

## Transcript of Conference Call Presentation

# The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition: Its Mission, Structure, and Activities

presented by:

**David R. Johnson**, Ph.D., Director  
National Center on Secondary Education and Transition

**Bonnie Jones**, Ph.D., Project Officer  
Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education



February 27, 2001

**Dr. Johnson:** I would like to welcome you. The purpose of this teleconference is to talk about who's involved in the Center and what some of the proposed activities that we are going to be looking at are. Then we can begin a discussion about the Center so you can learn a little more about what we are doing.

Before I do that though, what I would like to do — and before I even turn it over to Bonnie — is to tell you that you are going to get an overview of the Center through this presentation. We have a Web site that's up and running, and I will give you that Web site address. The Web site address is *ici.umn.edu/ncset*. Okay? That's if you would like to access the Web site while we are talking. Certainly as we conclude this, you can spend a little more time learning what information we have available on the Web site in terms of background information.

All right. Bonnie, if you would be kind enough to talk a little bit from OSEP's perspective about the Center and the direction you folks saw it going as you put this Request for Proposals forward, that would be great.

**Dr. Jones:** Thanks, David. Hi to all of you out there. It looks like we have a good cross-section from Hawaii to New Jersey and Boston to Kentucky.

I wanted to give you some background and some of the OSEP perspective on why we need the Center and how we intend the Center to operate. Every five years — at least that's been the recent history — we have completed and designed a proposal that we think will address the needs under the current laws and conditions.

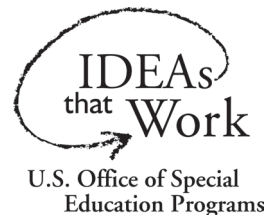
Last year we began writing — actually it was the year before — we began writing and thinking about what the conditions were in the field of special education as it relates to secondary education and transition. We wanted to find out where

the existing gaps were, and how we could close those gaps. This design-thinking matrix guided us through some of our initial planning. The other piece of our planning was greatly influenced by IDEA '97. Prior to this time, we had the NTA focus on School to Work, and we now have a requirement for access to the general curriculum.

This was a new piece for technical assistance at the secondary level. We have never had an investment in technical assistance that would focus on high school, the access to the general curriculum piece. That's the new piece to this, and it raises the stakes even higher because we are in an environment of standards-based reform and inclusion in large-scale assessments. That means that we have a large amount of work to do.

From the beginning, we really felt that this Center needed to make sure that it worked efficiently. It needed to avoid duplicating any efforts. In order to do that, we use many of our good transition skills and practices that we know about collaboration. You will find this Center should be operating over the next four years in ways that pull together networks of people and organizations. They are going to try to align the work that they do with other investments, not only in special education, but in workforce development or in general education with similar programs, similar missions so that we don't duplicate efforts.

We have a logo at OSEP, which is the Office of Special Education Programs, for those of you that aren't familiar with how we are positioned here at the federal level, and that logo is "Ideas that Work." You will see that logo on many of our investments. We have put



forth this technical assistance center to make sure that their work deals in ideas that work.

Now, how is that translated? We feel that they need to focus on those research-based practices that we have developed through significant investment over the past 15 years. Those practices should enable us to replicate those previous research-based practices. Those replications are the models that we have put forward. This year, our investment in our national programs under IDEA Part D is \$326 million plus. That's not much money when you think about the entire country. This is going to challenge this Center to work smart and to think smart as they join in these collaborations.

Now, that's not the amount for technical assistance. That's for all of the Part D program. When I look at the line item for technical assistance, which covers the range of birth through 21, that's a different number and that's down more like \$53 million. You can tell we are trying to achieve a great amount with not a lot of money.

We appreciate everyone's support out there. We have four TA&D centers, and as I said, they cover the range from birth through age 21.

We have tried to challenge the new Center with trying not to reinvent the wheel. I think I have probably made that clear by now. We have invested in several research institutes that are in their second and third year. They are five-year institutes. One is at the University of Kansas that's focusing on instructional interventions in high school classrooms; and the other is at the University of Wisconsin, and they are focusing more on systems reform in high school. Together, we think those research institutes will provide much information for this TA Center for dissemination.

We will be publishing this year — in fact, it's out now and will be reviewed later this spring — the priority that we call "Promoting What Works." This priority will synthesize the body of knowledge that we have in transition. They are not a technical assistance center, but they will be collaborating as well with the Secondary Education and Transition Center that we know at the University of Minnesota.

