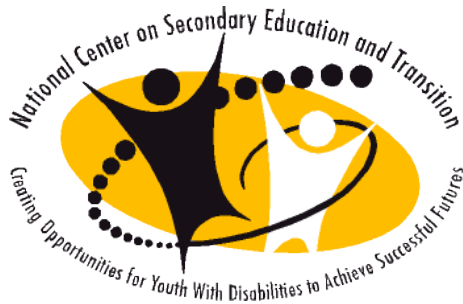


National Center on Secondary Education and Transition and  
Division on Career Development and Transition, Council for Exceptional Children

present a Capacity Building Institute

# Transition, Secondary Education Reform, and Access to the General Education Curriculum

October 10, 2001  
Denver, CO



## Institute Proceedings

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## Background

The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) and the Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) hosted a National Capacity Building Institute on *Transition, Secondary Education Reform, and Access to the General Education Curriculum*, October 10, 2001, at the Marriott City Center in Denver, Colorado.

Staff from NCSET and DCDT designed this institute to promote discussion among professionals, policymakers, employers, parents, and individuals with disabilities concerning current and future dilemmas facing secondary education and transition services nationally. Challenges impacting transition and secondary education reform for students with disabilities include:

- Participating in the full range of general education curricula and learning experiences;
- Increasing accountability through using valid and accurate assessments for high school graduation decisions;
- Clarifying the impact of alternate diplomas on students with disabilities;
- Ensuring full access and participation in postsecondary education, employment, and independent living opportunities;
- Supporting self-determination through student and family participation; and
- Improving collaboration and systems linkages at all levels.

The one-day institute was an opportunity for key stakeholders in special education, higher education, school-to-work, state departments of education, transition services, parent and family advocacy groups, and vocational rehabilitation to examine policies and innovative strategies in the field. Panel discussions focused on current practices and emerging trends affecting access to the general education curriculum; high school reform; professional development/teacher training; high stakes testing; and practitioner advocacy at the local level.

In the following proceedings you will find the institute agenda, an overview of the institute purpose, discussion questions, and a summary of the institute. This summary highlights the general expert sessions. At the end of the summary, you will also find biographical information for the speakers.

**David R. Johnson**  
NCSET

**Ann T. Clapper**  
NCSET

**Michael Wehmeyer**  
DCDT

## Institute Agenda

|       |   |  |
|-------|---|--|
| 8:00  | Registration and Continental Breakfast  |  |
| 9:00  | Welcome   | <p>David R. Johnson, <i>Director, NCSET</i></p> <p>Michael Wehmeyer, <i>Associate Professor, Department of Special Education and Associate Director, Beach Center on Disability, University of Kansas; Chair, DCDT Research Committee</i></p> <p>Bonnie Jones, <i>Project Officer, U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Special Education Programs</i></p> <p>Ann T. Clapper, <i>Associate Director, NCSET</i></p> |
| 9:30  | <p>Panel: <i>Intended and Unintended Consequences of High Stakes Assessments for Secondary Age Students with Disabilities</i></p> <p><i>Large Scale and Statewide Assessments for Students with Disabilities: Current Knowledge and Implications for Transition</i></p>   | <p>Moderator/Reactor: David R. Johnson</p> <p>Martha Thurlow, <i>Director, National Center on Educational Outcomes, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota</i></p>  |
| 10:30 | Break   |  |
| 10:45 | <i>The Consequences of Teacher Decision-making in Special Education Students' Participation and Accommodation in High Stakes Tests</i>  | Lizanne DeStefano, <i>Professor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign</i>  |
| 11:30 | Participant Questions and Participation   |  |
| 12:00 | Lunch   |  |
| 1:00  | <i>Access to the General Education Curriculum – OSEP's Policies, Goals, and Future Challenges.</i>  | Lou Danielson, <i>Director, Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Dept. of Education</i>  |
| 2:00  | <i>The New American High Schools Initiative – Challenges and Opportunities for Serving All Students</i>   | Sharon Olson, <i>Assistant Principal, Loveland (CO) High School</i>  |
| 3:00  | Break   |  |
| 3:15  | <p>Panel: <i>Future Directions and Comments on the Day</i></p> <p><i>DCDT's Role in Transition, Secondary School Reform, and Access to the General Curriculum</i></p> <p><i>Implications for Professional Development and Teacher Training in Transition</i></p> <p><i>Curricular and Instructional Issues for Transition as a Result of the Access to the General Curriculum Mandates</i></p> <p><i>Implications for Policy and Practice and the Role of NCSET</i></p> | <p>Diane Bassett, <i>Past President, DCDT; Associate Professor, Division of Special Education, University of Northern Colorado</i></p> <p>Carol Kochhar-Bryant, <i>Professor, Department of Special Education, George Washington University</i></p> <p>Michael Wehmeyer</p> <p>David R. Johnson</p>  |
| 4:30  | Wrap-Up and Final Words   | David R. Johnson, Michael Wehmeyer   |

