ABSTRACT

Ronda J. Sortino, SECONDARY TO POSTSECONDARY TRANSITION FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES: STUDENT AND TEACHER PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF A SERIES OF NON-COGNITIVE TRANSITION CURRICULUM MODULES (Under the direction of Dr. William Rouse, Jr.). Department of Educational Leadership, July 2014.

With increasing frequency, students with learning differences are transitioning out of high school ill-prepared for the rigor and freedom of a postsecondary setting. The transition from high school to college is marked by the transfer of responsibility for accessing and monitoring services and performance. The familiar model of special education services at the high school level changes significantly at the postsecondary level, shifting responsibility from the K-12 school system to the individual student. Research is limited in specific transition processes that manifest into successful transitioning of students with learning differences from secondary to postsecondary educational institutions. This study sought to investigate the quality of a series of non-cognitive transition modules developed to prepare students with learning differences for the postsecondary education setting. For purposes of this research, the terminology learning differences was used, except when referring to learning disabilities as it relates to federal law.

Though transition planning for students with learning differences has long been discussed and supported by federal mandate, there are shortcomings in the literature as to static or longitudinal studies supporting or refuting practices that support transitioning of students with high incidence disabilities from secondary to postsecondary settings. This study served to provide a systematic, non-cognitive curricular approach to preparation for students with learning differences.
The purpose of this study was to determine teacher and high school student perceived effectiveness of a series of non-cognitive transition curriculum modules developed to prepare high school students with learning differences for a postsecondary educational setting. Using a mixed-methods explanatory research design, the researcher collected quantitative data that would be expanded upon by further collection of qualitative data. Using the qualitative data to explain and extend the paradigm created by the presentation of the quantitative data, the research effectively answered the proposed study questions and provided insight into the preparedness of secondary students with learning differences for transitioning to a postsecondary education. Further implementation in secondary settings, with continuous feedback from teachers and students for appropriateness and effectiveness, will provide a sustainable transition curriculum designed to help students with learning differences experience a positive transition to postsecondary education.
SECONDARY TO POSTSECONDARY TRANSITION FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES: STUDENT AND TEACHER PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF A SERIES OF NON-COGNITIVE TRANSITION CURRICULUM MODULES

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by

Ronda J. Sortino

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For the first time in more years than I can remember, I will not be enrolling in school for the fall semester or, for that matter, any semester. Words cannot adequately express the sincere thanks and appreciation I have for the lifelong friendships I have made along the way- through undergrad, a few masters programs, and while working toward my doctoral degree. Thank you to my friends (who are my family), my parents, and the amazing educator mentors who have influenced me on this journey. Thank you for believing in me.

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Graduating from high school is a major milestone as it signifies the transition from youth to adulthood. It is a time marked by new opportunities and independence. As we progress through the 21st century, the standard prerequisite for a middle class life is a college degree (Adams, 2011). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 and 2004 resulted in improved transition planning for students with learning disabilities (Madaus & Shaw, 2006b). As a result, more individuals with disabilities enter institutions of higher education. However, students with disabilities are still accessing college at a lower rate. Identifying specific methods to facilitate the successful inclusion of students with learning differences into postsecondary settings continues to be a relevant transition issue for high schools and colleges (Lightner, Kipps-Vaughan, Schulte, & Trice, 2012; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a; Madaus & Shaw, 2006b; Newman, Wagner, Cameto, Knokey, Buckley, & Malouf, 2010).

The demands of higher education are significant for all students. With increasing frequency, students with learning differences are transitioning out of high school ill-prepared for the rigor and freedom of a postsecondary institution (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Mellard, 2005). While students with learning differences have the ability to succeed in a postsecondary educational setting, they frequently encounter challenges from secondary school personnel, their parents, and their self-image. Students with learning differences “often deny their learning problems, wanting to distance themselves from the special education label they carried in elementary and secondary school” (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002, p. 463).

The transition from high school to college is marked by the transfer of responsibility. The familiar model of special education services at the high school level changes significantly at
the postsecondary level, shifting responsibility from the K-12 school system to the individual student (Barnard-Brak, Davis, Tate, & Sulak, 2009; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Madaus, 2005; Shaw, 2009). The successful transition of students with learning differences from a secondary to postsecondary educational setting requires early planning, collaborative efforts, and vertical alignment between educational settings.

**Statement of the Problem**

As more individuals with disabilities enter institutions of higher education, identifying specific methods to facilitate the successful transition of students with learning differences into postsecondary settings continues to be a relevant issue for high schools and colleges (Lightner et al., 2012; Newman et al., 2010). Transitions are an integral part of life and the demands of higher education are difficult for all students, thus stronger transition programming for college-bound students with learning differences is critical. With increasing frequency, students with learning differences, as well as those without, are transitioning out of high school ill-prepared for the rigor and freedom of a postsecondary setting (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Mellard, 2005; Michael, Dickson, Ryan, & Koefer, 2010).

The transition from high school to college is marked by the transfer of responsibility for accessing and monitoring services and performance. The familiar model of special education services at the high school level changes significantly at the postsecondary level, shifting responsibility from the K-12 school system to the individual student (Barnard-Brak et al., 2009; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Madaus, 2005; Shaw, 2009). Research is limited in specific transition processes that manifest into successful transition of students with learning differences in postsecondary educational institutions. This study sought to investigate the quality of a series of non-cognitive transition modules developed to prepare students with learning differences for
the postsecondary education setting. For purposes of this research, the terminology learning
differences was used, except when referring to learning disabilities as it relates to federal law and
state statute. Learning disabilities indicates an identified population and learning differences was
used throughout the study to refer, collectively, to students who have been identified with
various disabilities.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine teacher and high school student perceived
effectiveness of a series of non-cognitive transition curriculum modules developed to prepare
high school students with learning differences for a postsecondary education setting.

**Significance of the Study**

This study was designed to contribute to the continued development of a non-cognitive,
or non-academic, curriculum useful for the successful transition from K-12 to postsecondary
education. Though transition planning for students with learning differences has long been
discussed and supported by federal mandate, there are shortcomings in the literature as to static
or longitudinal studies supporting or refuting practices that support transitioning of students with
high incidence disabilities from secondary to postsecondary settings. This study served to
provide a systematic, non-cognitive curricular approach to preparation for students with learning
differences. Further implementation in secondary settings with continuous feedback from
teachers and students for appropriateness and effectiveness will undoubtedly provide a
sustainable transition curriculum that will help students with learning differences experience a
positive transition to postsecondary education.


Research Questions

1. How did using the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules change student perspective on their ability and preparedness to attend college?

2. What impact did the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules have on teacher perception of students with learning differences transitioning to postsecondary education?

3. What is the student perception of the quality of the modules?

4. What is the teacher perception of the quality of the modules?

Overview of Methodology

The purpose of the study was to determine teacher and high school student perceived effectiveness of a series of non-cognitive, or non-academic, transition curriculum modules developed to prepare high school students with learning differences for a postsecondary education setting. In this systematic mixed method survey research investigation, open ended questionnaires and interviews were used, as well as a Likert scale pre and posttest, to determine the appropriateness of content, student and teacher knowledge of and involvement in transition planning for postsecondary education, and ease of use of eight transition modules designed to enhance the preparation of secondary students for postsecondary education. The research study was executed in two high schools in western North Carolina.

With prior approval from Superintendent Dr. Tony Baldwin (see Appendix H), Buncombe County Schools hosted the research with two Academic Support classes from two different high schools participating in the study. Comprehensive, non-cognitive transition modules were provided to each teacher in the two classrooms. Between those two classrooms, the total number of students who participated in the research study was twenty-six. The
transition curriculum consisted of eight modules, with each module comprised of two to four
detailed and fully planned lessons. Each lesson was designed to take participants approximately
30 minutes to complete and includes PowerPoint presentations, student activities, student notes,
teacher notes, and embedded resources.

Participants in the study included the classroom teacher in each of two classrooms and 26
high school students who were enrolled in a designated Academic Support class. Each of the
students was eligible for and received services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education
Act. The students participating in this study received services in the Exceptional Children’s
program and had been identified as having high incidence disabilities, including, but not limited
to Specific Learning Disabilities, Other Health Impaired, and Autism. For this research project,
a pre/post-test design was utilized, with the additional collection of ongoing qualitative data.
Both groups—the teachers and the students—were administered a common measure before
implementation of the transition curriculum and were then administered the same measure
following completion of the eight transition modules. Questions of retrospect were included in
the post-test. Additionally, data were collected using a survey from each of the students and the
teachers at the completion of each individual module and from teachers at the conclusion of each
lesson plan. Finally, all participants were interviewed individually after completing their
respective post-tests.

Data collected from the pretests and posttests, the surveys, and the interviews were
thoroughly analyzed and then coded to provide insight into the student and teacher perceived
effectiveness of the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules in preparing high school
students with learning differences for a postsecondary education setting. Data collected in this
research study became joint property of both Project STEPP at East Carolina University and
The entities involved in this research proposal had a vested interest in the outcomes of the study.

**Definition of Terms**

*Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*—

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities that are like those provided to individuals on the basis of race, sex, national origin, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, State and local government services, and telecommunications. (U.S. Department of Education, 2006, para. 1)

Further, the Americans with Disabilities Act states that “Auxiliary aids and services must be provided to individuals with vision or hearing impairments or other individuals with disabilities so that they can have an equal opportunity to participate or benefit, unless an undue burden would result” (U.S. Department of Education, 2006, section 2, bullet 3).

*Individual Transition Plan*—A component of an Individualized Education Program that must be in place by the time the student reaches the age of 16. This plan outlines a series of outcome oriented activities that will guide a student from secondary to postsecondary life (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

*Individualized Education Program*—

The IEP is a written statement for a student with a disability that is developed, at least annually, by a team of professionals knowledgeable about the student and the parent. The plan describes the strengths of the child and the concerns of the parents for enhancing the education of their child, and when, where, and how often services will be provided. The IEP is required by federal law for all exceptional children and must include specific information about how the student will be served and what goals he or she should be meeting. (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], n.d., “IEP”)

*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*—IDEA is a federal mandate that originated as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) in 1975 and has been
reauthorized multiple times, most recently in 2004 (Madaus & Shaw, 2006a). IDEA is designed to ensure that all children from preschool age to 21 are provided a free, appropriate public education that allows access to special education and related services. Services for students are individualized and designed to ultimately prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. IDEA requires that public schools create an Individualized Education Program for students who are found to be eligible for services under both federal and state eligibility/disability standards (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

Learning Differences—Learning differences refers to the students whose learning profiles are “not aligned with the expectations and teaching methodologies prevalent in mainstream school systems” (Oak Foundation, 2011). Learning differences are often associated with high incidence disabilities, such as learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and dyslexia. Students with learning differences experience learning struggles that make them atypical from their mainstreamed peers (Oak Foundation, 2011).

Learning Disabilities—The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities and member organizations define learning disabilities as

A general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example, sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance), or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences. (LD Online, 2010)

Local Education Agency—Also referred to as the local school system, the LEA is a “public board of education or other public authority [that] maintains administrative control of the public schools in a city or county” (NCDPI, n.d., “LEA”).
Non-Cognitive—Non-academic; academic and non-academic factors contribute to college readiness. Academic factors are those based on formal education, such as content knowledge and grades, while non-academic factors include dispositions, habits of mind, executive functioning abilities, external resources, and college knowledge. Non-cognitive refers to the “student’s ability to adapt to and meet the varying demands of a college environment” (Sommerfeld, 2011, p. 22).

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973—A federal mandate, Section 504 is designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. The law provides that disabled individuals not be excluded from participation or otherwise discriminated against in any program or organization which receives federal funding. Further,

Section 504 regulations require a school district to provide a ‘free appropriate public education’ (FAPE) to each qualified student with a disability who is in the school district’s jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability. Under Section 504, FAPE consists of the provision of regular or special education and related aids and services designed to meet the student’s individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met” (U.S. Department of Education, 2013, “Introduction,” para. 4).

Transition Planning—Transition planning is a coordinated set of outcome oriented activities focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of a student with disabilities. The intent of transition planning is to facilitate the student’s movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation. Transition planning is a collaborative process coordinated by the LEA and an integral part of the Individualized Education Program. Transition planning is based on the individual needs,
preferences, and interests of the student. Transition plans are required to be in place by the time the student reaches sixteen years of age (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

**Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of the study were as follows:

1. Longstanding perceptions of teachers about the ability of students with learning differences to attend a postsecondary educational institute may influence their responses on the pre and post-test instrument and in the interview.

2. Student perception of their ability to attend and be successful at a postsecondary educational institute may be impacted by actions of school personnel throughout their education careers.

3. Implementation was limited to one school district, two schools, and students enrolled in an Academic Support class during the spring semester of 2014.

4. Students with learning differences who were not enrolled in Academic Support during the second semester and not part of the predetermined sample were not considered in this study.

5. Longitudinal data providing exit outcomes for the participating students will not be part of this study.

6. Data collection tools were reviewed, critiqued, revised, and approved by multiple experts in the field of Special Education and Educational Leadership. Despite their years of experience and professional background, student and teacher interpretation of each question cannot be guaranteed by the researcher.
7. Teacher perception of the ability of students with learning differences to attend a postsecondary educational setting could impact their perception of the quality of the transition modules.

**Organization of the Study**

This study was organized in the traditional five-chapter dissertation format. Chapter 2 provides a thorough review of the literature. Chapter 3 provides an in-depth examination of the research design and methodology. Data analysis and research findings are expressed in Chapter 4. A summary of the study, implications for practice, and recommendations are addressed in the final chapter, Chapter 5. The dissertation also includes references and appendixes.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter 2 provides an in-depth review of the literature as it pertains to transition planning for students with learning differences. The chapter summarizes and discusses the federal legislation that governs students with disabilities in secondary and postsecondary institutions, details the importance and necessity of transition planning, and clarifies the roles of those involved. The role of the student in transition planning, the role of the parent, the role of school personnel, and the role of postsecondary personnel are clearly identified based on data of best practice and supported by a variety of research studies.

Further examination of research includes the impact of secondary transition services at the postsecondary level, the importance of self-determination in transition planning, and the need for identifying at-risk characteristics. The research of literature also delves into the appropriateness of high school programming as a determining factor in school completion for students with disabilities, high school completion and post-school outcomes, student perception of secondary school programming, and college readiness. Conclusive statements are made to summarize the findings and to clearly articulate the relevance to the research study.

The purpose of this literature review was to examine existing research in transition planning for individuals with learning differences from secondary to postsecondary education. Specifically, this review of literature will delve into an area of research that examines transition planning for students with high incidence disabilities, self-determination, and preparation for a postsecondary education. The search engines utilized during the research of this literature included Education Research Complete and Eric via Ebsco. Key search terms included high incidence disabilities, college readiness, post school outcomes, postsecondary education,
learning disabilities, at-risk students, transitions, transition planning, retention, dropout, post school transitions, and self-determination.

Secondary v. Post-Secondary Education Laws

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act has undergone several changes since it began as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), or Public Law 94-142, in 1975 (Madaus & Shaw, 2006a). This law originated as a way to insure that students with disabilities receive an appropriate public education. In 1997, reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), PL 105-17, broadened the focus of IDEA from improving access to special education, supports, and services for children with disabilities, to improving results for these children (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a). While many important changes were made to the statute in this regard, some of the most significant changes impacted the way we help students with learning differences progress through school and transition from school to post-secondary education and employment (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997). These new provisions compelled educators and other stakeholders to consider more seriously the benefits of strong transition planning for students with learning differences, whether they planned to pursue academic courses of study, vocational courses, or a more uniquely designed program of study (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002).

In the 1997 revision of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, transition services were identified as a series of activities planned for a student with a disability that is intended to produce an outcome-oriented process (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997). The transition plan was expected to provide individualized and collaborative planning to foster movement from school to post-school activities. Components of the transition plan should
include transition support to a post-secondary educational setting, vocational training, employment, independent living, or community participation based on the student needs, desires, and cognitive ability (Warger & Burnette, 2000). Through the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process, students, along with other members of their IEP team, designed their high school experience to help them attain prerequisite skills needed to move through high school and to achieve post-secondary goals (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005). Moreover, transition planning during the development of the IEP helped identify, when appropriate, those responsibilities of the school and of other agencies that play important roles in connecting a student to post-school options (Curtis, Rabren, & Reilly, 2009; Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a).

Since the 1997 reauthorization of the IDEA, transition planning is required for all students who receive services under the legislation. The 1997 reauthorization dictates that beginning by the time the student reaches the age of 14, a transition plan will be in place (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a; Transition Planning, 1999). The Individual Transition Plan is part of the Individualized Education Program and is based on individual student needs (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). The law specifically places the responsibility for initiating and overseeing transition planning within the school system. Under the 1997 revision, beginning at age fourteen and updated annually, a statement of transition service needs of the student that focuses on the student’s course of study must be included in the current IEP. By age 16, or sooner if applicable, the IEP must include a statement of the needed transition services for the student including a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any necessary linkages (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997;
The Individual Transition Plan (ITP) must address instruction, community experiences, employment/ adult living, daily living/ functional vocational evaluation, and related services. This plan is evaluated and amended, as necessary, per annum with the Individualized Education Program (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997; Lerner, 2000).

In December of 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized again and signed into law by President George W. Bush, with most provisions effective on July 1, 2005 (Identification of Specific Learning Disabilities, 2006; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a). The most recent three year reauthorization process of the IDEA, also known as Public Law 108-446, represented the first update to the nation’s special education law in seven years (Identification of Specific Learning Disabilities, 2006). While many important changes were made to the statute, key provisions in the law impacted identification of students with learning differences, discipline, reevaluations, early intervention services, over identification and disproportionality, IEP changes, accountability, personnel standards, child medications, and funding (The New IDEA, 2005).

The 2004 reauthorization saw the addition of “further education” to the purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and changes to the definition of transition services:

The purposes of IDEA include ensuring that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living. [34 CFR 300.1(a)] [20 U.S.C. 1400(d)(1)(A)] (Secondary Transition, 2007).

The term “transition services” means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that

- Is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported
employment); continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;
• Is based on the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child’s strengths, preferences, and interests; and
Includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

Additionally, the most recent reauthorization changes the secondary transition requirements in the Individualized Education Program:

Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined by the IEP Team, and updated annually thereafter, the IEP must include:
• Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment and, where appropriate, independent living skills;
• The transition services (including course of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals; and
• Beginning not later than one year before the child reaches the age of majority under State law, a statement that the child has been informed of the child’s rights under Part B, if any, that will transfer to the child on reaching the age of majority under §300.520 [34 CFR 300.320(b) and (c)] [20 U.S.C. 1414 (d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII) (Secondary Transition, 2007).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act mandates that any student with a disability between the ages of three and twenty-one must be provided a free, appropriate, public education (FAPE), regardless of the nature and severity of the disability (Hallahan & Kaufmann, 2006; Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). Under all revisions of the IDEA, “local education authorities are responsible for identifying and assessing students with potential disabilities through a comprehensive and nondiscriminatory evaluation process and for designing and implementing an Individualized Education Program (IEP)” for each student who qualifies for services under the federal mandate (Madaus & Shaw, 2006a, p. 13). A key component of IDEA is the child find clause. Essentially, this means that by law, the burden of locating and serving disabled students rests on school officials in the K-12 arena (Eckes &
Disclosure of a disability is the defining difference between IDEA, Section 504 and the ADA (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a).

**Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504**

Understanding law and policy is an important aspect of the transition from high school to higher education. The laws that apply to students with disabilities and the provisions they offer are different in higher education compared to those that apply in secondary education (Barnard-Brak et al., 2009; Beale, 2005; Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Scott, 1991). In contrast to the “entitlement legislation of IDEA” (Madaus & Shaw, 2006a, p. 13), the laws governing postsecondary education are civil rights laws shifting the responsibility of disability identification, evaluation, and services from the local public school system to the student (Barnard-Brak et al., 2009; Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Hurtubis Sahlen & Lehmann, 2006).

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) are civil rights laws that govern disability policy in higher education (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Hurtubis Sahlen & Lehmann, 2006; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a). As described by Hurtubis Sahlen and Lehmann (2006), these laws “provide general guidelines regarding the processes associated with students’ requests for accommodations” (p. 28). More specifically, both mandates prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability and require that postsecondary institutions ensure equal access, interpreted as “reasonable academic access” for otherwise qualified students (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Hurtubis Sahlen & Lehmann, 2006; Madaus, 2005).

As students transition from secondary to postsecondary institutions, it is imperative that they understand the difference in the governing disability legislation. Students in a K-12 setting are exposed to a familiar, and sometimes rigid, model of educational services governed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and driven by the Individualized Education Program
Though disability services vary greatly at the college level, no special education system similar to that in K-12 exists in postsecondary education (Beale, 2005; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a). The scope of services changes considerably at the postsecondary level. Legal rights change at the college level and responsibility shifts from a program primarily facilitated by the parent to the student taking sole responsibility. Legislation changes from protection of the service delivery model and a comprehensive educational plan for students with disabilities to equal access and nondiscrimination of students who are only identified through self-disclosure (Beale, 2005; Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Hurtubis-Sahlen & Lehmann, 2006; Madaus, 2005).

**Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities**

Halpern (as cited in Public Schools of North Carolina, 1998) defines transition as “a period of floundering that occurs for at least the first several years after leaving school, as adolescents attempt to assume a variety of adult roles in their community” (p. 17). Although graduation from high school is a time filled with many challenges and changes, for most people it is anticipated and anxiously awaited. Historically, this has not been the case for students with disabilities. In order for youths with disabilities to move successfully from the role of student to the role of a productive and involved member of the community, planning is required for both them and their families.

Planning for the future has long been recognized as a good idea. Yet, relatively little attention has been given to planning for adult life of students who do not deal well with the events of everyday life, including transitions to postsecondary education. Although they constitute the largest proportion of students with disabilities in public schools, students with high incidence learning differences have not received as much attention in transition planning as
students with more severe disabilities. According to Janiga and Costenbader (2002), empirical evidence indicates that when transition planning is not thorough, many students with learning differences are unsuccessful in both vocational and education settings (Eches & Ochoa, 2005). Further, Janiga and Costenbader (2000) expressed that postsecondary disability service providers shared “dissatisfaction with how well high school staff informed students of the services available for students with disabilities at the college level” (p. 466). Individualized transition planning can be a dynamic vehicle by which to empower students and families to utilize strengths, set and reach short-term and long-range goals, and include community variables in the process (Lightner et al., 2012). Vertical planning can help students who have historically struggled with the rigors and processes of elementary and secondary education to be successful in their early integration into postsecondary education (Barnard-Brak et al., 2009; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002).

The 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act brought a change with significant impact to postsecondary disability services in the area of transition. Specifically, IDEA requires that:

Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team, and updated annually, thereafter, the IEP must include –

(1) Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills; and

(2) The transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals. (§300.320 (b)). (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004).

Though the federal mandate requires transition planning to begin at age 16, it should be taken into consideration that waiting until the sixteenth birthday may hinder students with disabilities
from proper preparation for the transition from high school to higher education (Curtis et al., 2009; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a).

The Local Education Agency (LEA), or the public board of education that maintains control of the public schools in the district, has the primary responsibility for planning, organizing, and conducting all transition planning meetings (NCDPI, Educational Acronyms. As with Individualized Education Program meetings, appropriate school personnel should be involved. Others may be invited, depending upon the goals and needs of individual students. This may include, but is not limited to: special education teacher(s), regular education teacher(s), workforce development education teacher(s), related service staff, the special populations coordinator, vocational rehabilitation representative, guidance counselor, the Local Education Authority (LEA) representative, the transition coordinator, representation from a postsecondary institute, administrators, parent/guardian, and the student (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997; Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004; Planning for Postsecondary Education, 2007). Although adult service providers and other community agencies are not mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to participate in transition services (since IDEA speaks specifically to the rights and services guaranteed for school-age students with disabilities), the law is clear in its intent that transition services be delivered in a cooperative and coordinated manner by the school and other agencies (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997; Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004; Public Schools of North Carolina, 1998).

According to the manual *Best Practices for Coordinating Transition Services* (1998), before a transition team convenes, it is important to arrange and gather data that will be useful in the decision making process. The purpose of the transition process should be clearly explained,
as necessary, to all parties involved (Trainor, 2005). The caseworker must assist the person in
transition to identify or clarify their needs, wants, and preferences for the future. In addition,
guidance needs to be provided to the person in transition and the family in determining whether
needs can be met by one agency or if a team approach is needed, who should be invited to the
team meeting, and what is perceived as the most important issue (Trainor, 2005). In order to
hold an effective meeting, information on current or previous assessments or services needs to be
available for review (Best Practices for Coordinating Transition Services, 1998).

One focus of transition planning is to enhance the self-image of social competence in
individuals with learning differences. This can be accomplished through social integration into
our society and to encourage them to exercise more personal choice and take more control over
their own lives (Beale, 2005; Hurtubis Sahlen & Lehmann, 2006; Jenkins, 2002; Trainor, 2005).
According to Jenkins, individuals with learning differences often lack control, involvement,
meaning, and sense of purpose. This often leads to alienation in which they experience feelings
of powerlessness, isolation, self-estrangement, and meaninglessness (Hong, Ivy, Gonzalez, &
Ehrensberger, 2007; Jenkins, 2002). Understanding the research provided and the importance of
tailoring transition plans to individual student needs, it is essential to recognize that planning
should be proactive. It should be driven by the student and the parents and should involve
student assessment, life skills development, accommodations, and, as appropriate, preparation
for postsecondary education (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997; Individuals with
Disabilities Education Act, 2004; Lightner et al., 2012; Trainor, 2005). Planned educational
activities should focus on school and work-based experiences linking high academic and
workplace standards, with integrated academic and vocational curricula for employment, specific
occupational instruction, and postsecondary education (Best Practices for Coordinating
Role of the Student in Transition Planning

Transition planning is a student-centered activity that requires a collaborative effort. The student, parent, secondary personnel, and postsecondary personnel, all of whom are potential members of the transition team, share responsibilities for the development of an effective Individual Transition Plan (Curtis et al., 2009; Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a). Collaboration requires that team members invest a great deal of time to generate realistic opportunities and design strategies for implementation of the plans devised in the Individualized Transition Plan (Trainor, 2005; Transition Planning, 1999). Working together invites participation of multiple service providers and the use of numerous resources, resulting in an Individualized Transition Plan that serves the student well in transition from secondary school to work or a postsecondary education (Curtis et al., 2009; Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a).

Since transition planning is a student-centered process, the student assumes many roles and responsibilities (Transition Planning, 1999). The student should understand his/her disability, including its effect on learning and work (Beale, 2005; Hurtubis Sahlen & Lehmann, 2006). The student must establish realistic goals and present a positive self-image by emphasizing strengths, while at the same time understanding the influence of the learning disability (Beale, 2005; Trainor, 2005). It is imperative that students know how, when, and where to discuss and request needed accommodations (Beale, 2005; DeFur, 2000; Trainor, 2005). If students are considering attending postsecondary schooling, they should explore postsecondary education options and entrance requirements (Individuals with Disabilities Transition Services, 1998; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004; Lightner et al., 2012; Trainor, 2005).
Education Act, 2004; Lightner et al., 2012; Trainor, 2005). They should also, in coordination with their high school advisors, select courses that meet these requirements (Porter, Freeman, & Griffin, 2000; Shepler & Woosley, 2011; Trainor, 2005). Students interested in pursuing a postsecondary education should be aware of the difference in laws governing individuals with disabilities (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Hurtubis Sahlen & Lehmann, 2006; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a).

Student participation in the development of goals and objectives is a critical piece of the transition planning process (Lightner et al., 2012; Shepler & Woosley, 2011; Trainor, 2005). The law makes it clear that the student is the most important member of the Individualized Education Program team. It is explicitly stated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that students must be involved in their transition planning process by mandating that the student be invited, per due process, if transition services are to be discussed (DeFur, 2000; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). In order to be successful in including students in their postsecondary planning, students must be more than observers at their Individualized Education Program meetings; they need to be provided the tools to be effective participants (Shepler & Woosley, 2011; Trainor, 2005).

Prior to the Individualized Education Program team meeting for development of the Individual Transition Plan, students should be coached and taught the skills they will need to participate in or lead their IEP transition meetings (Lightner et al., 2012). Including students in the development of their Individualized Education Program should begin as early in the child’s education as possible. Educating the student on the importance of their input and awareness of their disability will enable them to be a more active participant in the design and implementation of their Individualized Education Program and will better prepare them to be self-advocates in the work and postsecondary setting (Hong et al., 2007; Hurtubis Sahlen & Lehmann, 2006;
Trainor, 2005). Students, with support and direct instruction, can become aware of their strengths and needs, learn to advocate for themselves, and learn to set and evaluate goals (Hong et al., 2007; Hurtubis Sahlen & Lehmann, 2006; Lightner et al., 2012, Trainor, 2005). With the help of the special education teacher, parent, school counselors and support personnel, the student should begin discussion and organization of goals and objectives for his/her future (Best Practices for Coordinating Transition Services, 1998; Planning for Postsecondary Education, 2007; Shepler & Woosley, 2011).

An integral part of promoting self-determination and preparation for actively participating in the Individualized Education Program meeting is educating the student in regards to their rights. The student should be informed of their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (Beale, 2005; Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Hurtubis Sahlen & Lehmann, 2006; Madaus, 2005). Further, students should be made aware of modifications, adaptations, and/or access they are entitled to in order to be successful in their educational and vocational curriculum, in the secondary and postsecondary classroom (Beale, 2005; Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Hurtubis Sahlen & Lehmann, 2006; Madaus, 2005). Students must be informed that if they leave high school or graduate before age twenty-two, special education services will be terminated. IDEA is the legislation that governs special education services to students with disabilities in elementary and secondary schools, but these services terminate when the student graduates or otherwise leaves high school (Beale, 2005; Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Hong et al., 2007; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a).

A qualitative study conducted by Audrey Trainor (2005) was designed to provide information about students’ behaviors and perceptions during postsecondary transition planning. The study participants ranged in age from 16 to 18 and were in grades 10 through 12. Findings
of the study suggest that, for this sample population, Individual Transition Plans (ITP) lacked relevant work-related goals. The ITPs also fell short of establishing a connection between the students’ stated career objectives and coursework and extracurricular activities (Trainor, 2005). Overwhelmingly, participants in the study indicated they were largely uninvolved in designing their Individual Transition Plans and the importance of the plans was understated by school officials (Trainor, 2005). Student participants agreed that discussing issues of transition with their parents was easier than discussing it with members of the ITP team. Interestingly, the study participants largely agreed that their ideas for the future were often clouded by the opinion and direction of their parents (Trainor, 2005).

**Role of the Parent in Transition Planning**

Independence is accomplished in small steps by gradually transferring responsibility for educational and life planning from the parent to the student (Beale, 2005; Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Hong et al., 2007; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a). However, in developing a secondary transition component, parental input and involvement is nonetheless necessary. The benefit of having parents serve on interdisciplinary teams is that they can assist teachers and support personnel in identifying the specific skills needed by their children. They can also offer their perspectives on the effectiveness of the delivery system given their experience with it. Parents can be extremely valuable tools in transition planning in that they know their children better than anyone else, they can be exceptionally helpful in maintaining continuity of training and purpose, and they can act as service coordinators, thus ensuring more effective and positive results (Blalock & Patton, 1996; Lightner et al., 2012; Wilson, Bialk, Freeze, Freeze, & Lutfiyya, 2012).

Although transition planning is enhanced by the combined efforts of multidisciplinary and interagency teams, collaborative consultation is effective in solving problems parents and
students encounter in making school and work transitions (Curtis et al., 2009; Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a; Shepler & Woosley; 2011; Trainor, 2005). During the initial Individualized Education Program/Individualized Transition Plan meeting, Blalock and Patton (1996) suggest envisioning, as a group, potential post school goals by grasping the realm of adult life then working backwards. Once the post school goals have been agreed upon, the team must identify specific activities that will get the student moving toward accomplishing these goals (Blalock & Patton, 1996).

Parents have numerous roles and responsibilities in contributing to successful transition planning (Shepler & Woosley, 2011; Trainor, 2005; Wilson et al., 2012). The primary role of parents during transition planning is to encourage, support, and guide their student to plan and achieve educational goals (Planning for Postsecondary Education, 2007). Independent decision-making and self-advocacy skills of the student should remain forefront in transition planning to a postsecondary education. When developing the Individualized Transition Plan the parents should participate in selecting high school courses that best meet postsecondary requirements and should collaborate with secondary and postsecondary staff to make decisions regarding programs, services, and resources (Lightner et al., 2012; Shepler & Woosley, 2011; Trainor, 2005). The parent should assist the student in collecting and maintaining a personal file, communicate confidence in the student’s ability to be successful in a postsecondary setting, and encourage the student to develop maximum independence in the learning, study, and living skills critical in postsecondary settings (Porter et al., 2000). Participant responses in Trainor’s (2005) study indicated that “parents and family members were key contributors to choice and decision making, goal setting, and goal attainment.” Evidences of informal transition planning at home were paramount to what was being accomplished at school.
The Role of School Personnel in Transition Planning

School personnel and administrators must show students how to look beyond middle and high school towards postsecondary opportunities (Lightner et al., 2012; Shepler & Woosley, 2011). This can be accomplished by initiating, designing, and evaluating effective transition plans and coordinating services that are consistent with federal and state statutes, rules, and regulations. School personnel have several roles and responsibilities in planning an effective transition component (Shepler & Woosley, 2011; Trainor, 2005). School personnel are responsible for forming a transition team consisting of a coordinator, the student, the parents, administrators, teachers, and related services personnel. They also must demonstrate sensitivity to the culture and values of the student and family (Porter et al., 2000; Trainor, 2005; Transition Planning, 1999).

School personnel should develop an appropriate packet of materials to document the student’s secondary school program and to facilitate service delivery in the educational or occupational setting as deemed appropriate by the Individualized Education Program team. They should be instrumental in providing administrative support and resources to all individuals involved in implementing and carrying out the transition goals and objectives (Trainor, 2005). School personnel should also incorporate time to foster collaboration among team members and informing students of statutes, rules, and regulations that ensure his or her rights (Lightner et al., 2012; Madaus, 2005; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a).

In successful transition planning, school personnel help the student evaluate his or her dependence on external supports and to adjust the level of assistance when appropriate. They should assist in developing appropriate social skills and interpersonal communication abilities, and help the student develop self-advocacy skills (Shepler & Woosley, 2011; Trainor, 2005).
This includes a realistic understanding of the learning disability and how to use this information for self-understanding and communication with others (Beale, 2005; Hurtubis Sahlen & Lehmann, 2006). It is essential for school personnel to help foster independence through increased responsibility and opportunities for self-management (Trainor, 2005). Encouragement to participate in extracurricular and community activities is also vital to positive transitioning (Porter et al., 2000; Transition Planning, 1999).

