Postsecondary Education-Focused Transition Planning Experiences of

English Learners with Disabilities

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Abstract

Transition planning is particularly important for dually-identified English learners with disabilities, who frequently face additional challenges to postsecondary education success. This study examined postschool expectations, transition planning experiences, and supports of a nationally representative sample of English learners with disabilities, based on secondary analysis of the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) 2012. Results demonstrated that these students' experiences were similar to other students with disabilities except that, according to parents, the transition component of the individualized education program (IEP) were likely to be developed by school personnel, with little input from students and family members, and necessary information about careers and financial aid was lacking. These findings underscore the intersectional identities and related experiences of this population and the implications for policy, transition education, and school services.

Key words: high school, bilingual learners, planning, disabilities, cultural competency, family involvement

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Postsecondary education has become increasingly important as the gap in earnings

between high school and college graduates continues to widen (Pew Research Center, 2014).

Census Bureau data indicate that 88% college graduates and 77% of those with some college

were employed, as compared with 69% of high school graduates (McFarland et al., 2017).

Although postsecondary education outcomes have generally improved for students with

disabilities as a whole, progress has not been consistent across disability, racial/ethnic, and

socioeconomic subpopulations (Newman et al., 2011). These differential outcomes are

particularly apparent for a growing sector of the U.S. school population: those who are dually-

identified as English learner (EL) students with disabilities. Many of these students face multiple

barriers to postsecondary success, including those associated with disability intertwined with

challenges linked to language and literacy development (Klingner, Artiles, & Barletta, 2006),

structural barriers associated with individual- and community-level discrimination and poverty,

and diminished access to high performing, resourced schools (Samson & Lesaux, 2015). To help

address some of these barriers, researchers have focused on identifying the secondary transition

practices and predictors related to improved post-school success (e.g., Doren, Gau, & Lindstrom,

2012; Haber et al., 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2016; Test et al, 2009). This paper examines the

postsecondary education-focused transition planning experiences of a nationally representative

sample of students dually-identified as ELs and as students with disabilities.

English learner students with disabilities are students who are dually identified as needing

to receive English language and disability related services. The EL term is a label with an

arguably deficit orientation; however, we use the term here to maintain consistency with how

education policy and school districts most frequently categorize emergent bilingual students who

receive English language services and who have not yet been reclassified as English proficient based on standardized measures. Students who receive English language support and services are one of the fastest growing groups in the U.S. school-aged population, representing 10% of the total U.S. public school students (McFarland et al., 2017). The majority of ELs (77%) speak Spanish at home, followed by Arabic (2%) and Chinese (2%). English learners have a range of immigration experiences; more than 50% are born in the U.S. (Flores, Park, Viano, & Coca, 2017). Additionally, ELs are vulnerable to poverty; 30% of Latino school-aged population, both with and without EL status, experiences poverty, with 14% of ELs experiencing homelessness (McFarland et al, 2017). They are more likely to attend schools in medium and large cities where 41% attend high poverty schools and 27% attend mid-high poverty schools (McFarland et al., 2017). Of ELs who immigrated to the U.S., unknown numbers experience interrupted education associated with access to schooling in their countries of origin and mobility (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011).

The amount and pedagogical approach to English instruction and services (i.e., English language development) also varies. While national data on reclassification (identified as proficient in English, no longer classified as EL students) is scarce, state-level data demonstrate that 30-50% of EL students are not reclassified after 7 years of receiving EL instruction (Estrada & Wang, 2018; Kieffer & Parker, 2016). Although failure to reclassify can be seen as an indicator of a disability, accurate identification of EL students who need special education services remains challenging (Klingner, Boardman, Eppolito, & Schonewise, 2012). Approximately 14% of ELs enrolled in U.S. public elementary and secondary schools are identified as also having a disability (McFarland et al., 2017). Dually-identified students represent 10% of U.S. students with disabilities who are served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; Lipscomb et al., 2017). Identifying disabilities among EL

students can be complicated by the difficulty of distinguishing between language development and a disability (Artiles & Klingner, 2006), particularly given the limited availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate language and psychoeducational assessments (Figueroa & Newsome, 2006; MacSwan & Rolstad, 2006).

Race, class, language, and immigration status are relevant to secondary and postsecondary experiences and outcomes (Flores & Drake, 2014; Flores et al., 2017). These intersecting identities and related experiences are particularly salient in the study of special education transition, which is built upon foundational theory and empirical evidence that school-based services and supports (e.g., transition planning) is an important contributor to postsecondary goal attainment (Test et al., 2009). Moreover, the efficacy of planning and education is closely tied to the expectations of families and students with disabilities (Grigal & Neubert, 2004; Powers, Geenen, & Powers, 2009). Yet, ELs with disabilities have not routinely been included in the extant transition literature, particularly in the study of intervention efficacy. Given what we understand about ELs whose experiences include some combination of interacting with additional service systems in English language development, the unique circumstances of individual and/or familial immigration, and likelihood of exposure to school- and family-level poverty, postsecondary transition for this population might differ from other students with disabilities.

