

## School Psychologist Involvement in Transition Planning: A Comparison of Attitudes and Perceptions of School Psychologists and Transition Coordinators

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of school psychologists and transition coordinators toward current involvement and importance of involvement of school psychologists in transition planning. An adaptation of a survey designed by Staab (1996) was used to assess the attitudes of school psychologists (N= 125) and transition coordinators (N= 66) in Pennsylvania and included transition-related tasks within the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) categories of Consultation, Assessment, Direct Services, and Program Planning/Evaluation (NASP, 1992). Results indicate that school psychologists and transition coordinators report similar ratings of involvement and importance. Most significantly, both school psychologists and transition coordinators reported greater ratings for importance than for involvement indicating that both groups believe that school psychologists should be more involved in transition planning than they are currently. Implications of these findings and suggestions for future research are discussed.*

Historically, individuals with disabilities have been over-represented in this country's unemployment, underemployment rates, (Levinson, 1993) and school dropout rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). The U.S. Department of Education (2002) reported that during the 1999-2000 school year, 29.4% of students with disabilities dropped out of school, while only 56.2% of students with disabilities were able to graduate. The National Organization on Disability (2004) reported that while 78% of people without disabilities are employed either part time or full time, only 35% of people with disabilities are employed. As a result, people with disabilities are three times as likely to experience poverty, and twice as likely to drop out of school, when compared to people without disabilities (National Organization on Disability, 2004).

In response to this, a considerable amount of legislation has been introduced and passed over the last 20 to 25 years designed to provide people with disabilities employment counseling, vocational assessment, transition planning, and placement services. Although transition planning is required in The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) (HR 1350), it is not specified who is responsible for organizing and providing these services. Frequently, school districts are using special education teachers, who may or may not have additional training in transition, to develop and implement transition programs (Repetto, White, & Snauwaert, 1990). In most states there is

no requirement for certification or specialized training in transition coordination/employment counseling. However, a number of "transition specialist" or "vocation specialist" training programs exist.

### *Roles of Transition Coordinators*

Transition coordinators may go by several job titles and may be responsible for many tasks including employment counseling. Asselin, Todd-Allen, and deFur (1998) found 21 different job titles for transition coordinators. Titles included transition supervisor, special education transition specialist, transition council coordinator, instructional specialist, work study coordinator, transition planner, vocational planner, school-to-work coordinator, employment placement coordinator, and employment specialist. Asselin et al. (1998) identified and defined nine roles of transition coordinators: intraschool linkage, interagency/business linkages, assessment and career counseling, transition planning, educational and community training, family support and resource, public relations, program development, and program evaluation.

deFur and Taymans (1995) defined seven competency domains as the central roles for transition coordinators: knowledge of agencies and systems changes, development and management of ITPs, working with others in the transition process, vocational assessment and job development, professionalism, advocacy and legal issues, job training and support, and assessment. The highest rated

direct service competencies by transition coordinators were job assessment, placement, and support services (deFur & Taymans, 1995). Competencies that are related to communication, collaboration, and consultation skills earned the highest rankings by transition coordinators (deFur & Taymans).

Although many of the activities associated with transition planning are often considered to be the responsibility of the designated "transition coordinator," several experts have noted that transition planning should not be the sole responsibility of one person (Everson, 1990; Neubert, Danehey, & Gradel, 1992). Effective provision of career development services for individuals with disabilities requires a team approach in almost every setting (Hohenshil, 1984). Developing a transition team that includes some or all of the skills represented by the various professions within a school setting creates a spirit of cooperation and creative problem-solving (deFur, 1999).

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It has been suggested that the transition planning process should begin with the formation of a team representing various professional disciplines (Wehman, Moon, Everson, Marchant, & Walker, 1987), including educators, language clinicians, occupational and physical therapists, school psychologists, adult services providers, funding agencies, parents (Brinckerhoff, 1996; Clark, 1998; deFur & Patton, 1999), and students (deFur & Patton, 1999; Kohler & Chapman, 1999; Wehman, 1992). However, research suggests that the participation of professionals in

areas such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, and school psychology sharply declines as students enter secondary education (United States Department of Education (USDOE), 1995). This is unfortunate because a transition team that taps some or all of these resources increases the chances for successful vocational training or community-based experiences for students (deFur, 1999).

School psychologists are one group of professionals who can contribute significantly to transition planning. However, actual involvement of school psychologists in transition planning continues to be limited. The lack of involvement of school psychologists in transition planning is not necessarily due to a lack of interest on the part of school psychologists. A national study conducted by Staab (1996) sought to determine the perceptions of school psychologists regarding their current involvement in transition planning, the importance of school psychologist involvement in transition planning, and barriers that hinder school psychologists' participation in transition activities. Approximately 50% of the respondents indicated that their skills were "underutilized" with regard to transition planning. Staab (1996) reported that she believed the results from the survey suggested a significant difference between current involvement and the "importance" ratings for involvement in transition-related functions, with "importance" ratings being higher than actual performance. In other words, although school psychologists were not highly involved in many transition activities, they indicated that they believe it is important for school psychologists to be involved in these activities.