We have other investments that our Center can link with, and these are topical centers that OSEP has invested heavily in over the years. Probably the most familiar and the most long-standing

one is the National Center on Educational Outcomes at the University of Minnesota. They are focusing on standards-based reform in the context of statewide assessments and other large-scale assessments and including students in those assessments.

A fairly new center, the National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum, again focuses across the age span, not just on high school, but certainly their work will be important to this Center. They are at CAST in Peabody, Massachusetts. The National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports at the University of Oregon as well will be an important center for topical information. We are hoping that this Center will be a one-stop shop for folks who are interested in the issues at the secondary education transition level.

A couple of other issues at the federal level you might be interested in: we recently funded a youth leadership project under the directorship of Lori Powers at the Oregon Health Services University. They will be collaborating with this Center in the Youth and Family Services Network.

Finally, we have funded another national longitudinal study. We are calling it the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2). This is a 10-year longitudinal study. Mary Wagner is the principal investigator on this project. We feel very fortunate that she's agreed to come on again for a second time. As I said, it's a 10-year longitudinal study, and it's following a selected group of secondary students with disabilities, ages 13-17. This study will follow them from the beginning. The NLTS2 will provide a national picture of experiences and achievements of students in special education as they transition from high school to adult life. We feel that the Center will play an important role in disseminating those findings from the NLTS2.

Now, all this doesn't happen by chance. We have tried to prioritize so that these large investments collaborate. We can't operate in insular types of ways. We expect the Center to partner with the regional resource centers in their work with the states to improve transition results and any other technical assistance arms of the federal government that we feel would make a good impact.

In summary, we would challenge the Center to disseminate research-based practices to build on prior investments. We want them to use cutting-

edge technology and to create innovative and fresh approaches to technical assistance. They need to make a measurable difference. We expect them to use a collaborative approach to leveraging resources. I think I used the word one-stop shop — to become a recognized national source of information assistance for all stakeholders.

David, we have given you and your partners a huge task. From what we have seen so far with last week's meeting of the networks, you are off to a great start.

**Dr. Johnson:** Thank you, Bonnie. Let me start by saying how what Bonnie was talking about comes into play or how we put that into place. We have certain strategies, and I want to cover some of those. Again, the Web site contains a more in depth overview of all of this.

OSEP, NIDDR, the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, and other agencies fund many of the centers that are out there. All have and maintain national investments that one way or another affect special education students at the secondary education level. All of this becomes an open environment in which to network, to gain rapport, and to try to become that one-stop shop, if you will — a Center that people can become familiar with as a source of information on a number of key topics.

First of all, let's talk about who is involved in this organization. You have been introduced to many people and the organizations they are involved in. As partners in this organization, you may be aware, we at the University of Minnesota have the lead program called the Institute on Community Integration. In that organization is a 15-year history of working with the National Transition Network, working together with the University of Illinois as a subcontractor on the National Transition Alliance, working principally on school-to-work issues.

- The National Center on Educational Outcomes is part of what we have had at Minnesota for the last 10 years. We have established a history in this area, and we are going to build on that as we move forward. We can't do it alone, so we are really enjoying the support of strong nationally focused partners.
- If you were on the conference call last month, you will be familiar with the National Center for

the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports at the University of Hawaii. Bob Stodden is the director. The center is a research and training center funded through NIDDR. The program's principal objective is to take a look at the transition of kids into participation in a variety of two-year and four-year degree granting programs. They are a major partner as we take on initiatives. In other words, access to the general education curriculum should be meaningful obviously in terms of achieving then those outcomes in terms of easy access or ready access to postsecondary education. They will be dealing with many of these issues.

- We are operating with a group not unfamiliar to many of you on the phone here called TransCen, Inc. They are a service provider. They have worked on many OSEP transition-related kinds of demonstration projects. They have firsthand knowledge on a large number of issues concerning secondary education participation and workforce development issues for youth-supported employment and other varieties of vocational technical education programming. Rich Luecking and his group work with us.
- We have brought on the Institute for Educational Leadership's Center for Workforce Development in Washington, D.C. This is a group that has worked substantially in terms of bringing together large groups or networks of policy-related and program-related organizations at the national level to start thinking through things like after school, what's next. They have been very much involved in looking at the high school curriculum and trying to make connections between the academic or content standards and the occupational work skills standards. They have had a very strong leadership role in this, are very well-recognized nationally for this. They bring to the table much of what we are trying to build in terms of national capacity for the Center through networking within a larger arena of general education and general workforce development programs. We are very excited about their participation.
- A good friend of ours and an ally that we have worked with for over, I would say, 25 years for myself, is PACER Center out of Minneapolis,

Minnesota. As you are aware, PACER is now FAPE, one of the four partnership projects. They are also the National Parent Alliance. We are very happy to have that group on with Paula Goldberg and others.