High school participants in Audrey Trainor’s (2005) study reported that teachers did not actively involve them in planning for their future and infrequently responded to their questions about decisions for future-planning. Further, the students did not perceive their teachers as being central figures in their transition planning process (Trainor, 2005). Data collected throughout this study led the researcher to conclude that the teachers’ efforts during transition planning should complement the parents’ and families’ efforts, though often there is a disconnect (Trainor, 2005). Postsecondary goals are often based on student consultation and collaboration with their parents, but often the parents lack the comprehensive knowledge to help the student make informed decisions. Effective communication between the school and home will require extended efforts and ongoing collaboration (Trainor, 2005).

**Role of Postsecondary Personnel in Transition Planning**

During transition planning, should the student opt for a postsecondary education, postsecondary personnel must network with and disseminate information to secondary educators, parents, and prospective students to realistically frame the expectations for the rigors of the postsecondary experience (Lightner et al., 2012). Successful transitioning requires multiple roles and responsibilities from postsecondary personnel. Postsecondary personnel must provide linkages to high schools through outreach efforts and inform secondary school personnel of the
prerequisites for the transition to postsecondary options (Lightner et al., 2012). In addition, they should disperse information about college or vocational school preparation and the expectations associated with various postsecondary settings (DeFur, 2000; Shepler & Woosley, 2011; Transition Planning, 1999). In effective transition planning, the postsecondary personnel would provide opportunities for campus visits for interested students and their families, educating them about the unique features of the specific postsecondary program.

There are numerous ways postsecondary personnel can help enhance the transitioning experience. They can clarify the roles of the student and the service provider in a postsecondary setting, teach students how to advocate for themselves in the postsecondary setting, and advocate on behalf of the students. It is also critical that students understand the difference between the governing disability legislation at secondary and postsecondary institutions (Beale, 2005; Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Hurtubis Sahlen & Lehmann, 2006; Madaus, 2005). On behalf of students with documented disabilities, postsecondary personnel may negotiate reasonable academic accommodations, work with admission officers to ensure that students with disabilities are fairly considered, and provide faculty and staff development on learning differences (DeFur, 2000; Transition Planning, 1999).

**Impact of Secondary Transition Services at the Postsecondary Level**

In a study conducted by Lightner et al. (2012) of James Madison University, qualitative data suggested that students who registered for disability services early in their college career reported more postsecondary education transition planning while in high school. The results of their study of forty-two students with learning differences who attended a large state university, indicated that some students did not receive transition services from secondary to postsecondary or that transition services were primarily focused on school to work (Lightner et al., 2012).
Further, all of the students who sought disability services early claimed to have participated in their high school IEP meetings, while less than half of the students who sought services late attended only one meeting. The research group concluded that participating in secondary IEP meetings may have an influence in helping students better understand their disability and what their role is in seeking help at the postsecondary level (Lightner et al., 2012).

**Self-Determination**

A primary goal of transition planning is to assist the student in becoming an independent, self-determining adult. Both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) legislation emphasize that the students’ preferences and interests be considered in transition planning, making self-determination skills essential for students with disabilities (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). VanReusen, as cited by West et al. (1999), acknowledged that self-determination refers to “an individual’s ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs, and rights” (para. 2). Self-determination is “a combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior; includes skills such as choice/decision making, goal setting, problem solving, self-evaluation, self-management, self-advocacy, and self-awareness (Heward, 2006, p. G-10). Martin and Marshall (1995) characterize self-determined individuals as those who:

Know how to choose—they know what they want and how to get it. From an awareness of personal needs, self-determined individuals choose goals, and then doggedly pursue them. This involves asserting an individual’s presence, making his or her needs known, evaluating progress toward meeting goals, adjusting performance, and creating unique approaches to solve problems. (p. 147)
Self-determination involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions (Hong et al., 2007; Trainor, 2005). Self-awareness is critical for the student in determining the direction that transition planning will take. The actions of a self-determined individual reflect a comprehensive and reasonably accurate knowledge of one’s strengths and limitations and a conscious, purposeful intent to use this knowledge and understanding in everyday situations (Field, 1996; Trainor, 2005). Attributes of a self-determined individual include, but are not limited to, knowing how to differentiate wants and needs, goal-setting, considering options and consequences, assuming responsibility for all outcomes, evaluating decisions based on previous experiences, striving for independence while understanding and recognizing interdependence, and self-confidence (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998).

Self-determination is essential in the development of the transition component and in transition to higher education (Trainor, 2005). No one has a greater stake in the outcome of transition planning than the student with the disability (Field, 1996; Hong et al., 2007; Trainor, 2005). The student should be an active, participating member of the transition team, as well as the focus of all activities. Throughout transition planning, students should be encouraged to express concerns, preferences, and conclusions about their options and to give facts and reasons (Field, 1996; Trainor, 2005). Transition planning should be an on-going opportunity for students to learn and practice responsibility and self-knowledge (Trainor, 2005). Transition planning is an ever-changing process, and students need to be skillful enough to adapt to the challenge of those changes. In order to fully comply with federal legislation, ample opportunities must be provided for students to take an active, participatory role in the transition planning process (Field, 1996; Trainor, 2005; West et al., 1999).
Students with learning differences often need to be taught self-determination skills to better prepare them for life after high school (Field, 1996; Hong et al., 2007; Trainor, 2005). Self-determination has been increasingly recognized as critical for students with disabilities as they prepare to transition to the adult world. According to Pocock and associates (2002), self-advocacy instruction for high school students often focuses on knowledge of rights and responsibilities, effective communication and negotiation skills, identification and request for accommodations and modifications, and instruction on participating in one’s own IEP meeting. Self-advocacy is frequently taught through role-play and direct instruction. Direct instruction might include a description of the target behavior, demonstration, rehearsal, practice, feedback, and practice in the natural environment (Pocock et al., 2002).

**At-Risk Characteristics**

Students who have a learning disability are at great risk for failure because of their inherent learning difficulties. The definition of “at-risk” is multifaceted and is often accepted as having tiered meaning. Students at risk are often underprepared and may lack basic skill and motivation. They may lack “soft skills” necessary to be successful, such as attending class, time management, or using appropriate social skills (Laskey & Hetzel, 2011). Their ability to self-assess strengths, deficits, interests, and values is often impaired, and they may find decision making to be a difficult process. Thus, students with learning differences need assistance to determine the specific accommodations they need to make career decisions (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). It is even suggested and encouraged to teach Individualized Education Program participation skills as a semester course beginning in middle school (Warger & Burnette, 2000). Janiga and Costenbader (2002) suggest that transition planning that begins as early as age fourteen may be too late. This is in contrast to what the 2004 reauthorization of the
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act mandates (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). The distinctive characteristics of students with learning differences make early planning critical. Students with disabilities are often considered at-risk due to the characteristics typically associated with the disability. Chris, Daigle, and Windy (2007) suggest that personality traits may influence scholarly pursuits of at-risk learners. As national standards increase and greater educational accountability is mandated, students with disabilities face tremendous pressures to “measure up” to their nondisabled peers.

**Appropriateness of Program**

Historical research indicates that youth with learning differences continue to drop out of school at a rate significantly greater than that of their nondisabled peers (Kortering & Braziel, 2002; Newman et al., 2010). Research suggests that many youth with learning differences drop out of their special education curriculum, implying that their program failed to meet their unique needs in some way (Kortering & Braziel, 2002). However, according to Wonacott (2001), students with disabilities in career and technical programs were less likely to drop out of school and more likely to be employed, to have paid competitive jobs, and to work full time after high school. Conversely, career and technical education that included only simulated work experience in a classroom setting did not appear to lead to optimal employment outcome (Wonacott, 2001). People with learning differences will improve their social capability more in natural environments rather than having skills developed in controlled settings and then exposed to real life experiences (Jenkins, 2002).

**High School Completion and Post School Outcomes**

Youth with mild disabilities historically have a low rate of high school completion (Dunn, Chambers, & Rabren, 2004; Lehr, 2004; Newman et al., 2010). The highest incidence of
dropping out and of disciplinary actions such as suspension and expulsion occurs during the first two years of high school (DeFur, 2000). The term “dropout,” as defined by Lehr (2004), is the total number of students who were enrolled at some point in the reporting year, but were not enrolled in any educational institution at the end of the reporting year. As cited in Kortering and Braziel (2002), the Office of Special Education Program’s Twenty-Second Annual Report indicates that in the 1997/98 school year 113,800 youths with Specific Learning Disabilities over age 14 graduated with either a diploma or certificate. Another 800 youth reached their maximum age of attendance. During this same period approximately 47,600 youth left school as identified dropouts. Another 33,500 youth left school but had not enrolled in another school, therefore are assumed dropouts. Even more alarming is the finding that this rate remains consistent with data from as far back as the 1984/85 school year (Kortering & Braziel, 2002). In 2001 the National Center for Educational Statistics reported that in October of 2000, 3.8 million individuals between the ages of 16 and 24 were not enrolled in a high school program or had not completed high school. These statistics have remained relatively static since the late 1980s (Dunn et al., 2004).

The problems most commonly encountered by secondary students with disabilities include unemployment, underemployment, dependency on governmental services, dependent living arrangements, low societal status, perceived lack of dignity, and inadequate social skills (Lehr, 2004). Low pay, part-time employment, frequent job changes, non-engagement with the community, and restricted social lives are characteristic of graduates of special education programs (Jenkins, 2002). According to a study conducted by the National Organization on Disability in July 1994, two-thirds of American’s with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 64 were not working, showing no improvement since a similar poll conducted in 1986 (Public
Schools of North Carolina, 1998). Overall adjustment to adulthood for individuals with disabilities is poorer than the adjustment of their peers without disabilities. Looking at how well students with disabilities have done after leaving high school has forced special educators throughout the nation to realize that it is time to closely examine where transition services are failing our youth.

A 1993 study cited in Kortering and Braziel’s (2002) research examined the post-school outcomes for over 1,000 youth with learning differences, including 101 dropouts. The results of the study indicated that youth who dropped out had lower rates of employment. A second related study, in contrast, found that youth with mild disabilities who had graduated, as compared to youth who had dropped out, had comparable rates of unemployment, hours of work, and earnings up to two years after leaving school (Kortering & Braziel, 2002).

With results complimentary to previous research done by Kortering and Braziel, Dunn et al. (2004) examined factors predictive to school drop out by students with mild disabilities. Specifically, the researchers, using a sample size of 1,654 students who had received special education services between 1996 and 2001, surveyed individuals with mild disabilities one year after they had exited their high school program (Dunn et al., 2004). The results of their study supported results found in studies previously conducted by Kortering and Braziel. Dunn et al. (2004) collected responses from participants in three areas: belief that school prepared them for the future, belief that their classes were helpful, belief that their teachers were helpful. Findings indicated that 54% of respondents who had dropped out felt their high school program prepared them for post-school life, while 80% who did not drop out felt they were prepared by their high school program. Of those individuals who dropped out, 23% reported that no one was helpful to
them during their high school tenure. Conversely, of those who remained in school, only 8% were unable to identify a helpful person (Dunn et al., 2004).

Historically, research on post school outcomes has focused on adjustment to life after high school and not necessarily on transitioning to postsecondary education (Curtis et al., 2009). Post-school outcomes have generally been focused on employment. In the late 1980s, the first national study to examine post-school outcomes of students with disabilities was conducted. The National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students (NLTS) provided a broad scope of post-school outcomes and exposed specific areas where students with disabilities were not meeting established expectations (Wagner, 1989). The follow up study, the National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students (NLTS2) found improvements in the post-school outcomes, but the data continued to show a gap between students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, & Levine, 2005). Specifically, the NLTS2 found differences for students with disabilities and students without disabilities in the area of postsecondary education. Participation in a four-year college for youths with disabilities was measured at only 6%, while participation by their nondisabled peers was measured at 28% (Wagner et al., 2005). According to the NLTS2, the percentage of students with disabilities completing high school increased by 17% between 1987 and 2003. During this same time, there was a 32% increase in enrollment in postsecondary education settings (National Council on Disability, 2003; Wagner et al., 2005).

**Student Perceptions of Secondary School Programming**

Kortering and Braziel (2002) conducted their own study on the assumption that improving the school completion rates involved tailoring programs and services to accurately and appropriately meet the needs of the students who would be using the services. The purpose
of the study was to provide information to assist educators in understanding the perceptions youth with learning differences have of their high school programs. The study consisted of one hundred and eighty-five youth with learning differences who were interviewed during the 1998/9 or 1999/0 school year (Kortering & Braziel, 2002).

Students in the study were asked numerous questions relating to their schooling. The students were asked (a) to relate the best and worst part of school; (b) perceived advantages and disadvantages that may influence staying in school; (c) school, family, and personal changes that might help participants to stay in school; (d) examples of teachers who helped in terms of learning; and (e) other recommendations for improving classes, texts, teachers, or administration (Kortering & Braziel, 2002). In response to the first question, students reported enjoyment of socializing with their peers and appreciation for classes that involved active participation. They also felt good about experiencing success and classes they found interesting in some way. Few participants felt that learning was the best part of school. Students reported the worst part of school as being specific classes that were considered boring or too difficult, educators whom students viewed as mean or uncaring, and peers who were hard to get along with, had a poor attitude, or made fun of participants in some way (Kortering & Braziel, 2002).

Perceived advantages of staying in school focused on long-term goals. This included such things as getting a better education and finding a better job. Disadvantages were conveyed as follows: staying in school interfered with employment; caused the participants to miss out on other things; and having to deal with educators (Kortering & Braziel, 2002).

Changes that participants felt would help them stay in school were broken down into three areas: school, family, themselves. Participants’ recommendations for school change included access to more individual help, rule changes, a change in attitude for some teachers, and
a change in classes. Family changes consisted only of the desire for more support or encouragement from parents. Personal changes accounted for the majority of responses. The participants indicated that they should work harder or earn better grades, change their attitude, and improve their behavior or attendance (Kortering & Braziel, 2002).

Responses of examples of teachers who helped in learning included teachers deemed as caring and offered individualized assistance. Other examples include teachers who took time to explain things and those who used hands-on activities. The final question offered participants a more open-ended opportunity to offer ideas on improving school. The attention was focused towards improving classes or texts, teachers and administration. Better textbooks, reduced class sizes, change in teacher’s attitudes, better teaching, listening to students and being less strict topped the list (Kortering & Braziel, 2002).

Drawing from the results of their study, Kortering and Braziel (2002) believe that most of the participants wanted to find success in high school and that they took ownership for what it might take to succeed. The participants’ collective comments also indicated support for the concept of self-determination. Kortering and Braziel (2002) concluded that high school teachers should offer an opportunity for students to direct their educational and related services around what they want to accomplish so they will stay in school and be successful in their endeavors. Further, they state the focus should be on empowering students to take more active roles in the planning of their educational and vocational services. In this study, participants provided a very distinct impression of school and it is up to the educators to orchestrate more effective high school services (Kortering & Braziel, 2002).

Curtis et al. (2009) administered a post-school outcomes survey of students who received special education services in high school. The survey was administered to students one year
after they graduated from high school and comprised students who had graduated over four years, bringing the sample size to 1,888 post-school participants (Curtis et al., 2009). Participants were asked if their high school training prepared them for what they were currently doing. Eighty-two percent responded positively, while 18% responded that they did not believe their high school training prepared them for their current role. Respondents indicated that 9% were involved in technical school, 13% were involved in a two-year college program, 5% were involved in a four-year college program, and 1% indicated military service (Curtis et al., 2009). Clear expectations of the future, planning and goal-setting, parent involvement, and utilization of available resources surfaced as the most common strategies that enhanced successful post-school outcomes (Curtis et al., 2009). On the other hand, identifying appropriate services and resources, access to transportation, and the impact of service providers were considered to be obstacles (Curtis et al., 2009).

Based on the results of their study on predictors of student drop out, Dunn et al. (2004) pose multiple recommendations for implementation during secondary schooling:

1. Teachers should value the importance of students’ perceptions of their high school experiences.
2. Teachers should gather information regarding these perceptions in order to use this information for counseling and program planning.
3. Teachers should help students see the connections between their high school curricula and their future plans.
4. Teachers need to understand the impact that they have on their students’ perceptions and possible completion of school.
Fundamentally, students need to see the connection between their post-school goals and their education. If their high school experiences are meaningful, the likelihood of them remaining until graduation is higher. Through proactive programming, many of the variables that influence a student’s decision to drop out of school can be altered, leading to meaningful experiences and increased motivation (Dunn et al., 2004).

**College Readiness**

Janiga and Costenbader (2002) conducted a study about how well students with disabilities had been prepared by transition services. This was done by surveying coordinators of special services for students with disabilities at seventy-four colleges and universities in New York. The results of this study suggest minimal satisfaction with the transition services provided to students with learning differences among postsecondary school professionals. The respondents were most satisfied with the triennial reevaluations supplied by the high schools. On the other hand, this was not unexpected since the reevaluations are required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. However, 13.9% of the respondents expressed concern about the quality of assessments and the lack of adequate documentation for specific accommodations (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002).

The greatest concern by the respondents in this study was with the inadequacy of students’ self-advocacy skills. Further, they indicated that career counseling, social skills training, and the development of self-awareness and self-advocacy skills need to be part of every transition plan for students with learning differences who seek postsecondary education (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). The respondents felt that students who were dependent on others would not experience success at the postsecondary level since they would likely be unable to communicate their needs and they would be solely responsible for their own educational
services. It was suggested that high school teachers receive training focused on strategies that they can use to teach self-advocacy skills. Additionally, the respondents felt that high school teachers needed to be more clearly educated on the laws that affect students with disabilities (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002).

As stated by Kortering and Braziel (2002), “bydropping out of school, youth with learning differences forfeit their best chance to develop the skills that will help them adjust to adulthood and secure suitable employment” (p. 41). Thus, student school experiences and activities, strategically and individually planned, should be student-centered and heavily supported. Youth with disabilities should be provided continuous encouragement to remain in school in their appropriately planned curriculum.

**Project STEPP Transition Curriculum**

Project STEPP (Supporting Transition and Education through Planning and Partnerships) is a comprehensive support program at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, that serves college students who have been identified as having a Specific Learning Disability and are eligible to receive services through East Carolina’s Department of Disability Support Services (Project STEPP, 2013). This specially designed and highly desirable program accepts only ten new students per academic school year, despite the high number of applicants seeking to partake in this unique learning and growth opportunity (Project STEPP, 2013). Project STEPP offers academic, social, and life-skill support to motivated and committed students who, aside from having a learning disability, otherwise qualify for admittance to the university (Project STEPP, 2013).

East Carolina University’s Project STEPP is one program of the UNC College STAR Initiative, a three campus collaborative effort designed to support students with learning
differences (ECU News Services, 2013). College STAR (Supporting Transition, Access, and Retention) is a project of the University of North Carolina System that currently has participation from Appalachian State University, East Carolina University, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (ECU News Services, 2013). Direct and targeted student support, as well as instructional support of faculty, provides the foundation for College STAR (ECU News Services, 2013). In addition to endowment and temporary grant support, funding for College STAR has been provided by the Oak Foundation of Geneva, Switzerland, and the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation (Project STEPP, 2013; ECU News Services, 2013). Other than typically occurring expenses associated with attending a university, participants in Project STEPP do so at no additional charge (Project STEPP, 2013).

High school students desiring to attend East Carolina University and participate in Project STEPP must be following a college preparatory academic track in their secondary educational training. Eligible students should have a documented learning disability, which may manifest as a reading disorder, dyslexia, a disorder of written expression, dysgraphia, a math disorder, or dyscalculia (Project STEPP, 2013). There is an application process for admittance to Project STEPP that is separate from East Carolina University’s admittance process. Students who are accepted into Project STEPP make a commitment to remain in the program for the duration of their undergraduate education at East Carolina (Project STEPP, 2013). A comprehensive, structured program, Project STEPP provides academic and social supports designed to help students with learning disabilities experience success on the university’s campus and in the postsecondary educational programming (Project STEPP, 2013).

High school students planning to attend East Carolina University, who want to be accepted into Project STEPP, must apply to the program before May 15th of their junior year.
(Project STEPP, 2013). Project STEPP provides transition support to incoming students who will be participating in their program. Supports include, but are not limited to, a full year of guided preparation to assist with the transition between secondary and postsecondary educational settings; individual consultation with students, families, and schools; assistive technology loans and support; monthly newsletters and web resources; and a pre-college boot camp that takes place the summer before starting their first year at East Carolina (Johnson, 2013).

Project STEPP at East Carolina University has continued to grow and change, adapting to the needs of the targeted student population and adjusting services to provide optimal benefits to potential postsecondary candidates. One such change, made possible with funding from the Oak Foundation, was that a transition curriculum project began to take form prior to the summer of 2012 (Johnson, 2013). Since then, eight non-academic transition curriculum modules have been developed through collaborative efforts of parents, high school teachers, and university staff and professors. High school teachers have used the modules with their students and provided feedback to Project STEPP staff (Johnson, 2013).

Although in continuous development, the Project STEPP Transition Curriculum is sound and easily adaptable for a high school classroom. The curriculum was originally designed for use in a Curriculum Assistance or Academic Support classroom environment that serves college-bound students who have been identified as having a learning disability and receives services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Johnson, 2013). The transition curriculum is comprised of eight in-depth modules designed to help students prepare for the non-academic aspect of a postsecondary education (Johnson, 2013). Each of the modules has two to four lesson plans:
Module 1 Overview: High School vs. College: A Comparison of What to Expect

• Lesson One – General Overview
• Lesson Two – Classes & Instructors
• Lesson Three – Studying
• Lesson Four – Grades & Testing

Module 2 Overview: Planning for Academic Success

• Lesson One – Goal Setting for College
• Lesson Two – Finding and Maintaining an Academic and Social Balance
• Lesson Three – Academic Integrity

Module 3 Overview: Technology

• Lesson One – Introduction to Technology
• Lesson Two – Postsecondary Technology Tools for Learning
• Lesson Three – Online Learning
• Lesson Four – Using Technology Responsibility

Module 4 Overview: College Readiness

• Lesson One – Campus Resources
• Lesson Two – The College Community
• Lesson Three – Disability Support
• Lesson Four – Support Services in College

Module 5 Overview: Developing and Maintaining Healthy Routines

• Lesson One – Personal Wellness
• Lesson Two – Campus Safety
Module 6 Overview: Finances

- Lesson One – Introduction to College Financial Topics
- Lesson Two – Creating a Budget
- Lesson Three – Using Credit Wisely

Module 7 Overview: Communication

- Lesson One – Transitioning Between Informal and Formal Communication Styles
- Lesson Two – Classroom Behavior Expectations
- Lesson Three – Sending Emails in College
- Lesson Four – Constructive Criticism

Module 8 Overview: Campus Living

- Lesson One – Introduction to Campus Living
- Lesson Two – Dimensions of Campus Diversity
- Lesson Three – Living with a Roommate
- Lesson Four – Understanding Conflict Management Styles

The Project STEPP Transition Curriculum features fully developed lesson plans, PowerPoint slides with detailed teacher lecture notes, student worksheets and handouts with accompanying teacher answer keys, guided notes for students, and embedded resources (Johnson, 2013). Generally, the lesson plans take approximately 30 minutes to deliver, though this is contingent upon the extension activities that might be added by the teacher. The curriculum can be accessed by a flash drive provided by Project STEPP at East Carolina University or it can be retrieved on the Project STEPP website at http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/stepp/curriculum.cfm.
Conclusion

Graduating from high school is a major milestone as it signifies the end of an era and signals transition from youth to adulthood. It is a time marked by new opportunities and independence. As we progress through the 21st century, the standard prerequisite for a middle class life is a college degree (Adams, 2011) and the demands of higher education are significant for all students. As more individuals with disabilities enter institutions of higher education, identifying specific methods to facilitate the successful inclusion of students with learning differences into postsecondary settings continues to be a relevant transition issue for high schools and colleges (Lightner et al., 2012; Newman et al., 2010).

The transition from high school to college is marked by the transfer of responsibility for accessing and monitoring services and performance. The familiar model of special education services at the high school level changes significantly at the postsecondary level, shifting responsibility for accessing and managing services from the K-12 school system to the individual student (Barnard-Brak et al., 2009; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Madaus, 2005; Shaw, 2009). Research is limited in specific transition processes that manifest into successful transition of students with learning differences in postsecondary educational institutions. This study sought to investigate the quality of a series of non-cognitive, or non-academic, transition modules developed to prepare students with learning differences for the postsecondary education setting.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

As described in Chapter 1, the objectives of this study were to determine teacher and high school student perceived effectiveness of a series of non-cognitive transition curriculum modules developed to prepare high school students with learning differences for a postsecondary educational setting. This chapter provides an in-depth description of the district involved in the study, study participants, design of the study, data collection procedures, and analysis of the data.

Statement of the Problem

As more individuals with disabilities enter institutions of higher education, identifying specific methods to facilitate the successful transition of students with learning differences into postsecondary settings continues to be a relevant issue for high schools and colleges (Lightner et al., 2012; Newman et al., 2010). Transitions are an integral part of life and the demands of higher education are difficult for all students, thus stronger transition programming for college-bound students with learning differences is critical. With increasing frequency, students with learning differences, as well as those without, are transitioning out of high school ill-prepared for the rigor and freedom of a postsecondary setting (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Mellard, 2005; Michael et al., 2010).

The transition from high school to college is marked by the transfer of responsibility for accessing and monitoring services and performance. The familiar model of special education services at the high school level changes significantly at the postsecondary level, shifting responsibility for accessing and managing services from the K-12 school system to the individual student (Barnard-Brak et al., 2009; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Madaus, 2005; Shaw, 2009). Research is limited in specific transition processes that manifest into successful transition of
students with learning differences in postsecondary educational institutions. This study sought to investigate the quality of a series of non-cognitive transition modules developed to prepare students with learning differences for the postsecondary education setting. For purposes of this research, the terminology learning differences was used, except when referring to learning disabilities as it relates to federal law and state statute. Learning disabilities indicates an identified population and learning differences was used throughout the study to refer, collectively, to students who have been identified with various disabilities.

**Research Questions**

1. How did using the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules change student perspective on their ability and preparedness to attend college?
2. What impact did the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules have on teacher perception of students with learning differences transitioning to postsecondary education?
3. What is the student perception of the quality of the modules?
4. What is the teacher perception of the quality of the modules?

**Description of the School District in this Study**

Buncombe County, North Carolina, is nestled in a central area of a high plateau bordered on the east by the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Great Craggy Mountains, and the Black Mountains. On the west, Buncombe County is graced by the Great Smokey Mountains of the Appalachians. Covering nearly seven hundred square miles, Buncombe County is home to over 244,000 residents, having experienced a 15.50% increase in population from 2000 to 2010 and a 2.6% increase in population from April 2010 to July 2012 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). The median household income in the year range of 2007 and 2011 was $44,321 and, during that same time
frame, 15.6% of the population was living below poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Though commonly referred to as a melting pot, U.S. Census reports (2013) indicate 89.8% of the population in Buncombe County is white. Buncombe County boasts an economy supported by a thriving tourist and convention enterprise, diversified industry, forestry, and agriculture. Asheville, the metro center and county seat, is located at the convergence of the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers. Asheville is the economic and cultural center of Western North Carolina.

Buncombe County is served by two distinct public school systems. Asheville City Schools operates eight schools and one preschool facility, all located primarily in central Asheville. Buncombe County Schools, the 11th largest school system in the state and the largest in Western North Carolina, serves approximately 25,600 students, making Buncombe County Schools the county’s second largest employer, preceded by Mission Health Care Center (BCS School System Report, 2012). Buncombe County Schools are fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and were one of the first school districts in the state to receive accreditation through AdvancEd (BCS School System Report, 2012). The school system is comprised of twenty-three elementary schools, three intermediate schools, seven middle schools, six traditional high schools, one alternative high school, and two middle/early college programs. Buncombe County Schools also operates a Progressive Education Program (PEP) that serves K-12 students with severe/profound disabilities. Enrollment at PEP typical hovers around one hundred and fifty in any given year (BCS School System Report, 2012). Buncombe County Schools also operates three day treatment intervention programs, serving an average of forty-four students across the K-12 grade span each year (BCS School System Report, 2012).
As of 2012, Buncombe County Schools ranked 85th of 115 in North Carolina school districts in funding. In the 2012 operating budget (excluding capital outlay), approximately 84% was spent on human resources, with operating budget resources distributed as follows: 62% State, 24% Local, 12% Federal, and 2% Other. Per pupil expenditure was $7,607, which was significantly lower than the state average of approximately $8,400 (Buncombe County School System Annual Report, 2013).

Buncombe County School has over 4,000 full and part time employees and boasts the ranking of 17th in the nation for the number of National Board Certified Teachers in a school system (BCS School System Report, 2012). In examination of the percentage of licensed employees district-wide categorized by years of experience, the majority (58%) have less than fifteen years of experience. Forty-one percent of licensed employees have 15-29 years of experience and those with 30 or more years represent the smallest percentage (8%) of all licensed employees in the school system (Buncombe County Schools Annual Report, 2013).

Buncombe County Schools operates the seventh largest transportation system in the North Carolina public school system (Buncombe County Schools Annual Report, 2013). Every day, approximately 16,600 students are transported by a fleet of 291 yellow buses, covering upwards of 16,600 miles per day. The school system has been recognized with a safety rating of over 98% (Buncombe County Schools Annual Report, 2013).

Approximately one in four students in Buncombe County Schools lives in poverty and, in 2012, 500 students were considered to be homeless (BCS School System Report, 2012). Fifty-three percent of the students served in Buncombe County Schools receive free or reduced lunch, a marked increase of nearly thirty percentage points over the past ten years (S. Swanger, personal communication, September, 17, 2013) and a 10% increase since the 2006 AdvancED
accreditation visit (Buncombe County School System Annual Report, 2013). Ninety-six percent of the district’s elementary schools qualify for and receive Title 1 funding and 38% of enrolled preschool children attend a publicly subsidized childcare. Additionally, 16% of the total student body receive services in the Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) program, 1,709 students are identified as English Language Learners, and 14% receive services in the Exceptional Children’s Program. Approximately 55 different home languages are represented in Buncombe County’s 42 public schools (Buncombe County Schools Annual Report, 2013).

Buncombe County Schools provides an array of program options available to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Special education services are provided in all 42 schools. As reported in the December 1, 2012, headcount, Buncombe County Schools served 3,619 students with disabilities (Buncombe County School System Annual Report, 2013). This included both school age students and preschool students. During the 2012 school year, 64.1% of school aged students with disabilities in Buncombe County Schools were served in the regular setting. The majority of preschool students with disabilities were served in settings with typically developing peers. During the 2012 school year, special education services were delivered by 223 special education teachers, 17 school psychologists, 35 speech and language therapists, 231 teacher assistants, eight occupational therapists, three physical therapists, two autism district-level lead teachers, two district-level behavior outreach lead teachers, ten district-wide curriculum specialists, and one audiologist. Administratively, the program is staffed with a director, three curriculum managers, a data manager and an office support position (BCS School System Report, 2012).

The ABCs of Public Education, a school level accountability program that was first implemented in North Carolina public schools in 1996-1997, provided proficiency standards
based on student achievement in grades three through twelve (NCDPI, 2012). The 2011/2012 school year was the final year of the accountability model that had been used in North Carolina schools for more than a decade. A new accountability model has been adopted and in place since the 2012/2013 school year (NCDPI, 2012). Tables 1 and 2 represent four-year performance composite trends for Buncombe County Schools and comparison data for North Carolina (state-wide performance) on tested subjects measured by state and federal accountability requirements.

Specifically, they display the percent of all students scoring proficient (at or above Level III) on the End-of-Grade (EOG) Reading and Mathematics tests in grades three through eight and Science in grades five and eight in Buncombe County Schools for 2009-2012 school years, as compared to North Carolina. The data show continued consistency of the district in maintaining performance higher than the state average (North Carolina Report Cards, 2013). Table 3 represents a four-year performance composite trend and comparison data for tested subjects administered at the high school level. Specifically, Table 3 displays the percent of all Buncombe County Schools students scoring proficient (at or above Level III) on the End-of-Course (EOC) Algebra I, Biology, and English I assessments as compared to that state average (North Carolina Report Cards, 2013). The data show a decline in students’ performance, compared to the state average, for all three tests from the 2009/2010 school year through the 2011/2012 school. Finally, Table 4 shows the proficiency comparison between all students and students with disabilities who took the state assessments and passed both the Reading and Math EOG, both the fifth- and eighth-grade Science EOG, and all three EOC tests (Algebra I, Biology, English I). The data provided cover four school years, as well as the district and state proficiency percentages (North Carolina Report Cards, 2013).
## Table 1

**Percentage of All Students (Grades 3-8) Scoring Proficient (at or above Level III) in Reading and Math for 2009-2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>EOG Subject</th>
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<th>2010-2011</th>
<th>2011-2012</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BCS</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>BCS</td>
<td>NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reading</td>
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<td>65.5</td>
<td>71.3</td>
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<td>69.1</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>71.6</td>
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<td>Math</td>
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<td>81.5</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>83.0</td>
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<td>68.5</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>71.1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Math</td>
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<td>80.1</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>81.2</td>
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<td>Reading</td>
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<td>71.0</td>
<td>76.3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>78.1</td>
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<td>80.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>66.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>84.7</td>
<td>80.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Reading</td>
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<td>66.6</td>
<td>75.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>83.9</td>
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</table>
Table 2

Percent of All Students (Grades 5 and 8) Scoring Proficient (at or above Level III in Science for 2009-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>EOG Subject</th>
<th>2008-2009</th>
<th></th>
<th>2009-2010</th>
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<th>2010-2011</th>
<th></th>
<th>2011-2012</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>BCS</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>BCS</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>BCS</td>
<td>NC</td>
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<td>NC</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Science</td>
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<td>60.8</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td>68.9</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>75.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

**Percent of All Students Scoring Proficient (at or above Level III) in Algebra I, Biology, and English I at the Secondary Level for 2009-2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Algebra I</td>
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<td>67.7</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>76.7</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>78.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
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<td>79.9</td>
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<td>74.6</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>83.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English I</td>
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<td>78.0</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>82.9</td>
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</table>
Table 4

Performance by Student Group Scoring Proficient (at or above Level III) on All Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tested Subject</th>
<th>2011-2012 All Students</th>
<th>2010-2011 All Students</th>
<th>2009-2010 All Students</th>
<th>2008-2009 All Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EOG</td>
<td></td>
<td>District</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>71.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>66.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td></td>
<td>District</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOC</td>
<td></td>
<td>District</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>75.9</td>
<td>80.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>79.7</td>
<td>80.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. All Students—Includes all subgroups; SWD = Students with disabilities; Students who passed both the reading and math End-of-Grade test; Students who passed both the fifth grade and the eighth grade science test; Students who passed all End-of-Course tests.
A multiyear, collaborative effort between Buncombe County Schools, Buncombe County Commissioners, and Eblen Charities that began in 2006 has shown marked improvements in the school system’s graduation cohort graduation rates. The Graduation Initiative, supported by a strong partnership, is committed to examining the systematic, long-term changes in all 42 schools that must occur in order to improve graduation rates (Buncombe County Schools Annual Report, 2013). Table 5 illustrates the four-year cohort graduation rates for all students in Buncombe County Schools as well as for the Students with a Disability (SWD) subgroup for each year over the past eight years (North Carolina Report Cards, 2013).