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**Roles of School Psychologists**

That school psychologists are not involved in transition planning to the extent that they can be is unfortunate. The barriers which hinder school psychologist involvement in transition planning will be discussed later. School psychologists possess many of the skills taught in "transition specialist" training programs, and can contribute these skills to the transition planning process (Levinson & Murphy, 1999).

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**However, actual involvement of school psychologists in transition planning continues to be limited.**

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In the area of assessment, school psychologists can contribute their understanding of test data from assessments of intelligence, academic achievement, personality, and adaptive behavior/social skills to the transition planning process. School psychologists routinely gather such data as part of a comprehensive assessment for special education eligibility evaluations and reevaluations. These tests, along with adaptive behavior and social skills data allow school psychologist to make predictions about success in a given vocational setting, and identify areas that need to be targeted for intervention prior to job or residential placement.

In the role of consultant, school psychologists can share their knowledge of learning and behavior theory and adolescent psychology by conducting in-service workshops on these topics. They can also use their knowledge of consultation theory and practice, in combination with their understanding of group dynamics, to serve as effective group facilitators by increasing cooperation and coordination among team members and by overcoming resistance to intervention implementation (Levinson & Murphy, 1999).

Within the area of direct service, school psychologists can assist in transition planning by developing and implementing social skills training programs or behavior management programs. Because many school psychologists are familiar with family dynamics and often facilitate family-school collaboration, they can be particularly effective in providing parent training or short-term family counseling aimed at enlisting parental support for involvement in the implementation of transition plans. This is crucial as family involvement in transition planning has been identified as a key characteristic of an effective transition program (Levinson & Murphy, 1999; deFur, 1999).

In the area of program planning and evaluation, school psychologists can use their understanding of research and program evaluation to evaluate a transition-planning program's effectiveness in facilitating the acquisition of skills necessary for successful transition from school to career or life (Levinson & McKee, 1990). The involvement of the school psychologist in the establishment and implementation of assessment programs can reduce the risk of inappropriate selection, use, and interpretation of assessment instruments, and can increase the validity of the overall transition assessment process (Levinson & Murphy, 1999).

However, to what extent do transition coordinators and school psychologists agree regarding current involvement and importance of involvement of school psychologists in transition planning? The current study sought to examine and compare the responses of school psychologists and transition coordinators regarding current involvement and perceived importance of involvement of

school psychologists in transition-related tasks. This study also investigated whether transition coordinators and school psychologists identify similar barriers to the involvement of the school psychologist in transition planning.

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**To what extent do transition coordinators and school psychologists agree regarding current involvement and importance of involvement of school psychologists in transition planning?**

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## Method

### Participants

To compare the responses of school psychologists and transition coordinators regarding the levels of current involvement and perceived importance of school psychologist involvement in transition related tasks, a questionnaire similar to that used by Staab (1996) was sent to 450 school psychologists and 225 transition coordinators throughout Pennsylvania. The school psychologists and transition coordinators were randomly and evenly selected from the 3 geographical regions of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as defined and divided by the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN). One hundred and fifty school psychologists (SP) and 75 transition coordinators (TC) were randomly selected from each of the three regions.

### Instruments

Each school psychologist and transition coordinator was sent a questionnaire similar to one sent out nationally to school psychologists by Staab (1996). The questionnaire included demographic questions and questions related to the school psychologists' current involvement and perceived importance of school psychologist involvement

in services related to transition planning, training related to transition, and perceived barriers to involvement in transition activities. No identifying information was included on the questionnaire in order to ensure confidentiality.

The transition related activities included on the questionnaire were divided into four major areas, "Consultation, Assessment, Direct Services, and Program Planning/Evaluation," as outlined in the *National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Standards for the Provision of School Psychological Services* (NASP, 1992). Content validity of the questionnaire was ensured as each question in the survey was linked to literature on best practices in transition planning and school psychology and organized around NASP standards for practice. Table 1 presents these categories and items. For each item, school psychologists and transition coordinators were asked "How often does a school psychologist currently..." and were asked to respond using the following Likert scale: 1=Never, 2=Occasionally, 3=Frequently, 4=Regularly/Routinely. Similarly, for each item, school psychologists and transition coordinators were asked "How important is it for a school psychologist to..." and were asked to respond using the following Likert scale: 1=Definitely should not, 2=Probably should not, 3=Probably should, 4=Definitely should.

