, a statement consisting of those elements set forth in (e)11 above and appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment and, if appropriate, independent living and the transition services including a course of study needed to assist the child in reaching those goals. N.J.A.C. 6A:14- 3.7(e)12
The IEP shall include the person(s) responsible to serve as a liaison to postsecondary

resources and make referrals to the resources as appropriate. N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(e)13
Beginning at least three years before the student reaches age 18, a statement that the student and parent have been informed of the rights under this chapter that will transfer to the student on reaching the age of majority. N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(e)14
Secondary level students may be placed in community rehabilitation programs for vocational rehabilitation services according to the following: Community rehabilitation programs shall be approved by a State agency, including, but not limited to, the New Jersey Department of Labor, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities, to provide vocational evaluation, work adjustment training, job coaching, skill training, supported employment and time-limited job coaching. N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.7(i)
When a student graduates or exceeds the age of eligibility, the student shall be provided a written summary of his or her academic achievement and functional performance prior to the date of the student's graduation or the conclusion of the school year in which he or she exceeds the age of eligibility. The summary shall include recommendations to assist the child in meeting his or her post-secondary goals. N.J.A.C 6A:14-4.11(b)4

Appendix C  
Program Design Instrument

<b>Program Design Component #1: Target Population</b>
a. <u>Who</u> is the target population?
b. What is the <u>size</u> of the target population?
c. What are the relevant target population <u>characteristics</u> ?
d. How can the target population be <u>segmented</u> ?
e. How can the target population be <u>documented</u> ?
<b>Program Design Component #2: Needs of Target Population</b>
a. What are the <u>psychological and educational domains</u> of the target population pertaining to growth, development, and improvement of the target population?
<b>Program Design Component #3: Purpose and Goals</b>
a. What are the <u>needs</u> of the target population and context (i.e., educational, psychological, vocational)?
b. <u>Who are the program</u> participants (i.e., entire target population or segment of it)?
c. How will the participants <u>attain the program</u> in terms of methods, activities, personnel, and location?
d. What <u>value will accrue to program participants</u> as a result of the program in terms of goals attained, outcomes realized, etc.?

e. For each need or set of needs, what are the <u>valuable accomplishments (goals)</u> in terms of human states, conditions, or qualities?
f. For each specified goal (valuable accomplishment), how can it be <u>measured</u> ?
g. Is the specified and measureable goal <u>attainable</u> by the people who will participate in the program (target population)?
h. Is the specified, measureable, and attainable goal <u>relevant</u> for the target population?
i. What is the <u>timeframe</u> within which the specified, measureable, attainable, and relevant goal is likely to be attained?
<b>Program Design Component #4: Eligibility Standards and Criteria</b>
a. What members of the target population are <u>eligible</u> to participate in the program? What are the criteria for eligibility?
<b>Program Design Component #5: Policies and Procedures</b>
a. What <u>policies</u> will guide personnel in how to function within the program (matters of how program will operate, such as who can be provided the program, how they can receive it, and what can be expected from participants following entry into program)?
b. What <u>procedures</u> will guide personnel in how to function within the program (e.g., way for implementers to proceed in doing things)?
<b>Program Design Component #6: Methods and Techniques</b>
a. What <u>methods</u> do personnel use with participants as a means to facilitate goal attainment (e.g., according to some convention, best practice, curriculum guide, or plan)?

b. What <u>techniques</u> do personnel use with participants as a means to facilitate goal attainment (e.g., ways of performing mechanical details of a skill)?
<b>Program Design Component #7: Materials</b>
a. What <u>materials</u> are used in conjunction with the methods and techniques (e.g., books, tapes, manuals, software, worksheets, other products)?
i. Who are <u>targeted</u> (i.e., all of the target population, some of the population, personnel)?
ii. How is the material <u>used</u> (i.e., frequency, intensity, duration, condition)?
iii. What is <u>expected to happen</u> when the material is used (i.e., anticipated reactions of user, contributions to learning, practicality for use)?
b. Are <u>forms and checklists</u> used to allow data to be collected as a basis for decisions to be made about the program?
i. <u>Who</u> is to use the forms or checklists and for what purpose?
ii. <u>How</u> are the forms and checklists to be used and what training is necessary to assure that they are used correctly and reliability?
iii. What is expected to happen <u>as a result</u> of using the forms or checklists in terms of program action?
<b>Program Design Component #8: Equipment</b>
a. What <u>equipment</u> (hardware and related devices) helps support program operations (e.g., support program methods)?

<b>Program Design Component #9: Facilities</b>
a. In which <u>facilities</u> (building, rooms, other places) does the program operate?
<b>Program Design Component #10: Components, Phases, and Activities</b>
a. What are the <u>components and the phases</u> that delineate the process of the program and how it will be implemented?
b. What are the <u>activities</u> of the program (what people do and how they do it) for each component and phase?
<b>Program Design Component #11: Budget</b>
a. What is the budget that supports program operations?
<b>Program Design Component #12: Personnel</b>
a. Who are the personnel responsible for implementation of the program?
b. For each component or phase, what personnel will be associated with it?
i. What are the <u>roles</u> of the personnel (the part or function a person is to perform with respect to the program or component)?
ii. What are the <u>responsibilities</u> of the personnel (specific tasks or activities assigned to the person)?
iii. What are the <u>relationships</u> of the personnel (manner in which person is to relate to other people associated with the component or to overall program)?