- We are working with the National Association of State Directors of Special Education. They are a natural link, of course, to the state directors and their concerns over secondary education preparation.
- The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs is a partner. This is a very important link for us because Bonnie joins us on routine planning meetings and many other matters. We list OSEP as a direct partner.

A couple of other organizations that are very important in this picture as we have rolled out our own strategy:

- One is the University of Kansas, the Center for Research on Learning. This is Don Deshler and his operation there. Don has consented to work with us very closely in terms of planning, designing, and conceptualizing part of the secondary education curriculum area.
- A second organization Bonnie mentioned is the University of Oregon, the Center on Self Determination. Essentially what is happening is our proposed youth activities are now integrally related to or have become one with this National Center on Self Determination. That's an excellent example of the networking that Bonnie was talking about. Why replicate or duplicate things when there are already existing centers with sources of information such as the National Center on Self Determination.

That's a long list of partners. In addition to them, I will show you some other large attempts to move forward with and even engage others in certain strategies. At the outset, we did an accumulative analysis or summary of what this Center should be about. We have four major strands of concern. We are calling these issues of national significance. Each of these issues runs very deep. Let me capture the four points.

1. One is certainly what Bonnie talked about in terms of changes within the IDEA '97. The

change in general education practice and professional expectations for standards has created access to the general education curriculum. Those of us who have been on what we have called the transition movement are familiar with the work that has gone on for 15+ years. We have seen how it has broadened our role in relation to looking at the curriculum in general education programs as well as in trying to work within the full spectrum of middle school to high school programming which includes opportunities from service learning to brain-based learning to other appropriate forms of transition preparation. This is a large area of concern, and there's plenty of work to be done.

2. The second area relates to the achievement of a positive post-school outcome as a result. Here is where we tap into issues of post-secondary education, employment, and independent living.
3. Also, we wanted to lead and engage students and families in the whole planning and design of our Center. We wanted to give students and their families opportunities to be involved in this process. We have a priority or a strand that relates specifically to how we engage students and their families in meaningful ways related to their participation in the framework of general education. We are trying to make sure we look very broadly across the full spectrum of educational opportunity.
4. The fourth point is something that shouldn't be unusual or new to anyone here which is the issue of improved system linkages and service coordination.

Those four strands will serve as an organizing structure for what I will talk about in terms of an effort to organize resources, organizations, and issues at a national level. As Bonnie mentioned, OSEP's challenges are many.

1. One was to function in terms of this national resource coordination leadership function; the one-stop shop bringing together large networks of people. I will talk about that in a second.
2. The second point was to deliver technical assistance. We have a variety of strategies I will mention in relation to that.
3. The third point is dissemination of those particular strategies with some attention to evaluation or

at least the interest in monitoring some large-scale issues going on in the country. We certainly want to tie into NLTS2 and other studies that are being conducted right now and to share information with policymakers and professionals across the country.

We have put into place a series of what might be regarded as guiding principles. I am not going to belabor them, but some of them are pretty evident in a Center like this. One principle is that we want to carry out activities of the Center within the largest possible arena within general education and the mainstream workforce development programming in this country. This leads us to conversations and discussions about the work of general education and other labor and economic development programs.

Secondly, we really want to approach this in a capacity-building way. In other words, not trying to be all things to all people but rather seeking out others who have greater capacity to deliver these things and not trying to replicate, duplicate, or attempt to do it ourselves. We want to do this in relation to technical assistance or any outreach functions. We would certainly try to do this in the broadest possible sense of partnerships with others. I don't think there's anything we are going to be doing alone or independent of another organization or many organizations in most cases. We want to do this, as Bonnie mentioned, emphasizing a research-based practice framework, building the basis of technical assistance around what we know from research in terms of secondary education, curriculum assessment, postsecondary education programming, employment practices, etc. There's plenty of research that's been done over the past 20-25 years.

Our audiences are very broad, and part of our strategy is to list these audiences for you: state-level education reform and systems change people, special and general education teachers, related school professionals, those working in community-based programs, workforce development agencies and initiatives used for disabilities and families, a national network of technical assistance providers, federal agencies, and national organizations. I believe that's everybody.

Part of the strategy is to make sure that we become known for a certain set of activities that we can orchestrate and perform well. We are invest-

ing in a strategy of holding meetings to engage our technical assistance networks in a planning effort to help define a direction for the Center. We are going to do this in one-year to two-year timeframes.

