

Chapter 26

A Model for Interdisciplinary Preparation in Culturally-Responsive, Evidence-Based Transition Planning

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ABSTRACT

Over the past seven years, we have provided intensive training to cohorts of school psychology and special education graduate students. Through rigorous shared coursework, in-person and virtual learning, coordinated school-based fieldwork, and enhanced study (conference attendance, seminar participation, case study completions) scholars gained the skills to establish and sustain culturally responsive, evidence-based transition services for students with disabilities, including those high-intensity needs. This chapter describes the steps the co-authors took to enhance the training and service delivery of school psychologists and special education teachers to provide effective transition services.

Students with disabilities generally fair less well in adulthood than those without disabilities (Mazzotti et al., 2021; Newman, 2011; Wagner, et al., 2014; Winsor et al., 2018). For example, the postsecondary completion rates of young adults with disabilities were lower than that of their peers in the general population. Data from a national sample showed that while 51% of similar-age peers in the general population had graduated or completed postsecondary, only 29% of youth with disabilities at 4-year universities completed college (Sanford et al., 2011). Other reports have indicated that these disparities in student outcomes may be influenced by type of disabilities. Newman et al., (2011) noted that in the employment domain for instance, young adults with intellectual and multiple disabilities were less likely

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to have been employed than young adults with other health impairments, speech/language impairments, learning disabilities, or hearing impairments.

In response to the disparities, schools were mandated by federal law to provide transition planning to better prepare students with disabilities for adult life. For more than 30 years, researchers have reported that special education teachers express being under-prepared across essential areas of transition (Plotner, et al. 2016). This lack of preparation is likely due to a failure by preservice special education programs to prepare teachers to be competent in meeting the transition needs of students with disabilities. As we sought to remedy this omission in special education teacher training, we decided to take an interdisciplinary approach and include school psychology students in this training because they could be strong partners in promoting evidence-based transition services due to their training in consultation, problem-solving and evidence-based interventions. Further, we decided to center the training on culturally-responsive transition services due to the potential to increase students with disabilities' adult outcomes by including families and cultural resources in a more consciousness manner.

Need for Evidence-based Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Transition Services

Culturally responsive and sustaining transition pedagogy can be described as an outcome-oriented process designed to prepare young adults for successful adulthood considering the unique sociocultural contexts within which all students thrive after high school. Transition educators who engage in culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies (CRSPs) are known to be effective in promoting post-secondary success by increasing student achievement and reducing opportunity gaps (Achola 2019; Achola & Greene, 2016; Christianakis, 2011). Research suggests that such educators foster academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness, and work toward the goal of preserving valued cultural heritages in pluralistic societies (Dickson et al., 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Morrison et al., 2008; Paris & Alim, 2012). These educators also raise students' consciousness about social justice issues, center on students' funds of knowledge, and provide a challenging transition curriculum tailored to address post-school goals.

More recently, the need for CRSP in transition has been amplified by the glaring inequities observed in student transition outcomes. Over the last 20 years, extensive patterns of racial/ethnic and class-based disparities in post school outcomes have been documented (Aucejo et al., 2020; Baker et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2011). The disparities are particularly prominent in the areas of access to quality transition programming (Landmark & Zhang, 2013), satisfaction with the transition experience, participation in gainful employment (Trainor, 2008; Trainor et al., 2014), and enrollment in post-secondary education (Rueda et al., 2005; Schuster et al., 2003). For example, compared to their peers from dominant communities (65.5%) young adults with disabilities from minoritized communities are more likely to receive individualized transition plans that are not compliant with Indicator 13 (Landmark & Zhang, 2013) and are less likely to be employed up to 8 years after graduating from high school. Similarly, many parents of youth from traditionally minoritized communities tend to be less satisfied with their level of involvement in the transition planning process compared to parents from other backgrounds (Cameto, et al., 2004; Greene, 2011; Rueda et al., 2005); they also struggle to access community resources (Cartledge et

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