<b>Program Design Component #13: Incentives</b>
a. What are the <u>incentives</u> that help set the conditions so that the program personnel and participants will want to follow through on the program?
<b>Program Design Component #14: Program Evaluation Plan</b>
a. What is the <u>program evaluation plan</u> that will allow data to be gathered and analyzed so that judgments of worth and merit can be made about the program?
i. What are evaluation questions, data collection variables, methods/ instruments/ procedures for data collection, methods/ procedures for data analysis and interpretation, and guidelines for communicating evaluation results?

*Based on information and suggested questions provided in: Maher, C. A. (2012). Planning and Evaluating Human Services Programs: A Resource Guide for Practitioners. Authorhouse: Bloomington, IN.*



Appendix D  
Assessment of Best- Practices Framework

**Assessment of Best- Practices Framework:**

**Best- Practices in the Field of Secondary Transition Services for Students with Severe Disabilities**

*Based on predictors of improved post-graduation outcomes, characteristics of exemplary transition programs, and standards/ recommendations set by organizations and government.*

**General Aspects of the Program**

- Inclusion in general education is a predictor of post-school outcomes in areas of education, employment, and independent living (Test et al., 2009).

**To what extent are students in the program with general education students?** Check the one category that applies:

- Less than 20%
- 20 to 40%
- 40 to 60%
- 60 to 80%
- Greater than 80%

- Student support and the provision of support services is a predictor of post-school outcomes in areas of education, employment, and independent living (Kohler et al., 1994; Test et al., 2009).

**What support services are provided to students?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Occupational guidance
- Educational guidance
- Independent living guidance
- Support on the job site
- Support from families
- Support from agencies
- Support from friends
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- Individuation in the transition program and services should be provided to fit individual student needs (Aspel et al., 1998; National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, 2010; Witte, 2002).

**How does the program individualize services provided to students?** Narrate a description.

**In what way can services be adapted based on student' post graduation goals (i.e., academic versus occupational focus)?** Narrate a description.

- Higher exit exam requirements/ high school diploma status is a predictor of post-school outcomes (Test et al., 2009, U.S. Department of Education, 2004a).

**What exit requirements do students in the program have?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Completion of certain number of class credits earned in specific areas
- Passing a competency test
- Passing a state high school exit exam
- Passing a local high school exit exam
- Passing a series of benchmark exams
- Passing a performance based assessment
- Creation of a portfolio
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Do students in the program receive an alternative diploma or a standard diploma?**

Check the one category that applies:

- Alternative diploma
- Standard diploma

- Students should have access to the general education curriculum (U.S. Department of Education, 2004a).

**To what extent do students have access to the general education curriculum?** Check the one category that applies:

- Less than 20%
- 20 to 40%
- 40 to 60%
- 60 to 80%
- Greater than 80%

**What types of instructional accommodations and modifications are used to ensure access to the general education curriculum?** Check all the categories that apply.

- Less than 20%
- Differentiated Instruction
- Strategy Instruction
- Textbook Organization
- Technology Use
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

- A transition program should increase the school completion rates of students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2004a).

**How does the program increase students' school completion rates?** Check all the categories that apply.

- A staff member builds trusting relationship with students to monitor at-risk indicators and helps problem solve difficult situations between student and school
- Student engagement is promoted with the school
- Flexibility exists with punitive disciplinary practices
- Curriculum is relevant to students
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

- A transition program should provide youth development and leadership opportunities (National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, 2010).

**How does the program provide youth development and leadership opportunities?**

Narrate a description.

- A transition program should have quantitative or qualitative outcome data to make judgments on the effectiveness of the program (National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, 2010).

**How is the program evaluated?** Narrate a description.

**How are student outcomes measured?** Narrate a description.

#### **Skills Taught in the Program**

- Teaching self-care and independent living are predictors of post-school outcomes in areas of education, employment, and independent living (Aspel et al., 1998; Test et al., 2009; WestEd Center, 2011).

**What self-care and independent living skills are taught?** Check all the categories that

apply:

- Purchasing skills
- Self-advocacy skills
- Self-determination skills
- Functional reading sight words
- Functional math skills
- Banking skills
- Cooking skills
- Food preparation skills
- Grocery shopping skills
- Home maintenance skills
- Leisure skills
- Restaurant purchasing skills
- Safety skills
- Social skills training
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**How are life skills taught?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Community-based instruction
- Computer-assisted instruction
- Self-management
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**How does the program assist students in meeting their post-secondary goals for living arrangements and recreation/leisure activities?** Narrate a description.

- Social skills instruction is a predictor of post-school outcomes (Life Centered Career Education; Test et al., 2009).