We built a priority theme consensus and then laid out activities around these issues. We want to become known as a Center for the things that we are targeting and do well within this large picture that Bonnie painted. We also have to be cautious about not trying to be all things to all people. We don't want to be known as a Center for what we're not doing rather than for what we're doing.

In regard to the national resource coordination charge, I think this is one of the largest pieces in this whole Center. We have established around each of those four issues of national significance what are called technical assistance networks. Now, the membership of these networks is pretty diffuse.

In other words, we have organized approximately 40+ other organizations that will be participants, let's say 10 each within each of the four, that are going to be groups that are convened and are used as a primary network to deal with issues such as secondary education assessment and curriculum issues. We have a wide range of groups, from the University of Kansas' Don Deshler, Martha Thurlow from the National Center on Educational Outcomes, and others. We have the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education. We have the Reach Group. We have the secondary education center, RISER, out of Madison, Wisconsin. We have a very strong group of people who are conducting and involved in research around curriculum and assessment issues.

These groups are charged with a very critical task, and it's really to help us to clearly understand what the issues are in relation to, let's say, secondary education and assessment to try to help us to develop and conceptualize our approach to these issues and try to reach a consensus around the two or three priorities that we can begin to work on as a group.

These technical assistance networks are part of a strategy to build coalitions, if you will, or networks of organizations that begin to think about these issues with us but also can be drawn upon for part of the technical assistance. They can be used to help share information about the work that they are doing, and to be a technical assistance network so

people can identify with these organizations, what they bring to the table in terms of information and technical assistance.

This is a large charge. We do that across each of the other three issues of national significance as well. We formed these networks, which are all operating. We are coordinating across these networks trying to figure out what the overlapping issues are.

Now, how do you orchestrate some central themes around these centers and provide people a porthole through which they can begin to access some of this information in a useful way? Beyond the formation of these technical assistance networks are the strategies we are going to use. You know, people have been in the business a long time like many of you out there, and we are charged with coordinating Capacity Building Institutes. These institutes are going to be run regionally. We are going to do several a year around some of the key issues now coming out of these technical assistance networks.

I would keep posted if you are out there looking for what's coming up. On the Web site you will notice there's information. There's a place to go to which will talk about upcoming events and things of that nature. Look for these and think ahead. We welcome wide participation in these.

They will be announced on the Web site along with national teleconferences like this one. In Years 2 and 4, we are going to be conducting national summits in Washington, D.C. We are now beginning to put together some thoughts around a group that will come together to plan those summits.

We are looking at creating some publications to advertise the Center. These might be tools for improving practice or briefs for teachers, parents, and students. The Policy Brief series was always, I think, welcomed. We are going to continue to explain or break apart federal law as it relates specifically to secondary education and kids with disabilities. We are going to do a great deal of technical assistance.

This is a very important distinction between this Center and other centers that have been funded in the past. Many of the other centers have had a more clearly defined target population. I know for the National Transition Network we had the State Systems Change Program, and the technical assistance role it had was very specific to people who were managing those grants. The National Transi-

tion Alliance has had a fairly broad-based appeal or broad-based grouping, but more and more the school-to-work state systems projects were the focus of things. They have a focused basis way to approach it. This Center has a larger base to it in terms of who it is targeted toward. We are going to have to be, I think, very careful how we do that.

Our evaluation activities are underway. I don't want to talk too much about those. We are basically going to work and share information with OSEP in relation to outcomes which Bonnie mentioned already.

Folks, I am going to try to leave it there, and see if there are questions. You can direct them either to Bonnie or me. I would be happy to answer anything you have thought about as we have been talking here. Any questions?

**Janice:** Hi, this is Janice.

**Dr. Johnson:** Hi, Janice.

**Janice:** Hey, this really is such a broad-based effort. You have an amazing challenge ahead of you. I was wondering if there is a way that the Center is going to try and make an impact at the local level, and if so, what specific activities you might see yourself doing?

**Dr. Johnson:** There are several strategies: one is what we can do ourselves, and we are trying to use technology as much as we possibly can to reach out to people. We are trying to work on a variety of Web-based strategies that we haven't used in the past so it's not such a flat base of information but more interactive. Approaches to it where people come on and they can find their place on the Web site and go to it and use it as a search engine for themselves for information that would be current and relevant to their needs.