During personal communication with Susanne Swanger, the Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction for Buncombe County Schools, she revealed that the reputation of Buncombe County Schools as progressive manifests in the vision and leadership from the superintendent and the values that coincide with what the school leaders believe to be true about the school system students and staff (September 17, 2013). Mrs. Swanger believes that as the 11th largest school system in the state, and the largest in the western region, the manner in which problems are approached and/or solved is different than neighboring districts just because of pure size. She shared that everything is bigger in Buncombe County Schools, including the impact of budgetary matters and implementation of state initiatives, such as Power School, the new comprehensive data management system recently adopted and launched by the state. In her extensive tenure as a district leader with Buncombe County Schools, she has experienced the mindset of getting in front of the problem and collaborating to solve it. Mrs. Swanger expressed that it is not uncommon for other western school districts to reach out to Buncombe County Schools for guidance or collaboration in resolving issues in their own systems (personal communication, September, 17, 2013). Further, Mrs. Swanger expressed the importance of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>Students with Disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>80.3</td>
<td>61.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>73.1</td>
<td>54.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>57.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>56.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
providing the school system’s employees with the structures they desire to do their jobs. She acknowledged that in the most recent AdvancEd accreditation visit, Buncombe County Schools was commended for outstanding collaborative efforts with teachers, parents, site-based leadership, and the community. In our personal communication, Mrs. Swanger stated that there is a relentless focus on student achievement in Buncombe County Schools, that success takes everyone, and having structures for collaboration is necessary to achieve forward progress (September 17, 2013).

Mrs. Swanger was eager to share what sets Buncombe County Schools apart from other school systems (personal communication, September 17, 2013). As detailed in the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan for Buncombe County Schools (2012) and referenced by Mrs. Swanger, the school district has designed a systematic and comprehensive five year plan that solidifies their belief that all students can and will learn. She shared that the mindset of some, however, does not always reflect that belief. In her experiences, she has observed a “can learn, but won’t learn” mentality. Mrs. Swanger believes that setting the tone, raising the bar, and providing clarity in high expectations will prove beneficial to the employees of Buncombe County Schools and, ultimately, to their students (personal communication, September 17, 2013). Further, Mrs. Swanger provided many examples of high quality professional development opportunities provided to certified staff over the past eight years. She has witnessed growth of the teaching force in Buncombe County Schools and in site-based leaders. Mrs. Swanger shared her excitement of providing more inclusive services and stronger partnerships between Special Education, English as a Second Language, Title 1, and Academically or Intellectually Gifted. She provided insight into testing data that clearly showed growth for at-risk populations and explained that growing traditionally high performing students has been a struggle. Mrs. Swanger
expressed the urgency of looking at the data and letting that lead to good decision-making (personal communication, September 17, 2013).

Two years ago, Buncombe County Schools started using the data analysis model that was shared with administrators and teacher leaders during a Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training (S. Swanger, personal communication, September 17, 2013). All of the schools went through training on how to effectively use the data analysis model and implementation of use became part of all School Improvement Plans. During our conversation, Mrs. Swanger articulated that, again, structures were needed for carrying out effective data-driven decision making. Recognizing the need for additional structures, each school put together a team to attend professional development provided by internationally recognized leaders in the area of Professional Learning Communities. Buncombe County Schools partnered with the Western Region Education Service Alliance to bring this training to the school system’s educators. Training on how to facilitate an effective Professional Learning Community (PLC) is ongoing and schools are eagerly engaging in regular PLCs on their campuses. The importance of modeling, monitoring, and implementation with fidelity were stressed by Mrs. Swanger as being critical for successful utilization of the data analysis model, establishment of productive Professional Learning Communities, and use of data to make decisions (personal communication, September 17, 2013). Overall, Mrs. Swanger believes that the culture of Buncombe County Schools is one of collaboration and high expectations for academics. Mrs. Swanger characterizes employees of Buncombe County Schools as “a competitive bunch” who pride themselves in the progress that continues to be made (personal communication, September 17, 2013).
Interestingly, Mrs. Swanger shared the marked increase in students receiving free and reduced lunch and described the population change over the last ten years as significant. Her personal belief is that while the population has changed, some of the teachers have not changed to keep up with the different demands (personal communication, September 17, 2013). She clarified that she does not believe the teachers have lower expectations, but that they might need to consider that homework may not look the same, parent involvement may not look the same, the classroom configuration will not look the same, and student performance may not look the same. She further stated that the poverty shift has been significant in a short period of time and adjusting has been quite a challenge. The school district needs to continue adjusting practices to ensure that all students and parents are engaged, even if things look differently than they did even just a few years ago. Mrs. Swanger expressed that for traditional teachers who have had the “high-flying” classes with homogeneous ethnic and socioeconomic student groups, this has been quite a shock. She continued that elementary and middle schools have not seemed to be impacted, unlike the high schools. With 55 languages outside of English spoken in the homes of Buncombe County students, Mrs. Swanger reiterated that Buncombe County Schools does not look like other school systems in the western part of the state (personal communication, September 17, 2013).

When asked about the most outstanding dynamic of Buncombe County Schools’ special education program, Mrs. Swanger’s response was multifaceted (personal communication, September 17, 2013). In her experiences as a district leader, she has seen the special education program maintain a very traditional approach to teaching and supporting students. She has observed programmatic problem-solving for literacy and math deficits and feels that it should not be about conveying a program or teaching a program to students, but the focus should be on
really growing the students. Growing their reading, their writing, their thinking, their speaking, and growing their listening should be a priority (personal communication, September 17, 2013). Mrs. Swanger would like to see a mindset change from resource teachers expressing their need for a math program or a reading program, to having them understand and deliver quality, differentiated instructional practices with the mindset of “I teach reading” and “I teach math.” She was strong in her belief that they need to reteach their teachers on the “new normal” in the schools (personal communication, September 17, 2013).

Due to the rise in mental health issues, the increase in identification of autism, and a more challenging overall student population, reorganization of the Special Services Department has been a focus in recent years (S. Swanger, personal communication, September 17, 2013). Behavior and autism supports have been added and roles have changed for many of the exceptional children support staff. Collaboration has been building between school social workers, counselors, and school psychologists to help the ever-changing and increasingly more challenging student population. Mrs. Swanger also noted that teachers of exceptional children frequently miss staff development or staff meetings due to conferences and/or IEP meetings. Making them a part of a site-based Professional Learning Community will ensure they feel part of a school. Mrs. Swanger expressed that teachers of exceptional children often have some of the best strategies and regular education teachers would benefit from ongoing collaboration (personal communication, September 17, 2013). Inclusive educational opportunities for the students in Buncombe County Schools are not as progressive as district leadership would like. Mrs. Swanger cautioned that teachers have not been trained on how to provide inclusive services and expressed that is a priority. Elementary and middle schools are making an effort in this service delivery model, but high schools continue to struggle with effective implementation
where it actually benefits the students (S. Swanger, personal communication, September 17, 2013).

Mrs. Swanger’s vision for growing the special education students in Buncombe County Schools into 21st century, future ready young adults is simple. She believes they need to grow and be given the same opportunities as everyone else (personal communication, September 17, 2013). Prefacing her comment as being stereotypical, Mrs. Swanger expressed that the culture of western North Carolina does not perpetuate that students with disabilities can participate in postsecondary education. “Interventions are key and all teachers of exceptional children need to think differently about how we serve and grow this special population” (S. Swanger). Mrs. Swanger wants teachers to engage students in using technology, she wants students to have eyes on text every day, she wants students to write, think, speak, and listen every day. She clearly expects it from regular education students and has the same expectations for special education students (personal communication, September 17, 2013). Mrs. Swanger would like to see an increase in the number of special education students in advanced placement classes at the high school. She expressed her believe in providing all students a quality, engaging, and challenging academic experience (personal communication, September 17, 2013).

Closing remarks in our personal communication focused on student achievement and effective leadership (September 17, 2013). Susanne Swanger passionately shared that teaching every student, regardless of social standing or intellectual ability, is paramount. Mrs. Swanger referenced a report that was required by the state last school year that sought information on how much time each teacher spent with each child. She shared that the collection of data for this report was eye-opening to teachers and administrators in that accountability for learning and growing all students is the responsibility of the entire school community. Mrs. Swanger mused
that maybe they were not getting “the bang for their buck” in all of the district’s classrooms. She expressed that Buncombe County Schools, not unlike other districts in North Carolina, are operating under a new normal. She shared that, in the district, they have work to do (S. Swanger, personal communication, September 17, 2013).

**Study Participants**

Participants in the study included two certified teachers, in two different schools, and a total of twenty-six students who were enrolled in the Academic Support class. Each of the students was eligible for and received services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The students participating in this study received services in the Exceptional Children’s program and were identified as having high incidence disabilities, including, but not limited to Specific Learning Disabilities, Other Health Impaired, and Autism.

The teacher participants were considered experienced, one teacher with more than ten years of teaching experience, the other teacher with more than twenty-five years of experience. Each teacher implemented the transition curriculum in two Academic Support classes. Students involved in the study ranged in age from fifteen to eighteen years old and were enrolled in grades nine through twelve, with the bulk assigned to grades ten and eleven.

**Design of the Study**

The purpose of this problem of practice research study was to determine teacher and high school student perceived effectiveness of a series of non-cognitive transition curriculum modules developed to prepare high school students with learning differences for a postsecondary educational setting. In this mixed method survey research investigation, pre/post-tests, open ended questionnaires, interviews, and Likert scales were used to determine the appropriateness of content, student and teacher knowledge of and involvement in transition planning for
postsecondary education, and ease of use of eight transition modules designed to enhance the preparation of secondary students for postsecondary education. The non-cognitive transition modules was provided to the lead teacher in each of the participating Academic Support classrooms located on each of the high school campuses. Each classroom had between five and eight students who participated in the research study.

Gall, Gall, and Borg (2010) defined mixed-methods research as “a type of study that uses both quantitative and qualitative techniques for data collection and analysis, either concurrently or sequentially, to address the same or related research questions” (p. 557). The rationale for using the mixed-methods approach was to solidify and triangulate the collected data. More specifically, it was the desire of the researcher for the qualitative data collection to support, explain, and further enrich the collected quantitative data. The participating students and teachers were administered data collection protocols that mirror Figure 1.

Quantitative research is an inquiry approach useful for describing trends and explaining relationships among variables. Further, quantitative research involves collecting and analyzing numerical data (Gall et al., 2010). Use of quantitative data in this research study covered the reality or perceptions that the problem of practice presents. As described by Yin (2009), “to explore, describe, or explain events [analyzed using quantitative methods] at a higher level” (p. 133) collection and use of both quantitative and qualitative data will yield appreciative benefits. The research study utilized a pretest/posttest design for both the students and the teachers using a Likert scale to specify level of agreement with a provided statement. Next, teachers evaluated each lesson plan using a Likert scale. A Likert scale was also used by the teachers, as part of an otherwise qualitative data collection tool, to evaluate the level of agreement with the quality of each module. The data collection tool for the lesson plan evaluation and the data collection tool
| Student: Quantitative → Qualitative → Quantitative → Qualitative |
| Teacher: Quantitative → Quantitative → Quantitative/Qualitative → Quantitative → Qualitative |

*Figure 1.* Data collection protocols.
for the module evaluation were used by the teacher participants only. Students evaluated each module using a qualitative tool. Students did not directly evaluate the lesson plans during this research study.

Qualitative research is defined as “a type of inquiry grounded in the assumption that individuals construct social reality in the form of meanings and interpretations and that these constructions are transitory and situational” (Gall et al., 2010, p. 560). Qualitative research was further defined by Creswell (2012) as an approach used to learn about the phenomenon being studied whereas the researcher “asks participants broad, general questions, collects the detailed views of participants in the form of words or images, and analyzes the information for description and themes” (p. 626). Students in this study were provided open-ended questionnaires to be completed after each module, whereas teachers were provided a mixed method assessment tool. The teacher tool used to evaluate the modules was comprised of Likert scale responses and a questionnaire with open-ended responses. Following the posttest, students and teachers engaged in one-on-one interviews comprised of open-ended questions.

The mixed-methods research design used for this study was the explanatory sequential design. Creswell (2012) described this design as consisting “of first collecting quantitative data and then collecting qualitative data to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results” (p. 542). The rationale for this approach was that a framework or foundation be established for the research problem through collection of quantitative data that would most likely be expanded upon by further collection of qualitative data. In this approach, qualitative data were needed to “refine, extend, or explain the general picture” (Creswell, 2012, p. 542). The first phase of the research study was to collect the quantitative data through a pretest from all of the student and teacher participants and, as the study progressed, qualitative data were collected from all
participants through open-ended questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data were also collected from the teacher participants after completion of each lesson plan and module. Prior to the one-on-one interviews with open-ended questions, the posttest was administered.

The transition curriculum consisted of eight modules, with each module comprised of two to four detailed and fully planned lessons in addition to supplementary activity plans for those topics that did not require a fully developed lesson plan. Each lesson was designed to take participants approximately 30 minutes to complete, though time restrictions were contingent upon extended content that could have been provided by the participating teacher. Such adjustments to the curriculum were recorded individually by the teachers involved in the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Processes

In this mixed-methods explanatory sequential design research study, quantitative data were collected from all participants, followed by qualitative data, then quantitative data, and finally, qualitative data. Figure 2 illustrates the sequence of data collection and the tools used to collect the data.

Purposeful sampling, a qualitative sampling approach, was used for this study. The target population of this purposeful sampling, a sampling strategy in which “researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2012, p. 206), was high school students who had Individualized Education Plans and were receiving services in an Academic Support class. The rationale for using purposeful qualitative sampling was that students in Academic Support classes and their teachers could provide in-depth and accurate (to their reality) information regarding transition services in place in the secondary setting. Feedback from the participating students and teachers helped to develop a detailed
<table>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>S:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quantitative → Qualitative → Quantitative → Qualitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likert Scale → Questionnaire → Likert Scale → Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quantitative → Quantitative → Quantitative/Qualitative → Quantitative → Qualitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likert Scale → Likert Scale → Likert Scale/Questionnaire → Likert Scale → Interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Sequence of data collection.*
understanding of the phenomena being studied. The purposeful sample provided useful information that would help others learn about the phenomenon and would provide a voice to students and teachers regarding their knowledge and perspective on transition preparations for students with learning differences from secondary to postsecondary educational settings. Further, sampling occurred before data collection began and was homogeneous. In homogeneous sampling, “the researcher purposefully samples individuals on sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics” (Creswell, 2012, p. 208). For this particular study, participants were selected based on the following defining characteristics: high school students with Individualized Education Plans who were enrolled in an Academic Support class during the spring 2014 semester. These student and teacher participants belonged to a subgroup of a larger campus community.

Permission for the study was obtained from the school system’s superintendent, from the site-based administration, from the participating teachers, and parents of the participating students. The sample size was 26 high school students, ages 15 to 18, who were served in grades nine through 12.

Quantitative data were collected using a psychometric scale, the Likert. The Likert scale was treated as an ordinal scale for purpose of data analysis. Students and teachers were given a pretest before implementation of the transition curriculum and a posttest following implementation. Scores were pre-assigned to responses on the questionnaires, for example, 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; and 4 = Strongly Agree. Descriptive statistics were used to describe trends in the data to a single variable or question on the instrument (Gall et al., 2010). Through the design of the Likert scale, individuals providing a higher numbered response were more in agreement than those with lower numbered responses. Participant responses were
reflective of their specific level of agreement with each statement on the pretest and posttest. Additionally, each lesson plan had an evaluative piece that utilized a Likert scale, pre-assigned as 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; and 4 = Strongly Agree. This evaluative tool was used by teacher participants only.

Qualitative data were collected in multiple ways. The first qualitative tools that were used were open-ended questionnaires. At the conclusion of each module, the students were provided a questionnaire designed to provide feedback on the content of the module. Teachers also completed a data collection tool at the end of each module, but that tool included four questions answered by using a Likert scale response of 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; and 4 = Strongly Agree, as well as multiple open-ended questions. Once all modules were implemented and after the posttest, one-on-one interviews were conducted with each student and teacher participant. The interviews were developed with open-ended questions designed to provide a more detailed, in-depth look at the Likert responses from the pre/post-tests, lesson plan evaluations, and module evaluations. Interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed. During the interviews, probing by the researcher was used for clarification purposes.

Controls

Though the school system superintendent expressed a desire for the North Carolina school system to be identified in the research study, personal and identifiable information was safeguarded and participants remained anonymous. School sites were not identified in this study, though the identification of the participating schools was disclosed to the school system superintendent. Teachers participating in the study were identified as Teacher A and Teacher B. Students were identified, when necessary, as Student 1, Student 2, Student 3, and so forth.
Each of the teacher data collection tools were reviewed, critiqued, revised, and approved by a formal panel and informal jury of experts in the fields of Special Education and Educational Leadership. The formal panel and informal jury of educational experts included representatives from an institute of higher education and two different Local Education Agencies (LEAs). All of the tools were reviewed for readability, alignment with the research questions, and to ensure that the questions were posed in such a way that the meaning and intent was clear. The student data collection tools were reviewed by the same professionals, as well as two junior level high school students, one identified as having a Specific Learning Disability who received services as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the other who received regular education services without specialized instruction. The intent of using those particular students was to determine whether students with characteristics that were similar to those of the student study participants could understand the questions. The students were instructed to read the questions, then summarize back to the researcher what they thought the question was asking. Though review and consideration of each of the data collection tools was thorough, the researcher conceded that individual interpretation by the participating students and teachers was varied.

Data were collected by the researcher from the study participants throughout the research study. A jury comprised of district-level practitioners from Buncombe County Schools engaged in data analysis with the researcher following the transcription, coding, and identification of emerging themes by the researcher. This group of practitioners had a vested interest in the implementation of the transition curriculum and the post-high school commitments of our students with learning differences. This problem of practice allowed the researcher and the practitioners to closely examine the collected data to determine trends and patterns, then they
utilized the data to design and plan for implementing necessary changes to instructional and/or transitional programming.

The expert jury of three was selected based on their role within the school system. Each of the three district-level employees were responsible for curricular implementation and management in Exceptional Children’s programming for grades kindergarten through twelfth. Specifically, they were responsible for instructional oversight and curriculum implementation and effectiveness. Two of the three members of the expert panel, shadowed the researcher and observed the pre-study in-service provided to the administrators, teachers, and students. The same two panel members observed researcher-led data collection, specifically the administration of the pre and post-test. One of the expert jury members served as the high school program specialist and the transition specialist and liaison between the school district and the state. The credentials of the three practitioners provided the researcher a qualified team to examine the data, determine trends, then design and plan for implementing necessary changes to instructional and/or transitional programming.

**Directions**

School participation was decided by the site-based administration. After being provided an overview of the purpose of the research study to all six high school principals in the district, two volunteered to participate. Understanding that the study would be implemented in the spring semester, the selection of teachers and students able to participate was narrowed down significantly. Principals were given discretion regarding which Academic Support teachers would participate and expressed to the researcher that they would be recommending veteran teachers whom they believed could be change agents. The researcher met with the principal and designated teacher at each school site. The researcher shared the purpose of the study and a brief
overview of the methodology, inviting the teacher to participate. The principal, teacher, and researcher at each site engaged in discussion regarding how many sections of Academic Support would be included in the research study. Teachers decided the number of sections and which classes they preferred to implement the curriculum in based on student academic performance and grade level. For example, one teacher declined to include one section of students as they were involved in a semester-long research project in preparation for their senior project.

After obtaining the appropriate written consent from the study participants, the research process began by providing the participating teachers and students an in-service, or introductory session, on the transition curriculum. In two different sessions at each school site- one for the teachers and one for the students- a brief presentation describing the purpose of the research and foundational information about the Project STEPP Transition Curriculum was provided. Teachers were shown how the hard copy of the curriculum was organized and given a brief general overview of the topics covered in each of the eight modules. Teachers were advised to explore the contents of each module, both online and using the hard copy, prior to implementation in their classrooms. General parameters set by the researcher included using the transition curriculum starting with module one and continuing chronologically through module eight, adding relevant materials at their discretion, and completing all eight modules in no less than eight and no more than twelve weeks. Teachers were also advised that data would be collected regularly by the researcher. At the conclusion of the introductory session, each participating teacher was provided the Project STEPP Transition Curriculum on a flash drive and in hard copy. Teachers were also provided the URL where the curriculum could be retrieved from East Carolina University’s website. The student session consisted of a brief and simple
overview explaining the purpose of the study and introducing the transition curriculum as a resource useful for transition planning.

The researcher provided each student at each school site a portfolio. Identifiers were notated on the front of each portfolio indicating Student 1, School A, for example. These identifiers were utilized for tracking the return of data only. There was no personal identifiable information collected. Further, each portfolio contained one copy of the student Transition Curriculum Module Evaluation Form for each module. Students were instructed by the researcher, then later prompted by the teacher participant, to independently complete one module evaluation tool for each module they completed. The completed data collection tools were to be left in their data notebooks until collected by the researcher.

The researcher also provided each teacher at each school site a portfolio. Identifiers were notated on the front of each portfolio indicating Teacher A, School A, for example. These identifiers were utilized for tracking the return of data only. There was no personal identifiable information collected. Further, each portfolio contained one copy of the Transition Curriculum Lesson Plan Evaluation Form for each lesson plan in the curriculum and one copy of the teacher Transition Curriculum Module Evaluation Form for each module. Neither the teachers nor the students had the other data collection tools available to them during the course of the research study. Teachers were directed to complete the lesson plan evaluations at the completion of each lesson plan and to complete the module evaluations after completing each module. Data were collected by the researcher based on a predetermined schedule that was provided to the teacher participants during the introductory session.

The researcher was present in each classroom to administer the pretest and the post-test at the start and end of the research study. The researcher provided the respective Transition
Curriculum Questionnaire to the students and the teachers during the pretest and the post-test session. Upon completion of administration at the beginning and end of the study, the researcher collected the documents and began data analysis.

After the pre-test was administered and collected, the researcher began data analysis and the teachers began implementation of the Project STEPP Transition Curriculum. Teachers were given directions to complete a minimum of one module per week. The researcher visited each school site at the end of the first week to collect the data from week one and to ensure the teacher was comfortable in his/her understanding of the curriculum and data collection tools. Thereafter, lesson plan and module evaluation data were collected every other week over the course of the estimated eight to twelve week implementation period.

After the pre-test, teachers evaluated every lesson plan and each module, while students only evaluated the modules. Following the completion of Module 8, the researcher returned to each participating classroom to administer the post-test. The post-test assessments were collected by the researcher and individual interviews began. Individual interviews were scheduled with the students either during their Academic Support class or during non-instructional time during the school day. One-on-one interviews with teachers were conducted by the researcher either during their planning period or after their instructional day ended. All of the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher.

Transcribed interviews were carefully reviewed and a descriptive narrative was developed for each. This provided an analytical framework from which the researcher identified patterned regularities in the data. Patterns and themes were identified and conclusions and generalizations were formulated. Considerations were made for emerging themes that triangulated between student responses and teacher responses, as well as from emerging themes
identified in the literature review. A jury of school district practitioners reviewed the coding and thematic patterns identified by the researcher to ensure quality control and accuracy. Further description of the role and purpose of the district practitioners will be presented in the Qualitative Analysis section of the Analysis of Data.

Data were collected by the researcher throughout the research study. This allowed the researcher the opportunity to identify emerging themes between lesson plans and between modules. This data collection procedure provided for a more thorough and purposeful exploration of the data collected from the study participants. Two dimensional matrices were developed to show the correlation between the proposed research questions and each question in each of the data collection tools (see Tables 6–12). This information will be presented in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Analysis of Data

In this mixed method survey research investigation, open ended questionnaires and interviews were used, as well as a Likert scale pretest/posttest and lesson plan and module evaluation tools, to determine the appropriateness of content, student and teacher knowledge of and involvement in transition planning for postsecondary education, and ease of use of eight transition modules designed to enhance the preparation of secondary students for postsecondary education. Further, data were analyzed to provide answers to the research questions:

1. How did using the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules change student perspective on their ability and preparedness to attend college?

2. What impact did the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules have on teacher perception of students with learning differences transitioning to postsecondary education?
### Table 6

**Student Transition Curriculum Questionnaire Research Question Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know what I would like to do after I graduate from high school.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can envision myself as a student on a college campus.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I have what it takes to be successful in a college setting.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I know how to prepare for college academically.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I know how to prepare for college in non-academic areas.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am aware of the support resources on the college campus.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have actively participated in my IEP transition planning meetings.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>RQ 1</td>
<td>RQ 2</td>
<td>RQ 3</td>
<td>RQ 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What topic/s in this module do you think will be most useful to you? Why?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What topic/s in this module do you think will be the least useful to you? Why?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What topic/s would you like to see added? Why?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was there any part of the module that doesn’t apply to you? Why do you think that?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which activity did you find most useful? What made you find it most useful?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which activity did you find least useful? Why do you feel this way?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What could be added to this module to make it more appealing or engaging?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What questions do you still have about the content covered in this module?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can this module be improved?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 8

**Student Interview Questions Research Question Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do your teachers do to encourage you to attend a postsecondary educational institution after graduation from high school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do your teachers provide transition support for your transition from high school to a postsecondary educational setting?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are your teachers preparing you for a college setting?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have your teachers taught you how to access student support resources on a college campus? How?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you participating in your IEP/IEP transition planning meetings?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What impact, if any, has the Project STEPP transition curriculum had on the steps you will take during your transition experience?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What impact, if any, has the Project STEPP transition curriculum had on your goals and plans for the future?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What type of resources or help do you need to better prepare you for your transition from high school to a postsecondary educational setting?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How should the curriculum be made available—paper or web-based?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what setting or grade level do you think the transition curriculum could provide the most impact? Why?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you plan to do after you graduate from high school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before using the Project STEPP curriculum, what were your thoughts about attending college after high school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1</td>
<td>RQ 2</td>
<td>RQ 3</td>
<td>RQ 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What do you think it takes to be successful on a college campus?

How have you prepared academically to attend college?

What does it mean to you to prepare for college in non-academic areas?

Which student support resources do you plan to use if you attend college?
### Table 9

**Teacher Transition Curriculum Questionnaire Research Question Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When appropriate, I encourage my students to attend some form of college after graduation from high school.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am providing direct transition support for students with learning differences to plan to attend a college setting.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to help prepare high school students for the college setting.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am aware of the different student support resources that are available on the college campus.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident in my ability to help students know how to access student support resources on the college campus.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students actively participate in their IEP transition meetings.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1</td>
<td>RQ 2</td>
<td>RQ 3</td>
<td>RQ 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lesson Plan/s**

- The lesson plan revolved around clear objectives.  
- The lesson plan revolved around meaningful objectives.  
- The content of the lesson plan seemed accurate.  
- The content of the lesson plan seemed thorough.  
- The lesson plan materials were well organized.

**PowerPoint Files**

- I was able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with my students based on the information in the PowerPoint files.  
- The content of the PowerPoint file seemed accurate.  
- The content of the PowerPoint file seemed thorough.  
- The content on the PowerPoint slides was clear and easy to understand.  
- The content on the PowerPoint slides was relevant to the lesson objective.  
- The content on the PowerPoint slides was relevant to the plans/needs of my students.  
- The PowerPoint slides were well organized.  
- I used the PowerPoint file during the delivery of the lesson.

**Teacher Notes**

- I did not need to spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson.  
- The teacher notes are an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.  
- I used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson.
Table 10 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Student Notes**

- The content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials. **X**
- The content of the student notes was relevant to the needs of my students. **X**
- The format of the student notes effectively met the needs of my students. **X**
- The student notes are an important resource for this lesson. **X**
- My students used the notes during the lesson. **X**

**Activities**

- Activities were aligned with the lesson objective. **X**
- Activities helped me to enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals. **X**
- Activities helped me to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective. **X**
- I did not need to spend much time to make the activities engaging for my students. **X**
- I feel the activities in this lesson were meaningful and a good use of my students’ time. **X**

**Embedded Resources**

- I used the embedded resources (links to websites, supplementary material, handouts, etc.) when preparing for or teaching this lesson. **X**
- The embedded resources enabled me to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for my students. **X**
- The embedded resources aligned with the lesson objectives. **X**
- The embedded resources were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping me accomplish the lesson objectives. **X**
- Having the embedded resources in this lesson saved me time. **X**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The At-A-Glance Module Map for this module is clear and easy to follow.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The At-A-Glance Module Map for this module helped me to navigate the curriculum.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This module was comprehensive across topic.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The assessment options in this module were sufficient to check for student understanding of the objectives.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you make any changes to the content or supplemental materials in this module? If so, in which lesson? What did you change?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What topic/s in this module do you think will be most useful to the students?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What topic/s in this module do you think will be the least useful to the students?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What topic/s would you like to see added to this module?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which lesson-support resources in this module will you use most?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which lesson-support resources in this module are you least likely to use?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What lesson-support resources would you like to see added to this module?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you like about the curriculum formatting in this module?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What changes would you make to the curriculum formatting in this module?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How could this module be improved?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12

*Teacher Interview Questions Research Question Matrix*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you encourage your students to attend a postsecondary educational institution after graduation from high school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you providing direct transition support for students with learning differences who are planning to attend a postsecondary educational setting?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you preparing high school students for the college setting?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How comfortable are you in helping students know how to access student support resources on the college campus?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are your students actively participating in their IEP transition meetings? What does their participation look like?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What impact, if any, has the Project STEPP transition curriculum had on the way you support students in transition?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What impact, if any, has the Project STEPP transition curriculum had on the way in which you influence and encourage student goal-setting for life after high school?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can Project STEPP make this curriculum a more useful tool for you and your students?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What type of resources or training do you feel would make you better prepared for helping students with learning differences transition from secondary to postsecondary education?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How should the curriculum be made available—paper or web-based?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what setting or grade level would the transition curriculum provide the most impact? Why?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. What is the student perception of the quality of the modules?
4. What is the teacher perception of the quality of the modules?

In an attempt to provide visual assurance and clarity to the relevance of the research questions to each data collection tool, multiple matrices were developed. In Tables 6–12, questions from each data collection tool are displayed in the left column of each table and the research questions—identified as RQ 1, RQ 2, RQ 3, and RQ 4—are represented on the top row of each table. Data collected throughout the study were used to answer the research questions based on the alignment with questions from each protocol provided in the matrices.

**Quantitative Analysis**

Pretest and posttest data were analyzed to examine the effect that the non-cognitive transition curriculum had on student perception of their ability and preparedness to attend college. Using a Likert scale, students communicated their level of agreement with the seven statements provided on the Student Transition Curriculum Questionnaire. Similarly, teachers were administered the six question Teacher Transition Curriculum Questionnaire, also a Likert scale assessment, that were designed to provide insight into the impact the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules had on teacher perception of students with learning differences transitioning to postsecondary education. Teachers also used a Likert scale when assessing the effectiveness and relevance of the content of individual lesson plans, the PowerPoint files, the included teacher and student notes, activities, and embedded resources. Additionally, teachers had four Likert scale questions, on the otherwise qualitative data collection tool, designed to evaluation each module. Descriptive statistics, used for “organizing, summarizing, and displaying a set of numerical data” (Gall et al., 2010, p. 552), were used to analyze the collected
data and provide a fuller and more precise description of student and teacher perception of the effectiveness and impact of the modules.

**Qualitative Analysis**

Qualitative data were collected through open-ended questionnaires and one-on-one interviews with open-ended interview questions. At the completion of implementation of the transition curriculum, students and teachers completed a questionnaire for each module. The last component of data collection consisted of one-on-one interviews with each student and teacher participant. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. After transcription of the interview protocols and careful examination of the data collected from the open-ended questionnaires, the researcher looked for overlapping themes. Data were coded, narrowed into broad themes, and analyzed. Developing themes were layered and interconnected before reporting the findings. A narrative discussion provided a summary, in detail, of the findings from the data analysis.

More specifically, the researcher gathered the raw data for each instrument, carefully examining each instrument and making note of recurring themes. After identifying the prominent themes, the researcher labeled one per quadrant on poster board. The raw data from the instruments were color-coded with a highlighter, then transferred to a sticky-note and affixed to the corresponding theme on the poster-board. This was done for all qualitative data and each data collection tool. Outliers were examined and considered as were responses that did not relate or were irrelevant to the study. Once the researcher completed this data disaggregation task, the raw data were brought to the expert panel. The expert panel was given the directive to start with the raw data and, using the same disaggregation process that was used by the researcher, develop a visual with the data broken down into recurring themes. Afterward, the researcher and practitioners each compared the themes they developed to summarize the data, reached consensus on a list of
themes that everyone felt adequately captured the information provided by teachers and students, and agreed on a definition for each theme. The researcher reviewed the categorized data by the practitioners and determined their identified themes mirrored those identified by the researcher.

**Data Collection Tools**

Data collection tools consisted of pretest and posttest questionnaires for both the participating students and the teachers (see Appendix E and F). Between-module assessments were administered using open-ended questionnaires for the students and both open-ended questions and Likert scale questions for each teacher (see Appendix C and D). Additionally, teachers also evaluated each lesson plan using a Likert scale assessment (see Appendix G). After the implementation of the eight modules, and following the post-tests, one-on-one interviews were conducted with each participating student and teacher (see Appendix A and B).

The quantitative tool used as a pretest assessment for each of the participating students included the following questions:

1. I know what I would like to do after I graduate from high school.
2. I can envision myself as a student on a college campus.
3. I feel like I have what it takes to be successful in a college setting.
4. I feel like I know how to prepare for college academically.
5. I feel like I know how to prepare for college in non-academic areas.
6. I am aware of the support resources on the college campus.
7. I have actively participated in my IEP transition planning meetings.

Students responded using a Likert scale designed to gauge responses from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The same questions were asked of students in the post test administered at the conclusion of all eight modules.
Participating teachers were also administered a quantitative pretest. Questions asked the teachers included:

1. When appropriate, I encourage my students to attend some form of college after graduation from high school.
2. I am providing direct transition support for students with learning differences to plan to attend a college setting.
3. I know how to help prepare high school students for the college setting.
4. I am aware of the different student-support resources that are available on the college campus.
5. I feel confident in my ability to help students know how to access student-support resources on the college campus.
6. My students actively participate in their IEP transition meetings.