**What types of social skills are taught to students?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Achieving self-awareness
- Acquiring self-confidence

- Achieving socially responsible behavior
- Maintaining good interpersonal skills
- Achieving independence
- Making adequate decisions
- Communicating with others
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### **Students' Self- Determination and Self- Advocacy**

- Enhancing the self-determination and self- advocacy of students with disabilities is a skill correlated with improved post-school success for students with disabilities (Aspel et al., 1998; Test et al., 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2004a).

#### **How does the program enhance and promote students' self-determination and self-advocacy skills (Aspel et al., 1998; OAR, 2006)?**

- Student centered transition planning
- Practicing common situations where may have to use self-advocacy skills
- Develop students' sense of strengths and weaknesses/ challenges
- Develop students' sense of supports and accommodations they will require
- Help students identify their goals
- Help students identify what they need to do to reach their goals
- Students should be able to identify and solve problems that may arise
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### **How are self-determination skills infused into the curriculum? Check all the categories that apply:**

- In language arts write about IEP goals
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

- One way to improve a student's self-determination is to include them in IEP and transition planning process (Aspel et al., 1998; Konrad & Test, 2004; Test& Grossi, 2011).

#### **What ways are students involved in the IEP process? Check all the categories that apply:**

- Planning the IEP
- Drafting the IEP
- Meeting to write the IEP
- Implementing the IEP
- Leading the IEP meeting
- Writing their IEP goals
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### **What ways are students involved in the transition planning process? Check all the categories that apply:**

- Planning their transition plan
- Drafting the transition plan

- Meeting to write the transition plan
- Implementing the transition plan
- Leading the transition planning meeting
- Writing their transition goals
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### **Students' Self- Exploration**

- A transition program should help students understand their unique learning issues and what adaptive strategies help them. A program should help students to identify their strengths and challenges in order to focus on target skills to be further developed (Witte, 2002).

**How does the program help students to understand their own learning, adaptive strategies, strengths, challenges, and skills to further target?** Provide a narrative description.

- Periodic failure helps students create more realistic perceptions of themselves. By keeping standards high and avoiding modifications/ accommodations when possible, it teaches students how to handle failure and effective ways to avoid failure (Witte, 2002).

**How does the program teach students how to handle failure and ways to avoid failure?** Provide a narrative description.

**How does the program keep standards high and avoid modifications when possible?** Provide a narrative description.

### **Individual Education Plan (IEP) Characteristics**

- There should be the expectancy in reaching for higher levels of proficiency in all life functional skill areas (Witte, 2002).

**How do IEP goals reflect high standards?** Provide a narrative description.

IEPs should have present functioning levels to make best educational decisions (Witte, 2002).

**How are functional levels kept present on IEPs?** Provide a narrative description.

#### **Individual Transition Plan (ITP) Characteristics**

- ITPs should include vocational skill profiles (strength oriented), transition supports, and post-school follow-up procedures (Witte, 2002).

**What things are included in students' ITPs?** Check all the categories that apply.

- Strength based vocational skill profile
- Transition supports
- Post-school follow-up procedures
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

- Goals of desired post-secondary outcomes and goals should be developed in several areas in the ITP. For example in: employment, continuing education, adult living, functional life skills, social skills, work skills, and career exploration and training (Witte, 2002).

**What types of areas are goals developed for students in the program?** Check all the categories that apply.

- Employment
- Continuing education
- Adult living
- Functional life skills
- Social skills
- Work skills
- Career exploration and training
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

- The ITP should be reviewed annually as part of IEP (Witte, 2002).

**How often is the ITP reviewed?** Check the one category that applies:

- Annually as part of IEP
- Annually, but not as part of the IEP
- Less than annually: \_\_\_\_\_
- More than annually: \_\_\_\_\_

- Work transition plans should include information packets for employers and businesses since employers may not be well educated on needs and legal safeguards of individuals with disabilities (Witte, 2002).

**What information in the ITP is provided to employers and businesses?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Needs of student
- Legal safeguards of individuals with disabilities
- Who to contact with questions or concerns
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### **Vocational Assessment**

- A comprehensive vocational assessment provides information needed in order to assist in the appropriate educational and vocational planning of students that will allow them to acquire the skills they need to make a successful transition to work and community life. Data can be gathered as part of a CST evaluation, and whatever information is not collected at that time should be by other means during Levinson's Exploration stage (age 15-24). Since various jobs require different skill sets in order to be a good employee and to also enjoy that profession, this assessment serves to help appropriately match a student with their prospective career (Levinson, 2002).

**Does the program conduct vocational assessments for students?** Check the one category that applies:

- Yes, for all students
- Yes, for some students: Indicate percentage: \_\_\_\_\_
- No

- A comprehensive vocational assessment should consist of multiple assessment methods (Levinson, 2002; Smith et al., 1995).