To make sense of transition services and expectations of ELs with disabilities in light of their educational contexts, Bourdieu's (1986) capital theory, which posits that access and expectations are imbued with interrelated economic, cultural, and social capital, is useful. While economic capital is straightforward, cultural and social capital require definitions. Cultural capital refers to both material and intangible knowledge, skills, and dispositions informing our participation in interactions with people and institutions. Social capital refers to relationships

with individuals, groups, and societies that also inform how we participate in society. Capital in all forms, both generates and is generated by other forms of capital.

The value of capital is fluid and is constantly being shaped through the interactions of dominant and nondominant groups (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu's theoretical stance framework helps to explain the relationship between agency, such as student and family active participation in transition planning meetings and goal setting, and social reproduction (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Yosso, 2005). Agency, supported by the cultivation of capital, underscores the importance of transition education and services (Trainor, Morningstar, Murray, & Kim, 2013; Vorhies, Davis, Frounfelker, & Kaiser, 2012; Williams & Le Menestrel, 2013).

Historically, education policy in the U.S. has addressed the inclusion and support of students who need special services. Examples include the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015; ESSA) which includes in Title I, the mandate to provide meals and other services for America's youth living in poverty, and Title III, the mandate to provide English language development to immigrant and multilingual youth; and, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), addressing the needs of students with disabilities.

Parental engagement, also fundamental to U.S. education policy and explicitly addressed throughout both ESSA and IDEA, is a known lever of access to educational services (Lareau, 2000; Rodriguez, Blatz, & Elbaum, 2014). Extant education research has provided ample evidence that engagement is key to benefitting from educational opportunities in schools (Martin & Williams-Diehm, 2013; Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2010); however, engagement is most often defined by dominant values, beliefs, and cultural practices associated with White, middle class families in traditional two-parent households (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Rueda, Monzo, Shapiro, Gomez, & Blacher, 2005; Trainor, 2010).

Specific to transition, parents and students should be involved in educational decision making and goal setting at individualized education program (IEP) meetings that include transition planning (Martin et al., 2006; Test et al., 2009). Ideally, both in these formal meetings and in informal interactions, teachers, parents, and the student discuss the student's goals for life after high school and they jointly create a plan for goal attainment. Yet, during transition meetings, parents and students often are not actively involved in decision-making (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Javitz, & Valdes, 2012), nor have they been treated as equal partners (Martin et al., 2006). Participating in this meeting, enacting the plan, and maintaining attention to the goals across settings of home and school requires all forms of capital. For example, setting a postsecondary education goal requires, at a most basic level, the cultural and social capital needed to build a student's experiences and interests and document these for college admissions processes, to prepare for and take college exams, possibly with accommodations, and to plan for the financial costs associated with higher education. Additionally, this futures planning builds upon expectations of high school graduation and goals of postsecondary education, post school employment, and community engagement similar to youth without disabilities.

Transition planning supports may be particularly critical for secondary ELs with disabilities and their families because immigrant and first-generation families may be unfamiliar with processes and services available to adolescents with disabilities as they enter adulthood (Povenmire-Kirk, Lindstrom, & Bullis, 2010). Moreover, parents in immigrant and first-generation families may be less likely to have experienced the transition to postsecondary education themselves (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011; Kiyama, 2010). Unfortunately, existing scholarship indicates that interactions and meetings where immigrant and first-generation parents and youth share expectations and participate in planning often lack cultural

responsiveness, accessibility, or respect, undermining the positive impact of these processes (Geenen, Powers, & Lopez-Vasquez, 2005; Klingner & Harry, 2006).

Many researchers have extensively documented powerful associations between parents' expectations and children's outcomes in a variety of domains (Zhang, Haddad, Torres, & Chen, 2011). Among secondary school students, parents' expectations may play a key role in students' transition, informing whether youth enroll in postsecondary educational institutions, or attain employment. Parental expectations influence students' own expectations for their academic achievement, which in turn influence their motivation, and academic achievement, persistence, and enrollment (Doren, Gau, & Lindstrom, 2012). Moreover, these associations are considered bidirectional, with parents' and students' influencing one another, as well as academic achievement (Zhang et al., 2011).

Many of these findings are similar for immigrant youth and their families. Among Black and Latino immigrant and first-generation secondary students, parents tend to hold high expectations that their child will enroll in postsecondary education and their expectations strongly influence those of their students' (Chavira, Cooper, & Vasquez-Salgado, 2016; Irvin, Byun, Meece, Reed, & Farmer, 2016). Both parent and youth expectations are associated with the belief that education is linked to upward mobility (Arellanes, Viramontez Anguiano, & Lohman, 2017; Kiyama, 2010; Ojeda & Flores, 2008). Moreover, actual and perceived barriers such as economic hardship and discrimination have been associated with lowered student and parent expectations for Black and Latino youth (Behnke, Plunkett, Behnke, Sands, & Choi, 2009). Immigrant youth expectations can be influenced by immigration experiences (e.g., age, generational status, documentation issues, parents' education attainment), with parents' expectations higher than youth expectations (Arellanes et al., 2017; Perriera & Spees, 2015).

