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The Transition of Students with Learning Disabilities: A Case Study

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Abstract

This case study illustrates the transition process of one individual with learning disabilities during a 3 year period. It describes her experiences as she graduated from high school and went on to a local community college. Specific transition objectives, personalized counseling, and individual accommodations are discussed in detail, with both secondary and postsecondary examples. Relevant research and recommendations pertinent to service providers who work with adolescents and adults with learning disabilities are also provided.

Introduction

One of the most topical transition issues being examined today is the service delivery for adolescents and adults with learning disabilities. There are currently numerous articles, conference presentations and even books focused on this new and frequently unexplored area. And yet, many questions still remain. In order to understand and better define the transition process for students with learning disabilities, we have chosen a case study approach to provide a comprehensive example of what transition is and how it was addressed with one student. It is hoped that the information derived from this case study will not only expand knowledge of transition but assist service providers in facilitating the successful transition of students from school to postsecondary settings and employment.

The framework for the service delivery to the student with learning disabilities in this study was provided through the LD Transition Project, a 3-year, federally-funded research/demonstration project located at the General College of the University of Minnesota. Forty high school juniors and seniors with learning disabilities were selected by the Project transition counselors. These participants received intensive, personalized service over a 3-year period as they moved from the secondary to postsecondary setting of their choice. (Aune & Price, 1988; Aase & Price, 1986; Evelo, 1989; Price, 1989a).

Current Research

It should be emphasized that very little empirical data or qualitative data are available about the transition process of adolescents and adults with learning disabilities (Hedberg, 1987; Mick, 1985; The New York Area Study Group on Transition, 1986; Price, 1986; Price, 1989b). Such a lack of supporting data and documentation is a critical gap, because a survey of the professional literature shows that: (a) many authors now recognize the transition process clearly exists (Hedberg, 1987; New York Area Study Group, 1986; Okolo & Sitlington, 1986; Scheiber & Talpers, 1987); (b) it is an important development phase in the lives of individuals with learning disabilities (Dalke & Schmidt, 1987; Kroll, 1984; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1987; Price, 1986); and (c) because learning disabilities are a life-long condition, continued support will be necessary for the individual with learning disabilities (AHSSPPE, 1986; Hedberg, 1987; Kroll, 1984; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1987; Ness, 1989; Okolo & Sitlington, 1986; Scheiber & Talpers, 1987; Seidenberg, 1986). The support needed for these individuals can be vocational (Brown, 1982; Clark, 1980; Crimando, 1984; Okolo & Sitlington, 1986); academic (Cronin & Gerber, 1982; Hinds, 1984; Kroll, 1984; Mangrum & Strichart, 1984); or social skills assistance (Alley, Deshler, Clark, Schumaker & Warner, 1983; Donahue & Bryan, 1984; Morse, 1977; Orzek, 1977). Consequently, it is the intent of this case study to build on this body of transition knowledge and clarify it through illustration of the transition process for one student with learning disabilities.

Background Information

Julie's case was selected because she represents a unique insight into the complexities that a student with learning disabilities might confront while preparing for adult life. It attempts to provide the reader with an understanding of one individual's experiences during the transition process, the interaction between Julie and her transition counselors, and the total holistic process that transpired over a 3-year period (1986-1989).

Julie's case study is unique to her, but it is also fairly typical of other students who participated in the LD Transition Project. Each student displayed a wide range of skills, interests, and needs. During the transition process, many of the students progressed and changed as they worked through complex stages of development and self-awareness. Each required a truly individual "plan" to be able to move successfully from high school to a postsecondary program. Additional background information about Julie is provided to better understand her personal experiences.

Julie, a 17-year-old white female, lived in a large, urban, midwestern city with her parents. She had received special education services since first grade, where she attended a special school for students with physical and learning disabilities. During seventh grade, Julie transferred to an accessible regular junior high. At ninth grade, she transferred to a regular high school where she received resource room special education services for students with learning disabilities. Julie's 11th grade individual education plan (IEP) indicated that her primary disability was "learning disabilities" and that her secondary disability was "ostegenous imperfecta" (brittle bones), which required her to

use an electric wheelchair. She was in the mainstream 83% of the time and received special education support 17% of the time during the school day. According to current test results, Julie demonstrated strengths in the areas of mathematics and spatial skills as well as eye-hand coordination and visual perception. Her weak areas that affected her learning were in oral and written language.