### Procedures

Packets were mailed via the U.S. Postal Service and included a cover letter, the questionnaire, and a stamped, self-addressed return envelope. A follow-up post card was mailed to each participant 14 days after the mailing of the questionnaire packet. The post card thanked respondents who had completed and returned the questionnaire

Table 1  
Summary of Categories and Items

Task
<u>Consultation</u>
A1. Provide in-service on use of assessment for transition planning
A2. Provide in-service on transition issues
A3. Develop behavior plans to assist students on job sites
A4. Consult to develop self-advocacy/self-determination
A5. Provide parent workshops on roles/legal rights
A6. Coordinate referrals between school and post-school agencies
A7. Coordinate assessments to avoid duplication
A8. Participate in local Transition Council
A9. Provide training to parents to act as advocates for their children
A10. Serve as resources to families on transition issues
A11.* Provide workshops on human learning, development, or behavior
A12.* Provide workshops on optimizing learning and performance
A13.* Serve as group facilitator to improve team cooperation
<u>Psychological &amp; Psycho-Educational Assessment</u>
B1. Coordinate comprehensive transition evaluation for secondary students
B2. Provide recommendations for post-school needs
B3. Review student records to assist in transition planning
B4. Interview students to assist in transition planning
B5. Explain test results to students to understand strengths/needs
B6. Complete reevaluations to meet transition planning needs
B7. Conduct functional behavior assessments
B8. Conduct personality assessments
B9. Conduct ability assessments
B10. Conduct social skills assessments
<u>Direct Services</u>
C1. Provide information to students regarding their roles/legal rights
C2. Attend secondary IEPs where transition is discussed
C3. Provide student training on self-determination/self-advocacy
C4. Provide student training on interpersonal/social skills
C5. Provide student training on career decision making
C6. Identify "at-risk" students and initiate transition planning
C7. Provide input for placement and support for curricular areas
C8.* Provide short-term counseling to families to enlist/support involvement
C9.* Conduct workshops on the use of assessment data in transition planning
<u>Program Planning &amp; Evaluation</u>
D1. Evaluate curricular models for transition planning
D2. Develop transition manual checklist for students and parents
D3. Participate on curriculum development committee for transition needs
D4. Develop social skills training programs for students
D5. Develop timeline for completion of transition activities
D6. Determine effectiveness of transition programs
D7. Develop orientation program for secondary curricular options
D8. Monitor compliance with regulation regarding transition
D9. Conduct formal needs assessment in transition area
D10.* Conduct longitudinal studies to determine long-term effect of transition plans

\*Items not included in Staab (1996)

and served as a reminder to those who had not. A second follow-up mailing of the materials was conducted 30 days after the mailing of the initial packet to those participants who had not yet responded. Table 1 summarizes the various categories and items included on the survey.

## Results

Surveys were sent to 50% (N = 450) of Pennsylvania's total number of school psychologists and 39% (N= 225) of Pennsylvania's total number of transition coordinators. One hundred and ninety-one surveys (28.3%) were returned and included in data analysis. This included 66 surveys from transition coordinators (29.3%) and 125 surveys from school psychologists (27.8%).

Of the school psychologists who returned useable surveys, 38.4% were male and 61.6% were female. The mean age of the school psychologists was 44.6 years, and the mean number of years of experience was 16.8. These characteristics are similar to those found in the total population of school psychologists in Pennsylvania where 62% are female, 38% are male, and the average years of experience is 15.6 (Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), 1999). The school district setting of the sample of school psychologists was as follows: 8.1% urban, 48.8% suburban, and 43.1% rural. A total of 35.8% were from Western Pennsylvania, 39% were from Central Pennsylvania, and 25.2% were from Eastern Pennsylvania.

Of the transition coordinators who returned useable surveys, 47% were male and 53% were female. The mean age of the transition coordinators was 45.3% years and the average years of experience was 20. The school district setting of the sample of transition coordinators was as follows: 7.7% urban, 41.5% suburban, and 50.8% rural.

A total of 29.2% were from Western Pennsylvania, 38.5% were from Central Pennsylvania, and 32.3% were from Eastern Pennsylvania.

### **School Psychologist Preparation**

Each respondent in the sample of school psychologists was asked to rate their perceived level of preparation for completing transition activities. The majority of school psychologists (54.4%) reported that they knew some information about transition planning, but "needed more" in order to complete transition activities. Also, while 10.4% of school psychologists in Pennsylvania reported being "well prepared," 25.6% reported being "adequately prepared," and 9.6% reported that they were "not prepared" to participate in transition.

With regard to training, school psychologists reported receiving their transition training in a variety of areas. Over half (53.6%) of school psychologists in Pennsylvania reported that they received transition training through in-service workshops at the local Intermediate Unit (a regional special education cooperative serving several school districts), while only .8% received their training through a graduate program in "transition."