Teachers responded using the same Likert scale as the students. The same post test was administered after full implementation of the transition curriculum modules.

Following administration of the pretest, teachers began instruction. As the transition curriculum was implemented, teachers and students provided continuous qualitative and quantitative feedback. After each module was completed, students and teachers provided individualized feedback on the designated data collection tools. Student between-module questions included the following:

1. What topic/s in this module do you think will be most useful to you? Why?
2. What topic/s in this module do you think will be the least useful to you? Why?
3. What topic/s would you like to see added? Why?
4. Was there any part of the module that doesn’t apply to you? Why do you think that?
5. Which activity did you find the most useful? What made you find it most useful?
6. Which activity did you find least useful? Why do you feel this way?
7. What could be added to this module to make it more appealing or engaging?
8. What questions do you still have about the content covered in this module?
9. How could this module be improved?

Teacher between-module questioning included four questions requiring responses using a Likert scale of 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; and 4 = Strongly Agree:

1. The At-A-Glance Module Map in this module is clear and easy to follow.
2. The At-A-Glance Module Map in this module helped me to navigate the curriculum.
3. This module was comprehensive across topic.
4. The assessment options in this module were sufficient to check for student understanding of the objectives.

Teachers also answered the following open-ended questions regarding each module:

1. Did you make any changes to the content or supplemental materials in the module? If so, in which lesson? What did you change?
2. What topic/s in this module do you think will be most useful to the students? Why?
3. What topic/s in this module do you think will be the least useful to the students? Why?
4. What topic/s would you like to see added to this module? Why?
5. Which lesson-support resources in this module will you use most often? Why?
6. Which lesson-support resources in this module are you least likely to use? Why?
7. What lesson-support resources would you like to see added to this module? Why?
8. What do you like about the curriculum formatting in this module?
9. What changes would you make to the curriculum formatting in this module?

10. How could this module be improved?

Students and teachers were provided a space to capture comments not otherwise expressed in the direct questioning.

Teachers also completed data collection tools between each lesson plan. These tools were comprised of Likert scale questions that were answered using the following scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; and 4 = Strongly Agree. Questions found on the teacher data collection tool for lesson plan evaluation were divided into six sections—Lesson Plan/s, PowerPoint Files, Teacher Notes, Student Notes, Activities, Embedded Resources:

Lesson Plan/s:

1. The lesson plan revolved around clear objectives
2. The lesson plan revolved around meaningful objectives.
3. The content of the lesson plan seemed accurate.
4. The content of the lesson plan seemed thorough.
5. The lesson plan materials were well organized.

PowerPoint Files:

1. I was able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with my students based on the information in the PowerPoint files.
2. The content of the PowerPoint seemed accurate.
3. The content of the PowerPoint seemed thorough.
4. The content of the PowerPoint slides were clear and easy to understand.
5. The content of the PowerPoint slides was relevant to the lesson objective.
6. The content of the PowerPoint slides was relevant to the plans/needs of my students.
7. The PowerPoint slides were well organized.

8. I used the PowerPoint files during the delivery of the lesson. (This question is answered yes or no.)

Teacher Notes:

1. I did not need to spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson.

2. The teacher notes are an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.

3. I used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. (This question is answered yes or no.)

Student Notes:

1. The content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials.

2. The content of the student notes was relevant to the needs of my students.

3. The format of the student notes effectively met the needs of my students.

4. The student notes are an important resource for this lesson.

5. My students used the notes during the lesson. (This question is answered yes or no.)

Activities:

1. Activities were aligned with the lesson objective.

2. Activities helped me to enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals.

3. Activities helped me to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective.

4. I did not need to spend much time to make the activities engaging for my students.

5. I feel the activities in this lesson were meaningful and a good use of my students’ time.
Embedded Resources:

1. The embedded resources enabled me to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for my students.
2. The embedded resources aligned with the lesson objectives.
3. The embedded resources were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping me to accomplish the lesson objectives.
4. Having the embedded resources in this lesson saved me time.
5. I used the embedded resources (links to websites, supplementary material, handouts, etc.) when preparing for or teaching this lesson. (This question is answered yes or no.)

These questions and an open-ended general comment question were provided to teachers at the conclusion of each lesson plan.

Finally, open-ended interview questions were asked in one-on-one interviews with each participant. Teacher questions included:

1. How do you encourage your students to attend a postsecondary educational institution after graduation from high school?
2. How are you providing direct transition support for students with learning differences who are planning to attend a postsecondary educational setting?
3. How are you preparing high school students for the college setting?
4. How comfortable are you in helping students know how to access student support resources on the college campus?
5. How are your students actively participating in their IEP transition meetings? What does their participation look like?
6. What impact, if any, has the Project STEPP transition curriculum had on the way you support students in transition?

7. What impact, if any, has the Project STEPP transition curriculum had on the way in which you influence and encourage student goal-setting for life after high school?

8. How can Project STEPP make this curriculum a more useful tool for you and your students?

9. What type of resources or training do you feel would make you better prepared for helping students with learning differences transition from secondary to postsecondary education?

10. How should the curriculum be made available—paper format or web-based?

11. In what setting or grade level would the transition curriculum provide the most impact? Why?

12. What questions do you still have?

Student questions included:

1. What do your teachers do to encourage you to attend a postsecondary educational institution after graduation from high school?

2. How do your teachers provide transition support for your transition from high school to a postsecondary educational setting?

3. How are your teachers preparing you for a college setting?

4. Have your teachers taught you how to access student support services on a college campus? How?

5. How are you participating in your IEP/IEP transition meetings?
6. What impact, if any, has the Project STEPP transition curriculum had on the steps you will take during your transition experience?

7. What impact, if any, has the Project STEPP transition curriculum had on your goals and plans for the future?

8. What type of resources or help do you need to better prepare you for your transition from high school to a postsecondary educational setting?

9. How should the curriculum be made available—paper or web-based format?

10. In what setting or grade level do you think the transition curriculum could provide the most impact? Why?

11. What do you plan to do after you graduate from high school?

12. Before using the Project STEPP curriculum, what were your thoughts about attending college after high school?

13. What do you think it takes to be successful on a college campus?

14. How have you prepared academically to attend college?

15. What does it mean to you to prepare for college in non-academic areas?

16. Which student support resources do you plan to use if you attend college?

17. What questions or comments do you still have?

Responses from each of the questionnaires and interviews were designed to determine the appropriateness of content, student and teacher knowledge of and involvement in transition planning for postsecondary education, and ease of use of eight transition modules designed to enhance the preparation of secondary students for postsecondary education.
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Purpose of the Study

As indicated in chapter one, the purpose of this problem of practice study was to determine teacher and high school student perceived effectiveness of a series of non-cognitive transition curriculum modules developed to prepare high school students with learning differences for a postsecondary educational setting. The guiding research questions were:

1. How did using the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules change student perspective on their ability and preparedness to attend college?

2. What impact did the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules have on teacher perception of students with learning differences transitioning to postsecondary education?

3. What is the student perception of the quality of the modules?

4. What is the teacher perception of the quality of the modules?

Description of Participants

As stated in Chapter 3, the research study was implemented in a total of four Academic Support classes across two high school campuses. Two certified teachers and 26 students enrolled in the Academic Support classes consented to participate in the study. Each of the student participants were eligible for and received services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The students participating in this study received services in the Exceptional Children’s program and were identified as having high incidence disabilities, including, but not limited to Specific Learning Disabilities, Other Health Impaired, and Autism.

The teacher participants were considered experienced, one teacher with more than ten years of teaching experience, the other teacher with more than 25 years of teaching.
experience. Each teacher participant implemented the transition curriculum in two Academic
Support classes during the spring semester of 2014. Students involved in the study ranged in age
from fifteen to eighteen years old and were enrolled in grades nine through twelve, with the
majority of the students assigned to grades ten and eleven.

In this systematic mixed method investigation, open ended questionnaires and interviews
were used. A pretest and posttest with a Likert scale design was also used. The data collection
tools were designed to determine the appropriateness of content and student and teacher
knowledge of and involvement in transition planning for postsecondary education.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedures, as detailed in Chapter 3, began by providing the
participating teachers and students an in-service, or introductory session, on the transition
curriculum. In two different sessions at each school site- one for the teachers and one for the
students- a brief presentation describing the purpose of the research and foundational information
about the Project STEPP Transition Curriculum was provided. Teachers were provided the
Project STEPP Transition Curriculum on a flash drive and in hard copy. Teachers were also
provided the URL so they could access the curriculum from East Carolina University’s website.

The researcher provided each student at each school site a portfolio. Each portfolio
contained one copy of the student Transition Curriculum Module Evaluation Form for each
module. The researcher also provided each teacher at each school site a portfolio. Each teacher
portfolio contained one copy of the Transition Curriculum Lesson Plan Evaluation Form for each
lesson plan in the curriculum and one copy of the teacher Transition Curriculum Module
Evaluation Form for each module.
The researcher was present in each classroom during administration of the pretest and the post-test at the start and end of the research study. The researcher provided the respective Transition Curriculum Questionnaire to the students and the teachers during the pretest and the post-test session. Upon completion of administration at the beginning and end of the study, the researcher collected the documents and began data analysis.

After the pre-test was administered and the associated data collected, the researcher began data analysis and the teachers began implementation of the Project STEPP Transition Curriculum. Teachers were given directions to complete a minimum of one module per week and, with the exception of some inclement weather causing school to be cancelled, were able to implement the full curriculum in the prescribed time. The researcher collected lesson plan and module evaluation data every other week over the course of the estimated twelve week, February 24 through May 23, implementation period.

After the pretest, teachers evaluated every lesson plan and both teachers and students independently evaluated the modules. Following the completion of module eight, the researcher returned to each participating classroom to administer the posttest. The posttest assessments were collected by the researcher and individual teacher and student interviews began. Individual interviews were scheduled with the students during their Academic Support class in an adjoining room with no interruptions. One-on-one interviews with teachers were conducted by the researcher during the lunch period and after the instructional day had ended. All of the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher.

Transcribed interviews were carefully reviewed and a descriptive narrative was developed for each. This process provided an analytical framework from which the researcher was able to identify patterned regularities in the data. Patterns and themes were identified and
conclusions and generalizations were formulated. Considerations were made for emerging themes that triangulate between student responses and teacher responses, as well as from emerging themes identified in the literature review. A jury of school district practitioners reviewed the coding and thematic patterns identified by the researcher to ensure quality control and accuracy.

**Data Analysis**

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected. In this mixed method survey investigation, open ended questionnaires and interviews were used, as well as a Likert scale pre/post-test and lesson plan and module evaluation tools, to determine the appropriateness of content, student and teacher knowledge of and involvement in transition planning for postsecondary education, and ease of use of eight transition modules designed to enhance the preparation of secondary students for postsecondary education. The rationale for using the mixed-methods approach was to solidify and triangulate the collected data. In this explanatory research design, the researcher collected quantitative data that may be used to explain and support the qualitative data.

The data analysis of this study was organized, first, by answering the research questions. Next, data were presented by module. Lesson plans in each of the modules were reviewed by the teachers. Each of the eight modules was reviewed by both the teachers and the students. These data were presented by module, in order of lesson plan, teacher module evaluation, and then the student module evaluation. After data for all modules were presented, the student and teacher interviews were analyzed, followed by the pretest/posttest data for both the teachers and the students. The intended purpose of the data analysis formatting chosen by the researcher was to
provide a thorough and descriptive reflection of each evaluative tool for ease of use in modifying the Project STEPP Transition Curriculum for individualized use and/or university adaptation.

At the conclusion of each module, teachers were asked to evaluate the module as a whole by providing both qualitative and quantitative responses. Teachers were given four Likert scale questions on the Transition Curriculum Module Evaluation Form, along with several open-ended questions. The Likert scale scores were pre-assigned to responses on the questionnaires, for example, 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; and 4 = Strongly Agree. Lesson plans were also evaluated by teachers using a Likert scale with scores pre-assigned to responses on the questionnaires, for example, 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; and 4 = Strongly Agree.

Students were also provided a questionnaire at the conclusion of each module. The purpose of the questionnaire was to provide feedback on the content of the module. Students completed the open-ended questionnaire independently. The questionnaire posed ten questions, including one allowing students could make general comments. Between twenty six and seventeen students completed this data collection tool. Student participation in the module evaluation varied due to school attendance.

After transcription of the interview protocols, the researcher looked for recurring themes. Data were coded, narrowed into broad themes, and analyzed. A narrative discussion will provide a summary, in detail, of the findings from the data analysis. Considerations were discussed in chapter five regarding emerging themes that triangulate between student responses and teachers responses.

Pretest and posttest results were examined to assess the impact that the non-cognitive transition curriculum had on student perception of their ability and preparedness to attend
college. It is the intent that teacher data from the pre/posttests will provide insight into the impact the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules had on teacher perception of students with learning differences transitioning to postsecondary education.

A jury of practitioners participated in a data analysis activity that followed transcription of the interviews, coding of the qualitative data, and identification of emerging themes. Discussion was guided and focused on determining trends and patterns. The data may be used to implement changes to instructional and/or transitional programming.

**Findings**

Each research question was aligned with specific questions from the data collection tools utilized during the study. The major findings from the research are outlined below by research question. Following the research questions, Tables 13–19 provide a visual representation of the compiled data for each instrument used during the study. The Research Question Matrix-Compiled Data tables illustrate alignment between each research question and the questions asked in each data collection tool. Further, detailed analysis of the student and teacher responses, by module, were outlined after the introduction of the tables.

**Research Question 1**

*How did using the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules change student perspective on their ability and preparedness to attend college?*  As evidenced in the Research Question Matrix and the resulting data collection, research question one was closely aligned with the Student Transition Curriculum Questionnaire and the Student Interview Questions. In examination of the pre and post responses provided in the Student Transition Curriculum Questionnaire, the areas in which student responses indicated a discernable variance was their awareness of support resources on the college campus and their participation in their IEP
meetings. Before exposure to the curriculum, 50% of the students \((n = 26)\) either agreed or strongly agreed that they were aware of the support resources on a college campus and the other 50% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. After exposure to the curriculum, 88% of the students \((n = 25)\) either agreed or strongly agreed and only 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Further, 50% of the students \((n = 26)\) agreed or strongly agreed on the pretest and 80% \((n = 25)\) either agreed or strongly agreed on the post-test that they actively participated in their IEP transition planning meetings. The results of the post-test indicate an increase in the level of agreement.

During the interviews, student responses indicated that their perspective on their ability and preparedness to attend college had been influenced by the transition curriculum. One student acknowledged, “It changed my whole view of college because I used to think that they wouldn’t let me use the stuff in my IEP. It changed my views about college.” Another student thought that “it would be really good for everyone to take this [curriculum] because it really helped me to envision my future differently and I’m pretty sure it helped the whole class.” Finally, a thought-provoking parting remark from a junior level student was, “I haven’t been very productive [in high school] and haven’t left much of a mark, but I’m glad to have participated in this project.”

**Research Question 2**

*What impact did the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules have on teacher perception of students with learning differences transitioning to postsecondary education?* As evidenced in the Research Question Matrix and the resulting data collection, research question two was closely aligned with the Teacher Transition Curriculum Questionnaire, the Teacher Transition Curriculum Module Evaluation, and the Teacher Interview Questions. Due to the
small sample size, it is difficult to generalize based solely on the Teacher Transition Curriculum Questionnaire, however, it is significant to note that one of the participating teachers disagreed on the pre and post-test regarding their role in providing direct transition support for students with learning differences to plan to attend college. Based on the abovementioned data and the actual implementation of the curriculum, as evidenced by the feedback in the Transition Curriculum Lesson Plan Evaluation Forms, the impact of the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules on teacher perception of students with learning differences transitioning to postsecondary education was likely unchanged in one teacher participant. However, the other teacher engaged in continuous reflection and dialogue with the researcher, expressing concern over the lack of preparedness of the students once they got to high school. The teacher acknowledged that his/her role in encouraging students to consider educational postsecondary outcomes was not as proactive as it should be and appeared genuine in interest to work on vertical alignment with the middle grades and postsecondary educational settings. Further, the teacher acknowledged the role of the whole school community in being detrimental or constructive in leading students to continued educational attainment.

**Research Question 3**

*What is the student perception of the quality of the modules?*  As evidenced in the Research Question Matrix and the resulting data collection, research question three was closely aligned with the Student Transition Curriculum Module Evaluation and the Student Interview Questions. Based on the data collected through these instruments, all of the students found value in the transition curriculum modules. Students provided a significant amount of feedback based on the questions in the Student Transition Curriculum Module Evaluation. Students provided suggestions on how to make the modules more engaging and what activities they found most and
least useful. Through their responses, the students provided insight into their academic and non-cognitive preparedness for their transition from secondary to postsecondary settings. As evidenced by the collected data, student perception of the quality of the modules was positive.

Research Question 4

*What is the teacher perception of the quality of the modules?* As evidenced in the Research Question Matrix and the resulting data collection, research question four was closely aligned with the Teacher Transition Curriculum Lesson Plan Evaluation, Teacher Transition Module Evaluation, and the Teacher Interview Questions. The teachers provided a substantial amount of data that was useful in contributing to the continued development of the curriculum. Both of the teachers acknowledged the content of the curriculum to be relevant and useful. One of the teachers proclaimed, “The first thought I had was that this is an excellent curriculum, an excellent idea . . .” The other teacher shared, “There are parts of it that I thought were wonderful, some of it I found redundant, but it was eye-opening. Passing this information [the curriculum] along is one of my goals for next year. I’m a big believer that we should share the good things we have.” As evidenced by the collected data, teacher perception of the quality of the modules was positive.

Module One: High School vs. College

*Lesson plan evaluations.*

*Lesson one: General overview.* In module one, lesson plan one, both teachers agreed (3) that the lesson plan revolved around meaningful objectives, the content of the lesson plan seemed accurate, and the content of the lesson plan seemed thorough. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the lesson plan revolved around clear objectives, while Teacher A only agreed (3).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RQ 1 Pre Test (n = 26)</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know what I would</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 23%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 36%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>like to do after I</td>
<td>Agree 62%</td>
<td>Agree 44%</td>
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<td>graduate from high</td>
<td>Disagree 8%</td>
<td>Disagree 16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>school.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 8%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 4%</td>
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<td>I can envision myself</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 27%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 36%</td>
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<td>as a student on a</td>
<td>Agree 50%</td>
<td>Agree 40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>college campus.</td>
<td>Disagree 15%</td>
<td>Disagree 16%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 8%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 8%</td>
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<td>I feel like I have</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 27%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 12%</td>
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<td>what it takes to be</td>
<td>Agree 38%</td>
<td>Agree 60%</td>
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<td>successful in a</td>
<td>Disagree 27%</td>
<td>Disagree 20%</td>
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<td>college setting.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 8%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 8%</td>
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<td>I feel like I know how</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 4%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 12%</td>
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<td>to prepare for college</td>
<td>Agree 46%</td>
<td>Agree 48%</td>
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<td>academically.</td>
<td>Disagree 35%</td>
<td>Disagree 36%</td>
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<td>Strongly Disagree 15%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 4%</td>
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<td>I feel like I know how</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 15%</td>
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<td>to prepare for college</td>
<td>Agree 46%</td>
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<td>in non-academic areas.</td>
<td>Disagree 23%</td>
<td>Disagree 32%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 15%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 4%</td>
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<td>I am aware of the</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 19%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 32%</td>
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<td>support resources on</td>
<td>Agree 31%</td>
<td>Agree 56%</td>
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<td>the college campus.</td>
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<td>Disagree 12%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 8%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0%</td>
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<td>I have actively</td>
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<td>Strongly Agree 32%</td>
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<td>participated in my</td>
<td>Agree 19%</td>
<td>Agree 48%</td>
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<td>IEP transition planning</td>
<td>Disagree 19%</td>
<td>Disagree 16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>meetings.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 12%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 4%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>RQ 1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RQ 1</strong></td>
<td>What topic/s in this module do you think will be most useful to you?</td>
<td>studying; design of classes; transition notebook; goal setting; scheduling; recognizing strengths and weaknesses; academic and social balance; choosing a college major; using technology responsibly; basic typing skills; campus resources; disability services; support services; campus safety; college financials; transitioning between informal and formal communication; conflict management; living with a roommate; campus diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RQ 2</strong></td>
<td>What topic/s in this module do you think will be the least useful to you?</td>
<td>grades; testing; general overview; academic integrity; daily schedule; academic and social balance; identifying strengths and weaknesses; choosing a college major; basic typing skills; using technology responsibly; college community; disability services; social media; college financials; constructive criticism; living with a roommate; campus diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RQ 3</strong></td>
<td>What topic/s would you like to see added? Why?</td>
<td>Additional information on note-taking, different academic and social groups, technology tools, social opportunities, public safety, online crimes, personal wellness, and dorm living; faculty support; strategies for staying on task; off-campus resources; alternatives for paying for college</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RQ 4</strong></td>
<td>Was there any part of the module that doesn’t apply to you? Why do you think that?</td>
<td>A few are planning to join the military, go straight to work, or attend a two-year program do not find the information applicable; assistive technology; social media; personal wellness; college financials; living with a roommate</td>
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<td>RQ 1</td>
<td>RQ 2</td>
<td>RQ 3</td>
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<td>Which activity did you find most useful? What made you find it most useful?</td>
<td>scheduling; guided notes; transition notebook; choosing a college major; typing; social networking; campus resources; campus safety videos; personal wellness; college costs; creating a budget; creating the FAFSA; role play scenarios; sending emails; sending thank you notes; conflict management; diversity; roommate preferences</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Which activity did you find least useful? Why do you feel this way?</td>
<td>grades; testing; general overview; college puzzle; goal setting; social networking; typing; What Does This Mean for Me; college community; personal wellness; conflict management</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>What could be added to this module to make it more appealing or engaging?</td>
<td>videos; field trips; expand upon existing topics; hand-on activities; additional information on playing sports, dorm living, grade point averages; guest speakers; additional typing activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What questions do you still have about the content covered in this module?</td>
<td>How to determine academic load v. elective load when scheduling classes; Does everything at college have to be my responsibility?; Is there special help at larger universities?; What does online testing look like at the university level?; clarification on how to talk to professors about your IEP; What are universities doing to become more secure to physical and online threats?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How could this module be improved?</td>
<td>hands-on activities; videos; visuals; expand upon existing topics; field trips; condense the general overview; video interviews of current college students who have learning differences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 15

**Student Interview Questions—Research Question Matrix: Compiled Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do your teachers do to encourage you to attend a postsecondary educational institution after graduation from high school?</td>
<td>teachers tell the importance of going to college, but don’t tell them how to get there</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do your teachers provide transition support for your transition from high school to a postsecondary educational setting?</td>
<td>students were mostly unclear about how to answer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are your teachers preparing you for a college setting?</td>
<td></td>
<td>students were mostly unclear about how to answer; encouraging good grades; adhering to assignment deadlines; making sure they take the right classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have your teachers taught you how to access student support resources on a college campus? How?</td>
<td>teachers taught students during the study; student responses indicated a lack of clear understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you participating in your IEP/IEP transition planning meetings?</td>
<td></td>
<td>mother attends meeting for them and then shares what was discussed; student attends and just listens; case manager/teacher asks students what accommodations they need/do not need</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What impact, if any, has the Project STEPP transition curriculum had on the steps you will take during your transition experience?</td>
<td>view of college has changed; previously did not know accommodations were made at the postsecondary level; greater level of awareness of the demands of postsecondary</td>
<td></td>
<td>positive perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1</td>
<td>RQ 2</td>
<td>RQ 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What impact, if any, has the Project STEPP transition curriculum had on your goals and plans for the future?</td>
<td>greater awareness of what they want to do in the future; better define college choices; define options; provided insight into the foundational skills necessary for independent living</td>
<td>positive perception</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What type of resources or help do you need to better prepare you for your transition from high school to a postsecondary educational setting?</td>
<td>videos of daily operations on a college campus; field trips to different universities; professors as guest speakers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How should the curriculum be made available- paper or web-based?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what setting or grade level do you think the transition curriculum could provide the most impact? Why?</td>
<td>Academic Support class; semester long college preparation and transition support class; integrate components in core academic classes; 11th and 12th grade</td>
<td>positive perception</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you plan to do after you graduate from high school?</td>
<td>attend a 2-year or 4-year postsecondary educational setting; school to work; military</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before using the Project STEPP curriculum, what were your thoughts about attending college after high school?</td>
<td>most students did not think about college much before going through the curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think it takes to be successful on a college campus?</td>
<td>motivation; focus; being responsible; perseverance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How have you prepared academically to attend college?</td>
<td>most students did not clearly understand this question; good grades; regular attendance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1</td>
<td>RQ 2</td>
<td>RQ 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does it mean to you to prepare for college in non-academic areas?</td>
<td>most students did not clearly understand this question; knowing how to navigate campus; financial literacy; having adequate life skills to function independently</td>
<td>students did not articulate a clear understanding of this question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which student support resources do you plan to use if you attend college?</td>
<td>study groups; tutoring; disability services</td>
<td>positive perception</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 16

*Teacher Transition Curriculum Questionnaire—Research Question Matrix: Compiled Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>Pre Test and Post Test (n = 2)</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When appropriate, I encourage my students to attend some form of college after graduation from high school.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 50%</td>
<td>Agree 50%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 50%</td>
<td>Agree 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 50%</td>
<td>Disagree 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am providing direct transition support for students with learning differences to plan to attend a college setting.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 0</td>
<td>Agree 50%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 50%</td>
<td>Agree 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 50%</td>
<td>Disagree 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to help prepare high school students for the college setting.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 50%</td>
<td>Agree 50%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 100%</td>
<td>Agree 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 50%</td>
<td>Disagree 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am aware of the different student support resources that are available on the college campus.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 50%</td>
<td>Agree 50%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 50%</td>
<td>Agree 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 50%</td>
<td>Disagree 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident in my ability to help students know how to access student support resources on the college campus.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 50%</td>
<td>Agree 50%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 0</td>
<td>Agree 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 50%</td>
<td>Disagree 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students actively participate in their IEP transition meetings.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 50%</td>
<td>Agree 0</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 50%</td>
<td>Agree 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 50%</td>
<td>Disagree 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17

*Teacher Transition Curriculum Lesson Plan Evaluation—Research Question Matrix: Compiled Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Plan/s</th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The lesson plan revolved around clear objectives.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 24%; Agree 75%; Disagree 2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lesson plan revolved around meaningful objectives.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 19%; Agree 81%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the lesson plan seemed accurate.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 17%; Agree 83%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the lesson plan seemed thorough.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 20%; 80%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lesson plan materials were well organized.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 17%; Agree 81%; Disagree 2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PowerPoint Files</th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with my students based on the information in the PowerPoint files.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 35%; Agree 65%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the PowerPoint file seemed accurate.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 8%; Agree 92%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the PowerPoint file seemed thorough.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 15%; 85%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content on the PowerPoint slides was clear and easy to understand.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 20%; 80%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content on the PowerPoint slides was relevant to the lesson objective.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 13%; Agree 85%; Disagree 2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PowerPoint Files</th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The content on the PowerPoint slides was relevant to the plans/needs of my students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree 8%; Agree 90%; Disagree 2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PowerPoint slides were well organized.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree 14%; Agree 84%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used the PowerPoint file during the delivery of the lesson.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Notes</th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I did not need to spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree 31%; Agree 67%; Disagree 2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher notes are an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree 19%; Agree 80%; Disagree 2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Notes</th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree 11%; Agree 72%; Disagree 7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the student notes was relevant to the needs of my students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree 7%; Agree 67%; Disagree 26%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The format of the student notes effectively met the needs of my students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree 20%; Agree 49%; Disagree 31%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student notes are an important resource for this lesson.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree 16%; Agree 61%; Disagree 23%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Notes</th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My students used the notes during the lesson.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes 67%; No 33%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>RQ 1</td>
<td>RQ 2</td>
<td>RQ 3</td>
<td>RQ 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities were aligned with the lesson objective.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree 15%; Agree 83%; Disagree 2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities helped me to enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree 16%; Agree 80%; Disagree 4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities helped me to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree 7%; Agree 91%; Disagree 2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not need to spend much time to make the activities engaging for my students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree 17%; Agree 79%; Disagree 4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel the activities in this lesson were meaningful and a good use of my students’ time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree 14%; Agree 81%; Disagree 5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Embedded Resources</th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I used the embedded resources (links to websites, supplementary material, handouts, etc.) when preparing for or teaching this lesson.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree 18%; Agree 58%; Disagree 24%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The embedded resources enabled me to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for my students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree 13%; Agree 60%; Disagree 27%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The embedded resources aligned with the lesson objectives.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree 13%; Agree 60%; Disagree 27%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Embedded Resources</th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The embedded resources were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping me accomplish the lesson objectives.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree 9%; Agree 66%; Disagree 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having the embedded resources in this lesson saved me time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes 67%; No 33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 18

*Teacher Transition Curriculum Module Evaluation—Research Question Matrix: Compiled Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The At-A-Glance Module Map for this module is clear and easy to follow.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 12%; Agree 88%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The At-A-Glance Module Map for this module helped me to navigate the curriculum.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 12%; Agree 88%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This module was comprehensive across topic.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 12%; Agree 88%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The assessment options in this module were sufficient to check for student understanding of the objectives.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 19%; Agree 81%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you make any changes to the content or supplemental materials in this module? If so, in which lesson? What did you change?</td>
<td>color-coded PowerPoint to help students follow along; made changes to the GPA and choosing a college major activities; added bell ringers using related topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What topic/s in this module do you think will be most useful to the students?</td>
<td>general overview; finding and maintaining an academic and social balance; using technology responsibly; IEP review; advocating for IEP support; campus safety; stress management; college financial tips; cost of college; transitioning between informal and formal communication; campus living; conflict management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 18 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What topic/s in this module do you think will be the least useful to the students?</strong></td>
<td>the lesson on academic integrity was too advanced; keyboarding and formatting are too basic for upper secondary students; basic cooking; creating a budget; dimensions of campus diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What topic/s would you like to see added to this module?</strong></td>
<td>expand upon computer safety; self-advocacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>PowerPoint file; blank schedule activity; social networking; typing counter; disability support; videos; campus safety; FAFSA checklist; classroom behavior; conflict management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Which lesson-support resources in this module will you use most?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>student notes; college puzzle activity; grade calculation; college community resources; writing thank you notes; college housing options</td>
<td>videos; testimonials from college students with learning differences; computer-based calendar activity; more hands-on activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Which lesson-support resources in this module are you least likely to use?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ease of use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What lesson-support resources would you like to see added to this module?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>group lessons and corresponding activities together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What do you like about the curriculum formatting in this module?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What changes would you make to the curriculum formatting in this module?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How could this module be improved?</td>
<td>RQ 1</td>
<td>RQ 2</td>
<td>RQ 3</td>
</tr>
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### Table 19

**Teacher Interview Questions—Research Question Matrix: Compiled Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you encourage your students to attend a postsecondary educational institution after graduation from high school?</td>
<td>encourage students to attend some type of postsecondary training after high school; communicate the benefits of additional education or training; “sell the foundation of a college experience”; informal discussion; not a structured process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How are you providing direct transition support for students with learning differences who are planning to attend a postsecondary educational setting?</td>
<td>direct transition support is not provided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you preparing high school students for the college setting?</td>
<td>promoting self-advocacy; what happens to the IEP and services at the postsecondary level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How comfortable are you in helping students know how to access student support resources on the college campus?</td>
<td>further education is necessary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How are your students actively participating in their IEP transition meetings? What does their participation look like?</td>
<td>discussion of accommodations and completion of interest inventories prior to meetings; students are active participants in the meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1</td>
<td>RQ 2</td>
<td>RQ 3</td>
<td>RQ 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What impact, if any, has the Project STEPP transition curriculum had on the way you support students in transition?</td>
<td>learned new information to help prepare students for the transition to a postsecondary educational setting; materials in the curriculum can be used to educate parents and students during IEP meetings</td>
<td>positive perception; long-standing mindset that may influence the level of support</td>
<td>positive perception; long-standing mindset that may influence the level of encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What impact, if any, has the Project STEPP transition curriculum had on the way in which you influence and encourage student goal-setting for life after high school?</td>
<td>better prepared to answer questions and provide postsecondary transition information</td>
<td>positive perception; long-standing mindset that may influence the level of encouragement</td>
<td>positive perception; long-standing mindset that may influence the level of encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can Project STEPP make this curriculum a more useful tool for you and your students?</td>
<td>professional development for regular and special educators on transitioning students with learning differences to a postsecondary educational setting; collaboration with postsecondary educators; video presentations from current college students with learning differences; campus visits</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What type of resources or training do you feel would make you better prepared for helping students with learning differences transition from secondary to postsecondary education?</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

120
Table 19 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
<th>RQ 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How should the curriculum be made available- paper or web-based?</td>
<td>Hybrid between pencil/paper and computer; junior and senior year implementation; transition planning should begin before high school</td>
<td>positive perception of implementing curriculum; varying ideas of how and where to implement it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teacher B agreed (3) that the lesson plan materials were well organized, while Teacher A disagreed (2), indicating that the layout tended to be confusing.

With regards to the PowerPoint presentations, both Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the PowerPoint file seemed accurate, that the content of the PowerPoint file seemed thorough, and that the content of the PowerPoint slides was clear and easy to understand. They also agreed (3) that the PowerPoint slides were relevant to the lesson objective and they agreed (3) that they were able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with their students based on the information in the PowerPoint files. While Teacher B agreed (3) that the PowerPoint slides were relevant to the plans/needs of the students, Teacher A disagreed (2). Both teachers agreed (3) that the PowerPoint slides were well organized and were able to use them in the delivery of the lesson.

Both Teacher A and Teacher B used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that they did not spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson. They also agreed (3) that the teacher notes are an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.

Teacher A and Teacher B both indicated that their students used the notes during the lesson. Both teachers agreed (3) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials, that the content of the student notes was relevant to the needs of their students, and that the format of the student notes effectively met the needs of their students. Additionally, both teachers agreed (3) that the notes were an important resource for this lesson.

Teachers A and B had varying opinions regarding the activities in lesson plan one. They both agreed (3) that the activities helped them to enable their students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals, however, that is the only area in which they agreed. Teacher B
strongly agreed (4) that the activities were aligned with the lesson objectives and that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objectives. Teacher B also strongly agreed (4) that not much time was needed to make the activities engaging for the students. However, Teacher A disagreed (2) regarding the time spent to make the activities engaging for the students and also disagreed (2) regarding the meaningfulness of the activities in this lesson and that they were a good use of students’ time. Further, Teacher A agreed (3) that the activities were aligned with the lesson objective.