Consistent with research among students in the general population, researchers have found that parents' expectations for their student with a disability's academic achievement predict students' attainment of a high school diploma and enrollment in postsecondary institutions (Doren et al., 2012; Wagner, Newman, & Javitz, 2014). Moreover, there is evidence that among students with disabilities, the link between family socioeconomic status and children's academic outcomes is mediated by parents' expectations for children's academic outcomes (Wagner et al., 2014). The association between parents' expectations and students' academic outcomes has consistently been found across students identified with a range of disabilities; however, parents of students with disabilities tend to have lower expectations than parents of students in the general population (Newman, 2005). Additionally, in contrast to the higher expectations held by parents of immigrant youth (Arellanes et al., 2017; Ojeda & Flores, 2008) the expectations of parents of students with disabilities tend to be lower than those of that students hold for themselves (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Levine & Marder, 2007).

Given the importance of postsecondary education and the paucity of research focused on the experiences and expectations of transition-age ELs with disabilities and their families, this secondary analysis of the NLTS 2012 examined parent and student postsecondary education-focused expectations and transition activities of this nationally representative group of high school ELs with disabilities. The analyses addressed four questions:

1. What were the postsecondary education expectations of transition age ELs with disabilities and their families?

2. What were the transition planning experiences, perceptions, and knowledge of ELs with disabilities and their families?

3. To what extent did secondary schools help support the postsecondary education-focused transition activities of ELs with disabilities?

4. How did these experiences, perceptions, and knowledge compare with those of other

students with disabilities, as well as with those of students in the general population?

Method

The findings in this paper are based on secondary analyses of restricted data from the

third iteration of the National Longitudinal Transition Studies, the NLTS 2012.

NLTS 2012 Overview and Sample

NLTS 2012, includes a nationally representative sample of approximately 22,000

students, including students with disabilities who have an IEP (81%), students with disabilities

who have a 504 plan (5%), and students in the general population with no IEP or 504 Plan

(14%). The NLTS 2012 two-stage sampling process entailed first sampling a stratified national

probability sample of 572 school districts and special schools that serve deaf and/or blind

students in the secondary school age range. Of those districts, 432 (76%) agreed to participate.

The second sampling stage entailed random selection of students who were in grades 7 through

12 (or ungraded) and were 13 to 21 years old as of December 1, 2011. Students were selected

from each of 14 sample strata categories, including students with an IEP in each of the 12 federal

disability categories recognized by IDEA, students with a disability with a 504 Plan, and students

in the general population.

NLTS 2012 parent and youth surveys were completed in 2012 and 2013, when youth

were ages 12 to 23, and most still were in secondary school. Surveys were administered in

English or Spanish through a combination of computer-assisted interviewing (by phone and in

person) and through web-based surveys. Parents of youth younger than 18 were surveyed first

and subsequently the youth survey was attempted. Parents, or other responsible household adults,

provided responses for 16% of youth who were unable to respond for themselves with

accommodations. Approximately 12,900 parent surveys were completed, representing a 59%

response rate, and 11,130 youth survey were completed, a 51% response rate. The potential for nonresponse bias in the parent/youth survey was assessed and results indicate that weighting was successful in limiting the potential for bias. Weighting and non-response bias analysis of parent/youth survey processes are more fully described in the *NLTS 2012 Design Documentation* (Burghardt et al., 2017). During the student sampling phase, participating districts provided administrative records on student characteristics, including students' English learner status.

Current study sample. To be included in the sample for the current study, students needed to have a completed parent/youth survey and to have been in secondary school during the year the survey was completed. Additionally, because this study focused on transition planning-related activities and IDEA (2004) mandates that transition begin by 16 years of age, sample students were required to be 16 years or older. The sample included 280 ELs with disabilities, 3,730 students with disabilities with an IEP who were not English learners, and 1,010 students in the general population (those without an IEP). These sample sizes and those reported in all subsequent results are approximate and are rounded to the nearest ten, per Institute of Education Sciences (IES) data reporting requirements for a restricted-use dataset.

Measures

The following student demographic measures were from district records: disability category/IEP status (students with an IEP in the 12 federal disability categories, students without an IEP); race/ethnicity (Black-not Hispanic, Hispanic, Other); gender; and student's English learner status (districts identified whether students were Limited English Proficient).

Transition-related expectations, experiences, and knowledge measures were from the parent/youth surveys. To assess education expectations, students and their parents were asked to indicate the highest level of education attainment they expected the student would complete (1 = *less than a high school diploma,* 6 = *advanced degree*). Transition planning measures included

whether the parent had attended a transition planning meeting; student's participation in the

meetings (1= did not participate, 4 =took a leadership role); who came up with transition goals (1

= mostly school, 2=mostly family and/or student, 3= school, family and/or student equally);

whether student's interests and strengths had been discussed (1=*yes*), and whether parents had

talked with staff about post-high school education and employment options (1=*yes*). To measure

parents' perceptions about their knowledge related to postsecondary education, parents were

asked whether they believed each of the following statements would be an issue their child likely

would face post high school (each coded 1=*yes*): *We do not have enough information about*

education or training options; We do not know how to get financial aid or help paying for

school; and *Staff at the high school has not provided enough information about career planning*

or job opportunities. Parents and students also were asked whether the high school had provided

the following types of help related to postsecondary education transition planning: signing up for

college entrance tests, completing financial aid forms and college applications, reviewing college

entrance test results, and arranging or taking on visits to colleges or college fairs. Respondents

also were asked whether the student had taken several types of college placement examinations,

including the PSAT, ACT, and SAT (each coded 1=*yes,*).

Data Analysis

Weighted means and percentages are presented for ELs with disabilities, students with

disabilities who were not ELs, and students in the general population without an IEP. A standard

error is included for each mean and percentage. To provide the much-needed baseline depiction

of the transition-related experiences, expectations and perceptions of ELs with disabilities and

how they compare with those of other students with disabilities and with students in the general

population, this study used a two-sample *t* test with unequal variances to determine whether the

difference between the group averages of ELs with disabilities and those of students in each of

the other two groups were greater than would be expected to occur by chance. Statistically significant differences were set at a probability of 0.05. All statistics were weighted to be representative of the national population of secondary students in the NLTS 2012 age group and time frame.

Missingness varied from 0% to 2% across most variables and no imputation of missing values was conducted. However, districts had not provided English learner status information for approximately12% of the initial NLTS 2012 sample. To ensure that students in the NLTS 2012 sample with identified EL status were nationally representative of the full EL population, the NLTS 2012 EL subsample was reweighted in the current study to account for students with unknown EL status, using the following approach: (1) the combined weights of students with known and unknown EL status were summed for each student age and disability strata; (2) the weights of students with known EL status were summed for each age and disability strata; (3) the weights of students with unknown EL status was set to zero; and (4) the weights of students with known EL status were multiplied by the ratio of the sums from steps 1 and 2. Additionally, because these analyses were focused on school-related issues, the *enrolled youth weight* included in NLTS 2012 restricted data file was used in creating the reweighted sample. This weight limits the population to students who were enrolled in school when surveyed.

Results

Reflecting the demographic characteristics of ELs as a whole, transition-age ELs with disabilities were predominantly Latino, more likely to live in lower income households and in urban settings. In these, and other demographic characteristics, ELs with disabilities differed significantly from their peers with disabilities, as well as from the general student population. Almost three-quarters (71%) of ELs with disabilities were Latino, as compared with 18% of other students with disabilities, and 25% of those in the general population ($p < .001$ for both

comparisons). Almost 85% lived in households with incomes below 185% of the poverty level

for the state, household size, and year (the level used to define free or reduced-price lunch

eligibility in many districts) in comparison with 54% of other students with disabilities and 47%

of students in the general population ($p < .001$ for both comparisons). Additionally, more than

one third of the parents of ELs with disabilities had not completed high school, as compared with

approximately 12% of both other students with disabilities and students in the general population

($p < .001$ for both comparisons). English learners with disabilities also were more likely than their

peers in both comparison groups to reside in urban areas and less likely to live in towns or rural

settings (45% in urban settings vs. 28% and 25%, $p < .001$ for both comparisons). When

compared with other students with disabilities, dually-identified students were more likely to

have been categorized as having a specific learning disability (57% as compared to 46%, $p < .05$)

and were less likely to have autism, multiple disabilities, other health impairments, or traumatic

brain injury. Similar to students with disabilities who were not ELs, ELs with disabilities were

more likely to be male than were their peers in the general population.

Research Question 1: Postsecondary education expectations of students and their families

Students and parents were asked to indicate the highest level of schooling they expected

the student would attain. Approximately one third of the parents of ELs with disabilities did not

expect their child to continue their education beyond high school (Table 1). At the other end of

the educational spectrum, parents of 25% of ELs with disabilities expected their child would

complete a 4-year college degree and 11% expected their child would attain an advanced degree.

Education expectations of dually-identified students did not differ significantly from those of

their parents. Moreover, the expectations of both dually-identified parents and students did not

significantly differ from those of students with disabilities who were not English learners or their

parents. In contrast, the expectations of ELs with disabilities and their parents were markedly

lower than the expectations of their general population peers. Ten percent of parents of general population students expected the highest level of education their student would attain was a high school diploma or less, as compared with 34% ($p < .001$) of parents of ELs with disabilities.