### **Transition Coordinator Preparation**

Each respondent in the sample of transition coordinators was asked to rate their perceived level of preparation for completing transition activities. The majority of transition coordinators (45.3%) reported that they were "adequately prepared" and 35.9% reported they were "well prepared" to participate in transition planning. No transition coordinators reported that they did not have any preparation, and 18.8% reported that they needed more information.

Most of the transition coordinators (78.5%) reported that

they obtained their training "on-the-job;" however, 75.4% of transition coordinators received training in transition through in-service workshops at their local intermediate unit. Few transition coordinators (6.3%) reported that they received their training through a graduate program in "transition." However, 26.7% received information related to transition in their graduate courses.

### **Ratings of School Psychologists' Involvement in Transition Activities**

Transition coordinators' and school psychologists' mean ratings for school psychologist performance of individual functions within the NASP categories of Consultation, Psychological and Psycho-Educational Assessment, Direct Services, and Program Planning and Evaluation were computed for each item in each category. No functions under any categories were listed as being performed "regularly/routinely."

#### **Consultation**

##### *SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST RATINGS.*

In the consultation category, 38% of the tasks were rated as "never" being performed, and 62% of the tasks were rated as "occasionally" being performed by school psychologists.

##### *TRANSITION COORDINATOR RATINGS.*

In the consultation category, 31% of the tasks were rated as "never" being performed, and 69% of the tasks were rated as being performed "occasionally" by school psychologists.

#### **Psychological & Psycho-Educational Assessment**

##### *SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST RATINGS.*

In the Psychological and Psycho-Educational Assessment category, 70% of the tasks were rated as being performed "occasionally" and 30% of the tasks were rated as being performed "frequently" by school psycholo-

gists. Tasks reported as being performed "frequently" include: (a) reviewing student records to assist in transition planning, (b) completing reevaluations to meet transition planning needs, and (c) conducting functional behavior assessment.

##### *TRANSITION COORDINATOR RATINGS.*

Similarly, transition coordinators also reported that school psychologists should "frequently" (a) complete reevaluations to meet transition needs and (b) conduct functional behavior assessments. In the Psychological and Psycho-Educational Assessment category, 80% of the tasks were rated as being performed "occasionally," and 20% of the tasks were rated as being performed "frequently" by school psychologists.

#### **Direct Services**

##### *SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST RATINGS.*

In the "Direct Services" category, 44% of the tasks were rated by school psychologists as "never" being performed, 44% of the tasks were rated as "occasionally" being performed, and one task (11%) was reported as being performed "frequently." The task, provide input for placement and support for curricular areas, was rated as being performed "frequently" by school psychologists.

##### *TRANSITION COORDINATOR RATINGS.*

Transition coordinators agreed with the school psychologist ratings in this category. In the "Direct Services" category, 44% of the tasks were rated as "never" being performed, 44% of the tasks were rated as "occasionally" being performed, and one task (11%) was reported as being performed "frequently" by school psychologists. Like school psychologists, transition coordinators rated the task, provide input for placement and support for curricular areas, as being performed "frequently" by school psychologists.

## Program Planning and Evaluation

### SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST RATINGS.

In the Program Planning and Evaluation category, 70% of the tasks were rated as “never” being performed, and 30% of the tasks were reported as being performed “occasionally” by school psychologists.

### TRANSITION COORDINATOR RATINGS.

In the Program Planning and Evaluation category, 80% of the tasks were rated as “never” being performed, while 20% of the tasks were rated as “occasionally” being performed by school psychologists.

### Differences Between School Psychologists' Ratings and Transition Coordinators' Ratings of School Psychologist Involvement in Transition Tasks

Independent sample t-tests were used to compare the responses of school psychologists with the responses of transition coordinators with regard to their current involvement in all transition related tasks. Table 2 presents means, standard deviations, and the results of these t-tests. In order to maintain a family-wise error rate of .05 when conducting multiple comparisons, the Bonferroni procedure (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991, p. 329) was used to adjust the original alpha level ( $p < .05$ ) for each item comparison within NASP categories as follows: Consultation,  $p = .004$ ; Psychological & Psycho-Educational Assessment,  $p = .005$ ; Direct Services,  $p = .006$ ; and Program Planning & Evaluation,  $p = .005$ . No significant differences were noted on tasks within any of the categories. Hence, school psychologists and transition coordinators agree as to actual involvement of school psychologists on all transition related tasks. Table 2 compares involvement ratings of school psychologists with transition coordinators.

## School Psychologists' and Transition Coordinators' Ratings of Importance of School Psychologist Involvement in Transition Tasks

Transition coordinators' and school psychologists' mean ratings of importance of school psychologist involvement in individual functions within the NASP categories of Consultation, Psychological and Psycho-Educational Assessment, Direct Services, and Program Planning and Evaluation were computed for each item in each category.

### Consultation

#### SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST RATINGS.

In the Consultation category, school psychologists reported that they “probably should” be involved in 92% of the tasks. The one task (8%) that school psychologists reported that they “probably should not” perform was coordinate referral between school and post-school agencies.

#### TRANSITION COORDINATOR RATINGS.

Similarly, transition coordinators, in the Consultation category, reported that school psychologists “probably should” be involved in 92% of the tasks. Like school psychologists, the one task (8%) that transition coordinators reported that school psychologists “probably should not” perform was coordinate referral between school and post-school agencies.

### Psychological & Psycho-Educational Assessment

#### SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST RATINGS.

In the Psychological & Psycho-Educational Assessment category, school psychologists reported that they “probably should” be involved in 90% of the tasks. The one task (10%) that school psychologists reported they “definitely should” perform was conduct functional behavior assessments.

### TRANSITION COORDINATOR RATINGS.

In the Psychological and Psycho-Educational Assessment category, transition coordinators reported that school psychologists “probably should” be involved in all of the tasks.

### Direct Services

#### SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST RATINGS.

In the Direct Services category, school psychologists reported that they “probably should” be involved in 89% of the tasks. The one task (11%) that school psychologists reported they “probably should not perform” was provide student training on career decision making.

#### TRANSITION COORDINATOR RATINGS.

In the Direct Services category, transition coordinators reported that school psychologists “probably should” be involved in all of the tasks.

## Program Planning and Evaluation

### SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST RATINGS.

In the Program Planning & Evaluation category, school psychologists reported that they “probably should” be involved in 40% of the tasks, and “probably should not” be involved in 60% of the tasks. Tasks in which school psychologists “probably should” be involved include: (a) curriculum development committees, (b) developing social skills training programs, (c) determining effectiveness of transition programs, and (d) conducting formal needs assessments in transition areas.

### TRANSITION COORDINATOR RATINGS.

Similarly, transition coordinators, in the “Program Planning & Evaluation” category, reported that school psychologists “probably should” be involved in (a) curriculum development committees, (b) developing social skills training programs, and (c) conducting formal needs assessments in transition areas. In this category, transition co-

Table 2  
t-Test Comparisons of Involvement - Transition Coordinators vs. School Psychologists

Task	Transition Coordinators			School Psychologists			Df	t	P
	n	mean	SD	n	mean	SD			
Consultation									
A1	65	1.58	0.86	122	1.50	.074	185	0.70	.484
A2	65	1.45	0.83	122	1.36	0.66	185	0.77	.441
A3	65	1.86	0.95	122	1.73	0.84	185	0.98	.331
A4	65	1.89	0.87	122	1.75	0.75	185	1.12	.263
A5	65	1.35	0.65	122	1.23	0.51	185	1.44	.151
A6	65	1.78	0.94	122	1.66	0.86	185	0.94	.347
A7	65	2.18	1.03	122	1.89	0.95	185	1.94	.054
A8	65	1.49	0.94	122	1.40	0.76	185	0.72	.474
A9	65	1.48	0.79	121	1.36	0.62	184	1.16	.249
A10	65	1.94	0.88	122	1.87	0.86	185	0.52	.602
A11	65	1.69	0.75	122	1.75	0.83	185	-.43	.664
A12	65	1.69	0.73	122	1.68	0.81	185	0.10	.920
A13	64	1.86	0.83	122	1.80	0.91	185	0.41	.683
Psychological & Psycho-Educational Assessment									
B1	65	2.15	1.05	122	2.17	1.04	185	-0.11	.909
B2	65	2.22	1.01	122	2.44	1.00	185	-1.47	.143
B3	65	2.31	1.09	122	2.67	1.08	185	-2.19	.030
B4	65	1.94	0.98	122	2.36	1.04	185	-2.70	.008
B5	65	2.45	1.12	122	2.43	1.03	185	0.07	.943
B6	64	2.61	1.19	120	3.03	1.04	182	-2.50	.013
B7	64	2.61	1.09	120	2.73	1.01	182	-0.77	.442
B8	64	1.64	0.82	120	1.79	0.97	182	-1.06	.291
B9	64	1.81	1.05	120	2.10	1.05	182	-1.77	.078
B10	64	1.95	0.88	120	2.23	1.00	182	-1.83	.069
Direct Services									
C1	64	1.70	0.99	120	1.66	0.87	182	0.32	.752
C2	64	2.50	1.18	120	2.39	1.08	182	0.63	.531
C3	64	1.25	0.59	120	1.28	0.61	182	-.36	.727
C4	64	1.33	0.56	120	1.42	0.72	182	-.86	.393
C5	64	1.22	0.45	120	1.28	0.62	182	-.64	.524
C6	64	1.97	1.02	120	1.84	1.02	182	0.80	.423