Teacher A did not use the embedded resources in module one, lesson plan one. Teacher B used them and indicated agreement (3) that the embedded resources were aligned with the lesson objectives and that they enabled him/her to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for the students. Teacher B agreed (3) that the embedded resources in this lesson helped save time.

Both teachers were able to implement this lesson in just over an hour. Teacher B taught it in segments over multiple days, while Teacher A taught it in one class period. Teacher A declared that his/her students were not fond of the note-taking. The teacher found the students’ difficulty with note-taking a burden in delivery of the lesson.

**Lesson two: Classes & instructors.** In module one, lesson plan two, both teachers agreed (3) that the lesson plan revolved around clear objectives and that the lesson plan materials were well organized. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the lesson plans revolved around meaningful objectives and that the content of the lesson plans seemed accurate, while Teacher A only agreed (3).

Both teachers used the PowerPoint file during the delivery of the lesson. They also both agreed (3) that the content of the PowerPoint file seemed accurate, that the PowerPoint file
seemed thorough, and that the PowerPoint slides were clear and easy to understand. Teacher A and Teacher B also agreed (3) that the PowerPoint slides were relevant to the plans/needs of their students and that the PowerPoint slides were well organized. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that he/she was able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with his/her students based on the information in the PowerPoint files, while Teacher A only agreed (3). Likewise, Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the PowerPoint slides were relevant to the lesson objective.

Teacher A and Teacher B used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the second lesson of module one. Teacher A disagreed (2) that not much time was spent gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson and Teacher B agreed with that statement (3). Teacher A agreed (3) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson, while Teacher B strongly agreed (4).

Both teachers indicated that their students used the student notes during the lesson. Teachers A and B agreed (3) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials and that the content of the student notes was relevant to the needs of their students. They had differing opinions regarding the effectiveness of the format. Teacher A disagreed (2) that the format of the notes effectively met the needs of his/her students, while Teacher B agreed (3). Further, Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the student notes were an important resource for this lesson, while Teacher A only agreed (3).

The activities in module one, lesson plan two, brought mixed results from the teachers. Teacher A disagreed (2) that the activities were aligned with the lesson objective, that the activities helped to enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals, and that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective. Teacher A
also disagreed (2) that he/she did not spend much time to make the activities engaging for the students and that the activities in this lesson were meaningful and a good use of students’ time. On the other hand, Teacher B agreed (3) that the activities were aligned with the objective, that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective, and that not much time was needed to make the activities engaging. Teacher B also agreed (3) that the activities in this lesson were meaningful and a good use of the students’ time. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the activities helped to enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals.

Both Teacher A and Teacher B used the embedded resources for lesson plan two of module one. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the embedded resources enabled him/her to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for the students and that the embedded resources aligned with the lesson objectives. Teacher B agreed (3) that the embedded resources were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping accomplish the lesson objectives. Teacher A disagreed (2) with all indicators regarding embedded resources in lesson plan two. Both teachers were able to implement this lesson in just over an hour. Teacher B taught it over multiple days, while Teacher A taught it in one class period.

**Lesson three: Studying.** Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the lesson plan revolved around meaningful objectives, the content of the lesson planned seemed accurate, and the content of the lesson plan seemed thorough. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the lesson plan revolved around clear objectives and that the lesson plan materials were well organized. Teacher A agreed (3) that the lesson plan revolved around clear objectives and that the materials were organized.
Both teachers used the PowerPoint slides during the delivery of lesson three and agreed (3) that they were organized and that they were able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with their students based on the information in the PowerPoint file. They also agreed (3) that the PowerPoint file seemed accurate, thorough, and was clear and easy to understand. Teachers A and B agreed (3) that the PowerPoint slides were relevant to the lesson objective and that the PowerPoint slides were relevant to the plans/needs of their students.

The teachers used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson and Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that he/she did not have to spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach the lesson. Teacher A agreed (3) with that statement. Both teachers agreed (3) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching lesson three of module one.

Students in the classes of both Teacher A and Teacher B used the student notes during lesson three. Both teachers agreed (3) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials and that the content of the student notes was relevant to the needs of their students. Further, they both agreed (3) that the student notes effectively met the needs of their students and that the student notes were an important part of this lesson.

Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the activities were aligned with the lesson objective. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the activities helped to enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals, while Teacher A agreed (3). Both teachers agreed (3) that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective and neither needed to spend much time making the activities engaging for the students. Teacher A agreed (3) and Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the activities in this lesson were meaningful and a good use of students’ time.
Neither teacher used the embedded resources in module one, lesson plan three. Both teachers were able to implement this lesson in just over an hour. Teacher B taught it over multiple days, while Teacher A taught it in one class period.

**Lesson four: Grades & testing.** Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the lesson plan revolved around clear objectives and that the lesson plan materials were well organized. Teacher A agreed (3) with both of these statements. Teachers A and B mutually agreed (3) that the lesson plan revolved around meaningful objectives, that the content of the lesson plan seemed accurate, and that the content of the lesson plan seemed thorough.

Both teachers used the PowerPoint file during the delivery of lesson four. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that he/she was able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with his/her students on the information in the PowerPoint files, while Teacher A only agreed (3) with this statement. They mutually agreed (3) that the PowerPoint content seemed accurate, thorough, and was clear and easy to understand. They concurred (3) that the PowerPoint slides were relevant to the lesson objective and that they were relevant to the plans/needs of their students.

Teacher A and Teacher B used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson on grades and testing. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that not much time was needed to gather extra information to be able to teach the lesson and Teacher A agreed (3). Both teachers agreed (3) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.

The teachers in both classrooms provided their students the student notes during the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objectives, that the format of the student notes effectively met the needs of their students, and that the student notes were an important resource for the lesson. Teacher A agreed (3) with
those three statements and they both agreed (3) that the content of the student notes was relevant to the needs of his/her students.

Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the activities were aligned with the lesson objective, that not much extra time was needed to make the activities engaging for the students, and that the activities in the lesson were meaningful and a good use of the students’ time. Teacher A agreed (3) with those statements. Both teachers agreed (3) that the activities helped to enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals. They also agreed (3) that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective.

Teacher A did not use any embedded resources for lesson plan four, module one. Teacher B utilized the embedded resources and agreed (3) that use of the embedded resources enabled him/her to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for the students. Teacher B also agreed (3) that the embedded resources aligned with the lesson objectives and were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping accomplish the lesson objective. This teacher also agreed (3) that using the embedded resources provided in this lesson helped save time. Teacher B taught it over multiple days, while Teacher A taught it in one class period.

**Teacher module evaluation.** Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the At-A-Glance Module Map for this module was clear and easy to follow and helped them to navigate the curriculum. They also agreed (3) that the modules were comprehensive across topic and that the assessment options in this module were sufficient to check for student understanding of the objectives. In addition to this ordinal, quantitative data, both teachers provided additional qualitative feedback.
While Teacher B did not make any changes to the content or supplementary materials of module one, Teacher A color-coded the information in the PowerPoint slides to help his/her students follow along. This strategy was regularly utilized in his/her classroom and it helped to keep the students engaged. In reflection, though both Teachers A and B found all of the topics in module one to be useful, they believed that the topic most beneficial to their students was the general overview. Teacher B indicated that he/she would likely use the PowerPoint file from this module the most, Teacher A suggested adding a computer-based calendar activity. Both teachers agreed that the lesson-support resources they were least likely to use was the student notes. Teacher B indicated that he/she would like to see videos added to this module as lesson-support resources. Teacher A suggested providing opportunities for the students to create PowerPoints based on provided information. He/she thought this might provide more opportunity for engagement. Final thoughts from the teachers regarding module one included a suggestion to reorganize the content so that, for example, lesson one is paired directly with activity one, instead of all lessons organized together, then all activities grouped together.

**Student module evaluation.**

**Question One: What topic/s in this module do you think will be most useful to you?**

Nearly 40% of the students responded that they believed the lesson on studying was the most beneficial. Students shared their thoughts that studying was not optional at college and understanding how to study was essential to their success. Seven percent of student responses also showed interest in the design of classes and knowing more about instructors at the post-secondary level. Multiple students, approximately 12%, also found the topic of transition binders to be useful and found them to be beneficial in application.
**Question Two: What topic/s in this module do you think will be least useful to you?**

Thirty-five percent of the students responded that they would recommend continued use of all topics. Twelve percent of the respondents did not find the information on grades and testing useful, maintaining that they already do well in those areas in high school. Another 12% responded that the general overview was less than useful because they perceived it as only an outline of ideas. The other student responses were scattered and mostly singular and unrelated to the understanding of the content presented.

**Question Three: What topic/s would you like to see added?** Question three elicited a wide range of responses, with 54% of the respondents not necessarily answering the question as it was intended. Fifteen percent of the students indicated that either they had no suggestions for topics to be added or they were unsure of what could be added to improve the curriculum. Nearly 8% of the respondents expressed additional information on note-taking and how it might look different in college. One student suggested adding a section on faculty support, conveying that understanding the support the faculty provides students with learning differences needs to be understood by secondary students who might be college-bound. Another student suggested adding content information, including strategies, on how to stay on task during a two hour class.

While the other answers were not neatly aligned with the proposed question, they were worthy of consideration as suggestions for improvements to the module. Fifty-five percent of the students who did not directly answer the question requested videos be added to the module. Students expressed interest in seeing actual footage of where students might go on campus for support and what a class looks like in session at a university. Several students have heard that classes can have up to a few hundred students in stadium seating, while other classes might look like their high school classes. They were curious to see the variety of class settings available at
the postsecondary level. Students also wanted to see video of high school classes and college classes back-to-back for comparison purposes. Respondents were curious about different types of groups in college and suggested that video footage be made available to see what different groups look like, specifically, band, ROTC, organized social groups, and academic clubs.

Thirty-seven percent of the students making recommendations expressed interest in video feedback from students with learning differences. The secondary students indicated desire for testimonials from actual college students who might have looked like them in high school. There was also interest in hearing from postsecondary students who were in the military first, then transitioned into a postsecondary educational setting. Finally, the students expressed the need to know what to expect before making the commitment to a postsecondary future.

*Question Four: Was there any part of the module that didn’t apply to you?* Nearly all of the respondents, 88%, felt that all of the topics in module one applied to them in some capacity. Most of the commentary centered around not knowing for sure when it would all be applicable, but they overwhelming recognized that the information would be useful for them as they prepare for transition out of high school. The students who did not find the topics applicable indicated that they would be joining the military immediately upon graduation and did not believe the topics to be transferrable.

*Question Five: What activity did you find most useful?* Sixty-five percent of the respondents indicated that the most useful activities in module one were those involving scheduling and studying. Some of the student were able to create schedules using Google. They were pleased with being able to actually create a schedule and then be able to manipulate it contingent upon their academic needs. The students expressed interest in being able to set a schedule based on classes that were of interest.
Twenty-four percent of the respondents found the guided notes high school vs. college comparison activities useful. They acknowledged that these activities helped reinforce what they were taught by the teacher and were useful guides for future reference. Eleven percent of the students stated that the transition notebook was their favorite and the most useful activity because it helped them organize their notes and it kept the information they compiled from the transition curriculum in one location.

**Question Six: What activity in this module do you think will be least useful to you?**
The majority of the respondents, 71%, agreed that the topics in module one were all useful and that they did not believe any of them to be least useful. On the other hand, 12% did not find the topics grading and testing useful and 12% did not find the general overview useful. Nearly 6% found the topic of studying to be least useful, stating that studying at a postsecondary is not much different than high school and that students should already know when and what to study.

**Question Seven: What could be added to this module to make it more appealing or engaging?** Respondents to question seven provided an array of responses. Twenty-five percent had no suggestions or were unsure of what to suggest. Another 25% suggested taking field trips to university campuses and to move around on the campus as if they were current students. Twenty percent requested more details and information be added to the topics already presented in module one. Another 20% proposed adding videos to enhance the content and show real-life experiences on a college campus. Finally, 20% advised that incorporating hands-on activities and opportunities would make the module more appealing or engaging.

**Question Eight: What questions do you still have about the content covered in this module?** Only two students responded to question eight. One was curious about how to determine what classes students should register for and what configuration should be taken each
semester. For example, at high school students on a block schedule typically do not take four core academic classes. This student wanted more information on how to determine the academic load versus the elective load each semester. The other question was simply, how do professors work?

**Question Nine: How could this module be improved?** Twenty-six percent of the student respondents believed that hands-on activities would improve this module. Twenty-one percent stated that videos and visuals would improve the module, while 16% did not make any suggestions for improvement of the module. Eleven percent of the students would like more detailed explanations for the content in module one, 11% would like the opportunity to take field trips to colleges, and another 11% believe there were too many words and too much talking in the general overview presented at the beginning of the module.

**Comments.** Only a few students provided general comments on module one. Three students in Teacher A’s Academic Support class conceded that the transition curriculum provided useful and helpful information, but that it was taking up too much of their time. One student stated, “I did learn a ton of things about college and it helped me understand what colleges expect.” Two more students echoed that the information was useful and one exclaimed, “This will be fun to learn about college.”

**Module Two: Planning for Academic Success**

**Lesson plan evaluations.**

**Lesson one: Goal setting for college.** In module two, lesson plan one, Teachers A and B agreed (3) that the lesson plan revolved around meaningful objectives, that the content of the lesson planned seemed accurate, organized, and thorough. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the
lesson plan revolved around clear objectives, while Teacher A agreed (3). Teacher A agreed (3) that the lesson plan materials were well organized and Teacher B strongly agreed (4).

Both Teacher A and Teacher B used the PowerPoint file during the delivery of the lesson. They both agreed (3) that the content of the PowerPoint file seemed accurate, thorough, and was clear and easy to understand. Further, they both agreed (3) that the slides were organized, that the content on the slides was relevant to the lesson objective and to the plans/needs of their students. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that he/she was able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with the students based on the information in the PowerPoint slides, while Teacher A agreed (3).

The teachers utilized the teacher notes when teaching lesson plan one. Both agreed (3) that the notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson. They also agreed (3) that they did not need to spend much time gathering information to be able to teach the lesson.

There was a greater degree of discrepancy in the opinions of the teachers regarding student notes. While both teachers provided the student notes during the lesson, Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the content of the student notes was relevant to the needs of the students and that the format of the student notes effectively met the needs of the students. Conversely, Teacher A disagreed (2) with both of those statements. They both agreed (3) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objectives and materials.

Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the activities were aligned with the lesson objective and that the activities helped enable their students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals. They also agreed (3) that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective. The teachers agreed (3) that they did not need to spend
much time to make the activities engaging for my students and that the activities in this lesson were meaningful and a good use of their students’ time.

Both teachers used the embedded resources in module two, lesson plan one. Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the embedded resources enabled them to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for their students. They also agreed (3) that the embedded resources were aligned with the lesson objectives and that having them in the lesson saved time. However, Teacher A disagreed (2) that the embedded resources were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping to accomplish the lesson objectives. Teacher B agreed (3) that they were sufficiently developed to accomplish the lesson objectives.

Teacher A found this lesson to take an exceptionally long time. This lesson was implemented over the period of a couple of days in order to keep the students engaged and on-task. Teacher B implemented this lesson in less than one 90 minute class period, with follow up discussion the next day.

Lesson two: Finding and maintaining an academic and social balance. Both Teacher A and Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the lesson plan for lesson two revolved around clear and meaningful objectives and that the content seemed accurate and thorough. They also strongly agreed (4) that the lesson plan materials were well organized.

Teachers A and B used the PowerPoint file during the delivery of the lesson. Both teachers strongly agreed (4) that the content of the PowerPoint file seemed accurate, thorough, and organized. They strongly agreed (4) that the slides were relevant to the lesson objective and to the plans/needs of their students. Teacher A agreed (3) that he/she was able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with the students based on the information in the PowerPoint files, while Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that engaging and meaningful
conversation took place. Teacher A agreed (3) that the content on the PowerPoint slides was easy to understand and Teacher B strongly agreed (4).

Both teachers used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that not much time was spent gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson and Teacher A agreed (3). Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.

In student notes of lesson plan two, both teachers indicated that their students used the notes during the lesson. They also both strongly agreed (4) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the content of the student notes was relevant to the needs of the students, while Teacher A agreed (3). Both teachers agreed (3) that the format of the notes effectively met the needs of the students and that the student notes were an important resource for this lesson.

Teacher A and Teacher B used the embedded resources when preparing for or teaching lesson two. Both teachers strongly agreed (4) that the embedded resources enabled them to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for their students. They also both strongly agreed (4) that the embedded resources aligned with the lesson objectives, were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping accomplish the lesson objective, and that having them in this lesson saved them time. Each of the teachers spent approximately one hour implementing this lesson. Teacher A commented that the content was good, but the lesson was lengthy.

Lesson three: Academic integrity. Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the lesson plan on academic integrity revolved around clear and meaningful objectives. They also agreed
(3) that the content of the lesson plan seemed accurate and thorough. Teacher B strongly agreed
(4) that the lesson plans were well organized, while Teacher A agreed (3).

Both teachers utilized the PowerPoint file during the delivery of the lesson and agreed (3) that they were able to facilitate engaging and meaningful conversation with their students based on the information in the PowerPoint file. Further, they both agreed (3) that the content of the PowerPoint file seemed accurate and thorough. Both teachers agreed (3) that the content on the PowerPoint slides was clear, easy to understand, relevant to the lesson objective, and well organized.

Teacher A and Teacher B used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Both teachers agreed (3) that they did not need to spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson. They also both agreed (3) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.

Regarding student notes in the academic integrity lesson, Teacher A disagreed (2) that the content of the student notes was relevant to the needs of the students. This teacher also disagreed (2) that the format of the student notes effectively met the needs of the students. Teacher B agreed (3) with both statements. Teacher A and B agreed (3) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials. They also agreed (3) that the student notes were an important resource for this lesson.

Both teachers agreed (3) that the activities in lesson three, module two, were aligned with the lesson objective and that the activities helped enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals. They also agreed (3) that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective and that the activities in this lesson were meaningful and
a good use of students’ time. There was agreement (3) that not much time was needed to make the activities engaging for their students.

Teachers A and B used the embedded resources when preparing for or teaching this lesson. Both teachers agreed (3) that the embedded resources enabled them to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for their students and that the resources were aligned with the lesson objectives. Both teachers agreed (3) that the resources were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping accomplish the lesson objective. Teacher A agreed (3) that having the embedded resources helped save time, while Teacher B strongly agreed (4). Both teachers report that it took forty-five minutes to teach this lesson.

**Teacher module evaluation.** Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the At-A-Glance Module Map for this module was clear and easy to follow and helped them to navigate the curriculum. They also agreed (3) that the modules were comprehensive across topic and that the assessment options in this module were sufficient to check for student understanding of the objectives. In addition to this ordinal, quantitative data, both teachers provided additional qualitative feedback.

While Teacher B delivered the curriculum as it was provided, Teacher A made adjustments to instructional delivery. Teacher A color-coded the information in the PowerPoint slides to help his/her students follow along. Specifically, the teacher had to make changes to the activities about choosing a college major and grade calculation. Due to the inability to secure individual computers or even have access to multiple computers, the students participated in the choosing a college major activity as a whole group. Additionally, the activity requiring students to calculate grades was done as a group activity with teacher proclaimed enriching dialogue between the teacher and the students.
Teacher A and Teacher B agreed that the topic most useful to students in module two was Finding and Maintaining an Academic and Social Balance. While both teachers found all the topics in this module useful and worthy of implementation, Teacher B expressed concern that the students had a difficult time understanding and grasping the idea of academic integrity. The teacher suggested preparing the content on academic integrity at a more fundamental level building it through the module using interactive activities and video presentations. Teacher B shared that he/she would most likely use the PowerPoint presentations again and Teacher A shared that he/she would definitely use the blank schedule again in the future. Teacher A stated that the blank schedule activity was an “eye-opener” for his/her students as they did not realize the difference in scheduling between secondary and postsecondary schooling. Teacher A reports that, in the future, he/she would least likely use the college puzzle and grade calculation lesson-support resources and both teachers agreed they were least likely to use the notes section again. Teacher B suggested adding videos to support the lessons in this module.

The curriculum formatting of module two was supported by both teachers. Teacher A expressed that it was conducive to engaging discussion with his/her students. Teacher B indicated that the formatting made it easy to use and that it allowed for minimal prep time. Teacher A suggested that there was too much information in this module and that it seemed information was “made to fit” in this module when it could have more appropriately been included elsewhere. Teacher B suggested improving the module by adding more hands-on activities, while Teacher A suggested that the module was too long and had too many activities. Teacher A disputed that completing a lesson in thirty minutes is not a reasonable expectation. Further, this teacher indicated that teaching one or two lessons per week, over the course of five days, would allow for more in-depth conversation and student understanding. Final thoughts
from the teachers regarding module two included a suggestion to reorganize the content so that, for example, lesson one is paired directly with activity one, instead of all lessons organized together, then all activities grouped together.

**Student module evaluation.**

*Question One: What topic/s in this module do you think will be most useful to you?*

The majority of respondents, 67%, stated that goal setting, scheduling, and recognizing strengths and weaknesses were the most useful topics in module two. Many of those respondents communicated that goal setting is essential to their success and in becoming what they want to be when they transition out of high school. Further, several expressed that understanding their strengths and weaknesses helped them figure out their priorities in order to better plan for their future. Seventeen percent thought that all of the topics were important and 11% found the content on academic and social balance most useful. Nearly 6% drilled down and expressed the most useful topic in module one was choosing a college major.

*Question Two: What topic/s in this module do you think will be least useful to you?*

Respondents to question two offered a wide array of answers. Sixty-three percent found that all of the topics were useful and applied to them in some way. One student revealed, “All of them made sense to me and my life, actually. I don’t know if there’s one I dread.” Others replied, “I am going to college, so they were all useful.” Eleven percent did not believe the content on academic integrity to be useful. Five percent of the students responding communicated that the daily schedule was least useful. Another 5% found the academic and social balance least useful, sharing that they do not see how they were related. Additionally, 5% believed identifying strengths and weaknesses to be least useful, 5% more believed choosing a major to be least useful. Finally, another 5% proposed that the college puzzle activity was not a useful tool.
**Question Three: What topic/s would you like to see added?** Fifty percent of the surveyed students did not have any input regarding topics to be added or they were unsure of additional topics. Twenty-nine percent were interested in more information about topics already covered in the module or other topics, such as what different universities in the state have to offer, how college students manage their daily life, and how college students living in the dorm plan their typical day. Fourteen percent of the respondents they would like to see field trips added to the curriculum to enhance the existing topics and 7% responded that they would like to see content providing information on off-campus resources, like access to public libraries for college students, internet access, and helpful online resources.

**Question Four: Was there any part of the module that didn’t apply to you?** Seventy-four percent of the respondents communicated that everything in the module applied to them. Twenty-one percent believed that the creating the college schedule, goal setting, and identifying strengths and weaknesses did not apply to them. One respondent replied that he/she does not believe “one way or another . . . this all applies under circumstances that I will go to a university, which is a distinct possibility.”

**Question Five: What activity did you find most useful?** The majority of students, 38%, found the scheduling activity to be the most useful. Specifically, one student declared that “They were all useful, but college scheduling was one of the most useful because it helped me to know what I’ll be doing when I get there.” Others replied that creating the schedule was helpful because having a visual reminder would keep activities prioritized and that the college schedule activity helped them realize how things should work. Choosing a college major was the most useful activity to 13% of students and then 49% of the respondents provided answers that did not fit into a theme or pattern or did not directly answer the question. A few individual responses
included, “Talking about credit hours and roommates was useful to me. I thought as a freshman you could take whatever classes you wanted” and “Maintaining a social balance is important to me. I need a strong social life.”

**Question Six: What activity in this module do you think will be least useful to you?**

Fifty-six percent of the students responded that they did not find any topics in module two least useful. These students stated that all of them were useful. Goal setting was found to be the least useful by 13% of respondents. Other themes or patterns were indiscernible, though a small percentage of students, less than 6% for each response, commented that creating a weekly schedule, academic integrity, and social balance were not useful topics.

**Question Seven: What could be added to this module to make it more appealing or engaging?** While 19% of respondents thought that the module was fine without anything additional, 24% of the students expressed the desire to have campus tours or field trips integrated into the transition curriculum. Fourteen percent shared they would like additional information on playing sports at the university level and another 14% would like to have guest speakers visit their secondary classroom to speak directly to the topics covered in the module. More hands-on activities were suggested by 10% of the respondents and another 10% suggested adding videos of actual college experiences that jive with the information provided in the lessons and activities. Other suggestions included providing more details about dorm living and how the dorm set up works.

**Question Eight: What questions do you still have about the content covered in this module?** Three students have additional questions about the content covered in this module:

1. Does everything at college need to be my responsibility?

2. Is there any special help in larger schools and what does that help look like?
3. Can we have more examples of freshman class schedules?

**Question Nine: How could this module be improved?** Student respondents largely agreed, at 40%, that videos would improve the module on Planning for Academic Success. Comments included providing videos of interviews with students with learning differences who were at different stages of their college career and making the information more realistic by providing actual visuals. Twenty-seven percent of the students agreed that providing more information, including more detailed descriptions, in the lessons throughout the module would be helpful. Thirteen percent stated that additional hands-on activities would improve the module, while 20% found the module to be acceptable the way it was written.

**Comments.** Only a few students provided additional comments about module two. One student asserted that he/she “loved the activities.” Another contended that participating in the delivery of the transition curriculum was taking time away from the work that had to be done for another class. Finally, a third student expressed “great module!”

**Module Three: Technology**

**Lesson plan evaluations.**

**Lesson one: Introduction to technology.** Both Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the lesson plans revolved around clear objectives and the lesson plan materials were well organized. They also agreed (3) that the content of the lesson plans seemed accurate and thorough. Teacher A agreed (3) that the lesson plan objectives were meaningful, while Teacher B strongly agreed (4).

Teacher A and B used the PowerPoint file during delivery of the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that he/she was able to facilitate meaningful conversation with students based on the information in the PowerPoint file, while Teacher A agreed (3). Both teachers agreed (3)
that the content of the PowerPoint file seemed thorough, accurate, and easy to understand. They also agreed (3) that the content on the PowerPoint slides was relevant to the lesson objectives and that the content was relevant to the plans/needs of their students.

The teachers used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Teacher A agreed (3) that not much time was spent gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson, while Teacher B strongly agreed (4) with this statement. Both teachers agreed (3) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.

The students of both teachers utilized the student notes for this lesson. Both teachers agreed (3) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objectives and materials. They also agreed (3) that the content of the student notes were relevant to the needs of their students and that the student notes effectively met the needs of their students. Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the student notes were an important resource for this lesson.

Regarding the activities in lesson one of module three, the teachers agreed (3) that the activities were aligned with the lesson objectives. The teachers also agreed (3) that the activities helped enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals and that the activities helped them to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective. Teacher A agreed (3) that not much time was spent to make the activities engaging for the students, while Teacher B strongly agreed (4). Both teachers agreed (3) that the activities in this lesson were meaningful and a good use of their students’ time.

Both teachers used the embedded resources when preparing for or teaching this lesson. Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the embedded resources enabled them to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for their students. They also agreed (3) that the embedded resources were aligned with the lesson objectives and that they were
sufficiently thorough and well-developed for help them accomplish the lesson objectives. Teacher A and Teacher B also agreed (3) that having the embedded resources in this lesson saved them time. Both teachers report that it took forty-five minutes to teach this lesson.

**Lesson two: Postsecondary technology tools for learning.** Teacher A and Teacher B both agreed (3) that lesson plan two revolved around clear and meaningful objectives. The teachers also agreed (3) that the materials were well organized and that the content seemed accurate. Teacher A agreed (3) that the content of the lesson plan seemed thorough, while Teacher B strongly agreed (4).

The PowerPoint file was used by both teachers during the delivery of the lesson on postsecondary technology tools for learning and both teachers agreed (3) that the slides were well organized. Teacher A agreed (3) that he/she was able to facilitate engaging and meaningful conversation with his/her students based on the information in the PowerPoint slides, while Teacher B strongly agreed (4). Both teachers agreed (3) that the content of the PowerPoint file seemed accurate and thorough. They also both agreed (3) that the PowerPoint slides were clear, easy to understand, and relevant to the lesson objective. Teachers A and B agreed (3) that the slides were relevant to the plans/needs of their students.

Teacher A and Teacher B used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Teacher A agreed (3) that he/she did not need to spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson, while Teacher B strongly agreed (4). Both teachers agreed (3) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.

The students of both teachers used the student notes during the lesson. Both teachers agreed (3) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objectives and materials. They also agreed (3) that the content of the notes was relevant to the needs of their students and
that the format of the student notes effectively met the needs of their students. Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the student notes were an important resource for this lesson.

The teachers agreed (3) that the activities in lesson two, module three, were aligned with the lesson objectives and that the activities helped to enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals. The teachers concurred (3) that the activities helped them to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective and that not much time was needed to make the activities engaging for their students. Both teachers agreed (3) that the activities in this lesson were meaningful and a good use of students' time.

Teacher A and Teacher B used the embedded resources when preparing for or teaching this lesson. Both teachers were in agreement (3) that the embedded resources enabled them to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for their students. They also agreed (3) that the embedded resources aligned with the lesson objectives and were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping them accomplish the lesson objectives. The teachers agreed (3) that having the embedded resources in this lesson saved them time. The teachers reported that it took forty-five to sixty minutes to teach this lesson.

**Lesson three: Online learning.** Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the content of the online learning lesson plans seemed accurate and thorough. They agreed (3) that the lesson plans revolved around clear and meaningful objectives and that the lesson plan materials was well organized.

Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that he/she was able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with their students based on the information in the PowerPoint slides, that the content of the PowerPoint file seemed thorough and that the slides were clear and easy to understand. Both teachers agreed (3) that the file seemed accurate and
that the slides were relevant to the lesson objectives. They also agreed (3) that the slides were relevant to the plans/needs of their students. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the slides were well organized and Teacher A agreed (3).

Both of the teachers used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the online learning lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson and Teacher A agreed (3). The teachers agreed (3) that they did not need to spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach the lesson.

Teacher A and Teacher B indicated that their students utilized the student notes in lesson three of module three. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objectives and materials and that the content was relevant to the needs of the students. Teacher A agreed (3) with those statements. Teacher A agreed (3), while Teacher B strongly agreed (4), that the format of the student notes effectively met the needs of the students and that the student notes were an important part of the lesson.

Embedded resources were used by both teachers when preparing for or teaching the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the embedded resources were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping accomplish the lesson objectives. Both teachers agreed (3) that the embedded resources enabled them to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for their students and that the resources aligned with the lesson objectives. They also agreed (3) that having the embedded resources in this lesson saved them time. Both teachers were able to implement this lesson in just over an hour. Teacher B taught the lesson over multiple days, while Teacher A taught it in one class period.

**Lesson four: Using technology responsibly.** Both teachers agreed (3) that the lesson plan in lesson four of module three revolved around clear and meaningful objectives and that the
content seemed accurate and thorough. They also agreed (3) that the lesson plan materials were well organized.

Teachers A and B both used the PowerPoint file during the delivery of the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that they were able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with their students based on the information in the PowerPoint files. The teachers both agreed (3) that the file seemed accurate and thorough and that the slides were well organized. They also agreed (3) that the PowerPoint slides were clear and easy to understand, relevant to the lesson objective, and relevant to the plans/needs of their students.

The teachers reported using the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson on using technology responsibly. They both agreed (3) that they did not spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching the lesson, while Teacher A agreed (3).

Both teachers reported that their students used the student notes during the lesson. They agreed (3) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials and that the content was relevant to the needs of their students. Further, both Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the format of the notes effectively met the needs of their students and that the notes were an important resource for the lesson.

Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the activities were aligned with the lesson objective and that the activities helped enable student to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals. They also agreed (3) that the activities helped them assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective. Additionally, the teachers agreed (3) that they did not
need to spend much time to make the activities engaging for their students. Both agreed (3) that the activities in this lesson were meaningful and a good use of their students’ time.

The embedded resources for lesson four of module three were used by both teachers. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the embedded resources enabled them to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for their students. They both agreed (3) that the embedded resources aligned with the lesson objective and that they were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping them accomplish the lesson objective. Both teachers agreed (3) that having the embedded resources in this lesson saved them time. Teacher A reported that teaching this lesson took two full class periods, or approximately 180 minutes, while Teacher B reported that it took approximately 90 minutes.

**Teacher module evaluation.** Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the At-A-Glance Module Map for this module was clear and easy to follow and helped them to navigate the curriculum. They also agreed (3) that the modules were comprehensive across topic and that the assessment options in this module were sufficient to check for student understanding of the objectives. In addition to this ordinal, quantitative data, both teachers provided additional qualitative feedback.

While Teacher B did not make changes to the content or supplementary materials of module three, Teacher A color-coded the information in the PowerPoint slides to help his/her students follow along. This strategy was routinely used in his/her classroom and was helpful in keeping the students engaged. In reflection, though both Teacher A and Teacher B found most of the topics in this module to be helpful, they believed that the most useful topic was using technology responsibly. Both teachers reported that the keyboarding and formatting topics were
too basic for students in upper secondary, expressing that those skills were taught much earlier in their schooling. Teacher A suggested adding more on the topic of computer safety.

Teacher A would likely use the social networking information provided in the technology module again and Teacher B plans to use the typing counter. Both teachers agreed that the lesson-support resources that they were least likely to use was the student notes. Teacher B suggested adding videos, examples, and testimonies to this module. In review of the curriculum formatting, Teacher B liked the pace and would not suggest changes in that area. Teacher A suggested improving this module by updating it and deleting parts that were no longer applicable or were antiquated based on the instruction being provided in the K-12 setting. Further, he/she indicated that changes in technology happen so fast, that keeping up with current trends and application should be an area of continued focus in making adjustments to this particular module of the curriculum. Final thoughts from the teachers regarding module three included a suggestion to reorganize the content so that, for example, lesson one is paired directly with activity one, instead of all lessons organized together, then all activities grouped together.

**Student module evaluation.**

*Question One: What topic/s in this module do you think will be most useful to you?*

Online learning and using technology responsibly were the most useful topics to 72% of the respondents. Twenty-eight percent identified the typing test activity in the basic typing skills lesson as the most important topic. Students explained that efficient typing is relative to work productivity and is, therefore, important.

*Question Two: What topic/s in this module do you think will be least useful to you?*

Most of the students, nearly 56%, believed all of the content in module three to be useful. Thirty-one percent of the respondents found that the basic typing skills topic, specifically the
formatting and typing activities, were least useful. Another 13% shared that using technology responsibly was least useful.