**Ed:** RRCs are certainly charged with a clear responsibility, and that is to respond to state directors of special education in relation to IDEA implementation. I think you have looked at those issues across the country yourself, I know you have done some research and you have done some thinking about the monitoring dilemma. I think you have looked at the implementation problems and difficulties that have persisted in relation to the IDEA transition requirements. I think you have seen a clear role for the RRCs in relation to that. We would be interested in partnering into what you people are thinking about

and look for leadership from you guys on these issues if that's a priority among your RRCs to address these issues. I am sure it is. I think that we need to be looking for leadership from you to try to ask us how we fit into the picture rather than try to come up with our own stance on what should be done from that perspective for the RRCs and more or less see if we can support and make connections with you on what it is you are trying to accomplish, be it the dissemination of information, co-hosting workshops, or activities that might be central to working with state education agency staff or others that might be appropriate. I would imagine that the people in the other RRCs would want a similar kind of partnering relationship as we have had with NTN in the past.

**Dr. Johnson:** We have invited two of the RRCs to become members of the technical assistance networks to date. We certainly have strong relationships with the others as well. We are looking forward to that relationship, Ed.

**Ed:** Likewise.

**Dr. Johnson:** Good, good. Other questions? I know we laid out so much information about the Center. Believe me, we have had a long time to study it to try to figure this out. It must be overwhelming on the front end just taking it in for the first time in terms of the scope of it. Any other questions?

**Dr. Jones:** You did a good job, David.

**Dr. Johnson:** I don't know. Have we overwhelmed them? I tell you what, guys, if there are no more questions, what I would like to do is invite you to, again, go to the Web site, give us a call so we can make connections with you. We will be looking forward to seeing you. I think about everybody who has indicated their name here I have met in one way or another and I look forward to continuing these efforts.

Now, some of you may — I know I have had this question asked before, and that is, will there be any more project directors' meetings? The answer to that is that the traditional project director meetings for OSEP-funded programs will not be held in that manner. Basically it is CEC that does that now, Bonnie, or is it?

**Dr. Jones:** There are several different contractors that we use, and CEC chooses the research project directors. We are tending to use contractors for those kinds of meetings. Many of the transi-

tion grants that we have had in the past were model demonstration projects, and those fall under our research program now. Which program your transition project is funded under typically defines which project directors' meeting you would go to.

**Dr. Johnson:** Good. We are trying to make sure that we are widely communicating about the national summits and providing other forums for individuals to come together who have been very important participants in those events in the past. We will keep posting information on the Web site about upcoming events around the country, and we will hopefully join many of you in these subsequent discussions and meetings and activities. Please let us know.

Let me know what your thoughts are about how we can be useful in doing this. We want this to be an inclusive center; that is, for people to feel welcome to bring ideas forward and to challenge us in terms of how we are doing. I think we learn by that. I think it would be great exposure for us to make sure that we are inviting people to be a part of what we are doing. Okay?

Well, it's time to quit. I guess if there aren't any more questions, going, going, gone, I guess, we will say goodbye and the next one will be in, I believe, in March. The topic — if I can remember the topic — I will have to go look that one up.

**Dr. Jones:** It's on health issues, David. It will be on March 20 at 1:00 p.m. Central Time. The title is "What's Health Got to do with Transition? Insight and Innovative Programs." Richard Horne of the President's Taskforce on the Employment of Adults with Disabilities will host it. It will feature Patience White, M.D., Executive Director of the Adolescent Employment Readiness Center at Children's Hospital in Washington, D.C.; and Tom Gloss, the Director of Healthy and Ready to Work Federal Initiatives. That's HHS Maternal and Child Health Bureau. And Patti Hackett; she's a project coordinator of Disability Studies and Services at the Academy for Educational Development, also of Washington, D.C.

**Dr. Johnson:** Good. That sounds like a very strong topic. I appreciate your being on board here, and Bonnie, thank you very much. Take care.

**Dr. Jones:** Take care.

Audio teleconferences are coordinated by National Transition Alliance and National Center on Secondary Education and Transition.

This transcript is copyright free. Please duplicate and share with others. For a copy of this or other transcripts, contact us at:



National Center on Secondary Education and Transition  
Institute on Community Integration  
6 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE  
Minneapolis MN 55455  
(612) 624-2097 (phone)  
(612) 624-9344 (fax)  
ncset@umn.edu (email)  
<http://www.ncset.org> (web)

For more information on the National Transition Alliance:



National Transition Alliance  
Transition Research Institute at Illinois  
University of Illinois  
113 Children's Research Center  
51 Gerty Drive  
Champaign, IL 61820  
(217) 333-2325 (phone)  
(217) 244-0851 (fax)