Table 2, continued  
t-Test Comparisons of Involvement - Transition Coordinators vs. School Psychologists

Task	Transition Coordinators			School Psychologists			Df	t	P
	n	mean	SD	n	mean	SD			
Direct Services, continued									
C7	64	2.63	1.13	120	2.73	1.12	182	-0.62	.535
C8	64	1.53	0.69	120	1.53	0.72	182	0.06	.955
C9	64	1.28	0.55	120	1.41	0.73	182	-1.22	.223
Program Planning and Evaluation									
D1	64	1.31	0.56	119	1.33	0.67	181	-0.16	.867
D2	64	1.25	0.59	119	1.23	0.54	181	0.27	.791
D3	64	1.42	0.75	119	1.36	0.72	181	0.53	.595
D4	64	1.44	0.59	119	1.66	0.79	181	-1.94	.054
D5	64	1.27	0.57	119	1.46	0.88	181	-1.61	.109
D6	64	1.36	0.60	119	1.42	0.70	181	-0.58	.560
D7	64	1.13	0.37	119	1.15	0.40	181	-0.43	.669
D8	64	1.64	1.03	119	1.81	1.12	181	-0.98	.327
D9	64	1.64	0.78	119	1.54	0.80	181	0.83	.405
D10	64	1.17	0.46	119	1.13	0.45	181	0.53	.594

ordinators reported that school psychologists "probably should" be involved in 30% of the tasks, and "probably should not" be involved in 70% of the tasks.

#### Differences Between School Psychologists' Ratings and Transition Coordinators' Ratings of Importance of School Psychologist Involvement in Transition Tasks

T-tests were conducted to compare the responses of school psychologists and transition coordinators with regard to perceived importance of school psychologist involvement in transition activities. Table 3 presents means, standard deviations, and the results of these t-tests. In order to maintain a family-wise error rate of .05 when conducting multiple comparisons, the Bonferroni procedure

(Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991, p. 329) was used to adjust the original alpha level ( $p < .05$ ) for each item comparison within NASP categories as follows: Consultation,  $p = .004$ ; Psychological & Psycho-Educational Assessment,  $p = .005$ ; Direct Services,  $p = .006$ ; and Program Planning & Evaluation,  $p = .005$ . Using these criteria, no significant differences were noted on tasks within any of the categories. Hence, school psychologists and transition coordinators agree as to the importance of school psychologist involvement in each transition task. Table 3 compares ratings of school psychologists and transition coordinators on the importance of various transition tasks.

#### School Psychologists' and Transition Coordinators' Current Involvement vs. Perceived Importance of Involvement

Means of school psychologists' and transition coordinators' ratings of current involvement were compared to their ratings of perceived importance. The differences between means were analyzed through the use of a t-test. The school psychologists' ratings of perceived importance were significantly greater than their ratings of current involvement in all tasks in all of the categories ( $p < .0001$ ). Similarly, the transition coordinators' ratings of perceived importance of involvement in all tasks in all categories were significantly greater than their ratings of current involvement for all tasks ( $p < .0001$ ).



**SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS.**

School psychologists rated importance as greater than involvement on all of the tasks. The greatest difference between school psychologists' ratings of current involvement and perceived importance of involvement was with regard to conducting personality assessments. In other words, the school psychologists reported that, although they "occasionally" perform personality assessments, they "probably should" conduct such assessments and would like to conduct more.

**TRANSITION COORDINATORS.**

Transition coordinators rated importance as greater than involvement on all tasks. The transition coordinators indicated that the greatest difference between their perceived involvement rating and perceived importance rating for school psychologists is with regard to conducting workshops on the use of assessment data in transition planning. In other words, Pennsylvania's transition coordinators reported that

school psychologists "never" conduct workshops on the use of assessment data in transition planning but "probably should" and would like school psychologists to conduct more workshops on this topic.

### Barriers to School Psychologist Involvement

A z-test was used to compare the responses of transition coordinators with the responses of school psychologists regarding the perceived barriers to school psychologist involvement in transition activities. For each group, the percentage of respondents listing a particular barrier was computed and percentages compared between groups. There were no significant differences between school psychologists and transition coordinators on the ratings of 91.7% of the barriers identified. These barriers included: "transition is not part of job description;" "lack of interest in transition activities;" "lack of training in transition;" "referral backlog;" "little secondary work;" "not invited to participate;" "lack of aware-

ness;" "role restrictions;" and "number of buildings served."

A significant difference was noted between samples relative to the frequency with which the barrier, "high caseload," was mentioned. While 40.6% of transition coordinators reported "high caseload" as a significant barrier to school psychologist involvement, 58.4% of school psychologist reported this as a barrier. This difference was determined to be statistically significant, ( $z = -2.32, p < .05$ ), and suggests that transition coordinators underestimate the extent to which this barrier inhibits school psychologist involvement in transition tasks.