**Question Three: What topic/s would you like to see added?** Nearly 62% maintained that the modules covered all of the topics and they could not think of others to add. One student stated, “I don’t know the possibilities.” Adding information on technology tools was suggested by 23% of students, with comments regarding how to use iPads for online classes and Smart Boards for interactive lessons in the postsecondary setting. Eight percent of students requested additional practice using their typing skills, while 8% were interested in content about online testing at the postsecondary level.

**Question Four: Was there any part of the module that didn’t apply to you?** Eighty-six percent of the students who responded to the survey affirmed that all parts of module three applied to them. The remaining 14% expressed that information on assistive technology did not apply to them.

**Question Five: What activity did you find most useful?** The most useful activity for 43% of the respondents was the typing activity in lesson one. The social networking activity was the most useful for 36% of the students. Twenty-one percent of the students found all of the activities to be useful in module three.

**Question Six: What activity in this module do you think will be least useful to you?** The topic found to be least useful, at 27%, was the typing test in lesson one. Students replied that knowing their typing speed was not useful, that they avoid computers, and that typing speed does not matter. Thirteen percent of respondents found the social networking activities were not useful, while 60% of respondents believed that all of the activities were useful and could not identify any that would not benefit them.
**Question Seven: What could be added to this module to make it more appealing or engaging?** Fifty-five percent of the students would like to see more activities added to this module. Ideas they shared included explaining different ways to organize and categorize pages and files electronically and visual or video representation of the types of technology used by both instructors and students around a college campus. Nine percent would like to have a guest speaker visit their secondary classroom to talk about using technology responsibly and postsecondary tools for online learning. Thirty-six percent did not have a suggestion for making this module more appealing or engaging.

**Question Eight: What questions do you still have about the content covered in this module?** Only one student had a lingering question and it was about online test taking at the postsecondary level. This student was curious about the frequency of online testing and what devices were used to take a test on a college campus.

**Question Nine: How could this module be improved?** Expanding on existing technology topics was suggested by 30% of the student respondents. Another 30% recommended incorporating additional hands-on activities. Specifically, one respondent stated that he/she would like to experience using the actual devices instead of just talking about them. Adding videos of actual use and/or demonstrations of how to use various forms of technology from current college students was mentioned by 30% as a way the module could be improved. Finally, 10% of respondents would like to see a guest speaker who could speak to the topics included in the technology module.

**Comments.** Students commented that they “really liked this module” and that it was a “great use of time!”
Module Four: College Resources

Lesson plan evaluations.

Lesson one: Campus resource. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the first lesson plan in module four revolved around clear objectives, that the content of the lesson plan seemed thorough, and that the lesson plan materials were well organized. Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the lesson plan revolved around meaningful objectives and that the content of the lesson plan seemed accurate.

Both teachers used the PowerPoint file during the delivery of the lesson. Teacher B strongly agrees (4) and Teacher A agrees (3) that the content of the PowerPoint slides was clear and easy to understand and that the content was relevant to the lesson objective. The teachers agree (3) that they were able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with their students based on the information in the PowerPoint files and that the content seemed accurate and thorough. They also agreed (3) that the slides were well organized and that the content was relevant to the plans/needs of their students.

Teacher A and Teacher B used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. They both agreed (3) that they did not need to spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson. While Teacher A agreed (3) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson, Teacher B disagreed (2).

Teacher A’s students did not use the student notes in lesson one of module four. The teacher reports the notes were too time consuming. However, Teacher B’s students did utilize the student notes. Teacher B agreed (3) that the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials, that the content was relevant for the students, and that the student notes effectively
met the needs of the students. Teacher B also agreed (3) that the student notes were an important resource for this lesson.

Teacher A attempted to use the embedded resources for lesson one, module four, but reported problems with the links. However, Teacher B was able to access the embedded resources and agreed (3) that they enabled him/her to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for the students and that having them in this lesson saved time. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the embedded resources aligned with the lesson objectives and that they were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping accomplish the lesson objectives. Teacher A reported that it took approximately 45 minutes to complete this lesson and Teacher B reported that the lesson was taught over the course of multiple class periods.

**Lesson two: The college community.** Both Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the lesson plan revolved around clear and meaningful objectives. They also agreed (3) that the content of lesson plan two seemed accurate and thorough. Further, they agreed (3) that the lesson plan materials were well organized.

Teacher A and Teacher B used the PowerPoint file during the delivery of the second lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that they were able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with their students based on the information in the PowerPoint file and that the content on the slides was clear and easy to understand. Both teachers agreed (3) that the file content seemed accurate and thorough and that the content on the slides was relevant to the lesson objective. Teachers A and B agreed (3) that the content on the PowerPoint slides was relevant to the plans/needs of their students and that the slides were well organized.
Both participating teachers used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that they did not need to spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson. The teachers agreed (3) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching the lesson on the college community.

Student notes were not used by Teacher A because he/she reported them to be too time consuming. Teacher B, however, utilized the notes with his/her students and agreed (3) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials. Teacher B also agreed (3) that the content of the student notes was relevant to the needs of the student, that the format of the student notes effectively met the needs of the students, and that the student notes were an important resource for this lesson.

Teacher A and Teacher B agree (3) that the activities in the college community lesson were aligned with the lesson objective and that they helped enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals. They also agreed (3) that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objectives. The teachers agreed (3) that they did not need to spend much time to make the activities engaging for their students. Both agreed (3) that the activities in this lesson were meaningful and a good use of their students’ time.

Teacher A had difficulty accessing several of the embedded resources in lesson two, module four, but Teacher B was able to access and use all of them. Of those that Teacher A was able to access, he/she agreed (3) with Teacher B that they enabled them to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for their students. They also agreed (3) that the embedded resources were aligned with the lesson objectives, that they were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping accomplish the lesson objectives, and that having them helped
save time. Teacher A provided feedback that this lesson was excessively computer dependent, which caused a problem in the delivery. Teacher A reported that it took approximately forty-five minutes to teach this lesson, while Teacher B reported it took a little more than sixty minutes.

**Lesson three: Disability support.** Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that lesson plan three was well organized and revolved around clear and meaningful objectives. The teachers agreed (3) that the content of the lesson plan seemed accurate and thorough.

Both teachers report using the PowerPoint file during the delivery of the disability support lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that they were able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with their students based on the information in the PowerPoint file and that the PowerPoint slides were well organized. The teachers agreed (3) that the PowerPoint content seemed accurate, thorough, and relevant to the lesson objective. The teachers also agreed (3) that the slides were easy to understand and relevant to the plans/needs of their students.

The teachers utilized the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that they did not need to spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson. They both agreed (3) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.

Neither Teacher A nor Teacher B utilized the student notes in lesson three of module four. Teacher A reported that the notes were too time consuming. Teacher B did not provide any feedback.

Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the activities were aligned with the lesson objective, that the activities helped them to enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to
their personal goals, and that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective. They also agreed (3) that not much time was spent to make the activities engaging for the students. They agreed (3) that the activities in the disability support lesson were meaningful and a good use of their students’ time.

Teacher A attempted to use the embedded resources in lesson three, but experienced difficulty in accessing them. Teacher B used the embedded resources, but did not provide any additional feedback. It took both teachers approximately thirty-five minutes to deliver this lesson.

**Lesson four: Support services in college.** Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the lesson plan on support services in college revolved around clear and meaningful objectives and the lesson plan materials were well organized. Both teachers agreed (3) that the content of the lesson plan seemed accurate and thorough.

Both teachers used the PowerPoint file during the delivery of the lesson plan. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that he/she was able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with the students based on the information in the PowerPoint file, while Teacher A agreed (3). Both teachers agreed (3) that the content in the file seemed accurate and thorough and that the slides were clear and easy to understand. They also agreed (3) that the content on the PowerPoint slides was relevant to the lesson objective and to the plans/needs of their students.

Teacher A and Teacher B both utilized the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. The teachers each reported agreement (3) that not much time was spent gathering extra information in order to teach this lesson. They agreed (3) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.
Teacher A did not use the student notes with his/her students in lesson four of module four. The teacher reported the student notes to be too time consuming. There is no evidence that Teacher B utilized the notes in this lesson and feedback was not provided.

Regarding the activities in lesson four, both teachers agree (3) that they were aligned with the lesson objective, that they helped enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals, and they helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective. Both teachers agreed (3) that not much time was spent to make the activities engaging for the students and they felt the activities in this lesson were meaningful and a good use of their students’ time.

Teacher A and Teacher B utilized the embedded resources and agreed (3) that they enabled them to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, and current for their students. Both teachers agreed (3) that the resources aligned with the lesson objectives and that they were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping accomplish the lesson objectives. Teacher A agreed (3) that having the embedded resources in this lesson saved time, while no response was recorded for Teacher B. It is unclear how long it took Teacher A and Teacher B to implement this lesson.

**Teacher module evaluation.** Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the At-A-Glance Module Map for this module was clear and easy to follow and helped them to navigate the curriculum. They also agreed (3) that the modules were comprehensive across topic and that the assessment options in this module were sufficient to check for student understanding of the objectives. In addition to this ordinal, quantitative data, both teachers provided additional qualitative feedback.

Both teachers made changes to the content or supplementary materials of module four. Teacher A discontinued use of the student notes, indicating they were too time consuming and
detracted from the content in the curriculum. Teacher A also continued to color-code and print the PowerPoint presentations and used those instead of the student notes. Teacher B added targeted discussion of the students’ Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and provided his/her students with additional information on how to be a self-advocate. In reflection, though both teachers found all of the topics in this module to be useful, Teacher A thought the information provided about the directory would be most useful for seniors. The topics they were most likely to use again were the IEP review and advocating for IEP support.

Teacher B indicated that he/she would likely use the disability support lesson-support resources from module four and was least likely to use the college community lesson-support resources. Teacher B suggested including a video of college students in action and/or college students giving video-recorded testimonials. Both teachers agreed that this was, overall, a good module and recommended no changes to the curricular format. Final thoughts from the teachers regarding module four included a suggestion to reorganize the content, pairing the lesson with the activity, and including testimony or examples of how college students with learning differences function in each of the provided topics.

**Student module evaluation.**

*Question One: What topic/s in this module do you think will be most useful to you?*

Nearly 38% of student respondents shared that they found the topic of campus resources the most useful. Another 38% believed the topic of disability services to be most useful. Support services was the most useful topic to 19% and 6% believed all topics to be equally important. Several students expressed disability services as the most important topic, with one stating, “Using disability services and my IEP will help me get going in school” and other stating, “Disability services will help me learn how to use my IEP in class.”
**Question Two: What topic/s in this module do you think will be least useful to you?**

Forty-five percent of the respondents believed that all of the topics in the fourth module were useful. Another 45% believe the college community topic to be least useful. Ten percent stated that the disability services topic was least useful, with one student stating that “the parts (of that section) that could be useful are available in other sections.”

**Question Three: What topic/s would you like to see added?** The majority of respondents, 50%, did not have suggestions for additional topics. Twenty-five percent would like to see more content on social opportunities, specifically, more information on Greek life. Thirteen percent recommended expanding on the topic of disability services and another 13% suggested adding videos to provide actual footage of students accessing college resources on campus.

**Question Four: Was there any part of the module that didn’t apply to you?** Sixty-seven percent of the students found that all of the topics applied to them and 33% felt like dorm living was irrelevant to their postsecondary goals. Those students were planning to attend a local community college and do not anticipate transferring to a four year program. On-campus living will not be an option for them and, therefore, they felt the content was not applicable.

**Question Five: What activity did you find most useful?** Campus resource activities were the most useful to 64% of the students. The remaining 36% found all of the activities in module four to be useful.

**Question Six: What activity in this module do you think will be least useful to you?**

The majority of students, 66%, found all of the activities useful, while 17% believed that the What Does This Mean For Me activity was not useful. Another 17% felt that the college community activities were least useful.
Question Seven: What could be added to this module to make it more appealing or engaging? Forty percent of the respondents suggested adding hands-on activities to the module to make it more appealing. Another 40% suggested that adding video of real-life experiences would make the content more engaging and memorable. Field trips to colleges and guest speakers were suggested by 10%.

Question Eight: What questions do you still have about the content covered in this module? A few students were still unclear about how to actually talk to professors about having an IEP.

Question Nine: How could this module be improved? Providing more detailed information about the college resources outlined in the module was recommended by 40% of the student respondents. Twenty percent suggested adding field trips and another 20% suggested incorporating videos. Keeping the module intact, with no adjustments, was endorsed by 20% of the students.

Module Five: Developing and Maintaining Healthy Routines

Lesson plan evaluations.

Lesson one: Personal wellness. Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the lesson plan on personal wellness revolved around clear and meaningful objectives. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the lesson plan materials were well organized. They agreed (3) that the lesson plan seemed accurate and thorough.

Both of the participating teachers used the PowerPoint file during the delivery of the lesson, agreeing (3) that the slides were well organized. Teacher A agreed (3) and Teacher B disagreed (2) that they were able to facilitate engaging and meaningful conversation with their students on the information in the PowerPoint file. They agreed (3) that the content of the slides
was clear and easy to understand and relevant to the lesson objective and to the plans/needs of their students.

The teachers reported using the teacher notes in lesson one of module five in preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that not much time was needed to gather extra information. Teacher A agreed (3) and Teacher B disagreed (2) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.

Teacher A did not utilize the student notes in lesson one of module five. He/she reported that the student notes were too time consuming. There is no evidence in the data collected that Teacher B used the student notes and no feedback was provided.

Both teachers agreed (3) that the personal wellness activities were aligned with the lesson objectives and that they helped enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals. They also agreed (3) that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective and that they did not have to spend much time to make the activities engaging for their students. Both teachers agreed (3) that the activities in lesson one of module five were meaningful and a good use of their students’ time.

Teacher A had difficulty accessing the embedded resources provided in the personal wellness lesson. For the embedded resources that Teacher A was able to use, he/she agreed (3) that they enabled him/her to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for the students and that the resources were aligned with the lesson objectives. Teacher A also agreed (3) that the embedded resources were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping accomplish the lesson objectives. This teacher agreed (3) that having the embedded resources in this lesson saved time, though they were not all accessible. There is no evidence of
use nor is there feedback regarding embedded resources from Teacher B. Teacher A provided feedback that he/she really liked the stress management topic in the personal wellness lesson. There is no indication from either participating teacher as to how long it took to implement this lesson.

**Lesson two: Campus safety.** Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the lesson plan revolved around the clear and meaningful objectives and that the content of the plans seemed accurate and thorough. They both agreed (3) that the lesson plan materials were well organized.

Both participating teachers utilized the PowerPoint file during the delivery of the lesson and agreed (3) that the slides were well organized. Teacher A agreed (3) and Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that they were able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with their students based on the information in the PowerPoint file. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the content of the PowerPoint file seemed accurate and thorough, while Teacher A agreed (3). Teachers A and B agreed (3) that the PowerPoint slides were easy to understand and relevant to the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the slides were relevant to the plans/needs of their students.

Teacher A and Teacher B used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that they did not spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson. Both teachers agreed (3) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching the lesson on campus safety.

Teacher A did not provide the student notes to the students, commenting that the notes were too time consuming. Teacher B agreed (3) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials, that the content of the notes was relevant to the needs of
the students, and that the student notes were an important resource for this lesson. However, Teacher B disagreed (2) that the format of the notes effectively met the needs of the students.

Teacher A agreed (3) and Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the activities in lesson two of module five were aligned with the lesson objective. Teacher A agreed (3) that the activities helped enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals, while Teacher B disagreed (2). Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the activities helped assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective and that not much extra time was spent to make the activities engaging for the students, while Teacher A agreed (3). The teachers were in agreement (3) that the activities in the lesson were meaningful and a good use of their students’ time.

Teacher A was unsuccessful using the embedded resources in the campus safety lesson due to site-based technology constraints. However, Teacher B used the embedded resources when preparing for or teaching the lesson and strongly agreed (4) that they were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping accomplish the lesson objectives and that having them in this lesson saved time. Teacher B agreed (3) that the embedded resources enabled him/her to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for the students, but disagreed (2) that the embedded resources aligned with the lesson objectives. Teacher A did not indicate how much time it took to implement this lesson, but Teacher B reports completing lesson two in about 120 minutes.

**Teacher module evaluation.** Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the At-A-Glance Module Map for this module was clear and easy to follow and helped them to navigate the curriculum. Teacher B also strongly agreed (4) that the modules were comprehensive across topic and that the assessment options in this module were sufficient to
check for student understanding of the objectives, while Teacher A agreed (3). In addition to this ordinal, quantitative data, both teachers provided additional qualitative feedback.

While Teacher B did not make any changes to the content or supplementary materials of module five, Teacher A color-coded the information in the PowerPoint slides and, after providing copies to the students, used those in lieu of the student notes. Teacher A expressed that the student notes provided in the curriculum were too time consuming. In reflection, the teachers were satisfied with all of the module topics, but found stress management and campus safety to be the most useful to the students. Teacher A believed that basic cooking would be the least useful to students. The teachers agreed that the videos were the most favored lesson-support resources in this module and Teacher B suggested adding more. Teacher A indicated that he/she would continue to use the campus safety lesson-support resources. Teacher B was very satisfied with this lesson and commented that the campus safety video was well done. Both teachers appreciated the curriculum formatting and the ease of use of the curriculum. Final thoughts from the teachers regarding module five included reorganizing the content so that the lesson and corresponding activity were together and adjusting implementation based on the design and purpose of the class where the curriculum is being taught.

**Student module evaluation.**

*Question One: What topic/s in this module do you think will be most useful to you?*

One hundred percent of the respondents found the topic of campus safety was the most useful in module five of the transition curriculum.

*Question Two: What topic/s in this module do you think will be least useful to you?*

Eighty percent of the respondents perceived all of the topics covered in this module were useful. Nearly 30% of those who perceived all of the information useful expressed that they no longer
use their social media accounts. Twenty percent communicated that personal wellness was not as useful as campus safety.

**Question Three: What topic/s would you like to see added?** Topics that the students wanted to see added included more information on public safety (32%), more information about online crimes impacting college students (7%), and more information on different ways to deal with personal wellness (7%). Fifty-four percent of the students stated that the module was good as written and it did not need additional topics.

**Question Four: Was there any part of the module that didn’t apply to you?** Seventy-one percent of the respondents agreed that all of the topics in the module applied to them. Twenty-one percent believed that the social media content in the campus safety lesson did not apply to them and 8% of the students believed the personal wellness content to be common sense.

**Question Five: What activity did you find most useful?** The respondents found the campus safety videos to be the most useful, with 77% agreeing. Students expressed that the videos were engaging and easy to understand. Fifteen percent communicated that all of the activities were equally useful and 8% agreed that the personal wellness activities were useful.

**Question Six: What activity in this module do you think will be least useful to you?** Eighty-six percent of the respondents found all of the activities in module five useful. Fourteen percent found the personal wellness activities least useful, reporting the activities consisted of worksheets which lacked engaging features.

**Question Seven: What could be added to this module to make it more appealing or engaging?** Sixty-three percent of the students surveyed stated that the module was appealing
and engaging as written. More time on each topic was recommended by 25% of the respondents and more videos were suggested by 12% of respondents.

**Question Eight: What questions do you still have about the content covered in this module?** Only one additional question was asked: What are postsecondary schools doing to become more secure to physical and online threats?

**Question Nine: How could this module be improved?** Fifty percent of the students recommended adding videos and testimonials of real-life experiences. Incorporating guest speakers was suggested by 12% of the students and more detailed and engaging information on personal wellness was recommended by 38% of the students.

**Comments.** Students agreed that they “loved this module” and that the information was “relevant to this day and age.” One student reported that the student notes take too much time.

**Module Six: Finances**

**Lesson plan evaluations.**

**Lesson one: Introduction to college financial topics.** Teacher B strongly agreed (4), while Teacher A agreed (3), that the first lesson plan of module six revolved around clear and meaningful objectives and that the content seemed accurate and thorough. The teachers were in agreement (3) that the lesson plan was well organized.

Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that they were able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with the students based on the information in the PowerPoint file, that the content seemed accurate, and that the content was relevant to the lesson objectives. The teachers agreed (3) that the content of the PowerPoint file seemed thorough, clear, and easy to understand. Both teachers were also in agreement (3) that the content of the
PowerPoint slides was relevant to the plans/needs of their students and that the slides were well organized.

Both participating teachers used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching lesson one, **Introduction to College Financial Tips**. Teacher B strongly agreed (4), while Teacher A agreed (3), that they did not need to spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson. Similarly, Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson and Teacher A agreed (3).

Students were provided the students notes by both teachers for this lesson, however, Teacher A indicated that the notes were quickly abandoned by the students and he/she, in turn, provided print-outs of the PowerPoint presentations. The teachers agreed (3) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials. Teacher B agreed (3) that the content of the notes was relevant to the needs of the students, while Teacher A disagreed (2). Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the format of the notes effectively met the needs of the students and that the student notes were an important resource for the lesson. Teacher A disagreed (2) with both of those statements and asserted that the notes were too time consuming and using them resulted in minimal student engagement.

Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the activities in lesson one were aligned with the lesson objective and that they helped enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals. Likewise, Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that they did not need to spend much time to make the activities engaging for their students and that the activities in the lesson were meaningful and a good use of their students’ time. They both agreed (3) that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective.
Teacher A attempted to use the embedded resources and had difficulty accessing them. He/she reported that the links did not consistently work and disagreed (2) that they make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for the students. Further, Teacher A disagreed (2) that the embedded resources aligned with the lesson objectives, were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping accomplish the lesson objectives, and that they saved time. Conversely, Teacher B did not have difficulty utilizing the embedded resources and agreed (3) that they were engaging, thorough, relevant, and aligned with lesson objectives. Teacher B agreed (3) that having the embedded resources available saved time. Teacher A spent thirty minutes teaching this lesson, while Teacher B spent a full week covering the three lessons in module six.

**Lesson two: Creating a budget.** The teachers agreed (3) that the lesson plans were well organized and thorough. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the lesson plans revolved around clear and meaningful objectives. They both agreed (3) that the lesson plans the lesson plan seemed accurate.

Both participating teachers utilized the PowerPoint file in teaching lesson two of module six. Teacher B strongly agreed (4), while Teacher A agreed (3), that they were able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with their students based on the information in the PowerPoint file. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the PowerPoint slides were relevant to the plans/needs of the students and were well organized, Teacher A agreed (3). The teachers agreed (3) that the content in the PowerPoint file seemed accurate, thorough, clear and easy to understand, and was relevant to the lesson objective.

Teacher A and Teacher B both used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Both agreed (3) that they didn’t need to spend much time gathering extra information.
to be able to teach this lesson. They also agreed (3) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.

Teacher A expressed that the student notes were not utilized in the delivery of this lesson, but that he/she agreed (3) with Teacher B that the content of the notes was aligned with the lesson objective and materials. Teacher A disagreed (2) that the content was relevant to the needs of the students, that the format of the notes effectively met the needs of the students, and that the notes were an important resource for this lesson. Teacher B, however, used the student notes and strongly agreed (4) that the format of the student notes effectively met the needs of the students and that the notes were an important resource for this lesson. Teacher B agreed (3) that the content of the notes was relevant to the needs of the students.

Teacher B strongly agreed (4), while Teacher A agreed (3), that the activities in lesson two were aligned with the lesson objective, that they helped enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals, and that they did not spend much time to make activities engaging for their students. They agreed (3) that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective. Teacher B felt strong (4) that the activities in the lesson were meaningful and a good use of the students’ time, while Teacher A agreed (3).

Teacher A attempted to use the embedded resources and had difficulty accessing them. He/she reported that the links did not consistently work and disagreed (2) that they make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for the students. Further, Teacher A disagreed (2) that the embedded resources aligned with the lesson objectives, were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping accomplish the lesson objectives, and that they saved time. Conversely, Teacher B did not have difficulty utilizing the embedded resources and agreed (3) that they were engaging, thorough, relevant, and aligned with lesson objectives. Teacher B
agreed (3) that having the embedded resources available saved time. Teacher A spent thirty minutes teaching this lesson, while Teacher B spent a full week covering the three lessons in module six.

**Lesson three: Using credit wisely.** Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that that content of the Creating a Budget lesson plan seemed accurate and thorough. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the lesson plan revolved around clear and meaningful objectives and that the materials were well organized. Teacher A agreed (3).

Both participating teachers used the PowerPoint file during the delivery of the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4), while Teacher A agreed (3), that they were able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with their students based on the information in the PowerPoint file, that the file was thorough, and that it was well organized. Teacher A agreed (3) with Teacher B that the content of the file seemed accurate, that the slides were easy to understand, and that the information was relevant to the lesson objectives. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the content of the PowerPoint slides was relevant to the plans/needs of the students and Teacher A agreed (3).

The teachers utilized the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that not much time was needed to gather extra information to be able to teach this lesson. They both agreed (3) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.

Teacher B utilized the student notes when teaching lesson three of module six, but Teacher A did not use them. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the student notes were an important resource for this lesson and that the format of the student notes effectively met the needs of the students. Teacher B agreed (3) that the content of the student notes aligned with the
lesson objective and materials and that the content was relevant to the needs of the students. Though Teacher A did not utilize the student notes, he/she disagreed (2) that the content was aligned with the objective and materials, that the content was relevant to the needs of the students, and that the format was effective in meeting the needs. Teacher A also disagreed (2) that the student notes were an important resource for this lesson.

It was agreed (3) by both teachers that the activities in lesson three helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objectives. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the activities aligned with the lesson objectives, that activities helped enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals, and that the activities in this lesson were meaningful and a good use of their students’ time. Teacher A agreed (3). Teacher A agreed (3) and Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that they did not have to spend much time making the activities engaging for their students.

It is unclear whether the embedded resources were used by Teacher A, however, this teacher communicated disagreement (2) that the resources enabled her/him to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for the students. Teacher A also disagreed (2) that the embedded resources aligned with the lesson objectives, were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping accomplish the lesson objective, and that having them in the lesson helped save time. On the other hand, Teacher B agreed (3) that the embedded resources helped to make the content more engaging and relevant, that the resources were aligned with the lesson objectives, and that they were sufficiently thorough to help accomplish the lesson objectives. Teacher B agreed (3) that having the embedded resources available in this lesson saved time. Teacher A used thirty minutes to teach this lesson, while Teacher B spent a full week covering the three lessons in module six.
**Teacher module evaluation.** Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the At-A-Glance Module Map for this module was clear and easy to follow and helped them to navigate the curriculum. They also agreed (3) that the modules were comprehensive across topic and that the assessment options in this module were sufficient to check for student understanding of the objectives. In addition to this ordinal, quantitative data, both teachers provided additional qualitative feedback.

Teacher B did not make any changes to the content or supplementary materials of module six and Teacher A continued to color-code the information in the PowerPoint presentations. She/he would then print the PowerPoint presentation for the students to be used in lieu of the designated student notes. The teacher found the student notes to be too time consuming. She/he maintained that the students expressed that they do not want another class where they had to copy notes.

In reflection, though both teachers found the topics in this module useful, they believed that the topics most useful for their students were the introduction to college financial tips and the cost of college. Creating a budget was suggested by both teachers to be the least useful, in that some of the students received that information in a different class and, for others, the material was too high level. Teacher B recommended adding lessons that dealt with more basic budgeting skills. The FAFSA checklist was touted by both teachers to be an invaluable lesson-support resource. Conversely, Teacher A found the section on how much college costs to be the lesson-support resource that was the least likely to be useful in the future.

Both teachers appreciated the curriculum formatting available in module six. Teacher B especially liked the breakdown of college costs and Teacher A found the ease of use to be beneficial in planning for instructional delivery. Suggestions for improvement included
simplifying some of the financial topics. The teachers agreed that some of the information provided for creating a budget and using credit wisely were above the skill level of their students. They recommended providing more of a basic informational structure, then building upon it. Final thoughts from the teachers regarding module six included a suggestion to reorganize the content to group the lessons with the activities. Additionally, the teachers expressed that, while the modules were good, they could be time consuming. Eliminating the student notes would allow more time to concentrate on the content.

**Student module evaluation.**

**Question One: What topic/s in this module do you think will be most useful to you?**

Forty-four students found the introduction to college financial topics, specifically, learning how much college costs, to be the most useful activity in module six. Several students expressed surprise at how much college costs per year and many proclaimed that “I had no idea it would cost that much.” Creating a budget was the most useful topic to 39% of the respondents and 17% felt like using credit wisely was the most useful topic in the sixth module. One student insightfully stated, “Watch your expenses and how you finance college so you’re not stuck paying for it for the rest of your life.”

**Question Two: What topic/s in this module do you think will be least useful to you?**

Eighty-five percent of the respondents felt that all of the financial topics were useful and applicable, however, 15% found the information on college financial topics less than useful as they were not planning on attending college after high school.

**Question Three: What topic/s would you like to see added?** While 8% of the respondents would like to see information added about scholarships and other alternative ways of
paying for college, 84% found the existing topics to be sufficient. A real-life budgeting activity was recommended by 8% of respondents.

**Question Four: Was there any part of the module that didn’t apply to you?** Most of the students, 85%, responded that all parts of the module applied to them. Fifteen percent did not agree and acknowledged that they were not planning to transition to a postsecondary institution after high school and felt the financial information did not apply to their intended path.

**Question Five: What activity did you find most useful?** Fifty-three percent of the students found the creating a budget activity to be the most useful. Researching tuition expenses and creating the FAFSA were most useful to 27%. Twenty percent of the respondents commented that all of the information was equally useful.

**Question Six: What activity in this module do you think will be least useful to you?** One hundred percent of the student respondents found all of the activities useful and important.

**Question Seven: What could be added to this module to make it more appealing or engaging?** Adding more hands-on activities, like creating a long-term budget and examining how finances add up, were recommendations supported by 36% of the respondents. Providing more information on scholarships was suggested by 9% of the students and incorporating more real-life videos or testimonials was supported by 9% of respondents. Forty-five percent suggested leaving the module as written.

**Question Eight: What questions do you still have about the content covered in this module?** Several students remained curious about why tuition is so high. They were also interested in learning more about grade point averages at the postsecondary level.

**Question Nine: How could this module be improved?** Students had many suggestions about how module six could be improved. More activities and more information on ways to save
money while attending college were recommended by 25% of the students. Another 25% suggested adding videos, while 12% suggested adding more information about scholarships. Thirteen percent of those who completed the questionnaire indicated they would not change anything in this module.

Module Seven: Communication

Lesson plan evaluations.

Lesson One: Transitioning between informal and formal communication styles.

Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the lesson plan material in lesson one of module seven were well organized and revolved around clear and meaningful objectives. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the lesson plan seemed accurate and thorough.

Both teachers used the PowerPoint file in delivery of the lesson on transitioning between communication styles. The teachers agreed (3) that they were able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with their students based on the information in the PowerPoint file and that the content of the file seemed accurate and relevant to the plans/needs of their students. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the content in the file seemed thorough, clear and easy to understand, and was relevant to the lesson objectives.

The teachers used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that they did not need to spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson. Likewise, Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.

Teacher B used the student notes and strongly agreed (4) that the format of the notes effectively met the needs of the students. Teacher A did not agree (2) with that statement and
also disagreed (2) that the student notes were aligned with the lesson objective and materials. Teacher B agreed (3) that they were and also agreed (3) that the content of the student notes was relevant to the needs of students and that the notes were an important resource for this lesson. Teacher A disagreed (2) with both statements. Teacher A did not use the student notes in delivery of this lesson.

Teacher A did not use the embedded resources in lesson one of module seven, noting that the embedded resources do not typically work. Conversely, Teacher B utilized the embedded resources and indicated strong agreement (4) that they were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping accomplish the lesson objectives. Teacher B agreed (3) that the embedded resources enabled him/her to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for the students and that they resources were aligned with the lesson objectives. Teacher B also agreed (3) that having the embedded resources in this lesson saved time. Teacher B reported that it took three class periods, using approximately sixty minutes per class period, to teach the full module. Teacher A taught lesson one of module seven in thirty minutes.

**Lesson two: Classroom behavior expectations.** Teacher B and Teacher A agreed (3) that the lesson plan on classroom behavior expectations revolved around clear and meaningful objectives and the lesson plan materials were well organized. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the content of the lesson plan seemed accurate and thorough.

Both teachers used the PowerPoint file during the delivery of the lesson plan. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the content of the PowerPoint file seemed thorough, clear and easy to understand, and that the content was relevant to the lesson objective. The teachers agreed (3) that they were able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation
with their students based on the information in the file, that the content seemed accurate and relevant to the plans/needs of their students, and that the PowerPoint slides were well organized.

Teacher A and Teacher B both utilized the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that not much time was needed gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson and that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching the lesson.

Teacher A did not use the student notes with his/her students in lesson two of module seven, but disagreed (2) that the notes were aligned with the lesson objectives and materials, that the content was relevant to the needs of the students, and that the format was effective in meeting the needs of the students. This teacher also disagreed (2) that the student notes were an important part of this lesson. Teacher B reported using the student notes in the delivery of the lesson and agreed (3) that the student notes were aligned with the lesson objectives and materials. Further, this teacher agreed (3) that the notes were relevant and an important resource for this lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the format of the notes effectively met the needs of the students.

Regarding the activities in lesson two, both teachers agree (3) that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective and that not much time was spent to make the lesson activities engaging for the students. Teacher B strongly agreed (4), while Teacher A agreed (3), that the activities were aligned with the lesson objectives, that the activities helped enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals, and that the activities were a good use of time.

Teacher B utilized the embedded resources and agreed (3) that they enabled him/her to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, and current for their students. Teacher
B also agreed (3) that the resources aligned with the lesson objectives and that they were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for accomplish the lesson objectives. Further, Teacher B agreed (3) that having the embedded resources in this lesson saved time. Teacher A did not use the embedded resources and disagreed (2) with all of the above statements. Teacher B reported that it took three class periods, using approximately sixty minutes per class period, to teach module seven in full. Teacher A taught lesson two of module seven in thirty minutes.

**Lesson three: Sending emails in college.** Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the content of the sending email in college lesson plan seemed accurate and thorough. They agreed (3) that the lesson plan revolved around clear and meaningful objectives and that the lesson plan material was well organized.

Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that he/she was able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with their students based on the information in the PowerPoint slides, that the content of the PowerPoint file seemed thorough and that the slides were clear and easy to understand. Both teachers agreed (3) that the file seemed accurate and that the slides were relevant to the lesson objectives. They also agreed (3) that the slides were relevant to the plans/needs of their students. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the slides were well organized and Teacher A agreed (3).