## Discussion Questions

1. What are current OSEP policies and future goals concerning access to the general education curriculum?
2. What are the lessons being learned in the New American High Schools Initiative relative to involving youth with disabilities?
3. What are the implications of high stakes assessment for secondary age youth with disabilities?
4. How can changes in professional development and teacher training enhance local efforts in transition, secondary education, and access to the general education curriculum?
5. What can practitioners do to enhance local efforts in transition, secondary education reform, and access to the general education curriculum?
6. How can we help students with disabilities meet state and LEA standards and still address the IDEA transition requirements?
7. What are other issues and challenges in secondary education and transition that you feel must be addressed over the next several years?

# Institute Summary

## Welcome

David R. Johnson, Michael Wehmeyer, Bonnie Jones, and Ann Clapper welcomed the Capacity Building Institute participants and briefly discussed the following Institute topics:

- Overview of OSEP policies and goals concerning access to the general education curriculum;
- Inclusion of youth with disabilities in the New American High Schools movement;
- High stakes testing and students with disabilities; and
- Transition services – next steps and future directions.

## **Panel: Intended and Unintended Consequences of High Stakes Assessments for Secondary Age Students with Disabilities**

Martha Thurlow, Director of the National Center on Educational Outcomes at the University of Minnesota, discussed current research in the area of large-scale and statewide assessments for students with disabilities. Dr. Thurlow highlighted the following practical implications of the research:

- Large-scale and state assessments are in all states, and exhibit tremendous variability in purpose, nature, and impact on secondary education students with disabilities. It is important to know the specific context that applies to individual students.
- Many positive benefits have been associated with the participation of secondary students with disabilities in assessment and accountability systems, including the opportunities that they provide for students to access the general curriculum.
- Transition efforts can be integrated with standards-based curriculum, testing, and accountability in ways that improve educational outcomes for students.
- Good decision-making, active involvement of students and parents, and appropriate use of accommodations, alternate assessments, and alternatives to assessment create best practices for secondary education and transition.

Lizanne DeStefano, Professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, discussed research on the impact of teacher decision-making on special education students' participation and accommodation in high-stakes tests. Her research findings indicate that prior to training, participation and accommodation patterns did not appear to be based on the general curriculum or the nature of the instructional accommodations used. In addition, there was no reference to state standards or state assessment results in IEPs.

She also noted that after training, teachers:

- Made more individualized decisions with closer links to the general curriculum and instructional accommodations.
- Expressed higher confidence in their ability to make participation and accommodation decisions for individual students but worried that the "right" participation decisions might not be feasible in their districts because of political or logistical reasons.
- Viewed the IEP as the major vehicle for making and documenting participation and accommodation decisions. However, there remained a gap between what was stated on the IEP and what occurred on the day of testing.

Lou Danielson, Director, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education, commented on factors affecting access to the general education curriculum:

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 contain several provisions directed at providing students with disabilities greater access to the general education curriculum and call for a broader focus in educational planning.
- Access to the general curriculum is dependent in part on pedagogically skilled educators, instructional materials that are accessible to students, and effective instructional strategies.
- Joint participation and leadership of general and special educators in curriculum and standards development, professional development, resource allocation, and instruction are critical in helping students with disabilities access the general education curriculum and acquire skills that will better prepare them for life after school.