### Discussion

Overall, the results of this study indicate that school psychologists and transition coordinators in Pennsylvania maintain similar attitudes and perceptions regarding the level of involvement that school psychologists have in transition-related tasks, and of the importance of school psychologist involvement

Table 3

t-Test Comparisons of Importance Ratings - Transition Coordinators vs. School Psychologists

Task	Transition Coordinators			School Psychologists			Df	t	P
	n	mean	SD	n	mean	SD			
Consultation									
A1	64	3.09	0.66	123	3.03	0.72	185	0.56	.572
A2	63	2.70	0.89	123	2.75	0.92	184	-.35	.726
A3	63	3.13	0.75	123	3.23	0.72	184	-.89	.376
A4	63	3.05	0.79	123	3.15	0.79	184	-.81	.420
A5	63	2.62	0.89	123	2.63	0.94	184	-.05	.961
A6	63	2.49	0.90	123	2.43	0.91	184	0.44	.662
A7	63	3.08	0.90	123	3.08	0.91	184	-.01	.989
A8	63	2.60	0.87	123	2.61	0.83	183	-.03	.979
A9	62	2.65	0.83	123	2.65	0.87	183	-.04	.969
A10	63	2.84	0.77	123	2.96	0.80	184	-.96	.337

Table 3, continued  
 t-Test Comparisons of Importance Ratings - Transition Coordinators vs. School Psychologists

Task	Transition Coordinators			School Psychologists			Df	t	P
	n	mean	SD	n	mean	SD			
Consultation, continued									
A11	63	3.17	0.68	123	3.12	0.77	184	-0.62	.649
A12	63	3.24	0.53	123	3.13	0.81	184	0.06	.339
A13	62	2.94	0.81	123	2.96	0.84	183	-1.22	.854
Psychological & Psycho-Educational Assessment									
B1	63	3.11	0.88	123	3.10	0.93	184	0.10	.921
B2	63	3.27	0.81	123	3.40	0.70	184	-1.13	.262
B3	63	3.29	0.79	123	3.41	0.76	184	-1.08	.280
B4	63	2.78	0.88	123	3.12	0.88	184	-2.44	.015
B5	63	3.40	0.83	123	3.50	0.67	184	-0.95	.343
B6	62	3.37	0.77	122	3.50	0.72	182	-1.12	.263
B7	62	3.50	0.62	122	3.59	0.64	182	-0.91	.362
B8	62	2.85	0.84	122	2.84	0.88	182	0.14	.890
B9	62	2.85	0.87	122	3.10	0.83	182	-1.86	.065
B10	62	3.06	0.74	122	3.26	0.70	182	-1.77	.078
Direct Services									
C1	62	2.63	0.91	121	2.66	0.94	181	-0.22	.825
C2	62	3.18	0.84	122	3.20	0.76	182	-0.16	.875
C3	62	2.81	0.83	122	2.62	0.85	182	1.40	.162
C4	62	2.84	0.73	122	2.74	0.86	182	0.80	.426
C5	62	2.53	0.82	122	2.43	0.86	182	-0.80	.425
C6	62	2.94	0.87	122	2.96	0.89	182	-0.17	.865
C7	62	3.29	0.73	122	3.46	0.67	182	-1.56	.120
C8	62	2.79	0.72	122	2.64	0.84	182	1.20	.232
C9	62	2.95	0.78	122	2.83	0.88	182	0.94	.350
Program Planning & Evaluation									
D1	62	2.44	0.93	120	2.43	0.87	180	0.08	.940
D2	62	2.27	0.94	119	2.16	0.97	179	0.76	.449
D3	62	2.68	0.81	120	2.58	0.90	180	0.76	.450
D4	62	2.94	0.72	119	2.92	0.86	179	0.15	.879
D5	62	2.35	1.01	120	2.30	0.99	180	0.35	.726
D6	62	2.44	0.88	120	2.61	0.91	180	-1.23	.221

Table 3, continued

t-Test Comparisons of Importance Ratings - Transition Coordinators vs. School Psychologists

Task	n	mean	SD	n	mean	SD	Df	t	P
Program Planning & Evaluation, continued									
D7	62	1.94	0.97	121	1.94	0.85	181	0.07	.946
D8	62	2.27	1.12	121	2.36	1.13	181	-0.46	.645
D9	62	2.61	1.01	121	2.56	0.94	181	0.39	.695
D10	62	2.31	1.02	121	2.33	1.04	181	-0.15	.881

in these tasks. Both school psychologists and transition coordinators believe that school psychologists should be involved in all tasks to a greater degree than they are currently involved. The finding that school psychologists are not involved to the extent that they believe they should be is consistent with existing literature (Levinson, 1990; Reschly & Wilson, 1995; Staab, 1996).