**What is included in the vocational assessments conducted by the program?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Record review
- Observations
- Interviews
- Paper and pencil tests to assess interests (i.e., Self-Directed Search, Strong Interest Inventory, Interest Assessment 2<sup>nd</sup> ed)
- Aptitude tests
- Performance tests (evaluate specific abilities related to job performance)



- Work samples
- Situational assessments
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

- A comprehensive vocational assessment assesses skills related to many areas (Levinson, 2002).

**What skills are assessed in the vocational assessments conducted by the program?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Psychological Functioning
- Social Functioning
- Educational/ Academic Functioning
- Physical/ Medical Functioning
- Vocational Functioning
- Other

- Vocational assessment should involve cooperation, collaboration, and consultation a variety of professionals (Levinson, 2002; Smith et al., 1995).

**Who is involved in the program's vocational assessment process?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Teachers
- Other school professionals: \_\_\_\_\_
- Community agency personnel
- State agency personnel
- Students
- Parents
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

- Assessment questions should encompass services needed, skills acquired, and what training is needed to acquire other skills (Levinson, 2002).

**What assessment questions are part of the program's vocational assessment process?**

Check all the categories that apply:

- What services will the student need to make a successful transition to post school life?
- Has the student acquired job-seeking skills?
- What additional training does the student need in order to be employable?
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### **Vocational/ Work Education, Training, and Experience**

- When students receive vocational education and training/ work experience at the secondary level are more likely to have better post- school outcomes, such as in areas of postsecondary vocational training or competitive employment (Aspel et al., 1998; Kohler, 1993; Kohler et al., 1994; National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, 2010; Test et al., 2009; Wagner et al., 1993). Career awareness is a predictor of post-school outcomes (Test et al., 2009).

**What types of vocational/ employment skills are students taught?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Job specific employment skills
- Computer assisted Job specific employment skills
- Completing a job application
- Employment skills using community based instruction
- Self-management for employment skills
- Job-related social/ communication skills
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**What types of training experiences are provided to students in the program?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Paid employment/ work experience
- Non-paid employment/ work experience
- Classroom training experiences
- Community training experiences
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**How is career awareness developed in students?** Provide a narrative.

- Community work experiences are a predictor of post-school employment outcomes (White& Weiner, 2004). The combination of duration of Community-Based Training (CBT) that included on-the-job training and age appropriate physical integration with non-disabled peers has been shown to predict successful integrated employment at time of transition (a paid job with non-disabled co-workers at graduation; White& Weiner, 2004).

**To what extent do students have work experiences in the community?** Check the category that applies to the percentage of student in the program who have these experiences:

- 0 to 25 %
- 26 to 50%
- 51 to 75%

- 76 to 100%

**What is the duration of their community- based training?** Check and complete the category that applies:

- \_\_\_ hours per day
- \_\_\_ days per week
- \_\_\_ days per month
- \_\_\_ months per year
- \_\_\_ years
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**To what extent are students integrated with non-disabled peers?** Check the category that applies:

- 0 to 25 %
- 26 to 50%
- 51 to 75%
- 76 to 100%

- Paid employment while in school is another predictor of post-school success (Test et al., 2008; Test et al., 2009). Half year to full year paid work programs during the senior year have been proven to be effective in increasing the likelihood of sustained employment after graduation (Witte, 2002).

**To what extent are students in the program paid for their work experiences?** For each category indicate the percentage of students in the program who apply to each category:

- Half year paid experiences - \_\_\_\_\_ percent
- Full year paid work experiences - \_\_\_\_\_ percent
- No paid work experiences - \_\_\_\_\_ percent

- Individuals with severe disabilities often require increased supports in places of employment and supported work on the job site has been shown to have benefits compared to other work environments (e.g., sheltered workshops; Olney& Kennedy, 2001; Rusch& Hughes, 1989). Additionally, job-site training along and simulation training off the job site has been shown to lead to improved work related skills when compared to just job-site training for individuals with Autism (Lattimore, Parsons, & Reid, 2006).

**What supports are provided to students on and off the job site?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Job coaches
- Modifications
- Enhanced training
- Job-site training and stimulation training off the job site
- Job-site training
- Stimulation training off the job site
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## **Family Involvement**

- Family involvement and participation in educational planning, life planning, and decision making is a predictor of improved post-school outcomes. Programs should increase informed parent participant and involvement (Hasazi, Gordan, & Roe, 1985; Kohler, 1993; National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004; Test et al., 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2004a).

**How are families involved in the program, in students' education and life planning, in decision making?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Helping with planning
- Helping to draft the plan
- Meeting to write plan
- Helping to implement the plan
- Attending meetings
- Leading meetings
- Helping to write goals
- Helping students make decisions
- Phone conferences with school staff
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**How does the program try to enhance informed parent participation?** Provide a narrative description.

**What are the barriers to family involvement?**

- Stress on families
- Unable to attend meetings due to other obligations
- Lack of family understanding or knowledge of the process
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### **Interagency Collaboration**

- Involvement and collaboration between various systems (i.e., programs, businesses, agencies) is a predictor of improved post-school outcomes (Aspel et al., 1998; Kohler, 1993; Kohler et al., 1994; National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2004; National Council on Disability, 2000; Test et al., 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2004a; U.S. Department of Education, 2007). At age 16, representation on student's team should broaden to include outside agency members (Witte, 2002).