Sharon Olson, Assistant Principal at Loveland High School in Colorado, reflected on the New American High Schools Initiative. She noted several challenges and opportunities in meeting the needs of *all* students, including:

- Educational reform doesn't have to be costly. Reallocation of existing dollars, effective use of time, and the creation of partnerships help a district to achieve its goals.
- Reform is continual. New American High Schools strive constantly for improvement in education by continually gathering information about the effectiveness of their reforms and determining the impact that these reforms are having on student outcomes.
- While most educators in New American High Schools have learned to embrace change and deal with the challenges that change produces, educational "rocks" exist everywhere. Districts committed to comprehensively reforming their high schools learn how to navigate around the obstacles that are an inevitable part of the school improvement process.
- Creativity in budgeting, time, and creating partnerships is essential to making all this work.

### **Panel: Future Directions and Comments on the Day**

Diane Bassett, Past President of DCDT and faculty at the University of Northern Colorado, discussed DCDT's involvement in transition, secondary school reform, and access to the general curriculum. She highlighted DCDT's observation that the field is losing many transition coordinators. This issue, coupled with what seems to be a move away from transition competencies to academic competencies, has resulted in a loss of "voice" for transition.

Further, Dr. Bassett noted the involvement of several key DCDT personnel in the following action steps:

- DCDT revisited its strategic plan to explore how to better collaborate and advocate for individuals with disabilities.
- DCDT has provided advocacy and leadership for transition by inviting a panel of experts to speak at CEC, co-hosting this Capacity Building Institute, and organizing the DCDT national conference.
- DCDT is also generating or supporting various publications and position statements. These include position papers on standards and accessing the general education curriculum (Michael Wehmeyer, lead), personnel preparation and transition competencies (Ginger Blalock, lead), and family involvement in the transition process (Donna Wandry, lead).

Future goals for DCDT include:

- Preparing a monograph on the transition process and standards-based education for publication by CEC (Carol Kochhar-Bryant and Diane Bassett, co-editors).
- Continuing to advocate for individuals and families, provide professional development, collaborate with other agencies and organizations, and provide awareness and understanding. DCDT hopes it can promote a logical conceptual framework for secondary education and services that defines the transition process as foundational to all education and services provided. This foundation would provide reasonable access to general education and foster collaboration between families, general education professionals, special education professionals, and community linkages through the application and implementation of holistic transition planning.

Carol Kochhar-Bryant, faculty at George Washington University, commented on professional development and teacher training in transition. She highlighted several dilemmas and critical issues:

- Transition implementation challenges have resulted from system problems, resource problems, organizational structure problems, and other barriers. All of these problems are fundamentally personnel development issues.
- Secondary teachers say they are not getting enough help to implement reforms. The help they need includes adequate access to curriculum materials and teaching units that match standards, information about how their students are doing on standardized tests, support systems for students who fall behind, and preservice and inservice training linked to standards.
- Special educators claim that neither adequate preservice nor inservice training is available for teachers, related services personnel, or administrators to prepare them for coordinated transition services or to align transition with the secondary education curriculum.
- Qualified and prepared personnel are needed in order to to successfully integrate and implement issues such as aligning academic, career-vocational, and transition curriculum at the local level and aligning a comprehensive system of personnel development, transition systems change and improvement goals, and secondary reform goals at the state level.

Dr. Wehmeyer, member of DCDT's Research Committee and a faculty member at the University of Kansas, highlighted several challenges affecting transition for youth with disabilities:

- IEP team members need training and support to design an appropriate curriculum that is based on both the general curriculum and unique student learning needs, and addresses a broad array of student outcomes, including transition-related outcomes.
- Students with and without disabilities, their families, and teachers must be empowered to make curriculum design and standard-setting decisions, be involved in district and campus-level decisions to implement those standards, and receive support to make student-based curriculum decisions that incorporate both the general curriculum and unique student learning needs.
- We must work with those who are writing state and local standards to ensure that they are written in such a way that students with a wide array of abilities can show progress and to ensure that they include a wide array of content areas, including transition-related content.
- Transition personnel must become more actively involved in secondary school reform efforts and must move beyond an emphasis only on students with disabilities to include a focus on the need for transition-related planning, services, and supports for *all* students.