Research Question 2: Transition-planning related experiences and parent knowledge

Parents of ELs with disabilities were as likely as parents of other transition-age students with disabilities to report having attended a transition planning meeting—approximately 58% of both groups of parents (Table 2). Additionally, the student's role during the IEP and transition planning meetings did not differ significantly for dually-identified students with disabilities as compared with other students with disabilities. Approximately one-quarter of ELs with disabilities were present during the transition planning meetings, but participated very little or not at all, whereas two in five (40%) provided some input, and 21% took a leadership role. Parents who attended transition planning meetings were asked about who primarily had come up with the goals on the IEP transition component. Parents of ELs with disabilities were more likely than parents of other students with disabilities to report that the school had mostly come up with the goals (51% vs. 39%, $p < .05$). In contrast, parents of other students with disabilities were more likely than parents of dually-identified students to report a joint development of the goals, with the school and the student and/or family being equally responsible. More than 90% of both groups of parents reported that their child's interests and strengths were discussed during the meeting. However, when parents were asked whether they had spoken with school staff about education and career options for their child post-high school, fewer parents of ELs with disabilities than other parents reported having this conversation (49% vs. 60%, $p < .05$).

Approximately one-third of parents of ELs with disabilities reported they did not have enough information about education options for their child after high school. Parents of ELs with disabilities were more likely than parents of students in the general population to state that they

did not know how to get financial aid (40% vs 28%, *p* <.05) or that school staff had not provided

sufficient career planning information (34% vs. 24%, *p* <.05).

Research Question 3: High school postsecondary education-focused transition activities

High schools were reported by students to have provided a variety of postsecondary

education transition supports, ranging from help with signing up for standardized college

entrance tests, to reviewing results after students had taken the exams, to assistance with

financial aid forms (Table 3). However, despite the majority of ELs with disabilities having

stated they expected to continue their education after high school, approximately one-third or

fewer of those ages 16 and older, had received these types of supports, with the exception of help

with reviewing college entrance test results, which was received by 45% of dually-identified

students who had taken these types of exams. However, few ELs with disabilities had taken these

types of tests, with less than one-quarter having taken a PSAT, ACT, or SAT exam, a

significantly lower rate than that of their peers in the general population. For example, 18% of

ELs with disabilities took the PSAT compared with 53% *(p<.05)* of the general population of

students. Rates of transition support receipt for ELs with disabilities did not significantly differ

from that of other students, with the exception of receipt of help with completing financial aid

forms and comparing packages. This type of support was received by 11% of ELs with

disabilities, as compared with 22% *(p<.01)* of their general education peers.

<div align="center">**Discussion**</div>

Our results show that EL students with disabilities share some postsecondary education-

focused expectations and transition planning IEP meeting experiences with students with

disabilities who are not ELs, but several differences are important to note. Before discussing

results specific to postsecondary education, we highlight results confirming that identifying ELs

with disabilities remains challenging (Artiles & Klingner, 2006; Klingner & Eppolito, 2014).

Among students with disabilities, ELs have a significantly higher prevalence of LD. At the same time, the prevalence of some lower-incidence disabilities (e.g., multiple disabilities, traumatic brain injury) is less common among ELs with disabilities. Accurate disability identification is relevant to postsecondary expectations and transition planning to maximize individualized, appropriate services and preparation interventions. Moreover, disability identification, relevant though not the focus of this paper, requires an array and quantity of stakeholder capital resources, such as teachers who understand how to assess student performances on culturally appropriate tasks in both formal and informal settings (Artiles et al., 2011), school psychologists who effectively employ nondiscriminatory assessment procedures (Figueroa & Newsome, 2006), and clear administrative policies outlining criteria and procedures for LD identification and testing accommodations (Burr, Haas, & Fierriere, 2015).

ELs with disabilities are significantly more likely to experience poverty and to have parents without high school diplomas, when compared to both general population students and students with disabilities who are not ELs. Diminished access to economic, social, and cultural capital has been associated with impediments to postsecondary education success and degree attainment (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). The transition to adulthood, particularly to postsecondary education, involves leveraging an array of capital resources routinely recognized and used by dominant-group families (i.e., White, U.S.-born, and upper/middle income), frequently headed by a parent with college experience (e.g., obtaining college entrance exam information and/or tutoring; Gonzales, 2010). Equally important, however, is preliminary evidence demonstrating that cultural capital, drawing upon community contingencies and collective resources, functions as a relevant support to the transition to adulthood including college enrollment and degree attainment. For example, parents often focus on educational opportunities and economic viability as a reason for immigrating, cultivating resilience and resourcefulness in secondary ELs,

immigrant families, and their communities (O'Shea, 2016; Yosso, 2005). These resources may be reflected in the fact that first generation college students who are Latino have the highest persistence rates in both 2- and 4-year degree programs (McFarland et al., 2017). Studies of postsecondary transition of immigrant and English learners underscore the complex role of capital in postschool achievement and avoiding deficit conceptualizations.

The current study is one of only a handful of studies to provide information about a nationally representative group of secondary ELs with disabilities. Developing a more detailed picture of who ELs with disabilities are advances the field's interpretation of results showing variability in postsecondary education expectations and transition participation across disability and family characteristics. We found that parents of ELs with disabilities, as well as the students themselves, tended to hold low postsecondary education expectations when compared to students without disabilities and their families. The postsecondary expectations of ELs with disabilities and their families did not significantly differ from those of other students with disabilities and their families; however, based on differences in the disability and race/ethnicity characteristics of ELs and other students with disabilities, this finding contrasts with previous research findings that students with LD and their parents maintain higher expectations for postsecondary education than students and families from all other disabilities combined (Lipscomb et al., 2017). Additionally, parents of Black and Latino immigrant and first-generation secondary students in the general population, many of whom are ELs, hold high education attainment expectations for their children (Chavira et al., 2016). Interestingly, postsecondary education expectations of ELs with disabilities and their parents were aligned with one another. Prior research focused on students with disabilities as a whole, found that parents tended to hold lower expectations for their adolescent children's future achievements than students held for themselves (Wagner et al, 2007).

Specific factors contributing to these comparatively low expectations remain unknown; however, EL students with disabilities face additional obstacles associated with poverty. Findings from previous studies show that parents of students with disabilities from lower income households generally hold lower educational attainment expectations than those held by parents from higher-income households (Newman, 2005). Low expectations may be directly related to the pressures of poverty, such that necessitate students to work and contribute to the family income during high school and/or worry about the affordability of college. Low expectations may also reflect cultural capital projecting which students are college-bound. Cultural capital goes beyond students' and families' knowledge and beliefs, functioning as a signal—taken up by all members of society to varying degrees—identifying who should be supported in the pursuit of higher education. Relatedly, implicit biases about who is college-bound can influence students' self-perceptions (Jaffe-Walter & Lee, 2011, O'Shea, 2016).

Expectations and experiences mutually and cyclically contribute to one another. Planning and access to services are related to student and family participation in special education processes (Test et al., 2009). Our results showed that the majority of EL students with disabilities and their parents held postsecondary school aspirations and were hopeful about degree attainment. While expectations were generally lower than those of ELs without disabilities and their parents for high school completion and trade school enrollment, they were not significantly different when compared to students with disabilities and their parents who were not EL. Whereas parents of EL students with disabilities were as likely as parents of other students with disabilities to report having attended a transition planning meeting; parents of ELs with disabilities indicated lower participation as decision-makers and leaders during transition planning goal generation and they were less likely to speak with teachers about transition and

postschool life. Voicing ideas, opinions, and concerns, such as one's dreams for the future, using the language of educators and the jargon of IEPs, and communicating disability-related questions and information about secondary achievement and postsecondary educational options requires all forms of capital. As Harry and Klingner (2006) extensively documented, such participation is moderated by perceptions of roles and responsibilities associated with parent, child, and educator. While IEP attendance was consistent across the two groups, slightly more than half of ELs with disabilities and their families felt that transition goals were developed by school personnel, demonstrating the persistent problem of passive transition planning that has been observed in other studies of IEP transition planning meetings (Martin et al., 2006).

Transition experiences at school sometimes fell short of students' needs. Our findings show that EL students with disabilities and their families may face additional barriers to receiving transition-related help from educators when compared to students with disabilities and families who were not EL, specifically in the areas of college financial aid and career planning. Parents of ELs with disabilities were more likely to state a need for more information about transition, including how to find financial resources to pay for college and how to plan for career and employment. This suggests that more support (e.g., interpretation and translation services during IEP meetings) and shared capital resources (e.g., information) might augment parent and student postsecondary education expectations and goal setting involvement during IEP meetings.

Limitations

The findings reported here make an important contribution to the knowledge base on postsecondary education-focused transition experiences of ELs with disabilities; however, limitations should be noted. All data were reported by youth or parents; there was no triangulation with data from educators and school administrators. As a secondary analysis, this study was limited by the design and available items in the NLTS 2012 dataset. Additionally, 8%

of the ELs population spoke languages other than English and Spanish, the two languages in which the survey was offered. Furthermore, analyses are descriptive and findings should not be interpreted as implying causal relationships. Neither should differences between groups be interpreted as reflecting differences between ELs with disabilities and other students with disabilities or with students in the general population alone, because of the confounding of demographic and disability factors.

Implications for Research

This study examined a population at the intersection of transition experiences associated with disability, EL status, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic background in ways that are germane to postsecondary education opportunities. Future research is needed to begin to disentangle and clarify differences in transition expectations, experiences, and opportunities related to disability, those related to family characteristics, and those related to school experiences. The current NLTS 2012 dataset affords examination of disability and family characteristics using multivariate and/or quasi-experimental statistical approaches, such as logistic regression and propensity modeling. The NLTS 2012 does not provide detailed information about students' English language services, information needed for understanding students' secondary experiences. Future studies employing these designs and expanding the inclusion of English-language services variables are essential to understanding which experiences predict positive postschool outcomes specific to this distinct population.

While the NLTS 2012 provides information about transition experiences related to planning during IEP meetings, additional research should be conducted to better understand ELs with disabilities secondary experiences. Information about school and special education program characteristics, including teacher quality and preparedness, are not available in the NLTS 2012 dataset. The educational contexts of both EL and special education services, as well as the

expertise of educators, is necessary to better understand the extent to which students are included in general education settings and how both English language and special education services are delivered. Inclusive education has been associated with the transition to postsecondary education (Lombardi, Doren, Gau, & Lindstrom, 2013; Rojewski, Lee, & Gregg, 2015); however, the need for both English language services and special education may preclude their inclusive delivery, depending on teacher expertise and other resources. More research on the delivery of both services will illuminate how and to what extent transition planning and related services are accessible, and the extent to which instruction of evidence-based practices associated with positive postsecondary outcomes are implemented and effective for this group of students.

Given that many EL students with disabilities experience poverty, and that school resources are often associated both with the economic health of communities and with post-school outcomes, it is also important to study EL students' educational environments and the opportunities they provide for postsecondary education-focused transition development (e.g., visiting a college campus). Studies that focus on educational environment should include a range of quantitative and qualitative designs, so that a depth and breadth of questions can be addressed that include, but also go beyond, description.

Actively engaging in the development of postsecondary-related transition goals during IEP meetings is an indicator, albeit imperfect, of self-determination (Shogren, Garner Villareal, Dowsett, & Little, 2016). For students with disabilities, self-determination is associated with successfully transitioning to postsecondary education (Morningstar et al., 2010). Further research is needed to explain why EL students with disabilities and their parents who do attend transition IEP meetings report less active involvement in decision-making and leadership (i.e., indicators of self-determination). Self-determination in the form of leading an IEP meeting may be incongruent with cultural norms associated with immigrant children and/or parents (Harry &

Klingner, 2006; Rueda et al., 2005). Researchers should use methods that afford an in-depth understanding of parent and student participation and engagement and how teachers successfully support such engagement. Moreover, because ELs with disabilities are vulnerable to marginalization based on immigration status, language, disability, class, and race/ethnicity, it is critical that we research teacher attitudes and knowledge about working with people from historically marginalized groups. For similar reasons it is important to study individuals and communities where resiliency, inclusion, and mutually beneficial relationships and interactions occur across dominant and nondominant groups. This can help identify solutions and strategies to improve the postsecondary education outcomes of ELs with disabilities. Researchers need to be cautious, however, and avoid designs that increase vulnerability associated with documentation issues.

Students' expectations, as well as those of their families and educators, are important contributors to engagement (Eccles & Wang, 2012). Engagement entails more that attending a meeting and listening to teachers. Future research should examine both the extent to which ELs with disabilities engage in academic and extracurricular activities, what factors influence this engagement, and how engagement influences IEP participation. Understanding engagement is key because of its potential positive effects on both school and post-school achievement.

Implications for Practice

In practice, closely aligned secondary programming and transition service provision requires accurate disability identification. The disproportionate identification of ELs as having LD indicates a need to continue to sharpen educators' ability to correctly identify ELs with LD and follow recommended practices for disability identification of English learner students (Burr et al., 2015). Parent participation in IEP meetings, including both initial eligibility and transition planning IEP meetings, is essential. Teachers should use culturally sustaining practices to

encourage families to actively engage in eligibility, annual progress, and transition development. Culturally sustaining practices support individuals from minority communities by supporting "cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence" (Paris, 2012, p. 95). For example, in transition planning, teachers might make time to have explicit discussions of parents' hopes and dreams for their children to attend college followed by outlining the specific steps and timelines necessary for fulfilling such goals. Teachers and administrators should encourage participation in this process with an awareness that students and their parents may have differing immigration statuses and that a discussion of transition-related topics such as access to federal financial aid may introduce anxiety beyond the cost of college affordance for both students and their parents. Educators can also call on family liaisons who are community insiders to help disseminate information about transition that are made sensitive because of obstacles associated with citizenship.

Communicating and supporting high expectations for attainment of postsecondary education also is critical. College aspirations and transition planning experiences are related to individual identities, family characteristics, and associated beliefs about disability, independence, individual rights, and autonomy in making decisions about the future (Geenen et al., 2005; Povenmire-Kirk et al., 2010; Rueda et al., 2005; Shogren, 2012; Trainor, 2008, 2010). Educators can use multiple strategies to support students' and families' high expectations for postschool success, including reflectively addressing their own biases about which students should go to college and sharing capital resources such as information and social networks relevant to postsecondary education and employment. Fostering respectful interactions with each family according to their unique cultural-linguistic identities and priorities, both of which are asset-based approaches to transition, is foundational to special education processes. Finally, when families are stressed by the impact of poverty and discrimination, teachers should partner with

community-level leaders and supporters who have positive interactions with families (e.g., church leaders, family-school liaisons) necessary for developing postsecondary education-focused events and activities.

Ensuring that school counselors, who typically provide information about college entrance exams, career paths, and college financial aid, are included in transition planning and experiences for ELs with disabilities also may be warranted. Increasing information is a practice that may more directly engage ELs with disabilities and their families in goal development. In addition to being well-informed about postsecondary disability services, school counselors should also become familiar with the implications of citizenship documentation on postsecondary enrollment and financial aid availability. College financial aid information should be available electronically and in multiple languages to increase accessibility; this may involve creating a link to organizations such as the College Board (collegeboard.org) or synthesizing or translating information for parents.

These valuable insights into EL student and family postsecondary education-focused transition perceptions and experiences surface additional challenges in research and practice. This analysis of the NLTS 2012 creates a sense of urgency for educators and policy makers to improve transition opportunities for this dually-identified population.

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Table 1

Parent and student postsecondary education expectations of English learners with disabilities,

other students with disabilities, and students in the general population, ages 16 and older

Postsecondary education expectations	English learners with disabilities		Other students with disabilities		Students in the general population	
	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE
Parent expects student will attain:						
High school diploma or less	34.31	4.71	40.52	1.23	10.43***	1.26
Technical or trade school	12.11	2.95	16.81	1.05	5.01*	0.86
2-year college	17.77	3.62	15.24	0.95	10.37	1.23
4- year college	24.96	3.99	21.50	1.10	44.54***	2.17
Advanced degree	10.85	2.89	5.92	0.60	29.65***	1.91
Student expects he/she will attain:						
High school diploma or less	27.04	4.81	26.21	1.29	5.33***	1.10
Technical or trade school	6.98	2.07	10.38	0.99	4.63	0.99
2-year college	26.59	5.40	17.91	1.20	12.16**	1.55
4- year college	25.61	4.45	31.50	1.44	41.44**	2.49
Advanced degree	13.78	3.74	14.00	1.09	36.44***	2.38
Unweighted sample N	280		3,730		1,010	

Note: All comparisons are with English learners with disabilities; **p<.01; ***p<.001;

% = percent; SE = standard error; SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of

Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, National

Longitudinal Transition Study 2012 (NLTS 2012), parent/youth surveys.

Table 2

Transition planning experiences of English learners with disabilities and other students with

disabilities, and parent knowledge of postsecondary education-related issues, for English

learners with disabilities, other students with disabilities, and students in the general population,

ages 16 and older

Transition planning experience	English learners with disabilities		Other students with disabilities		Students in the general population	
	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE
Parent attended a transition planning meeting–	58.56	4.61	58.10	1.33		
Youth's role in IEP meetings – parent view						
Youth did not participate	10.13	3.59	8.53	0.72		
Youth was present but participated very little or not at all	25.74	4.52	24.95	1.34		
Youth provided some input	40.42	5.77	46.71	1.60		
Youth took leadership role	21.05	4.84	17.49	1.25		
Who came up with goals						
Mostly the school	51.38	4.97	39.04*	1.32		
Mostly family and/or youth	21.03	3.97	22.11	3.97		
School and family and/or youth equally	27.59	4.25	38.85*	1.11		
Youth's interests and strengths discussed	95.07	1.66	92.93	1.31		
Parent reported speaking with staff about post-high school education and career	49.17	4.37	59.55*	0.72		
Parent reported post-high school knowledge:						
We do not have enough information about education or training options for student	35.88	4.10	41.80	1.26	28.22	1.81
We do not know how to get financial aid or help paying for school	40.13	4.24	35.094	1.22	28.33*	1.82
Staff at the high school has not provided enough information about career planning or job opportunities	34.13	4.14	32.87	1.14	24.28*	1.73

Transition planning experience	English learners with disabilities		Other students with disabilities		Students in the general population	
	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE
Unweighted sample N	280		3,730		1,010	

Note: All comparisons are with English learners with disabilities; *p<.05

% = percent; SE = standard error; SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of

Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, National

Longitudinal Transition Study 2012 (NLTS 2012), parent/youth surveys.

Table 3

Type of postsecondary education-focused transition help high school provided to English learners with disabilities, other students with disabilities, and students in the general population, ages 16 and older

High-school provided help	English learners with disabilities		Other students with disabilities		Students in the general population	
	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE
Help with signing up for standardized college entrance tests	23.80	4.0945	17.74	1.01	29.84	1.91
For those who took college entrance exams: Help reviewing college entrance test results or suggested re-testing, if necessary?	44.77	7.97	56.62	2.27	54.34	2.83
Help with financial aid forms, comparing financial aid packages	10.82	2.96	12.93	0.99	22.23**	1.92
Help completing college applications?	37.76	5.13	32.44	1.46	41.21	2.40
Help arranging or taking on visits to colleges or college fairs	34.71	4.99	35.77	1.50	42.18	2.39
Unweighted sample N	280		3,730		1010	

Note: All comparisons are with English learners with disabilities; **$p<.01$; ***$p<.001$; % = percent; SE = standard error; SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, National Longitudinal Transition Study 2012 (NLTS 2012), parent/youth surveys.