**What agencies or systems collaborate with the school and the student?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Other programs: \_\_\_\_\_
- Businesses
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
- Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD)
- National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY)
- Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)
- New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)
- New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE)
- Autism New Jersey
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Of the agencies that collaborate with the school and the student, what is their involvement in the transition process?** Check all the categories that apply:

- Attend student IEP meetings
- Attend student transition planning meetings
- Observe student in school
- Observe student in workplace
- Provide resources to student and their families
- Provide resources to school
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**How is it determined which agencies and outside systems will be involved in the transition process?** Provide a narrative description.

**How are relationships established between the school and other systems? How are business partnerships formed?** Provide a narrative description.

**What are barriers to interagency collaboration?** Provide a narrative description.

- Based on the most effective policies and practices for agency involvement in transition services (U.S. Department of Education, 2007):

**Is an IEP/ transition plan and individualized plan for employment (IPE) coordinated before the student completes high school?** Check the one category that applies:

- Yes, all the time
- Some of the time: \_\_\_\_ percent of the time
- No, never

**Do vocational rehabilitation agency personnel provide career counseling and guidance services to eligible transition-aged youths who are still attending high school?** Check the one category that applies:

- Yes, all the time
- Some of the time: \_\_\_\_ percent of the time
- No, never

**Do vocational rehabilitation agency personnel actively build rapport and personally encourage eligible transition-aged youths in their efforts at school and in the work experience activities?** Check the one category that applies:

- Yes, all the time
- Some of the time: \_\_\_\_ percent of the time
- No, never

**What are the barriers to these practices?** Provide a narrative description.

#### **Post- Graduation Support**

- Adults with special needs often need support beyond the secondary level (Witte, 2002).

**How are help-seeking skills for this period of their life taught in the program's curriculum?** Provide a narrative description.

**Does the program provide services or have re-entry options for adults who graduated from the program who need additional job skills, skill enhancement, or other services and support for new life adjustment issues? Provide a narrative description.**

**What resources on information are students provided with? Where they can find these services and supports once they graduate? Provide a narrative description.**

Appendix E  
IRB Letter of Consent

**Consent Form to Participate in a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a study of the Students Achieving Independent Life Skills (LIFE SKILLS) Program. The purpose of this study is to gather information about the LIFE SKILLS program in order to put the program into evaluable format and to evaluate the program's use of best practices. This program evaluation is being conducted for the Piscataway School District by Alyssa Augustyniak of Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology as part of her dissertation project. You were selected as a participant in this study because of your involvement and knowledge of the LIFE SKILLS program.

If you decide to participate, Ms. Augustyniak may conduct an interview with you to find out more information about the activities of the LIFE SKILLS program. Ms. Augustyniak will also conduct observations of the program (observations will be conducted of program activities during school day hours) and review program documents. Observations and interviews will take place in the building where the LIFE SKILLS program is housed. In addition to observing the program in the classroom setting, Ms. Augustyniak may have the opportunity to conduct observations of program activities that take place at businesses in the community (job sites). Observations and interviews will begin once IRB approval is granted and will continue until June 2013 (end of 2013 school year).

Your participation in this study is part of the program evaluation process. The interviews and observations are not about individual staff members, but about the program itself. The director and the superintendent of schools have approved the program evaluation process. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. All information, when aggregated, will not show who said what. No one will be identified by name and the district itself will not be identified in the dissertation. This is a program evaluation of the LIFE SKILLS program and not an evaluation of personnel.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. There are no alternatives to participating in this study. There are few foreseeable risks to participating in this study. Individuals who choose to participate in interviews and observations will increase the knowledge of the LIFE SKILLS program's current activities and practices. Information and resources related to facilitating and improving the program will be shared with personnel at the completion of the evaluation. Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relation with the Piscataway School District or with Rutgers University. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Augustyniak. If you have any additional questions later about the study, please contact Alyssa Augustyniak at (908) 892-0787 or [alyssa.augustyniak@gmail.com](mailto:alyssa.augustyniak@gmail.com) who will be happy to answer them. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:



Subject Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human  
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
3 Rutgers Plaza  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559  
Tel: 848 932-0150  
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which you may be entitled after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study. Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study. You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix F  
Proposed Program Evaluation Protocols

Protocol #1:

<i>Question</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To what extent do students progress when in the Life Skills Program?</b></li> </ul>
<i>Data Collection Variables</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of progress made by the student over time, while in the program</li> <li>• Look at progress in relation to areas that are reflected in the goals of the program</li> <li>• Select rating scales that have indexes that measure the following areas:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Independent/ Daily Living Skills</li> <li>○ Job Skills</li> <li>○ Functional Academic Skills</li> <li>○ Social/ Community Involvement</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>Data Collection Methods, Instruments, Procedures</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preprogram/ Post program procedure: Can administer rating scale when student first enters the program and when they exit the program, or</li> <li>• Time series procedure: Can administer rating scale when student first enters the program, during the program (at certain time points), and at the conclusion of the program</li> <li>• Examples of rating scales that can be utilized (Harrison&amp; Raineri, 2008)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Adaptive Behavior Assessment System (ABAS)</li> <li>○ Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales (VABS)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Can also look at other data sources: observations, progress reports</li> </ul>
<i>Methods and Procedures for Data Analysis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider Point in Time Reference Frame: Data collected at one point in time will be compared to data collected at another point in time</li> <li>• Qualitative analysis of rating scale data</li> <li>• Want to see if there are significant improvements in progress of individual students (will contribute to individual student planning) and if there are significant improvement in progress of program as a whole (will contribute to program evaluation process)</li> </ul>
<i>Program Evaluation Personnel and Responsibilities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify personnel in district or outside consultant who will collect and analyze data.</li> </ul>
<i>Guidelines for Communication and Use of Program Evaluation Information</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decide who information will be communicated to, what information will be communicated, and when this will occur</li> </ul>

Protocol #2:

<i>Question</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To what extent are students successful following their graduation from the Life Skills Program? (look at student outcomes post-graduation)</b></li> </ul>
<i>Data Collection Variables</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcomes or benefits can be in the areas of:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Engagement in community</li> <li>○ Engagement in employment; Placements</li> <li>○ Living arrangements</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>Data Collection Methods, Instruments, Procedures</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questionnaire sent to all students who graduated from program</li> <li>• Post Program Procedure: Data collected only at conclusion of the program; Determine time points to administer questionnaire: For example, 1, 3, or 5 years after graduation (short or long term outcomes)</li> <li>• Determine if questionnaire should be administered at multiple time points: For example, 1 year and 5 years after graduation</li> <li>• Examples of surveys that could be utilized:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Selected items from NLTS-2 survey</li> <li>○ Add additional questions to current NJDOE measure already being used 1 year after graduation</li> <li>○ See Appendix x for a sample survey that could be used to answer this evaluation question</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>Methods and Procedures for Data Analysis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative analysis of surveys</li> <li>• Consider Normative Reference Frame: Compare data to a statistical norm or norm group</li> <li>• When interpreting data, consider student ability in relation to outcomes (can group outcomes based on disability classification and/or placement in division I or II)</li> <li>• When interpreting data, consider how long since student graduated (can group outcomes based on students who graduated 1 year ago, 5 years ago, etc.)</li> <li>• When interpreting data, consider how many years they were enrolled in the program (could potentially range from 1 to 4 years)</li> </ul>
<i>Program Evaluation Personnel and Responsibilities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify personnel in district or outside consultant who will collect and analyze data.</li> </ul>
<i>Guidelines for Communication and Use of Program Evaluation Info.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decide who information will be communicated to, what information will be communicated, and when this will occur</li> </ul>

Protocol #3:

<i>Question</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To what extent are families satisfied with the program?</b></li> </ul>
<i>Data Collection Variables</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfaction can be in the areas of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Appropriateness of curriculum to student</li> <li>○ Opportunities made available to students</li> <li>○ Degree of involvement with their child's transition planning</li> <li>○ Understanding of the program</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>Data Collection Methods, Instruments, Procedures</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questionnaire sent to parents</li> <li>• Focus groups with parents and program personnel</li> </ul>
<i>Methods and Procedures for Data Analysis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative analysis of Questionnaires</li> <li>• Quantitative analysis of Focus groups: For example, find themes among answers to focus group questions</li> </ul>
<i>Program Evaluation Personnel and Responsibilities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify personnel in district or outside consultant who will collect and analyze data.</li> </ul>
<i>Guidelines for Communication and Use of Program Evaluation Information</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decide who information will be communicated to, what information will be communicated, and when this will occur</li> </ul>

Appendix G  
Sample Post-Graduation Outcome Survey

*Part 1: NJDOE Student Demographic Profile*

*Part 2: NJDOE Post-School Data Collection Survey*

*Part 3: Amendment to Post-School Data Collection Survey*

*Notes:* Part 1 and Part 2 are the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education survey that is required by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) to study post-school outcomes of students with disabilities, ages 14-21, who leave public school. School districts are collecting this information on post-school outcomes 1 year after graduation. Part 3 includes selected sections and items from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS-2): NLTS2 Young Adult Questionnaire 2009.

**Part 1: Student Demographic Profile**

**Directions:**

- Complete Student Demographic Profile (PART 1) from student records, prior to interview.
- Verify match between student name and student ID number.
- DO NOT SEPARATE PART I: Student Demographic Profile from PART II: the Post-School

Survey Questions.

- Remove the Student Name (Question #3) prior to sending the completed survey to NJDOE
- Conduct phone or in-person interviews to complete PART II: Post School Survey. (pp. 5-6)

1. School District Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. School District Code: \_\_\_\_\_ (4 digits)

3. \*\* Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Student's Survey ID: \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ (3 digits)

5. Student's date of birth: Month (mm): \_\_\_\_ Day (dd): \_\_\_\_ Year (yyyy): \_\_\_\_

6. Student's PRIMARY special education disability (CHECK ONE OPTION):

- \_\_\_\_\_ (1) Mental Retardation/Cognitive Impairment
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2) Hearing Impairments
- \_\_\_\_\_ (3) Speech or Language impairment
- \_\_\_\_\_ (4) Visual impairments
- \_\_\_\_\_ (5) Emotional disturbance
- \_\_\_\_\_ (6) Orthopedic impairments

- (7) Other health impairments
- (8) Specific learning disabilities
- (9) Deaf/blindness
- (10) Multiple disabilities
- (11) Autism
- (12) Traumatic brain injury

7. Gender (CHECK ONE OPTION):

- (1) Female
- (2) Male

8. Ethnicity in school records (CHECK ONE OPTION): Is the student Hispanic or Latino?

- (1) Yes (A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South of Central American or Other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.)
- (2) No

9. Race in school records (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- (1) American Indian or Alaska Native
- (2) Asian
- (3) Black or African American
- (4) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- (5) White

10. Manner in which student exited school (CHECK ONE OPTION)

- (1) Graduated
- (2) Reached maximum age
- (3) Dropped out or Moved Not Know to be Continuing

11. What post-school goals are included in this **student's IEP for the period** immediately following high school? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- (1) Attend a postsecondary school, training, or education
- (2) Secure employment
- (99) No Answer Provided

12. What placement was the student in at the time of graduation or exiting from school? (CHECK ONE OPTION).

- (1) At least 80% or more of the school day in the presence of general education students.
- (2) Between 40-79% of the school day in the presence of general education students.
- (3) Less than 40% of the school day in the presence of general education students.
- (4) Public Separate School for more than 50% of the school day (including: Educational Services Commission, Regional Day school, Special Services School District, Jointure Commission, or Public College Operated Program).
- (5) Private Day School for more than 50% of the school day.
- (6) Private Residential.
- (7) Public Residential.
- (8) Home Instruction.

\_\_\_(9) Correctional Facility.  
 \_\_\_(10) Other, specify: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Did the student have any work-based learning/structured learning experiences while they were in high school?

\_\_\_ (1) YES  
 \_\_\_ (2) NO

14. Prior to graduation was the student referred to any adult service agency?

\_\_\_ (1) YES  
 \_\_\_ (2) NO

Please check all that apply:

Agency	Phone	Web Site
<input type="checkbox"/> NJ Division of Disability Services For Information and Referral Assistance	1-888-285-3036	www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dds
<input type="checkbox"/> NJ Division of Vocational Rehab. Services	609-292-5987	www.state.nj.us/labor/dvrs/vrsindex.html
<input type="checkbox"/> NJ Commission on Higher Education	609-292-2955	www.nj.gov/highereducation/sn.htm
<input type="checkbox"/> NJ Transit Access Link	1-800-955-2321	www.njtransit.com/as_al.shtml
<input type="checkbox"/> County Paratransit System		www.njtransit.com/as_paratransit.shtml
<input type="checkbox"/> NJ Comm. for the Blind and Visually Impaired	973-648-3333	www.state.nj.us/humanservices/cbvi
<input type="checkbox"/> NJ Division of Youth and Family Services	1-800-331-3937	www.nj.gov/dcf/about/divisions/dyfs/index.html
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Mental Health Agency	1-800-382-6717	www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dmhs/community-services.html
<input type="checkbox"/> Center for Independent Living	732-571-3703	<a href="http://www.nisilc.org">www.nisilc.org</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Security Administration	1-800-772-1213	<a href="http://www.ssa.gov/disability">www.ssa.gov/disability</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities	1-800-832-9173	www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd

## Part 2: Post-School Data Collection Survey

Student's Survey ID: \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ (3 digits)

Directions:

- These data are to be gathered One Year following the student's exit from high school.
- Obtain information via phone or in-person interview.
- Record dates and time of attempted contact(s) for Part II of the survey:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

### POSTSECONDARY SCHOOL

1. At any time since leaving high school, have you ever been enrolled in any school, job training, or education program?

- (1) NO → GO TO QUESTION 4
- (2) YES → GO TO QUESTIONS 2 AND 3
- (99) No Answer

2. Did you complete an entire term? (Note: “Completing a term” includes completing a quarter, semester, intersession, summer or on-line)

- (1) NO
- (2) YES
- (99) No Answer

3. Tell me about the kind of school or job training program you have been enrolled in. (Directions to Interviewer – Ask as an “open ended question”. Clarify, as needed, and then CHECK ONE OPTION below:)

- (1) High school completion document or certificate (Adult Basic Education, GED)
- (2) Short-term education or employment training program (WIA, Job Corps, Youth Corps etc.)
- (3) Vocational/Technical School - less than a 2-year program
- (4) Higher Education – 2 year community college
- (5) Higher Education – 4 year college/university
- (88) Other (Name the institution/agency and the type of education or training BELOW): \*\*

---

- (99) No Answer

Note to Interviewer:

\*\* (Other - 88) If the response does not fit into categories 1-5, or you are unsure how to code the response, check other (88). Then in the space provided below, write (1) the name of the institution or agency from which the student received his or her training and (2) the type of education or training, he or she received.

## EMPLOYMENT

4. At any time since leaving high school, have you ever worked?

- (1) NO → STOP: DATA COLLECTION COMPLETED
- (2) YES → GO TO QUESTIONS 5, 6, 7 & 8
- (99) No Answer

5. Since leaving high school, have you worked for a total of 3 months (about 90 days)? (Directions to Interviewer: Tell the respondent that the days do not need to be in a row.)

- (1) NO



- \_\_ (2) YES
- \_\_ (99) No Answer

6. Did you work 20 hours or more per week? (Directions to interviewer: Ask how many hours a week the person worked and complete (1) OR (2) PLUS (88) below).

- \_\_ (1) NO
- \_\_ (2) YES
- \_\_ (88) Indicate the number of hours worked per week \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_ (99) No Answer

7. Were you paid at least minimum wage (\$7.25 an hour)?

- \_\_ (1) NO
- \_\_ (2) YES
- \_\_ (99) No Answer

8. Tell me about the job you have or have had since leaving high school? (CHECK ONE OPTION) (Directions to Interviewer – Ask as an “open ended question”. Clarify, as needed, and then CHECK ONE OPTION below:)

- \_\_ (1) In a company, business, or service with people with and without disabilities
  - \_\_ (2) In the military
  - \_\_ (3) In supported employment (paid work with services and wage support to the employer)
  - \_\_ (4) Self-employed (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
  - \_\_ (5) In your family’s business (e.g., farm, store, catering)
  - \_\_ (6) In sheltered employment (where most workers have disabilities)
  - \_\_ (7) Employed while in jail or prison
  - \_\_ (88) Other (Specify below (1) where the student worked and (2) what the student did: \*\*
- 
- \_\_ No Answer (99)

Note to Interviewer:

\*\* (Other - 88) If the response does not fit into categories 1-7, or you are unsure how to code the response, check other (88). Then in the space provided below, write a description of (1) where the student worked and (2) what the student did .

**Part 3: Amendment to Post-School Data Collection Survey**

**Work Experiences**

1. Do you have a paid job NOW, other than work around the house?
  - Yes
  - No → skip to next section
  
2. How many different jobs do you have now? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Thinking about all the jobs you have, about how many hours a week do you usually work?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your job title at this job (where you spend the most time)? (If you have more than one paid job now, please answer the next questions about the job where you spend the most time.) Please enter your job title.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What are your main job duties at this job? Please describe.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. About how many hours a week do you usually work at this job? \_\_\_\_\_
7. If you work part time (less than 35 hours), do you work part time because you want to or would you rather work full time? Please mark (x) ONE box.
- Does not apply, I work full time.
  - Want to work part time
  - Would rather work full time
8. About how long have you had this job? \_\_\_\_\_
9. About how much are you paid per hour at this job? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Are you paid more now than when you started this job?
- Yes
  - No
11. Have you been promoted or taken on more responsibility since you started this job?
- Yes
  - No
12. As part of this job, do you get...
- Paid vacation or sick leave
  - Health insurance
  - Retirement benefits, like a 401k
13. At this job, do you think...
- You are pretty well paid for your work?
  - You are treated pretty well by others at your job?
  - You have lots of chances to work your way up?
  - You put your education and training to good use?
14. How did you find this job? Mark (x) in all that apply
- You got the job yourself
  - You used an employment agency or other service program

- Someone at school helped you
- A family member helped you
- A friend or someone else you know helped you (neighbor, friend of family member)

15. Has someone from an agency or program stayed in touch with you to check on how you are doing on the job?

- Yes
- No

16. Have you ever received any services, accommodations, or other help from your employer because a learning problem, disability, or other special need?

- No
- Yes

If No, did you ask for or apply for any accommodations or help?

- No
- Yes

If Yes, what services did you receive?

\_\_\_\_\_

17. At your job, do most of the workers have disabilities?

- No
- Yes

## Services

1. Since leaving school, have you received any services or help, other than from family or friends?

- No, I have not received any services or help
- Vocational or career help
- Financial aid
- Educational assistance
- Reader or interpreter
- Independent living or occupational therapy
- Childcare services or parent training
- Mental health, counseling, psychological services
- Social work services
- Physical therapy
- Devices or assistance technology
- Transportation assistance
- Medical services for diagnosis or evaluation
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you think you need any services?

- Yes

No

3. If yes to #2, what services do you think you need?

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SRI International. (2009). The National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2): NLTS2 Young Adult Questionnaire 2009. Washington, D.C: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

U.S. Department of Education. New Jersey Post-School Outcomes Data Collection Protocol: For students with disabilities exiting during 2010-2011. Washington, D.C: U.S. Author, Office of Special Education.