Schoolwide implementation of universally-designed transition-related materials and instructional activities to benefit all students in secondary education, including students with disabilities, is needed.

## **Appendix A: Speakers' Biographical Information**

### **Diane S. Bassett**

Diane S. Bassett is Associate Professor in the Division of Special Education at the University of Northern Colorado. Her work with adolescents and adults has spanned over 25 years in her roles as classroom teacher, special education teacher, state department consultant, and university professor. Dr. Bassett is Immediate Past President of DCDT. She is currently Project Director for a federally-funded personnel preparation grant that blends transition competencies with standards-based education for students with high incidence disabilities.

### **Lou Danielson**

Lou Danielson is Director of the Research to Practice Division in the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U. S. Department of Education. Dr. Danielson was awarded a doctorate in educational psychology from Pennsylvania State University in 1976. His career spans several roles in education including secondary school science and mathematics teacher, school psychologist, and university instructor. For the past 23 years, Dr. Danielson has held leadership roles at OSEP and is currently responsible for the discretionary grants program, including research, technical assistance and dissemination, personnel preparation, technology, and parent training priorities, national evaluation activities, and other major policy-related studies. He has served in numerous research and policy roles across the Department and has represented OSEP in major school reform activities. A frequent contributor to professional journals, Dr. Danielson has published extensively and is a frequent speaker at national and international conferences and events focusing on special education. His particular areas of interest include policy implementation and national evaluation studies.

### **Lizanne DeStefano**

Lizanne DeStefano holds a doctorate in educational psychology and trained and practiced as a clinical and school psychologist at Yale Child Study Center. She is a former Fellow of the Bush Center for Child Development and Social Policy, Yale University. She received an NIMH postdoctoral fellowship in 1989 to study advanced statistical methodologies. Currently, she is Professor of Educational Psychology, Associate Dean for Research, and Director of the Bureau of Educational Research at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Dr. DeStefano's research interests include the evaluation of innovative programs, multi-site initiatives, and programs serving special populations, such as students with disabilities and those at risk for academic failure. Dr. DeStefano has conducted many large-scale evaluations of programs serving children and youth over the last decade. In 1998, she was Principal Investigator for an evaluation of the NCAA's National Youth Sports Program, which serves more than 10,000 poor minority youth each summer in approximately 100 programs nationwide. Currently, she is Co-Principal Investigator with James Shriner on OSEP-funded Project PAR: Participation, Accommodation, and Reporting of Students with Disabilities on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test. She recently co-edited a special issue on democratic, deliberative evaluation for *New Directions in Evaluation* and has published more than 50 articles, chapters, and books on evaluation, special education, and policy. In 1995, she was named a University Scholar.

### **David R. Johnson**

David R. Johnson, Ph.D. is Director of the Institute on Community Integration (UAP) and Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Policy and Administration, College of Education



and Human Development at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Johnson is also Director of the newly funded National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, of the Office of Special Education Programs, U. S. Department of Education. His research interests include investigations of the post-school outcomes and status of young adults with disabilities, evaluations concerning access and participation of young adults with disabilities in postsecondary education programs, studies on systems change, cost-benefit analysis, and other policy-related research. Dr. Johnson has also served as consultant to several national, regional, and state organizations including NIDRR, National School-to-Work Office, Rehabilitation Services Administration, National Alliance of Business, Council for Exceptional Children, and several Congressional Committees. Dr. Johnson has published numerous journal articles, book chapters, research monographs, and technical reports and products on topics concerning secondary education, special education, rehabilitation, transition, school-to-work, and other themes related to the priorities of this research effort.