The results also indicate that school psychologists and transition coordinators agree that school psychologists frequently perform some transition-related tasks including: (a) completing reevaluations to meet transition needs, (b) conducting functional behavior assessments, and (c) providing input for placement and support. School psychologists and transition coordinators also agree that school psychologists should be involved in many transition related tasks. These tasks include all tasks in the Consultation category except for coordinating referral between school and post-school agencies, all tasks in the Psychological and Psycho-Educational Assessment category, all tasks in the Direct Services category except for providing student training on career decision making, and the tasks (a) participate on transition development committees, (b) develop social skills training programs, and (c) conduct func-

tional behavior assessments from the Program Planning and Evaluation category.

**The results of this study indicate that school psychologists and transition coordinators in Pennsylvania maintain similar attitudes and perceptions regarding the level of involvement that school psychologists have in transition-related tasks, and of the importance of school psychologist involvement in these tasks.**

The results also indicate that school psychologists believe that conducting personality assessments is an important transition planning task and one that they should be performing more frequently. Personality assessments can be a valuable tool in determining the extent to which an individual possesses the personality characteristics necessary for success in a given occupation. Therefore, transition planning might be more effective if school psychologists were more frequently involved in this task. In contrast, school psychologists do not believe they should be involved in providing student training in career decision making while transition coordinators do believe they should provide this training.

In terms of the barriers that limit school psychologist in-

volvement in transition, for the most part, school psychologists and transition coordinators agree as to the extent to which specific barriers are present. The only barrier for which school psychologists and transition coordinators did not provide equal ratings was high caseload. A significantly larger percentage of school psychologists than transition coordinators perceived "high caseload" as impacting the involvement of school psychologists in transition planning. This finding indicates that transition coordinators may not be aware of the extent to which this barrier affects school psychologists' involvement in transition. Much has been written about this in the school psychology literature and some have suggested that special education reform may reduce the amount of testing required of school psychologists (Levinson & Murphy, 1999). This, in turn, may provide school psychologists with more time to devote to transition related tasks other than assessment.

This study has several limitations that must be considered. One limitation of the study is the relatively low response rate obtained. Though characteristics of the school psychologist sample were similar to characteristics of the population of Pennsylvania school psychologists at the time the study

was conducted, the presence of a response bias still exists. The Pennsylvania Department of Education does not have information available on the demographics of transition coordinators so it is unclear how the characteristics of the sample of transition coordinators compare to the population. Regardless, it is possible that respondents' perceptions may not be representative of the perceptions of all school psychologists and transition coordinators in Pennsylvania.

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**Future research should be designed to replicate this study with nationally representative samples or samples in other states.**

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Another limitation of this study is that it was conducted in the state of Pennsylvania rather than nationally. Hence, the results apply to transition coordinators and school psychologists within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and cannot be generalized to individuals in other states or countries. Future research should be designed to replicate this study with nationally representative samples or samples in other states to investigate the extent to which our results may be generalized beyond Pennsylvania. Additionally, since the titles of those professionals who serve as transition coordinators may vary from state to state, research should also be designed to determine whether roles and perceptions vary by title. This research is important because the results of such research could provide a more accurate representation of the professionals involved in the transition planning process in each state and their roles in this process.

The structure of the survey may also have affected the results. The survey selected in this study was a replication of

one that had been mailed nationally to school psychologists by Staab (1996). The Likert ratings format on Part II of the survey included four choices for each question. The use of a four-point scale has been criticized (Fink, 1995) because there is less of a difference between options than on a scale with five or seven points. Responses may have been different had a five or seven point scale been used.

However, in spite of these limitations, this study has implications for school psychologists and other educational professionals involved in transition in terms of transition training. Consistent with existing literature (Shepard, 1982; Staab, 1996), the results of the study indicate that most school psychologists felt that they were not adequately prepared in the area of transition planning. This finding is particularly concerning considering Ulmer's (2004) finding that school psychologists who feel that they lack adequate training in the area of transition services, are less likely to participate in such activities.

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**This study has implications for school psychologists and other educational professionals involved in transition in terms of transition training.**

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In addition, the results of the study indicate that few transition coordinators received training through a graduate program, but that many transition coordinators received training through in-service workshops. In order to ensure that school psychologists are better prepared to participate in transition planning, transition coordinators should involve school psychologists in in-service workshops designed to inform educational professionals about transition planning. These re-

sults also clearly indicate a need for graduate training programs in transition to include information regarding the contributions that school psychologists can make to the transition planning process. This training could provide transition coordinators with the knowledge needed to fully utilize the transition-related skills of school psychologists, and therefore, make transition planning more effective.

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