Both of the teachers used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the online learning lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson and Teacher A agreed (3). Likewise, Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that they did not need to spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach the lesson.
Teacher B used the student notes and strongly agreed (4) that the format of the notes effectively met the needs of the students in lesson three of module seven. Teacher A did not agree (2) and also disagreed (2) that the student notes were aligned with the lesson objective and materials. Teacher B agreed (3) that they were and also agreed that the content of the student notes was relevant to the needs of students and that the notes were an important resource for this lesson. Teacher A disagreed (2) with both statements. Teacher A did not use the student notes in delivery of this lesson.

Regarding the activities in lesson three of module seven, both teachers agree (3) that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective and that not much time was spent to make the lesson activities engaging for the students. Teacher B strongly agreed (4), while Teacher A agreed (3), that the activities were aligned with the lesson objectives, that the activities helped enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals, and that the activities were a good use of time.

Teacher B utilized the embedded resources and agreed (3) that they enabled him/her to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, and current for their students. Teacher B also agreed (3) that the resources aligned with the lesson objectives and that they were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for accomplish the lesson objectives. Further, Teacher B agreed (3) that having the embedded resources in this lesson saved time. Teacher A did not use the embedded resources and disagreed (2) with all of the above statements. Teacher B reported that it took three class periods, using approximately sixty minutes per class period, to teach module seven in full. Teacher A taught lesson three of module seven in thirty minutes.

**Lesson four: Constructive criticism.** Both Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the lesson plan revolved around clear and meaningful objectives. They also agreed (3) that the
content of lesson plan four seemed accurate and thorough. Further, they agreed (3) that the lesson plan material was well organized.

Teacher A and Teacher B used the PowerPoint file during the delivery of this lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that they were able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with their students based on the information in the PowerPoint file and that the content on the slides was clear and easy to understand. Both teachers agreed (3) that the file content seemed accurate and thorough and that the content on the slides was relevant to the lesson objective. Teachers A and B agreed (3) that the content on the PowerPoint slides was relevant to the plans/needs of their students and that the slides were well organized.

Both participating teachers used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that they did not need to spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson. The teachers agreed (3) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching the lesson on the college community.

Student notes were not used by Teacher A because he/she reported them to be too time consuming. Teacher B, however, utilized the notes with his/her students and agreed (3) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials. Teacher B also agreed (3) that the content of the student notes was relevant to the needs of the student, that the format of the student notes effectively met the needs of the students, and that the student notes were an important resource for this lesson.

Teacher A and Teacher B agree (3) that the activities in the constructive criticism lesson were aligned with the lesson objective and that they helped enable students to apply the topic of
the lesson to their personal goals. They also agreed (3) that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objectives. The teachers agreed (3) that they did not need to spend much time to make the activities engaging for their students. Both agreed (3) that the activities in this lesson were meaningful and a good use of their students’ time.

It is unclear whether the embedded resources were used by Teacher A, however, this teacher communicated disagreement (2) that the resources enabled her/him to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for the students. Teacher A also disagreed (2) that the embedded resources aligned with the lesson objectives, were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping accomplish the lesson objective, and that having them in the lesson helped save time. On the other hand, Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the embedded resources helped to make the content more engaging and relevant and that the resources were aligned with the lesson objectives. Teacher B agreed (3) that they were sufficiently thorough to help accomplish the lesson objectives and that having the embedded resources available in this lesson saved time. Teacher B reported that it took three class periods, using approximately 60 minutes per class period, to teach module seven in full. Teacher A taught lesson four of module seven in thirty minutes.

**Teacher module evaluation.** Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the At-A-Glance Module Map for this module was clear and easy to follow and helped them to navigate the curriculum. They also agreed (3) that the modules were comprehensive across topic. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the assessment options in this module were sufficient to check for student understanding of the objectives. In addition to this ordinal, quantitative data, both teachers provided additional qualitative feedback.
Both teachers made a few adjustments to the content or supplementary materials in module seven. Teacher A continued to color-code the PowerPoint presentations and print them for the students to be used in lieu of the student notes. Teacher B added bell-ringers on relevant topics or extensions to the existing topics from the curriculum. In reflection, though both Teacher A and Teacher B found all of the topics in module seven to be useful, they believed that the topic most beneficial to their students was transitioning between formal and informal communication. They agreed that everything covered in the module is of importance to their students. Teacher B suggested adding content on how to appropriately advocate for yourself, explaining how self-advocacy can help students in secondary and post-secondary educational settings. Teacher A indicated that he/she was most likely to use the lesson-support resources aligned with appropriate classroom behaviors and least likely to use the lesson-support resources aligned with writing thank you notes.

The teachers affirmed their appreciation for the content in this module and that the curriculum formatting allowed for ease of use. Final thoughts from the teachers regarding module seven included a suggestion to reorganize the content so that the lessons and corresponding activities were grouped together. Teacher B would like to see more self-advocacy integrated into the modules. Teacher A believed the students needed exposure to the content of the transition curriculum and recommended that the content be updated continuously to remain current as trends change.

**Student module evaluation.**

*Question One: What topic/s in this module do you think will be most useful to you?*

Forty-six student respondents found all of the topics equally useful in module seven.
Transitioning between formal and informal communication was useful for 27% of the students and another 27% found the conflict management topic most useful.

**Question Two: What topic/s in this module do you think will be least useful to you?**

Eighty-eight of the questionnaire respondents believed all of the module content to be useful, while 12% believed that the constructive criticism topic would be least useful.

**Question Three: What topic/s would you like to see added?** One hundred percent of the student respondents reported that they had no suggestions for additional topics.

**Question Four: Was there any part of the module that didn’t apply to you?** One hundred percent of the student respondents commented that all parts of module seven applied to them.

**Question Five: What activity did you find most useful?** Thirty percent of the students stated that communication role play scenarios were the most useful activity, while another 30% believed all of the activities were equally useful. Twenty percent agreed that the sending email activities were useful and another 20% agreed that the thank you note scenario was most useful.

**Question Six: What activity in this module do you think will be least useful to you?** One hundred percent of respondents found all of the activities in module seven to be useful.

**Question Seven: What could be added to this module to make it more appealing or engaging?** More than half of the respondents, or 55%, found that nothing was needed to make this module more appealing or engaging. Thirty-six percent recommended adding more hands-on activities. Nine percent suggested adding videos.

**Question Eight: What questions do you still have about the content covered in this module?** No students responded to this question.
**Question Nine: How could this module be improved?** One hundred percent of the students agreed that more information could be added to this module to improve it. While they found it to be engaging, many noted that it was short on substance.

**Module Eight: Campus Living**

**Lesson plan evaluations.**

**Lesson one: Introduction to campus living.** Teachers A and B agreed (3) that the lesson plan material for lesson one of module eight was well organized and that the content seemed accurate and thorough. They also agreed (3) that the lesson plan revolved around meaningful objectives. Teacher A agreed (3) and Teacher B disagreed (2) that the lesson plan revolved around clear objectives.

Teacher B strongly agreed (4), while Teacher A agreed (3), that they were able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with the students based on the information in the PowerPoint file and that the content was clear and easy to understand. The teachers agreed (3) that the content of the PowerPoint file seemed accurate and thorough and that it was relevant to the plans/needs of their students. Teacher A agreed (3) and Teacher B disagreed (2) that the content of the PowerPoint slides was relevant to the lesson objective.

Both teachers used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that they did not need to spend much time gathering extra information in order to teach this lesson and that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.

Teacher B utilized the student notes when teaching lesson one of module eight and Teacher A did not use them. Teacher B agreed (3) that the student notes were an important resource for this lesson and that the format of the student notes effectively met the needs of the
students. Teacher B also agreed (3) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials and that the content was relevant to the needs of the students. Though Teacher A did not utilize the student notes, he/she disagreed (2) that the content was aligned with the objective and materials, that the content was relevant to the needs of the students, and that the format was effective in meeting the needs. Teacher A also disagreed (2) that the student notes were an important resource for this lesson.

Both teachers agreed (3) that the introduction to campus living activities were aligned with the lesson objectives and that they helped enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals. They also agreed (3) that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective and that they did not have to spend much time to make the activities engaging for their students. Both teachers agreed (3) that the activities in lesson one of module eight were meaningful and a good use of their students’ time.

Teacher B utilized the embedded resources and strongly agreed (4) that they enabled him/her to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, and current for their students and that they were aligned with the lesson objectives. Teacher B agreed (3) that the embedded resources were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for accomplishment of the lesson objectives. Teacher B also agreed (3) that having the embedded resources in this lesson saved time. Teacher A did not use the embedded resources and disagreed (2) with all of the above statements. Teacher B reported that it took all week, using approximately sixty minutes per class period, to teach module eight in full. Teacher A taught lesson one of module eight in thirty minutes.

*Lesson two: Dimensions of campus diversity.* Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the lesson plan on campus diversity revolved around clear and meaningful objectives. They also
agreed (3) that the content of the lesson plan seemed accurate and thorough. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the lesson plans were well organized, while Teacher A agreed (3).

Both teachers utilized the PowerPoint file during the delivery of the lesson and agreed (3) that they were able to facilitate engaging and meaningful conversation with their students based on the information in the PowerPoint file. Further, they both agreed (3) that the content of the PowerPoint file seemed accurate and thorough. Both teachers agreed (3) that the content on the PowerPoint slides was clear, easy to understand, relevant to the lesson objective, and well organized.

Teacher A and Teacher B used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Both teachers agreed (3) that they did not need to spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson. They also both agreed (3) that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.

Student notes were not used by Teacher A because he/she reported them to be too time consuming. Teacher A disagreed (2) that the content was aligned with the objectives, that the content was relevant to the needs of the students, and that the format was effective in meeting the needs of the students. The teacher also disagreed (2) that the notes were important for this lesson. Teacher B, however, utilized the notes with his/her students and agreed (3) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials. Teacher B also agreed (3) that the content of the student notes was relevant to the needs of the student, that the format of the student notes effectively met the needs of the students, and that the student notes were an important resource for this lesson.

Teacher A and Teacher B agree (3) that the activities in the campus diversity lesson were aligned with the lesson objective and that they helped enable students to apply the topic of the
lesson to their personal goals. They also agreed (3) that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objectives. The teachers agreed (3) that they did not need to spend much time to make the activities engaging for their students. Both agreed (3) that the activities in this lesson were meaningful and a good use of their students’ time.

Teacher A did not use the embedded resources in this lesson, however, he/she communicated disagreement (2) that the resources enabled her/him to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for the students. Teacher A also disagreed (2) that the embedded resources aligned with the lesson objectives, were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping accomplish the lesson objective, and that having them in the lesson helped save time. On the other hand, Teacher B agreed (3) that the embedded resources helped to make the content more engaging and relevant and that the resources were aligned with the lesson objectives. Teacher B also agreed (3) that they were sufficiently thorough to help accomplish the lesson objectives and that having the embedded resources available in this lesson saved time. Teacher B reported that it took all week, using approximately sixty minutes per class period, to teach module eight in full. Teacher A taught lesson two of module eight in thirty minutes.

*Lesson three: Living with a roommate.* Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the lesson on living with a roommate revolved around clear and meaningful objectives. Both agreed (3) that the content of the lesson plan seemed accurate and thorough and that the lesson plan materials were well organized.

Teacher B strongly agreed (4), while Teacher A agreed (3), that they were able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with the students based on the information in the PowerPoint file and that the content was clear and easy to understand. The teachers agreed (3) that the content of the PowerPoint file seemed accurate and thorough and that it was relevant
to the plans/needs of their students. Both teachers agreed (3) that the content of the PowerPoint slides was relevant to the lesson objective.

Both teachers used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that they did not need to spend much time gathering extra information in order to teach this lesson and that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.

Teacher B utilized the student notes when teaching lesson three of module eight and Teacher A did not use them. Teacher B agreed (3) that the student notes were an important resource for this lesson and that the format of the student notes effectively met the needs of the students. Teacher B also agreed (3) that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials and that the content was relevant to the needs of the students. Though Teacher A did not utilize the student notes, he/she disagreed (2) that the content was aligned with the objective and materials, that the content was relevant to the needs of the students, and that the format was effective in meeting the needs. Teacher A also disagreed (2) that the student notes were an important resource for this lesson.

Both teachers agreed (3) that the living with a roommate activities were aligned with the lesson objectives and that they helped enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals. They also agreed (3) that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective and that they did not have to spend much time to make the activities engaging for their students. Both teachers agreed (3) that the activities in lesson one of module eight were meaningful and a good use of their students’ time.

Teacher B utilized the embedded resources and strongly agreed (4) that they enabled him/her to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, and current for their students.
and that they were aligned with the lesson objectives. Teacher B agreed (3) that the embedded resources were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for accomplishment of the lesson objectives. Teacher B also agreed (3) that having the embedded resources in this lesson saved time. Teacher A did not use the embedded resources and disagreed (2) with all of the above statements. Teacher B reported that it took all week, using approximately 60 minutes per class period, to teach module eight in full. Teacher A taught lesson three of module eight in thirty minutes.

Lesson four: Understanding conflict management style. Teacher A and Teacher B agreed (3) that the understanding conflict management style lesson plan was well organized and that the content seemed accurate and thorough. They also agreed (3) that the lesson plan revolved around clear and meaningful objectives.

Teacher B strongly agreed (4), while Teacher A agreed (3), that they were able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with the students based on the information in the PowerPoint file and that the content was clear and easy to understand. The teachers agreed (3) that the content of the PowerPoint file seemed accurate and thorough and that it was relevant to the plans/needs of their students. The teachers agreed (3) that the content of the PowerPoint slides was relevant to the lesson objective.

Both teachers used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that they did not need to spend much time gathering extra information in order to teach this lesson and that the teacher notes were an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.

Teacher B utilized the student notes when teaching lesson four of module eight and Teacher A did not use them. Teacher B strongly agreed (4) that the student notes were an
important resource for this lesson and that the content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials. Teacher B agreed (3) that the format of the student notes effectively met the needs of the students and that the content was relevant to the needs of the students. Though Teacher A did not utilize the student notes, he/she disagreed (2) that the content was aligned with the objective and materials, that the content was relevant to the needs of the students, and that the format was effective in meeting the needs. Teacher A also disagreed (2) that the student notes were an important resource for this lesson.

Both teachers agreed (3) that the understanding conflict management styles activities were aligned with the lesson objectives and that they helped enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals. They also agreed (3) that the activities helped to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective and that they did not have to spend much time to make the activities engaging for their students. Both teachers agreed (3) that the activities in lesson four of module eight were meaningful and a good use of their students’ time.

Teacher B utilized the embedded resources and strongly agreed (4) that they enabled him/her to make the content of the lesson in this module more engaging, relevant, and current for their students and that they were aligned with the lesson objectives. Teacher B agreed (3) that the embedded resources were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for accomplishment of the lesson objectives. Teacher B also agreed (3) that having the embedded resources in this lesson saved time. Teacher A did not use the embedded resources and disagreed (2) with all of the above statements. Teacher B reported that it took all week, using approximately 60 minutes per class period, to teach module eight in full. Teacher A taught lesson one of module eight in thirty minutes.
**Teacher module evaluation.** Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the At-A-Glance Module Map for this module was clear and easy to follow and helped them to navigate the curriculum. Moreover, Teacher B strongly agreed (4) and Teacher A agreed (3) that the modules were comprehensive across topic and that the assessment options in this module were sufficient to check for student understanding of the objectives. In addition to this ordinal, quantitative data, both teachers provided additional qualitative feedback.

Changes to the content or supplemental materials in module eight were made by both teachers. Teacher A continued to color-code and print the PowerPoint presentations for his/her students. These were provided instead of participating in use of the student notes as the teacher reported them to be too time consuming. Throughout module eight, Teacher B provided students insight into his/her own college experience, drawing on real-life examples of campus living that were relevant and engaging to the students. In reflection, the teachers found most of the topics in module eight beneficial, but believed the topics of campus living necessities and conflict management would be most useful to the students. Teacher B thought dimensions of campus diversity would be least useful for the students. The lesson-support resource most likely to be used again by the teachers included those regarding conflict management, especially the questionnaire. Teacher A indicated that the college housing options lesson-support resources were the least likely to be used again with his/her students.

Final thoughts from the teachers regarding module eight include a suggestion to reorganize the content so that the lessons and corresponding activities were grouped together. Overall, the teachers were satisfied with the curriculum formatting, the transitions between topics, and the ease of use. Teacher B suggested additional video support, real-life examples, and use of testimonials from students with learning differences at the post-secondary level.
Student module evaluation.

Question One: What topic/s in this module do you think will be most useful to you? Forty percent of the students found the living with a roommate topic most useful. Thirteen percent of students found the topic on conflict management useful and 7% found campus diversity most useful. Forty percent of respondents reported that they found all topics equally useful.

Question Two: What topic/s in this module do you think will be least useful to you? Living with a roommate was reported as the least useful topic for 8% of students and campus diversity was also reported as the least useful topic for 8%. Most students, 84%, suggested that all of the topics in the module were useful.

Question Three: What topic/s would you like to see added? Eighty-eight percent of the responding students did not have suggestions for additional content, but 12% recommended adding more information on dorm living.

Question Four: Was there any part of the module that didn’t apply to you? All of the respondents, except one, agreed that the contents of this module applied to them. The one respondent who disagreed stated that knowing how to live with a roommate was not applicable to his/her future plans.

Question Five: What activity did you find most useful? Student responses were varied on this question. Forty-three percent suggested that all activities were equally useful. Twenty-two percent acknowledged that the scenarios were useful and 14% shared that the conflict management questionnaire was useful. Seven percent of respondents, respectively, agreed that the email activity, the diversity worksheet, and the roommate preferences worksheet were most useful.
**Question Six: What activity in this module do you think will be least useful to you?**

While 92% of the students responded that all of the activities were useful, 8% shared that writing down what conflict meant to them was least useful.

**Question Seven: What could be added to this module to make it more appealing or engaging?**  Sixty-two percent of the students recommended adding videos, noting relevant videos would enhance the module on campus living. The remaining 38% suggested that the module did not need anything added.

**Question Eight: What questions do you still have about the content covered in this module?**  The students did not have additional questions about module eight.

**Question Nine: How could this module be improved?**  Fifty percent of the students declared that videos would improve the content of this module. Twelve percent felt that the module lacked content and that additional information should be added to enhance each of the topics. Thirty-eight percent felt the module did not need to be improved.

**Student interviews.**  The last component of data collection was one-on-one interviews with each student and teacher participant. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. After transcription of the interview protocols and careful examination of the data collected from the open-ended questionnaires, the researcher looked for recurring themes. Data were categorized into broad themes and analyzed.

In review and analysis of the transcribed student interviews, the researcher identified themes and constructed triangulated meaning based on other qualitative and quantitative data collection tools utilized in this study, including the student Transition Curriculum Module Evaluation Form and the pre and post student Transition Curriculum Questionnaire. For purposes of this chapter, this narrative summary identified the common themes based on
grouping of the interview questions. Questions one through four, question eight, and questions thirteen through sixteen of the student interview were grouped together. The commonality of these questions, lending to the appropriateness of their grouping, was based on the perspective of preparedness and active engagement of the student in their looming transition from a secondary education. Further, questions five through seven and questions eleven and twelve were grouped together based on student participation in their IEP team meetings and transition planning. Questions nine and ten were paired as they identify formatting and delivery preference, providing insight into perspective of achieving maximum effectiveness.

Eighteen students were asked what teachers do to encourage them to attend a postsecondary educational institution after graduation from high school. Students offered that teachers tell them the importance of going to college so they can get good jobs and better prepare for their futures. Students reported that, though teachers tell them they should go to college, they do not tell them anything about how to get there. Students were unclear about transition supports that could be provided and articulated the importance of having the necessary classes to graduate from their secondary schooling. Most commonly, students did not have a clear understanding of the type of transition supports that could be provided by their teacher to better assist with their transition from secondary to postsecondary. In asking how teachers were preparing them for a college setting, students continued to show a disconnect in understanding what that preparation might look like. Emerging themes trended toward getting good grades, meeting deadlines, and taking the right classes.

Accessing student support resources, as communicated by multiple students, was learned during the execution of the research study. However, understanding the depth and intended purpose of these resources on a college campus appeared to be an area of uncertainty. Themes
emerged indicating a lack of clear understanding of campus student support resources and an emerging awareness that support services exist. Students who expressed an understanding of support services reported that they plan to use study groups and tutoring if they transition to a postsecondary educational setting. They also suggested using disability services to maintain the continuity and application of their IEP at the postsecondary level.

When asked about what resources they need to better prepare for their transition from high school to college, student responses primarily honed in on activities of awareness that will allow them additional insight into transitioning to postsecondary. For example, students expressed the desire to have access to videos of daily operations on a college campus and field trips to secure first-hand accounts of college classes and campus transitions. Other themes included inviting a professor to visit the secondary classroom to share expectations and other relevant information with the students. One student stated, “It would be nice if we could visually see what kind of setting we’re getting into. It’s not like high school where you have thirty or something kids (in a class), you could have stadium seating with hundreds. You can describe it, but the setting is very different and going from 30 to 300 could be really overwhelming for someone like me. You can’t really raise your hand and ask for individual help during class.”

Student responses were consistently narrow in theme when asked what they think it takes to be successful on a college campus. Students reported belief that being successful in college is rooted in motivation, focus, being responsible, and having perseverance. One student maintained, “You don’t have to be a genius, you just have to want it.”

Sharing how they have prepared for college academically, students articulated the need for good grades and good attendance. More students than not did not understand the meaning of this question. Though most students did not clearly understand the question about preparation in
non-academic areas either, others identified the need for knowing how to get around on campuses, exhibiting financial literacy, and having adequate life skills to function independently.

Three distinct themes were identified when students were asked what they planned to do after high school. Some students acknowledged plans to attend a postsecondary educational setting, whether it be a two or four year institution, some planned to go from school to work, and some were still undecided as to their path. Students affirmed that they did not think about college much before being exposed to the transition curriculum. When asked what impact the Project STEPP curriculum had on the steps they would take during the transition experience, the primary theme was that their view of attending college had changed. Emerging themes indicated that students did not know that their IEP could transition with them to college, understanding what to look for (with regards to services) before transitioning to a postsecondary setting, and that secondary case managers make transitioning out of school sound too easy. As shared by one student, “It made me feel more confident that there are people out there who are looking out for me. I may or may not need the support, but it’s good to have. Most of us are fully capable of doing it ourselves, but we need a bit of a nudge. It’s good to have a nudge here and there. It is good to know there are people who care enough to keep us straight.” Students reported that the transition curriculum helped them think about what they want to do after high school. Emerging themes indicated the content of the transition curriculum helped them to better define their college choices, clearly define their options, and provided insight into the foundational skills necessary for successful independent living.

Students were asked how they were participating in their IEP/IEP transition meetings and three distinct themes emerged. Themes of participation included the following: their mother attends the meeting for them and then tells the student what was discussed afterwards, the
student attends the meeting and just listens, and that the case manager/teachers ask the student during the meeting what accommodations they want or no longer use. One particular student articulated, “I talk to my case manager about it (the IEP). Like, when I don’t need this, you can take it off of my IEP. Of course, I use my accommodations. I normally just listen, but will ask questions at the end if I have them. I don’t ever give recommendations.”

The theme derived from student responses after asking students what setting the transition curriculum should be used, was that implementation in an Academic Support class would be the preference. Emerging themes came in the way of suggestions on how to implement it into the Academic Support classes. Appreciating the opportunity for small group instruction, based on the nature and design of the class, students enjoyed being able to share meaningful and relevant dialogue with their peers. Suggestions were made to create a semester long elective class that would only provide instruction on college and college transitions, to designate a specific day (or days) of the week when the curriculum would be taught in Academic Support, and to integrate components of the curriculum into the core English classes. Students provided deliberate insight into the grade in which the curriculum should be implemented, sharing that the curriculum should be started in the second semester of grade eleven, then provided in greater depth during the first semester of grade 12.

Finally, student reaction to how the curriculum should be presented resulted in the recommendation that it be delivered as a hybrid of paper-pencil and computer-based. A hybrid delivery would allow students the opportunity to access the curriculum on their phones, tablets, and desktops, at school and at home. A student stated, “Students, including me, react more to technology. When a teacher walks in with a paper-pencil test and says we’re doing this test today, we all react naturally, like we don’t want to do this today, but when it’s on a computer it’s
more exciting and students don’t realize it’s the same test that’s on the paper. It’s a lot more fun and it’s quicker for us. In this day and age, a lot of kids are doing computer stuff and it’s a lot easier to do things using technology. Personally, I can type a lot faster than I can write. I am able to get a lot more done on the computer than I am just in a general classroom setting when I’m writing down what the teacher is saying.” Another student emphasized, “I think most students are hands-on, so I think videos and computers and stuff like that work better. I don’t like doing paperwork, I’m a hands-on learner. Using technology in instruction helps me retain things more easily because I’m not just reading and writing it, I’m looking it up and using it. Being active makes learning fun.”

Students were given an opportunity at the close of their interviews to ask questions or provide additional feedback. Several students engaged in continuous dialogue, addressing ideas for improving the curriculum that would potentially have a greater impact on future students who may be able to participate. The statement by this student captured the essence of what was articulated by most of the students: “It would be pretty cool to have a field trip as part of this curriculum and to add more videos. The videos really popped out for me. Specifically, visiting the dorm rooms and seeing how big the classes are while they’re in session, how big the campus is, how much time you’ve got and the weekly schedule, how the lunchroom works . . . I just have so many questions.” Another student added, “I think we should visit an actual college and have administrators talk to us about attending school on their campus. We should be able to walk around and see how different students live. It would be interesting to have a professor come and talk to our class to share what he expects from his students. How do professors work, anyway? Maybe even having a college student visit our class to talk about the differences between high school and college. Yes, that would be helpful.”
**Teacher interviews.** Teachers were interviewed individually following the administration of the post-test. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. After transcription of the interview protocols and careful examination of the data collected from the open-ended questionnaires, the researcher looked for recurring themes. Data were categorized into broad themes and analyzed.

In review and analysis of the transcribed teacher interviews, the researcher identified themes and constructed triangulated meaning based on other qualitative and quantitative data collection tools utilized in this study. Specific tools used in triangulation included the Transition Curriculum Lesson Plan Evaluation Form, Transition Curriculum Module Evaluation Form, and the pre and post Transition Curriculum Questionnaire. For purposes of this chapter, the narrative summary identified the common themes based on grouping of the interview questions.

Both teachers confirmed that they routinely encourage their students to attend some type of postsecondary training after the completion of high school. They reportedly communicate the benefits of receiving additional education or training, as applicable to their specific cognitive and functioning needs. One teacher responded that his/her approach was to “sell the foundation of a college experience,” while the second teacher conceded that “we talk about college a lot, but it’s more of an informal type thing. It’s not a structured process. My class is laid back and we just talk.” Both teachers acknowledged they do “very little” in promoting a postsecondary education, but rather lead their students towards some type of vocational training. Teacher B expressed a desire to learn more about preparing and transitioning students with learning differences into postsecondary settings, while Teacher A expressed that “I’ve not seen many of the kids in my Academic Support classes who are going on to college and, now those in regular education, we have more of them going, but not in the Academic Support class because they’re lower. They’ve
had to struggle too much in high school and they know they aren’t going to college.” Further, Teacher B explained that he/she can tell by the time the students reach tenth grade if they have been prepared to go to college, but confided that he/she “saw this curriculum spark a fire in some of my students.” He/she voiced concern and surprise at how unaware the students were in just the basic ideas that were covered in the curriculum. Making connections with his/her own experiences, it was articulated that the transition curriculum would be beneficial to all students, not just those with learning differences.

Teachers A and B agreed that in preparing their students for a postsecondary or work setting, a focus on self-advocacy is essential. Teacher B believed that, “kids with disabilities really struggle with self-advocacy because they already have certain insecurities about their disability. They’ve been boxed in or labeled certain ways, so those are the ones who are really challenged to advocate for themselves.” They reportedly encourage their students to understand that they must learn to speak for themselves and that, if they attend a postsecondary educational setting, they would have to disclose that they have a disability to receive services. Other emerging themes of note were preparing students on basic communication skills and how to effectively interact with others.

The teachers expressed a sufficient level of comfort in helping their students’ access student support resources on the college campus. Prior experience was the commonality for the level of comfort and the emerging themes suggest exposure to the transition curriculum served as a refresher of what resources were available to postsecondary students. When prompted about whether he/she thought additional training in this area would benefit secondary teachers, Teacher B thought it might be informative, but was doubtful that many would apply the provided information with their students. Clarifying his/her statement, the teacher shared “I think it would
give them [regular education teachers] an idea that these kids can go to college and that there are resources to help them. I mean, obviously, for special education teachers it would be great. It would be good for the Academic Support teachers.” The teacher explained further that there were teachers who served students with IEPs who thought they could not go on to college. He/she believed that they were not familiar with the resources available to students with learning differences on the college campuses.

The teachers concurred that prior to IEP transition meetings students were provided time to discuss their upcoming meeting with their case manager. Both teachers agreed that when transition planning, they utilized interest inventories and had dialogue with the student to create the transition plan and other components of the IEP document. Based on their responses, emerging themes indicated transition planning and IEP design were functional, with basic skills addressed in the transition component, and a review of classroom accommodations. The teachers communicated that transition planning for upperclassmen was different than transition planning for students in their first two years of high school. Both teachers responded that their students were actively involved in their IEP meetings.

The Project STEPP Transition Curriculum impacted the way both teachers support their students in transition and in goal-setting. The teachers agreed that they learned from the curriculum. Emerging themes included having the resources found in the curriculum available at an IEP meeting, using pieces of the curriculum during the senior exit interviews, connecting sections of the curriculum with core content areas, and sharing the curriculum with other teachers. Teacher B commented that, “I can share some of this information with them [students during IEP and senior exit meetings] and kind of encourage them a little more truthfully because I can see that there really are some resources to access.”
The teachers had differing perspectives on how to make the curriculum a more useful tool. Teacher A focused more on the layout of the content. He/she recommended organizing the materials so that the activity immediately follows the corresponding lesson plan. This teacher also recommended either revamping or deleting completely the student notes component of the curriculum, expressing that it proved time consuming and discouraging to the students. Teacher B focused more on the audience and in delivery. He/she communicated that “Your target audience is probably not special education kids and to keep that [the curriculum] from the kids, the high percentage that are going to college, seems, it’s like holding back a pretty good resource.” Further, the teacher expressed that his/her own child, who was served in regular education, would have benefited from the content of the modules, less the topic on disability services.

Teacher A and Teacher B shared many of the same ideas regarding the type of resources or training they would need to feel more comfortable helping students with learning differences transition from secondary to postsecondary education. They specifically addressed issues of vertical alignment. Understanding how to sufficiently prepare students with learning differences on how to access and utilize disability services and other campus support services was deemed essential. Both teachers recommended providing educational opportunities for secondary staff that would allow them open dialogue with postsecondary contacts. Campus visits and video presentations were among the recommendations. Teacher B acknowledged that he/she would “like to see a kid who has autism in his dorm room or even in a class setting. Or perhaps even professors who are accommodating kids with disabilities. That is so foreign to me.” The teacher continued, “The scenarios showed students approaching the teacher, but not how the teacher
responded. For everything to be in a conceptual format, it’s tough. Even for teachers. Not having the prior knowledge makes it difficult.”

Teacher A and Teacher B agreed that the transition curriculum should be provided as a hybrid, using both pencil-paper and the computer for delivery. Teacher A explained that he/she had difficulty with some of the embedded resources, likely due to site-based technological issues. They both appreciated having the curriculum available both on East Carolina University’s website and having it on a flash drive. They agreed that the printed manual was bulky and not easily transported.

In determining the ideal grade level for implementation of the curriculum, the teachers stated that providing this content to juniors and seniors would have the greatest impact. One suggestion was to sensitize the students as freshmen, then bring it back to them at the end of their junior year and again at the start of their senior year. While the teachers agreed that using it in the Academic Support class was ideal, they suggested that parts of the curriculum could easily be implemented into core content areas. Both teachers were planning to continue use of the Project STEPP Transition Curriculum.

At the conclusion of the interview protocol prepared by the researcher, teachers were given the opportunity to ask questions or provide commentary regarding the research study experience or on the Project STEPP Transition Curriculum. Both teachers engaged the researcher in continuous dialogue, providing perspective on the actual curriculum and the implementation in the secondary schools.

Both teachers agreed that the first few modules had a significant amount of content. The modules were thorough and provided a sound balance of instructional materials and worthy
activities. However, as they progressed through the curriculum, they found the modules contained less content and felt that the depth and breadth of topics was minimal.

Teacher B provided significant insight to his/her thoughts on the target audience for use of this curriculum. When the teacher started reviewing the curriculum, at the beginning of the study, he/she pondered the appropriateness of the audience. The teacher thought, “How do we encourage more kids to consider postsecondary education so that this can be applicable to them, so that this can be relevant, so that this can make sense.” He/she asserted that, though some of the students might be “lit up” by the idea of it, several of those same students were functioning at a third grade level and cannot do high school math. Just meeting the basic requirements to get into college would be a tremendous hurdle. “The first thought I had was that this is an excellent curriculum, an excellent idea, but unfortunately, I don’t know if we’ve given them the skills to even get to that level. I would say, there’s a lot of things we need to work on.” With this statement, the researcher prompted the teacher to delve deeper, asking about vertical alignment through the K-12 system and if, systemically, changes need to be made. The teacher responded with:

I think there are a lot of factors. There are cultural factors, stigmas about being in a special education classroom. There are certain factors that involve the regular education teacher and some resentment toward- resentment is a strong word- in some feeling that there’s a division. With some teachers it’s either hit or miss. They either have a good attitude about accommodating or helping these kids or they see it as paperwork, a liability. I’ve had teachers transfer a kid out of their classroom so they don’t have to monitor, modify, or accommodate. I think it’s a lot of things. When they [the students] go home, they’re not exposed to parents who have gone to college or friends who have gone to college. It’s a big battle and I don’t think we can pin it to one factor. I think if there was discussion that was fruitful about the nature of what we do here it might prompt more people, kids, to look toward postsecondary. I see kids who, by the time they get to high school, they are so beat up that they aren’t even thinking about college. They’re thinking about working, about making money, they’ve been beat up by school. By the time they get to high school, you know by looking at them and dealing with them if they are going to go on to college or be working on an engine somewhere.
With an obvious passion, the teacher continued, stating that preparing students with IEPs for a postsecondary education needed to begin in the lower grade levels. He/she believed that conversations should start in elementary school and continue into the middle grades. The teacher expressed the need to start talking about postsecondary early, so that when the students get to 11th grade, per se, they were not completely blown away. Teacher B shared that as they progressed through the transition curriculum he/she was shocked by how little the students knew about a postsecondary education. He/she was surprised that “some [students] wanted to know things about simple living, like, if you don’t go to class, they don’t call your parents.” The teacher emphasized that nobody had “lit a fire” for these students and that discussions centered around transitioning from secondary to postsecondary educational settings were not happening from other teachers. He/she said, “Since the discussions aren’t happening, it tells me they aren’t aware or they’ve written the kid off.” The teacher returned to an earlier prompting by the researcher and adds, “Going back to your question, sensitizing a faculty, training a faculty, giving them professional development. Perhaps that would be very relevant.”