### **Bonnie Jones**

At the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, Bonnie is responsible as a federal partner for several national centers that focus on improving results for students with disabilities in high schools. Bonnie earned her doctorate at Teachers College, Columbia University and teaches at the Graduate School of Education, George Mason University (adjunct faculty). Her research interests include the study of whole-school reform in high schools. Prior to coming to the U.S. Department of Education, Bonnie was responsible for career development and transition programs in district and state level positions in Virginia, Hawaii, and Kansas, in addition to holding teaching and educational leadership positions in secondary schools. As a District Transition Coordinator she implemented numerous innovative career development and transition initiatives that were adopted statewide. She developed and coordinated a multi-agency school employment project that won national recognition from the U.S. Department of Labor. She was awarded the State Vocational Educator of Year Award in Hawaii, and in Kansas she revived the state chapter of DCDT and served as its president. In 1990, Bonnie received the "Outstanding Contribution to Transition" award from the Kansas State Council for Exceptional Children.

### **Carol Kochhar-Bryant**

Dr. Kochhar-Bryant is Professor of Special Education at the George Washington University. For 15 years, she has developed and directed Doctoral Leadership, Educational Specialist, and Masters training programs and taught doctoral courses in special education legal issues and public policy, systemic change and leadership, research and development methods, and interdisciplinary planning and development. She also consults with public school districts, state departments of education, and federal agencies. Dr. Kochhar-Bryant has collaborated in international special education research with the World Bank. Dr. Kochhar-Bryant's research interests include research and evaluation of state systemic reform initiatives, most recently the Office of Special Education's State Improvement Grants initiative authorized by the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act. Other relevant evaluation experiences include evaluation of the special education Federal Regional Resource Centers and network, special education and transition services in a 22-site correctional education system in Pennsylvania, personnel preparation programs, and a variety of cross-categorical and community-based services, including case management, residential services, adult vocational services, institutional services, respite care services, and JTPA employment training programs. Dr. Kochhar-Bryant is widely published in areas of disability policy, leadership development, interagency service coordination, career-vocational programming, and school-to-work transition for special learners. Dr. Kochhar-Bryant is past President of DCDT of the International Council for Exceptional Children.

### **Sharon Olson**

Sharon Olson is Assistant Principal at Loveland High School. She has held a variety of positions as an educator including Curriculum Specialist, School-to-Career Coordinator, and Activities Director. Sharon was also a teacher for 18 years. She received her B.S. from Mankato (MN) State University and her M.S. from Colorado State University. Sharon has been involved with New American High Schools for seven years since Thompson School District took a bold step in education reform by instituting ambitious district standards and assessments.

### **Martha Thurlow**

Martha Thurlow, Ph.D. is the Director of the National Center on Educational Outcomes at the University of Minnesota. In this position, she addresses the implications of contemporary U. S. policy and practice for students with disabilities, including national and statewide assessment policies and practices, standards-setting efforts, and graduation requirements. Dr. Thurlow has conducted research in special education for the past 30 years in a variety of areas, including assessment and decision making, learning disabilities, early childhood education, dropout prevention, effective classroom instruction, and integration of students with disabilities in general education settings.

### **Michael L. Wehmeyer**

Michael L. Wehmeyer, Ph.D. is Associate Professor, Department of Special Education, and Associate Director, Beach Center on Disability, at the University of Kansas. Prior to joining the KU faculty, Dr. Wehmeyer was Director of the Bill Sackter Center on Self-Determination at The Arc of the United States, a national organization on mental retardation, and Assistant Director of that association's Research and Program Services department. Dr. Wehmeyer is engaged in teacher personnel preparation in the area of severe, multiple disabilities and directs multiple federally-funded projects to conduct research in and develop methods and materials to promote the causal agency and self-determination of children, youth, and adults with cognitive and developmental disabilities. He is the author of more than 80 articles or book chapters on self-determination, student involvement, transition, and assistive technology, and has authored, co-authored, or co-edited 10 books on topics including self-determination, student involvement, gender equity, and mental retardation, and is a frequent conference speaker. Dr. Wehmeyer serves on numerous editorial boards and is co-editor of the American Association on Mental Retardation's research-to-practice publication, *Innovations*. In 1999 he was the inaugural recipient of the Distinguished Early Career Research Award from the Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Research.

This report was supported in whole or in part by the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (Cooperative Agreement No. H326J000005). However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, and no official endorsement by the Department should be inferred.

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