A combination of psychometric and vocational assessments were administered to Julie in her junior year of high school. She scored a 12th grade equivalent in Vocabulary and a 12th grade equivalent in *Comprehension* on the *Gates MacGinitie Reading Test*, with an overall reading level of grade 12. Her scores on the *Wide Range Achievement Test-Revised (WRAT-R)* indicated Spelling at 6th grade level, and Math at the 11th grade level. Sub-test scores on the *Career Occupational Preference System Interest Inventory (COPS)* included: Science/Professional at the 97th percentile, Service/Professional at the 94th percentile, Outdoor at the 89th percentile, Arts/Skilled at the 74th percentile, and Science/ Skill Labor at the 68th percentile.

A summary of the academic, vocational and work samples assessment identified strengths in Julie's ability to take the initiative, and in her outgoing, friendly, pleasant and cooperative behavior. Her level of academic achievement, evidence that her quality performance could be transferred into appropriate job settings, and her interests would predict success in several occupational areas. An area of weakness for Julie was the limit of vocational options available to her because of her physical disability. She would require light lifting and a more sedentary role in a job. The occupational area in which Julie expressed an interest (becoming a veterinary technician) was not considered realistic for her given her physical disability.

Results on *The Career Assessment Inventory* (National Computer Systems, 1986) were consistent with her previously expressed interests in becoming a veterinary technician. It was suggested to Julie that because of her high interest in the Social and Investigative areas, she may want to explore a 4-year rather than a 2-year postsecondary program. Julie agreed that this might be a possibility.

The Student Questionnaire (LD Transition Project, 1987), a self-report inventory, was given to all Project participants as a pre- and post-measurement of knowledge about transition issues including the following: (a) the student's level of awareness and skills in various areas of transition; (b) skill areas that the student would need to develop, and (c) appropriate modifications and accommodations to suit individual student needs.

Julie's initial screening on *The Student Questionnaire* revealed that she had some insights into her learning style. She listed math, singing and "people liking her" as strengths in school, and "being responsible" as a strength on the job. She felt that other people would view her "outgoing" personality as a strength as well. Julie listed her preferred mode of learning to be through listening, talking or discussing things, writing or drawing and through experiencing. Speed in reading and writing were seen as problem areas. She named four specific postsecondary schools and two program areas in which she had personal interest, but she was aware of only one postsecondary school that offered special

services to students with learning disabilities. Julie's assessment of her "self-advocacy" skills was very high. She felt she was able to ask for and get the help she needed. She stated that she was "very likely" to utilize a number of accommodations and services if the need arose in a class situation. Julie also perceived that she had the ability to manage her time, set goals and complete assignments, and had no difficulty with general study skills.

The Janis-Field Attitude Inventory (Robinson & Shaver, 1973) is designed to measure a student's self-esteem level. Julie's score of 4.15 placed her in the high average range compared to other project participants whose overall average score was 3.5 (average self-esteem).

The *Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised* (The Psychological Corporation, 1981) was administered to all project students to identify strengths and weaknesses and to fulfill the entrance criteria for participation in the project. Julie's overall score placed her in the average range of intelligence (Full Scale I.Q. 105) with strengths in the areas of spatial motor skills and mathematical reasoning ability. She also showed strengths in the areas of visual-perceptual ability and eye-hand coordination. The interpreter of the test also indicated that Julie's learning disability significantly affected her ability to work with written and oral language as well as her writing speed and accuracy. Julie also had problems encoding information which affected spelling, vocabulary and organization of written ideas, skills that are essential for college success.

The First Year

Julie received extensive transition counseling services during her junior year in high school from the Project. Her individual goals included: (a) participating in two out of five summer sessions offered by the transition staff on various aspects of transition (Choosing the Right School for You, Exploring Career Interests, Learning What to Expect in a Postsecondary School, Understanding Your Strengths and Weaknesses, Planning Accommodations in School and Advocating For Yourself); (b) reviewing high school course selections for senior year to ensure appropriateness for college preparation; (c) checking to see whether the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) was required for her chosen postsecondary institution and, if so, arrange for an adapted SAT; (d) participating in study sessions for the SAT; (e) reviewing postsecondary programs available and special services available; (f) choosing sites to visit; (g) reviewing career goals after vocational evaluation from Division of Rehabilitative Services (DRS); (h) improving vocabulary and general knowledge through high interest reading; (i) increasing understanding of her individual strengths and weaknesses; (j) planning to visit the veterinary technician program in Waseca, Minnesota; (k) considering taking a class through the Minnesota Postsecondary Options Act in a local Technical Institute or Community College; (l) improving study skills; and (m) completing college and financial aid applications.

The Second Year

During the summer months before her senior year in high school, Julie not only attended the project's summer sessions, but she also worked in the office of her DRS counselor doing general office work, and obtained a vocational assessment. Julie expressed to her transition counselor that she felt very discouraged when she was told during her vocational evaluation that being a veterinary technician would be an unrealistic goal because of her physical limitations. She reluctantly agreed to look at other career options, and her transition counselor provided numerous career brochures from various local technical institutes and 2-year colleges. She encouraged Julie to make appointments to visit the schools, and to ask specific questions about their programs and what specific services might be available.

Transition objectives for Julie's senior year included: (a) choosing a postsecondary school by obtaining information about four postsecondary schools, visiting at least three of them, making a list of questions to ask on a site visit, and listing and/or comparing the support services available at each school; (b) implementing career exploration by identifying four career areas for further exploration based on interests and strengths, planning and completing activities to explore each career (e.g., job shadowing, interviewing); (c) getting into the school of choice by meeting with the high school guidance counselor to discuss college choices and application procedures, obtaining applications, filling them out, role-playing the college interview with transition counselor, and studying for the SAT; (d) financing college by obtaining and completing appropriate financial aid forms, meeting with the DRS counselor, checking at least four sources for scholarships, and completing scholarship applications; (e) exploring postsecondary options by taking a class through the Postsecondary Option Act during the third high school trimester; and (f) implementing accommodations by determining study strategies or accommodations to complete reading assignments in English, Economics, and Psychology, and continue to use them as needed.

Julie followed through with four site visits to local technical colleges, community colleges, and universities. She also followed through with studying for the SAT on the computer. She expressed new interest in a travel advisor program and in architectural drafting. During her senior year, Julie received special education services for both her learning disability and her physical disability. She also made plans to move into an accessible apartment with a girlfriend in February, 1988.

Julie was hospitalized in mid-December because she broke both arms and suffered a ben pin in her leg as a result of a fall from her wheelchair. She required surgery and was hospitalized for approximately one month. When she was able to go home, she needed to have a home health aide and attended school only half-days. Julie was beginning to consider attending a nearby community college for at least the first year after high school while she sorted out what she wanted to do. Julie and the transition counselor discussed how she could obtain applications and financial aid forms. Julie's parents were able to assist her in completing the necessary forms.

Julie returned to high school full-time in February and moved into her own apartment as planned. The transition counselor consulted with Julie, the special education staff, and outside agencies on thirteen occasions during this month. The transition plan was updated and revised. Julie and her transition counselor discussed taking a course through Postsecondary Options during the spring semester at the nearby community college. Some arrangements were made by the transition counselor to prepare Julie and the staff at the community college concerning the postsecondary option course and the courses Julie would take there in the next year.

During March and April, Julie registered for a Biomedical Terminology course at the community college as a postsecondary student. After discussing the course with the instructor and the project's postsecondary transition counselor, Julie was cautioned that it was an extremely fast-paced course, was not intended as an introductory college course and would require a lot of independent work. The transition counselor suggested that she take a look at the textbook and talk directly to the instructor before making a final decision.

Julie continued her spring courses in high school and although she had many responsibilities, she felt positive about the job she was doing both at school, work, and with her living arrangement. She received a "B" on her first Biomedical Terminology test at the community college. By May, however, Julie was experiencing difficulty with the postsecondary course. The Biomedical Terminology instructor contacted the transition counselor and stated that Julie needed to study between nine and ten hours per week to do well, and there were no taped accommodations available for the course. He also suggested that Julie might want to withdraw from the course immediately so that it would not affect her GPA. After discussion of the situation and possible options, Julie decided to withdraw from the class.

Exiting High School

Julie and her transition counselor concluded the senior year by discussing summer plans and developing a transition "Exit file". This file contained Julie's IEP, Transition Plan, letters of recommendation and support, documentation of her learning disability, and a list of accommodations that could be needed. Julie would be able to use this file to facilitate a smooth transition into her postsecondary school.

The Third Year

Julie began the third year of the Project in July, 1988. The postsecondary transition counselor contacted her to set up a meeting for registration at the community college in early August. Julie informed her counselor that she had already contacted the community college, taken the required Skills Assessment at the community college, and expressed excitement about beginning classes in the fall. Julie, with assistance from the postsecondary transition counselor, completed registration in early August and discussed possible accommodations that might be needed for her courses. She requested a notetaker for English and Health, but she did not think she would need any texts taped for fall. In

fact, Julie stated that she had tried using taped texts and did not like them. The transition counselor arranged to have the math computer fee and text books paid for by DRS, as her DRS counselor was very supportive of Julie's decision to attend the community college.

Julie bought her books early and previewed them prior to classes starting. Her excitement remained high even after some last minute course changes and some difficulty in getting her financial aid check. The transition counselor gave Julie several names and phone numbers of people on campus and at other agencies to contact if there continued to be problems with financial aid.

After classes began, Julie and her transition counselor met to discuss the courses she was taking. Julie enjoyed all of her classes and didn't find them to be too difficult. There did not appear to be a need to tape texts at this time, but Julie agreed to keep this in mind as an option for the future. Julie was utilizing a notetaker in Health and English and using the computer for Math. The transition counselor offered some suggestions for reading: long- and short-term goals for studying were established. Julie was encouraged to talk with her teachers regarding extra time needed for taking exams.

Postsecondary Progress: Fall

Meetings in October revealed that Julie continued to be progressing very well. She reported to be averaging a "B" in English and continued to like all her courses. She was following through with the study strategies that were suggested and with the goals that were set with her transition counselor. Julie joined the Student Senate at the community college and became Student Activities Director. The purchase of an Apple IIc computer printer was discussed as a possible aid to assist with written assignments especially because spelling, punctuation, and speed were difficult areas for Julie. Julie already owned a computer so the transition counselor spoke with the DRS counselor who agreed to research the possibility of assisting with the purchase of a printer. Julie said that she was having some difficulty keeping up with all the reading in her Health class. The transition counselor reviewed the steps in SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review), and set two short-term goals with Julie: (1) keep track of study times and work completed by recording them in a notebook, and (2) use a highlighter to underline important concepts in the text.

Julie expressed that she continued to be pleased with her progress during her November meetings. The "B" average in all classes continued and she had been asked to work at the Upward Bound office as a secretary. She also became involved as a cheerleader for the community college basketball games.

Accommodations And Strategies

In December, Julie discussed the difficulty she was beginning to experience in her English class, specifically in spelling, punctuation, and not having enough time to correct errors or to complete writing assignments. The transition counselor worked with Julie and they developed a number of strategies and accommodations for her to utilize which

included: (a) speaking directly to the instructor, explaining her disability and needs; (b) requesting appropriate accommodations in class, such as utilizing a notetaker; and (c) requesting services from the Learning Center, such as tutoring and assistance with writing projects. In addition, the transition counselor offered to speak with Julie's English instructor to explain her disability and offer assistance.

Postsecondary Progress: Winter

Julie missed several weeks of school in January because of bronchitis. She had been doing passing work in English but had not followed up with utilizing the tutorial assistance from the writing specialist. Julie continued to be active in student senate, choir, and cheerleading and was working twenty hours per week in the Upward Bound office.

Some of the strategies that Julie used in her courses during winter quarter included keeping a list of difficult vocabulary words, using the dictionary for definitions and writing them on notecards. The transition counselor referred Julie to a math tutor as she stated that she was having difficulty understanding Algebra and was falling behind in class. A goal was set to help Julie develop a study schedule and establish study goals. Although Julie was having some difficulty this quarter, she expressed a positive attitude about her progress and decided to consider a career in Math, possibly as a teacher.

In March, Julie was uncertain about her status or grades in English, even after consulting with the instructor. The transition counselor talked with the instructor who expressed some concerns about Julie's progress. The instructor stated that although Julie was outgoing, assertive, and had the potential for academic success, several major assignments had not been handed in. Julie did not write down or follow directions for papers; she did not make the recommended changes in her writings; and there was little follow-through. She felt Julie was not taking the class seriously and suggested that she repeat the class prior to taking the next English course.

When this was discussed with Julie, she agreed that she had not put enough effort into English and that because of other things going on in her life (school activities and personal problems) she had let her academic responsibilities slide. Julie also stated that it was often difficult for her to understand verbal directions and she had never asked for clarification. The transition counselor suggested some self-advocacy skills and assertiveness strategies Julie might use in this situation. Julie agreed to try these suggestions and to consider taking the class again.

Postsecondary Progress: Spring

Julie started spring quarter registered in four courses: Choir, Math, Speech and Sociology. Prior to beginning spring quarter, Julie was encouraged to speak with the Sociology instructor to inform him of her learning disability and to discuss accommodations (extra time for tests, special testing arrangements and the use of a notetaker in class). She was also encouraged to purchase the textbook early to get a head start on the reading. Julie did not follow through with any of these suggestions. At the

beginning of the quarter, she was excited about public speaking and choir, and was again encouraged to seek tutoring assistance early on for Math. Due to the large amount of reading required in Sociology, taped texts were suggested, but Julie did not want to use them. The transition counselor encouraged Julie to highlight main ideas and use flashcards for important terms. Julie promised to keep track of her study schedule for 1 week.

When winter quarter grades were received, Julie and her transition counselor were both surprised to see an "F" in Math 109. Julie agreed to discuss this with the instructor because she thought she had done much better. At first, she was unwilling to consider withdrawing from Math 110, even though she received an "F" on the first test of the spring quarter. But because it is a prerequisite for the higher level class, Julie was advised to withdraw from Math 110 and retake Math 109 in the fall. She would also work with a tutor from the beginning of the course. She stated feeling a sense of relief as now she could devote more time and energy to her other three classes. Because Julie's credit completion was 18 out of 30 credits attempted, with a cumulative GPA of 1.6, she was placed on the Warning component of Academic Probation.

Julie was feeling positive about Speech and Choir and reported some difficulty with Sociology, although it appeared to be going well. Extra-curricular activities kept Julie very busy during the spring. She continued to be active in student senate, directed a talent show and continued her twenty-hour part-time job.

Julie's Future Goals

Julie's goals for the future were unclear and undecided as she completed her first year at the community college and her final year with the Project. She stated in her final interview with the Project staff that she might take the Math 109 course during the summer session, or wait until fall quarter. She did intend to return to the community college in the fall but did not plan to graduate from there. Rather, she would transfer the credits earned at the community college and apply to a 4-year college, such as one of those visited on earlier site visits. Julie felt her strengths and interests continued to be in the areas of math, science and computers. She admitted that she sometimes got pretty caught up in extracurricular things and didn't do very well in school.

Counselor's Future Goals For Julie

Finally, it was recommended to Julie by the project transition counselor that she, (a) re-examine her academic goals and vocational choice, and her personal motivation/commitment to pursuing them; (b) set specific manageable goals for the upcoming year; (c) continue to apply study strategies which she had learned in order to prepare effectively for exams and to capitalize on her academic strengths; (d) realize and accept her academic strengths and weaknesses and select future courses accordingly; (e) make full use of accommodation options designed specifically for individuals with learning disabilities; (f) practice self-advocacy skills by speaking with instructors early in the quarter, before problems arose; and (g) manage her time more effectively. Julie was

referred to the support services counselor at her community college for further assistance. Because the federal funding for the Project ended in 1989, no further follow-up has been conducted.

Recommendations And Conclusions

Both the quantitative and qualitative data gathered during the 3 years of the LD Transition Project clearly point to a number of recommendations that should be beneficial to others who provide services to students with learning disabilities. The following recommendations gleaned from this case study are offered for consideration.

(1) There is a pressing need for more longitudinal research to be done which applies to the transition process for adolescents and adults with learning disabilities. One of the few current studies in this area is being carried out by the Stanford Research Institute (Wagner, 1989). The National Longitudinal Study of Secondary Handicapped Students was created to follow 8,000 students with disabilities from ages 13-21. Preliminary results show many sobering trends directly related to Julie's experiences. For instance, 25% of the students with disabilities in the Stanford study were drop-outs. Only 15% of the students with learning disabilities have gone on to postsecondary education after high school graduation. Obviously, this study, and others like it, are necessary to further illuminate facets of the transition process.

(2) Julie's case study emphasizes the need to "front-load" the system by providing transition services early on in high school. The LD Transition Project staff saw the necessity of encouraging interagency cooperation, working closely with parents, and focusing on real life skills needed after high school graduation. Obviously, the emphasis on these skills goes beyond the typical secondary curriculum of academics traditionally used to earn a high school diploma. We firmly believe that this shift in secondary curriculum is integral to the successful transition of adolescents with learning disabilities into adulthood. This new transition emphasis moves the focus of service delivery and academic instruction in both secondary and postsecondary settings from merely "passing classes" to components that will affect adults with learning disabilities throughout their lives. Examples are: (a) emphasizing generalizable skills, such as using accommodations equally applicable to academic, vocational or social environments; (b) increasing disability self-awareness; (c) giving an equal emphasis to psycho-social issues as well as academic problems; and (d) shifting the responsibility for success to the student, as well as the service provider or the instructor. All of these components will require continued exploration.

(3) Continuous life-long support for individuals with learning disabilities must be provided. Both the professional literature (Cronin & Gerber, 1982; Hedberg, 1987; Kroll, 1984) and our own work at the University of Minnesota clearly show that the transition process may be a life-long one. Julie's case study illustrates this well. It is apparent from observing Julie's struggles and successes that each individual with disabilities may have his/her own unique timetable, but all will need some type of support at some time or another. Current information is beginning to emerge from interviews with this population

who indicate the need for information on resources and support on the job for their disability (Brown, 1984; Clark, 1980; Crimando, 1984; Hedberg, 1987). This support must be flexible enough to allow LD individuals to "drop-in" or "drop-out," requesting services as they see fit.

(4) We must continue to explore transition issues that relate to adults with learning disabilities. One clear theme emerges from Julie's case study: Transition is not a "one-shot" set of isolated techniques, but a process full of overlapping, complex factors. Consequently, we as service providers must continue to incorporate knowledge and support for issues that are relevant to adults, and not only children. We recommend that issues such as chemical dependency, financial independence, human sexuality and pregnancy, marriage and family needs, social isolation, older students returning to school, and unsuccessful employment histories continue to be explored as part of the life-long transition process.

(5) Secondary and postsecondary service providers should prepare individuals with learning disabilities for independence. It becomes apparent when reviewing the progress of individuals with learning disabilities that it is vital for these students to receive personalized support which fosters both self-advocacy skills and disability self-awareness while they make the crucial transition from secondary settings to adult life. Experiences with students like Julie have underscored the fact that specialized information must be taught, because even though many individuals with learning disabilities have many strengths (such as average or above intelligence), they often don't develop these skills by themselves.

A great deal of time and energy in our Project was focused upon fostering self-advocacy skills and disability self-awareness in many different ways in a variety of settings. As a result, Project participants: (a) have the knowledge and appropriate skills to pursue postsecondary education and/or job training; (b) can practice pinpointing and communicating their needs; and (c) are able to listen, understand and accept feedback from peers, instructors, parents, supervisors, and others in their everyday environment. Best practices (Brown, 1984; Dalke & Schmidt, 1987; Hedberg, 1987; Ness, 1989, Seidenberg, 1986) demonstrate that programs which build a bridge of support from high school to postsecondary education and/or employment include these components: teaching self-advocacy skills; visiting postsecondary facilities; connecting students with adult and community support services; and developing appropriate educational service plans (IEPS or ITEPS). To assume that individuals with learning disabilities will "pick-up" this critical information on their own is both naive and inaccurate, and a disservice to the student. To support this belief, several large longitudinal studies are now underway with students with mild handicaps to study the relationship between dropout rates and postsecondary retention patterns and self-advocacy skills and disability self-awareness (Johnson, 1989; Wagner, 1989).

(6) Collaboration with secondary personnel is critical to enhance transition. Our experiences have clearly taught us that transition cannot, and should not, be developed in isolation. If the transition process is to be successful for both students with learning

disabilities and the service providers who work with them, collaboration must be continuous between secondary staff and postsecondary staff and/or employers. As Julie's case illustrates, if communication and sharing of information is encouraged among professionals, everybody wins. These benefits may accrue through collaboration: (a) students and parents are introduced to staff and services available in postsecondary facilities in a supportive, comprehensive manner; (b) the groundwork is prepared for students as they exit secondary education and enter postsecondary education and/or employment; (c) assessment data are coordinated to avoid costly duplication of staff and student time and energy; (d) information is synchronized so that everyone can pull together diverse bits of knowledge from many sources and then focus it on specific goals; and (e) the "handing-off" of students with disabilities is expedited by providing an exit file, which includes a description of the student's individual strengths and weaknesses, past disability accommodations, test scores, disability documentation and contact names and phone numbers.

In summary, if the field of learning disabilities is to continue to grow as children with learning disabilities mature into adults with learning disabilities, everyone involved in this journey needs to participate in dialogue and problem solving. Julie's case study is illustrative of an approach leading to an exciting and successful future for many individuals with learning disabilities.

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