**Pretest/Posttest.** The researcher presented the teachers and the participating students with a pre-test prior to implementation of the transition curriculum and a post-test after full implementation of all eight modules. The pre-test and post-test consisted of the same questions and format, but the study participants were provided two different data collection tools when recording their responses to prevent compromised fidelity when responding to the post-test. Questions on the pre/post-test were aligned primarily with the first and second research questions.

Pretest and posttest data were analyzed to examine the effect that the non-cognitive transition curriculum had on student perception of their ability and preparedness to attend
college. Using a Likert scale, the students communicated their level of agreement with the seven statements provided on the Student Transition Curriculum Questionnaire. Similarly, the teachers were administered the six question Teacher Transition Curriculum Questionnaire, also a Likert scale assessment, that provided insight into the impact the non-cognitive transition curriculum had on teacher perception of students with learning differences transitioning to postsecondary education. Table 20, the Researcher Data Collection Sheet, shows a graphic representation of the collected data from both the student and teacher Transition Curriculum Questionnaire.

In summary, using a mixed-methods explanatory research design, the researcher collected quantitative data that would be expanded upon by further collection of qualitative data. Using the qualitative data to explain and extend the paradigm created by the presentation of the quantitative data, the research effectively answered the proposed study questions and provided significant insight into the preparedness of secondary students with learning differences for a transition to a postsecondary education.
### Table 20

**Researcher Data Collection Sheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Rating Before using the Transition Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating After using the Transition Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( n = 26 )</td>
<td>( n = 25 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know what I would like to do after I graduate from high school.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 23%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 62%</td>
<td>Agree 44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree 8%</td>
<td>Disagree 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 8%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can envision myself as a student on a college campus.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 27%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 50%</td>
<td>Agree 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree 15%</td>
<td>Disagree 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 8%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I have what it takes to be successful in a college setting.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 27%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 38%</td>
<td>Agree 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree 27%</td>
<td>Disagree 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 8%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I know how to prepare for college academically.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 4%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 46%</td>
<td>Agree 48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree 35%</td>
<td>Disagree 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 15%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I know how to prepare for college in non-academic areas.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 15%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 46%</td>
<td>Agree 48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree 23%</td>
<td>Disagree 32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 15%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am aware of the support resources on the college campus.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 19%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 31%</td>
<td>Agree 56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree 42%</td>
<td>Disagree 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 8%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have actively participated in my IEP transition planning meetings.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 50%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 19%</td>
<td>Agree 48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree 19%</td>
<td>Disagree 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 12%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 20 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rating Before using the Transition Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating After using the Transition Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( n = 26 )</td>
<td>( n = 25 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When appropriate, I encourage my students to attend some form of college after graduation from high school.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 1</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 1</td>
<td>Agree 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree 0</td>
<td>Disagree 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am providing direct transition support for students with learning differences to plan to attend a college setting.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 0</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 1</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree 1</td>
<td>Disagree 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to help prepare high school students for the college setting.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 1</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 1</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree 0</td>
<td>Disagree 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am aware of the different student-support resources that are available on the college campus.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 1</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 1</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree 0</td>
<td>Disagree 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident in my ability to help students know how to access student-support resources on the college campus.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 1</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 1</td>
<td>Agree 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree 0</td>
<td>Disagree 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students actively participate in their IEP transition meetings.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 1</td>
<td>Strongly Agree 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 0</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree 1</td>
<td>Disagree 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from Transition Curriculum Survey: STUDENTS and TEACHERS; Rating scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As indicated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to determine teacher and high school student perceived effectiveness of a series of non-cognitive transition curriculum modules developed to prepare high school students with learning differences for a postsecondary education setting. This chapter provides a summary of the study, implications for practice and research, and recommendations.

Summary

This study was designed to contribute to the continued development of a non-cognitive, or non-academic, curriculum useful for the successful transition from a K-12 educational setting to a postsecondary educational setting. Though transition planning for students with learning differences has long been discussed and supported by federal mandate, there are shortcomings in the literature as to static or longitudinal studies supporting or refuting practices that support transitioning of students with high incidence disabilities from secondary to postsecondary educational settings. This study provided an analysis of a systematic, non-cognitive curricular approach to preparation of students with learning differences.

Relatively little attention has been given to planning for adult life of students who do not deal well with the events of everyday life, including transitions to postsecondary education. Although students with specific learning disabilities constitute the largest proportion of students with disabilities in public schools, they have not received as much attention in transition planning as students with more severe disabilities (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). According to Janiga and Costenbader (2002), empirical evidence indicates that when transition planning is not thorough, many students with learning differences are unsuccessful in both vocational and education settings (Eches & Ochoa, 2005). Further, Janiga and Costenbader (2002) expressed
that postsecondary disability service providers shared “dissatisfaction with how well high school staff informed students of the services available for students with disabilities at the college level” (p. 466) and that waiting until the student turns 14 to start transition planning was often too late. Moreover, Madaus and Shaw (2006) acknowledged that “if districts do not begin transition planning until age 16, it is possible that many students with disabilities will not be properly prepared during high school to attend college” (Disability Services, p. 18). Early, vertical planning can help students who have historically struggled with the rigors and processes of elementary and secondary education to be successful in their early integration into postsecondary education (Barnard-Brak et al., 2009; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002).

**Research Questions**

This study investigated teacher and high school student perceived effectiveness of a series of non-cognitive transition curriculum modules developed to prepare high school students with learning differences for a postsecondary education setting.

1. How did using the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules change student perspective on their ability and preparedness to attend college?

2. What impact did the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules have on teacher perception of students with learning differences transitioning to postsecondary education?

3. What is the student perception of the quality of the modules?

4. What is the teacher perception of the quality of the modules?

**Overview of Methodology**

As mentioned in chapter three, in this mixed method survey investigation, pre/post-tests, open ended questionnaires, interviews, and Likert scales were used to determine the
appropriateness of content, student and teacher knowledge of and involvement in transition planning for postsecondary education, and ease of use of eight transition modules designed to enhance the preparation of secondary students for a postsecondary educational setting. The mixed-methods research design used for this study was the explanatory sequential design. Creswell (2012) described this design as consisting “of first collecting quantitative data and then collecting qualitative data to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results” (p. 543). The rationale for this approach was that a framework or foundation would be established for the research problem through collection of quantitative data that would most likely be expanded upon by further collection of qualitative data. In this approach, the qualitative data were needed to “refine, extend, or explain the general picture” (Creswell, 2012, p. 542).

The first phase of the research study was to collect the quantitative data through a pretest from all of the student and teacher participants and, as the study progressed, qualitative data would be collected from all participants through open-ended questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data were also collected from the teacher participants after completion of each lesson plan and module. Prior to the student and teacher one-on-one interviews with open-ended questions, the quantitative posttest was administered.

Use of quantitative data in this research study was intended to cover the reality or perceptions that the problem of practice presented. As described by Yin (2009), “to explore, describe, or explain events [analyzed using quantitative methods] at a higher level” collection and use of both quantitative and qualitative data will yield appreciative benefits (p. 133). The research study utilized a pretest/posttest design for both the students and the teachers using a Likert scale to specify level of agreement with a provided statement. Next, teachers evaluated each lesson plan using a Likert scale. A Likert scale was also used by the teachers, as part of an
otherwise qualitative data collection tool, to evaluate the level of agreement with the quality of each module. The data collection tool for the lesson plan evaluation and the data collection tool for the module evaluation were used by the teacher participants only. Students evaluated each module using a qualitative tool.

The Project STEPP Transition Curriculum consisted of eight modules, with each module comprised of two to four detailed and fully planned lessons. Additionally, supplementary activity plans were provided for topics that do not require a fully developed lesson plan. Each lesson was designed to take participants approximately thirty minutes to complete, though time restrictions were contingent upon extended content that may be provided by the participating teacher.

**Study Participants**

The research study included two high schools in western North Carolina. Leadership of Buncombe County Schools allowed unrestricted access to the high schools in agreed participation of the implementation of the problem of practice research study. Study participants included two certified teachers and started with twenty-six students across four classrooms. Only one student did not complete the curriculum.

The teachers, both experienced in terms of number of years teaching, implemented the transition curriculum in two of their Academic Support classes during the spring semester of 2014. Teachers were provided a hard copy and flash drive of the complete curriculum, as well as a URL linked to the full curriculum online. Teachers were provided the curriculum in mid-February and were advised that each lesson plan should take approximately 30 minutes. The expressed expectation was that all eight modules would be taught during an eight to twelve week period of time. Teachers were provided an organized data binder that included blank data
collection tools for every lesson plan and module. Students were provided a pocket folder with eight blank module evaluation data collection tools. Data were collected from the students and teachers every other week.

After implementation of the modules and administration of the post-test, each consenting student participated in a one-on-one interview. Each teacher also participated in individual interviews. The interviews were recorded and then later transcribed by the researcher. In reviewing the data, emerging themes were identified. In an effort to validate the conclusions and generalizations derived from the data, a jury of school district practitioners reviewed the coding and thematic patterns identified by the researcher to ensure quality control and accuracy.

Findings

Research Question 1

*How did using the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules change student perspective on their ability and preparedness to attend college?* As evidenced in the Research Question Matrix and the resulting data collection, research question one was closely aligned with the Student Transition Curriculum Questionnaire and the Student Interview Questions. In examination of the pre and post responses provided in the Student Transition Curriculum Questionnaire, the areas in which student responses indicated a discernable variance was their awareness of support resources on the college campus and their participation in their IEP meetings. Before exposure to the curriculum, 50% of the students (*n* = 26) either agreed or strongly agreed that they were aware of the support resources on a college campus and the other 50% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. After exposure to the curriculum, 88% of the students (*n* = 25) either agreed or strongly agreed and only 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Further, 50% of the students (*n* = 26) agreed or strongly agreed on the pretest and 80% (*n* = 25)
either agreed or strongly agreed on the post-test that they actively participated in their IEP transition planning meetings. The results of the post-test indicate a decrease in the level of agreement.

During the interviews, student responses indicated that their perspective on their ability and preparedness to attend college had been influenced by the transition curriculum. One student acknowledged, “It changed my whole view of college because I used to think that they wouldn’t let me use the stuff in my IEP. It changed my views about college.” Another student thought that “it would be really good for everyone to take this [curriculum] because it really helped me to envision my future differently and I’m pretty sure it helped the whole class.” Finally, a though-provoking parting remark from a junior level student was, “I haven’t been very productive [in high school] and haven’t left much of a mark, but I’m glad to have participated in this project.”

**Research Question 2**

*What impact did the non-cognitive transition curriculum modules have on teacher perception of students with learning differences transitioning to postsecondary education?* As evidenced in the Research Question Matrix and the resulting data collection, research question two was closely aligned with the Teacher Transition Curriculum Questionnaire, the Teacher Transition Curriculum Module Evaluation, and the Teacher Interview Questions. Due to the small sample size, it was difficult to generalize based solely on the Teacher Transition Curriculum Questionnaire, however, it was significant to note that one of the participating teachers disagreed on the pre and post-test regarding their role in providing direct transition support for students with learning differences to plan to attend college. Based on the abovementioned data and the actual implementation of the curriculum, as evidenced by the
feedback in the Transition Curriculum Lesson Plan Evaluation Forms, the impact of the non-
cognitive transition curriculum modules on teacher perception of students with learning
differences transitioning to postsecondary education was likely unchanged in one teacher
participant. However, the other teacher engaged in continuous reflection and dialogue with the
researcher, expressing concern over the lack of preparedness of the students once they got to
high school. The teacher acknowledged that his/her role in encouraging students to consider
educational postsecondary outcomes was not as proactive as it should be and appeared genuine
in interest to work on vertical alignment with the middle grades and postsecondary educational
settings. Further, the teacher acknowledged the role of the whole school community in being
detrimental or constructive in leading students to continued educational attainment.

Research Question 3

What is the student perception of the quality of the modules? As evidenced in the
Research Question Matrix and the resulting data collection, research question three was closely
aligned with the Student Transition Curriculum Module Evaluation and the Student Interview
Questions. Based on the data collected through these instruments, all of the students found value
in the transition curriculum modules. Students provided a significant amount of feedback based
on the questions in the Student Transition Curriculum Module Evaluation. Students provided
suggestions on how to make the modules more engaging and what activities they found most and
least useful. Through their responses, the students provided insight into their academic and non-
cognitive preparedness for their transition from secondary to postsecondary settings. As
evidenced by the collected data, student perception of the quality of the modules was positive.
Research Question 4

What is the teacher perception of the quality of the modules? As evidenced in the Research Question Matrix and the resulting data collection, research question four was closely aligned with the Teacher Transition Curriculum Lesson Plan Evaluation, Teacher Transition Module Evaluation, and the Teacher Interview Questions. The teachers provided a substantial amount of data that was useful in contributing to the continued development of the curriculum. Both of the teachers acknowledged the content of the curriculum to be relevant and useful. One of the teachers proclaimed, “The first thought I had was that this is an excellent curriculum, an excellent idea . . .” The other teacher shared, “There are parts of it that I thought were wonderful, some of it I found redundant, but it was eye-opening. Passing this information [the curriculum] along is one of my goals for next year. I’m a big believer that we should share the good things we have.” As evidenced by the collected data, teacher perception of the quality of the modules was positive.

Limitations

The limitations of the study were as follows:

1. Long standing perceptions of teachers about the ability of students with learning differences to attend a postsecondary educational institution may influence their responses on the pre and post-test instruments and in the interview.

2. Student perception of their ability to attend and be successful at a postsecondary educational institute may be impacted by actions of school personnel throughout their education careers.

3. Implementation was limited to one school district, two schools, and students enrolled in an Academic Support class during the spring of 2014.

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4. Students with learning differences who were not enrolled in Academic Support during the second semester and not part of the predetermined sample were not considered in this study.

5. Longitudinal data providing exit outcomes for the participating students were not part of this study.

6. Data collection tools were reviewed, critiqued, revised, and approved by multiple experts in the field of Special Education and Educational Leadership. Despite their years of experience and professional background, student and teacher interpretation of each question cannot be guaranteed by the researcher.

7. Teacher perception of the ability of students with learning difference to attend a postsecondary educational setting could impact their perception of the quality of the transition modules.

**Implications**

This study was designed to contribute to the continued development of a non-cognitive, or non-academic, curriculum useful for the successful transition from a K-12 educational setting to a postsecondary educational setting. This study provided an analysis of a systematic, non-cognitive curricular approach to preparation for students with learning differences. In reflecting upon this problem of practice, the researcher acknowledges there are multiple implications that impact educational leaders, middle level and secondary classroom teachers, postsecondary faculty, education policy makers, and parents. Understanding the federal legislation that drives transition planning for students with learning differences and the impact of effective and proactive preparedness at the middle and secondary level would be beneficial to all stakeholders, whether directly or indirectly, involved in transition planning.
**Implications for Practice**

**Teachers.** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 and 2004 resulted in improved transition planning for students with learning disabilities (Madaus & Shaw, 2006b). As a result, more individuals with disabilities enter institutions of higher education. However, students with disabilities are still accessing college at a lower rate and they continue to face great challenges. A sustained, collaborative effort toward early transition planning should begin as early as upper elementary and should be based on comprehensive planning (Madaus & Shaw, 2006b). Identifying and coordinating specific methods to facilitate the successful inclusion of students with learning differences into postsecondary settings continues to be a relevant transition issue for high schools and colleges (Lightner, Kipps-Vaughan, Schulte, & Trice, 2012; Madaus & Shaw, 2006a, 2006b; Newman et al., 2010). Deliberate, intentional, and purposeful activities should be designed and implemented to prepare students with learning differences for successful transitioning from a secondary to postsecondary educational setting.

While students with learning differences have the ability to succeed in a postsecondary educational setting, they frequently encounter challenges from secondary school personnel, their parents, and their self-image. Students with learning differences “often deny their learning problems, wanting to distance themselves from the special education label they carried in elementary and secondary school” (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002, p. 463). As evidenced in the study, secondary school personnel were not necessarily encouraging of their students to attend a postsecondary educational setting. One teacher acknowledged the lack of preparation was both the fault of the special education and the regular education teachers, while the other articulated that his/her students “didn’t go to college” and were “ready to be done with school.” Further,
based on interview responses, several students in the study did not believe they were college material.

The findings of this study indicated that purposeful planning for transition from secondary to postsecondary educational settings for students with learning differences in this school district was marginal and lacking clear programming objectives. Compliance with the federal mandate should not depend solely on what is written on the paper in the students’ individualized plans, but rather transition planning should be an active and engaging process in which vertical alignment between educational settings is used as a blueprint. Educational leaders, teachers, and postsecondary faculty would benefit from reviewing the data collected in this study. Student and teacher feedback was substantial and provided a discerning view into secondary programming for students with learning differences.

As evidenced in this research study, student voice was powerful and rich. It provided valuable insight into student perspective. Historically, educators are known to tell students to be responsible and accountable for their education, but we frequently create barriers or other obstacles that either inhibit them or prohibit them from doing it. Teachers should engage in continuous and meaningful dialogue with their students regarding their interests, life goals, and plans for life after high school. Transition planning should be facilitated by aligning student short and long term objectives with their academic classes/schedules, extracurricular activities, and community interests. Students should be shown and taught confidence and empowerment. Lack of confidence will undoubtedly impact their ability to self-advocate, therefore, significantly impairing them for a successful secondary transition.

Through continuous and purposeful dialogue, teachers should consider the mindset of each student and whether or not it is aligned with their skill development. As indicated in the
data collected throughout this study, often times the student perception and the teacher perception of the student’s ability to attend a postsecondary educational setting did not jive. How is the student being prepared, even from elementary school, for their transition to life after high school? Are purposeful conversations taking place and intentional transition practices applied to help the student realize postsecondary educational goals?

Continuous professional development in the area of effective transition planning from a K-12 educational setting to a postsecondary educational setting is critical to successful practices. Professional development opportunities should be collaborative in nature and, in addition to secondary and district level educators, include postsecondary educators, community partners, and parents. Other suggested areas for professional development include transition planning for students with high incidence disabilities, or for those who do not have significant cognitive challenges, creating positive and inclusive classroom environments, teaching and growing self-advocacy in students, how to effectively interact with students, and the importance of student voice.

**Students.** Students with learning differences “often deny their learning problems, wanting to distance themselves from the special education label they carried in elementary and secondary school” (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002, p. 463). Students should be educated about their learning difference early in their schooling. Teaching self-advocacy and modeling the social and academic expectations desired of the student will further encourage and enable them to appropriately and actively participate in their academic and social behaviors. Through these actions, students will be empowered to change or better define behaviors that will help them find success through their secondary education and better prepare them for the transition to a postsecondary education. By empowering and positively enabling students with learning
differences, disposition and deliberate activities of the student will lend toward positive student outcomes. When provided the appropriate supports, students should be held accountable for the behavior that is necessary to bring about successful transition practices.

**Principals.** The principal is responsible for the climate and culture in the school. It is the responsibility of the principal to set the tone for the climate in the classrooms and, further, to establish parameters for the expectations from his/her staff and students. Why does it often seem that the special education program is burdensome? Perhaps principal preparation programs are lacking in educating school leaders on the intricacies that exist when schooling the hard to serve and/or hard to reach students. As school administrator confidence increases in working with students with learning differences, opportunities in the school community, increased academic achievement, and a more inclusive school environment will undoubtedly result. Additionally, vertical alignment from middle school to high school and high school to institutes of higher education is critical in delivering continuity in support, programming, and educational opportunity for our students.

**Central services.** As principals set the tone for climate and culture in their buildings, Central Service administrators set the tone for the school district as a whole. Central Services often serves as the change agent for the school district and the expectations set by district administrators is channeled into the schools. Effective collaboration and communication between regular education district-level administrators and special education administrators is paramount to bridging the gap between regular and specialized instruction. Understanding and promoting the notion that all students are “our” students often necessitates a mindset change from senior leadership down into the schools and, even further, into the classrooms. District level administrators must serve as the facilitators of change.
Implications for Research

Stakeholders who might review this study or decide to implement it in their schools would certainly be able to more closely examine and possibly discover weaknesses in the programming and support for students with learning differences. How are we encouraging our students to graduate from high school? How are we encouraging and preparing our students to consider postsecondary opportunities? What is the culture of our school? Do our teachers believe and support the idea that all children can learn? Results of the study revealed that, as educators, we have a lot to learn about providing academic and non-cognitive supports to our most fragile, but often full of potential, learners. Further implementation in secondary settings with continuous feedback from teachers and students for appropriateness and effectiveness will undoubtedly provide a sustainable transition curriculum that will help students with learning differences experience a positive transition to postsecondary education.

Considerations for a longitudinal study from implementation of the curriculum to graduation and postsecondary commitments would provide a sound recognition of the impact of the curricular instrument. Specifically, what are the student outcomes? Does the transition curriculum actually help students transition to a postsecondary educational setting? When they get there, are they able to maintain and stay enrolled? What impact did the curriculum have on their decision to self-disclose their struggles with learning? A longitudinal study would be beneficial in examining what can be taught before students graduate that will make a positive impact on their transition to postsecondary and contribute to the success of their postsecondary experience. Further, what can be taught and what must be learned by living it.

In retrospect, there are a few components of the study the researcher would encourage others to consider before attempting to replicate. The Teacher Transition Curriculum Lesson
Plan Evaluation document was designed to collect data that would contribute to the continued development of the transition curriculum. While that was the intended purpose of that specific data collection tool, feedback from teachers provided valuable insight and the integrity of instructional delivery was reflected in their responses.

The researcher discovered throughout the course of the study implementation and in review of the module data collected from students that assumptions should not be made with regards to prior knowledge. The researcher recommends that adjustments to the student Transition Curriculum Module Evaluation form be considered. Students showed difficulty in answering the question asking them what topic should be added. With limited prior knowledge, which was revealed in the results of the study, it was clear that students grappled with that question. Additionally, two questions on that same data collection tool elicited the same responses. Asking the students what could be added to make the module more appealing or engaging, then asking how the module could be improved, was repetitive and unnecessary.

Finally, enlisting a larger sample size would bring results that could be generalized to a larger population. This study involved two teachers and twenty-six students across two high schools. Implementation of the curriculum and data protocol completion was confined to a minimum of eight weeks, but no more than 12-week period of time. The researcher recommends allowing for a full semester of implementation to account for inclement weather, illnesses, and other defined absences. Further, consideration should be made for the structure and culture of the class where the curriculum is being implemented. The differences in academic and non-cognitive expectations, classroom routine, and teacher style could potentially impact the fidelity of the study.
Recommendations

Based upon the findings and implications of this study, the following recommendations for further research are respectfully presented. First, the development of a crosswalk between the transition curriculum and the Common Core, or other state adopted curriculum, would provide acceptance and ease of integration into core content and/or academic support classes. As accountability in secondary education continues to mount, teachers and educational leaders are reluctant to adopt competing or ancillary instructional materials or curriculums. Providing a validated and clearly defined crosswalk between the state standards and the transition curriculum would benefit both the students and the educators.

Second, the researcher recommends further exploration of when implementation of the transition curriculum would prove most beneficial to the students. Feedback from the study participants proposed the curriculum would be most effective if delivered in the junior and senior years, but continued investigation in this area is suggested. If the curriculum is executed in the junior year and then the non-cognitive areas addressed again in the senior year, as recommended by the participants, what transition programming could be made available as follow up to the original curriculum used? Should a transition curriculum also be developed for the middle level to guide student and teacher thinking toward postsecondary outcomes?

Next, collaboration and communication between educators at secondary educational settings and postsecondary educational settings will benefit all stakeholders involved in the transition planning process. Awareness through education will provide secondary personnel, postsecondary personnel, and parents the valuable tools necessary to provide adequate services to students with learning differences who have the potential to enroll in higher education. Developing intentional processes for educating K-12 students with learning differences on
possible post-school outcomes and opportunities should begin early and be sustained throughout their secondary schooling. The training on how to do that should be provided to special education teachers, regular education teachers, and administrators.

Finally, considerations for a longitudinal study from implementation of the curriculum to graduation and postsecondary commitments would provide a sound recognition of the impact of the curricular instrument. Tracking students who have been exposed to the curriculum as they progress through high school and, ultimately graduation could potentially strengthen the foundation and alignment of not only the curriculum, but the entire Project STEPP initiative at East Carolina University.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: STUDENT POSTTEST INTERVIEW

Interview Questions:

1. What do your teachers do to encourage you to attend a postsecondary educational institution after graduation from high school?

2. How do your teachers provide transition support for your transition from high school to a postsecondary educational setting?

3. How are your teachers preparing you for a college setting?

4. Have your teachers taught you how to access student support resources on a college campus? How?

5. How are you participating in your IEP/IEP transition meetings?

6. What impact, if any, has the Project STEPP transition curriculum had on the steps you will take during your transition experience?

7. What impact, if any, has the Project STEPP transition curriculum had on your goals and plans for the future?

8. What type of resources or help do you need to better prepare you for your transition from high school to a postsecondary educational setting?

9. How should the curriculum be made available- paper format or web-based?

10. In what setting or grade level do you think the transition curriculum could provide the most impact? Why?

11. What do you plan to do after you graduate from high school?

12. Before using the Project STEPP curriculum, what were your thoughts about attending college after high school?

13. What do you think it takes to be successful on a college campus?

14. How have you prepared academically to attend college?

15. What does it mean to you to prepare for college in non-academic areas?

16. Which student support resources do you plan to use if you attend college?

17. What questions or comments do you still have?
APPENDIX B: TEACHER POSTTEST INTERVIEW

Interview Questions:

1. How do you encourage your students to attend a postsecondary educational institution after graduation from high school?

2. How are you providing direct transition support for students with learning differences who are planning to attend a postsecondary educational setting?

3. How are you preparing high school students for the college setting?

4. How comfortable are you in helping students know how to access student support resources on the college campus?

5. How are your students actively participating in their IEP transition meetings? What does their participation look like?

6. What impact, if any, has the Project STEPP transition curriculum had on the way you support students in transition?

7. What impact, if any, has the Project STEPP transition curriculum had on the way in which you influence and encourage student goal-setting for life after high school?

8. How can Project STEPP make this curriculum a more useful tool for you and your students?

9. What type of resources or training do you feel would make you better prepared for helping students with learning differences transition from secondary to postsecondary education?

10. How should the curriculum be made available- paper format or web-based?

11. In what setting or grade level would the transition curriculum provide the most impact? Why?

12. What questions or comments do you still have?
APPENDIX C: STUDENT MODULE EVALUATION

Module Number: ______________  Student Identification Number: _____________

Transition Curriculum Module Evaluation Form

Please provide detailed responses after completion of each module. Use the back of the page for additional space.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What topic/s in this module do you think will be most useful to you? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What topic/s in this module do you think will be the least useful to you? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What topic/s would you like to see added? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was there any part of the module that doesn’t apply to you? Why do you think that?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which activity did you find most useful? What made you find it most useful?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which activity did you find least useful? Why do you feel this way?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What could be added to this module to make it more appealing or engaging?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What questions do you still have about the content covered in this module?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How could the module be improved?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D: TEACHER MODULE EVALUATION

Reviewer: ________________________________________________________________

Module Name and Number: ________________________________________________

Transition Curriculum Module Evaluation Form

Please rate each of the following questions on a scale of 1 – 4 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The At-A-Glance Module Map for this module is clear and easy to follow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The At-A-Glance Module Map for this module helped me to navigate the curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This module was comprehensive across topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The assessment options in this module were sufficient to check for student understanding of the objectives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did you make any changes to the content or supplemental materials in this module? If so, in which lesson? What did you change? Please be specific.

What topic/s in this module do you think will be most useful to the students?

What topic/s in this module do you think will be the least useful to the students?

What topic/s would you like to see added to this module?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which lesson-support resources in this module will you use most?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which lesson-support resources in this module are you least likely to use?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What lesson-support resources would you like to see added to this module?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you like about the curriculum formatting in this module?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What changes would you make to the curriculum formatting in this module?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How could this module be improved?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments about this module:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E: STUDENT-TEACHER BEFORE RATING SURVEY

STUDENTS

Please rate each of the following questions on a scale of 1–4 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Before using the Transition Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know what I would like to do after I graduate from high school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can envision myself as a student on a college campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I have what it takes to be successful in a college setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I know how to prepare for college academically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I know how to prepare for college in non-academic areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am aware of the support resources on the college campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have actively participated in my IEP transition planning meetings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Transition Curriculum Survey: STUDENTS with permission from Dr. Sarah Williams at East Carolina University.
Please rate each of the following questions on a scale of 1–4 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rating Before using the Transition Curriculum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When appropriate, I encourage my students to attend some form of college after graduation from high school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am providing direct transition support for students with learning differences to plan to attend a college setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know how to help prepare high school students for the college setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am aware of the different student-support resources that are available on the college campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel confident in my ability to help students know how to access student-support resources on the college campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My students actively participate in their IEP transition meetings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Transition Curriculum Survey: TEACHERS with permission from Dr. Sarah Williams at East Carolina University.
APPENDIX F: STUDENT-TEACHER AFTER RATING SURVEY

STUDENTS

Please rate each of the following questions on a scale of 1–4 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating After using the Transition Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know what I would like to do after I graduate from high school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can envision myself as a student on a college campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I have what it takes to be successful in a college setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I know how to prepare for college academically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I know how to prepare for college in non-academic areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am aware of the support resources on the college campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have actively participated in my IEP transition planning meetings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Transition Curriculum Survey: STUDENTS with permission from Dr. Sarah Williams at East Carolina University.
TEACHERS

Please rate each of the following questions on a scale of 1–4 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rating *After* using the Transition Curriculum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When appropriate, I encourage my students to attend some form of college after graduation from high school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am providing direct transition support for students with learning differences to plan to attend a college setting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to help prepare high school students for the college setting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am aware of the different student-support resources that are available on the college campus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident in my ability to help students know how to access student-support resources on the college campus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students actively participate in their IEP transition meetings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Transition Curriculum Survey: TEACHERS with permission from Dr. Sarah Williams at East Carolina University.
APPENDIX G: TEACHER LESSON PLAN EVALUATION

Reviewer: ________________________________________________________________

Module Name and Number: __________________________________________________

Transition Curriculum Lesson Plan Evaluation Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please rate each of the following questions on a scale of 1–4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Plan/s</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The lesson plan revolved around clear objectives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lesson plan revolved around meaningful objectives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the lesson plan seemed accurate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the lesson plan seemed thorough.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lesson plan materials were well organized.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please rate each of the following questions on a scale of 1 – 4 or Yes/No as indicated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PowerPoint Files</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was able to facilitate an engaging and meaningful conversation with my students based on the information in the PowerPoint files.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the PowerPoint file seemed accurate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the PowerPoint file seemed thorough.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content on the PowerPoint slides was clear and easy to understand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content on the PowerPoint slides was relevant to the lesson objective.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content on the PowerPoint slides was relevant to the plans/needs of my students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PowerPoint slides were well organized.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used the PowerPoint file during the delivery of the lesson.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please rate each of the following questions on a scale of 1 – 4 or Yes/No as indicated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Notes</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I did not need to spend much time gathering extra information to be able to teach this lesson.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher notes are an important resource for effectively teaching this lesson.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used the teacher notes when preparing for and/or teaching the lesson.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please rate each of the following questions on a scale of 1–4 or Yes/No as indicated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Notes</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The content of the student notes aligned with the lesson objective and materials.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the student notes was relevant to the needs of my students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The format of the student notes effectively met the needs of my students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student notes are an important resource for this lesson.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students used the notes during the lesson.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please rate each of the following questions on a scale of 1–4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities were aligned with the lesson objective.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities helped me to enable students to apply the topic of the lesson to their personal goals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities helped me to assess student accomplishment of the lesson objective.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not need to spend much time to make the activities engaging for my students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel the activities in this lesson were meaningful and a good use of my students’ time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please rate each of the following questions on a scale of 1 – 4 or Yes/No as indicated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Embedded Resources</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The embedded resources enabled me to make the content of the lesson more engaging, relevant, or current for my students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The embedded resources aligned with the lesson objectives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The embedded resources were sufficiently thorough and well-developed for helping me accomplish the lesson objectives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having the embedded resources in this lesson saved me time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used the embedded resources (links to websites, supplementary material, handouts, etc.) when preparing for or teaching this lesson.</td>
<td>Yes   No   NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please answer the following questions regarding Lesson Plan 1:

How long did it to complete Lesson 1?

Additional Feedback:
APPENDIX H: PERMISSION LETTER

Tony Baldwin, Ed.D., Superintendent

November 22, 2013

Dear Sirs,

I am pleased to provide a letter of support for Ms. Ronda Sortino regarding the implementation of her study to determine how teachers and students will perceive the effectiveness of a series of non-cognitive transition curriculum that has been developed to prepare high school students with learning differences for a future postsecondary educational setting.

Ms. Sortino currently serves as our Exceptional Children’s Service Director; a position of leadership in which she excels. We understand that the research data collected in this study will become joint property of both Project STEPP at East Carolina University and Buncombe County Schools. Both the availability of the data and the implementation of the eight transition modules of curriculum represent significant benefits for staff and students in our school system.

The exploration of non-cognitive or non-academic curriculum to enhance the success of students with varied learning differences is certainly a valid expenditure of research time. A prescribed focus on the use of such curriculum to enhance transition from the K-12 educational environment to the post-secondary level is likewise a valuable investment that potentially holds considerable gain for our students.

Sincerely,

Tony Baldwin, Ed.D.
Superintendent

TB/clj
APPENDIX I: IRB APPROVAL

IRB: Study Correspondence Letter

umcirb@ecu.edu
Thu 2/13/2014 10:04 AM
To: Sortino, Ronda Jo <SORTINOR91@students.ecu.edu>;

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office
4N:70 Brody Medical Sciences Building, Mail Stop 682
600 Mose Boulevard, Greenville, NC 27834
Office 252-744-2914, Fax 252-744-2284, www.ecu.edu/irb

Notification of Initial Approval Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: Ronda Sortino
CC: Bill Grobe
Date: 2/13/2014
Re: UMCIRB 13-002773
Secondary to Postsecondary Transition for Students with Learning Differences

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 2/13/2014 to 2/12/2015. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category #6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

There are no items to display

Please reformat the consent document so that the parent’s signature fits on the page with the study description. This will eliminate the second page that would contain only the parental signature. Once that revised document has been submitted, approval will be granted.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418
IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral) IORG0000418

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Study PI Name:
Study Co-Investigators: