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Educators Taking the Lead to Transition High School Emergent Bilingual Learners with Disabilities

Diane Rodríguez

Fordham University, drodriguez1@fordham.edu

Lora Lee Smith Canter

East Carolina University, smithcanterl@ecu.edu

Karen Voytecki

East Carolina University, Voyteckik@ecu.edu

Kimberly Floyd

West Virginia University

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Educators Taking the Lead to Transition High School Emergent Bilingual Learners with Disabilities

Diane Rodríguez

Fordham University

Lora Lee Smith-Canter

East Carolina University

Karen Voytecki

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Kimberly Floyd

West Virginia University

This article seeks to improve transition services for Emergent Bilinguals (EBs) with disabilities in secondary education. The authors provide recommendations to school administrators and educators on how to design a promising *transitional context* within classrooms and schools for EBs with disabilities. This article considers *transition* issues from multiple perspectives and urges secondary school educators to broaden their programmatic and teaching practices in order to increase successful transition of their multilingual students from school to work or to post-secondary education.

Keywords: Emergent bilingual students with disabilities; transitions; transitional planning and programming; secondary education

Consistent with North American society as a whole, classrooms have become more diverse, including individuals from multiple racial, ethnic, linguistic, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds (García, 2002; U.S. Census, 2010). This diversity and richness in student populations extends across grade and ability levels and is evident in both rural and urban settings (Gebeloff, Evans, & Scheinkman, 2010; Genesee, 1999). Along with the increase in the number of Emergent Bilinguals (EBs) being served in schools across the United States, there has been a significant increase in EBs with disabilities. Across the nation, approximately 500,000 EBs with disabilities were served in 2007, constituting almost 10% of the total population of EBs (Echevarría, 2009). Poignantly, along with the richness and increased learning opportunities diversity can bring, cosmopolitan classrooms generate considerable challenges, which EBs and their families, educators, administrators, and other school personnel must face.

EBs often experience difficulties with academic achievement, language acquisition, social development, social alienation, acculturation, and lack of resources

throughout their schooling (Abedi & Diatal, 2004). These challenges are exacerbated when EBs are also diagnosed with a disability (Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010; Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2006). EBs with disabilities need specialized care and instruction to facilitate academic progress from kindergarten through 12th grade. In particular, during their secondary school experience it is recommended that they receive focused support in helping them transition into a productive life after obtaining their high school diploma. As per the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), *transitional services* are required for all students with disabilities ages 16 to 21. To accomplish perhaps the greatest goal of secondary education, transitional planning is key. By offering this type of specialized educational services EBs with disabilities may gain employment or pursue postsecondary education opportunities. Transitional planning is critical in an effort to ensure that every student, no matter what race, creed, socioeconomic class, or any other manifestation of diversity, leaves school prepared to move into successful citizenship and a fulfilling life (Wehman, 2006). IDEA defines it as follows:

Transitional planning is a term used to coordinate a set of activities for a student with a disability, that (a) is designed within an outcome oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; (b) is based on the students' needs, taking into account the students' preferences and interests; (c) includes instruction related services, community experience, the development of employment, and other post secondary objectives, and when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation [20 U.S.C. § 1401 (30)].

Unfortunately, the absence of transitional planning and services for EBs with disabilities is a pernicious and persistent problem (National Disability Authority, 2005; Stanberry, 2010). Typically, the range of transitional services is coordinated by a special education transitional coordinator in high school. However, evident in the sources cited previously, many schools lack such a person to support EBs with disabilities in this capacity. It is not surprising, then, that the dropout rate of these students increases dramatically in high school (New York City Department of Education, 2013). The lack of transitional planning and services prevents some EBs with disabilities from accessing opportunities to post-secondary institutions, vocational training, or successfully joining the workforce. For instance, like many high school students in this country, EB adolescents with disabilities need to learn how to apply for employment and interview for jobs after high school graduation (Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwing, Soodak, & Shogren, 2011). Due to the absence of transitional services for EBs with disabilities, they are less likely to search for jobs after high school or be successful in obtaining one (Wehman, 2006).

To address these challenges and to increase the likelihood of success for EBs with disabilities in secondary school transition, we assert that there needs to be systemic, pervasive, and targeted efforts and action to provide and implement transitional services on local, state, and national levels in education. We maintain that secondary educators do not have to wait for systemic mandates to be passed down in

order to institute changes in the school that can positively affect the lives of EBs with disabilities in powerful and positive ways. As suggested by Billingsley and McKleskey (2004), educators can make influential changes in their own classrooms and schools that will help prepare adolescent EBs with disabilities to function as productive citizens after graduation. Utilizing effective teaching practices within their classrooms and assuming an advocacy stance in their schools and the larger context of their community, educators can begin to implement and provide transitional services for these students.

In this article we expand awareness of ways to provide transitional services for EBs by first reviewing the relevant scholarly literature highlighting the essentials of quality transitional services. The discussion identifies principles and standards for offering transitional services recommended by professional organizations. It also describes researched-based models and programmatic structures implemented in schools and classrooms with general education students. In the second part of this article, we use our practical expertise working with EBs with disabilities to propose instructional activities and strategies that could be used to scaffold transitional skills for these students. Although our practical suggestions have not been examined through research yet, the discussion establishes an alignment to the research-based recommendations identified in the review of the research. Based on this alignment we propose particular practices that educators may use to create a positive learning environment that offers transitional services to enhance prospects of a more promising future for EBs with disabilities. In the conclusion of the article we challenge schoolteachers and administrators to take the lead in guiding EBs with disabilities to make successful transitions from school to work or to postsecondary education.

Search for Scholarly Articles

When presenting educators with ideas on how they can improve transitional services for secondary EBs with special needs, it is important to ensure that these ideas are informed by research in the field. The more professional educator discourse is connected to research literature, the more opportunities there are to inform practice and enhance the learning environment, which in this case will include identification of transitional supports for students with learning needs. The key phrase guiding the search for scholarly articles was “transitional services for secondary English learners with disabilities.” Unfortunately, a dearth of research evidence in the area of transitional services for secondary EB students was readily evident. Our search revealed only one article published within the new millennium pertaining to transitioning secondary English language learners (ELLs)¹. That one article was written by Lucas (2000).

However, use of broader search terms such as self-determination and individualized transitional planning, for scholarly investigations on transitioning secondary school students uncovered a few additional sources that, although not specifically related to EBs with disabilities, could be useful in informing transitional services for this specific student population. Since there is a dearth of published work on transitional services that target EBs with disabilities, scholars advocate drawing on research on the general student with disabilities school population in order to begin establishing transitional services for EBs with disabilities (Mazzotti, Rowe, & Test,

2013). The following sections identify scholarly sources on the design and implementation of transitional services.

Review of Scholarly Literature on Secondary School Transitional Services

This review has three focal points: (1) General principles and standards; (2) School wide programmatic practices; and (3) Classroom practices.

General Principles and Standards

Lucas (2000) identified six broad priorities to facilitate transition for secondary ELLs (author's term):

1. Encourage and support teachers and others to learn about students and their communities.
2. Cultivate caring, engaged relationships with students and their families.
3. Provide information about the educational system and the larger U.S. society.
4. Build collaborative relationships with other agencies and institutions that serve the students and their communities.
5. Support professional development to build knowledge, skills, and dispositions for teaching ELLs.
6. Facilitate and participate in collaboration to bring about educational change. (p. 4)

At the onset of transitional planning in the United States these priorities introduced educators to the key issues in designing programs that serve students with disabilities beyond secondary education. They served as a catalyst to guide educators in the implementation and design of Individualized Transitional Planning.

As mentioned before, most of the scholarly discussions about transitional services in secondary schools identified for this review relate to all school aged students with disabilities, without focusing on one subgroup. Of particular importance to this work are the National Standards and Quality Indicators for Secondary Education and Transition established by the National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition (NASSET). These standards and quality indicators were generated as research-based foci for guiding quality transitional services for *all youth*, including secondary students with disabilities, those from multicultural backgrounds, EB students, and others possessing risk factors associated with lack of success (National Alliance for Secondary Transition [NASSET], 2005). In general, there are about three to four standards accompanied by two to six indicators for each standard organized under five key areas: "Schooling; Career Preparatory Experiences; Youth Development and Youth Leadership; Family Involvement; and Connecting Activities" (NASSET, 2005, p. 3). To reach a broad spectrum of schools and populations of students with disabilities, NASSET suggests that standards and indicators should meet the following criteria:

- Be general enough to serve various audiences;

- Reflect both research-based practices and recognized best practices in the field;
- Identify what is needed for youth to participate successfully in postsecondary education and training, civic engagement, meaningful employment, and adult life; and
- Include effective practices within secondary education and transition program and services for youth with disabilities and other youth with special needs (NASET, 2005, p. 3).

Our analysis of these macro level principles suggest that they can be used by individual administrators and educators to promote effective transitional programs in school systems, as well as in individual schools and classrooms to guide development of improved transitional services for EB students with disabilities. Taken together, the priorities and standards suggest that collaboration, cooperation, and ownership in transitional programs are key to achieve individual students' engagement and participation. All educators, from special, bilingual, English as a second language, and general education programs, within the school setting should embrace efforts towards designing and executing transitional services in ways that align with the priorities and standards highlighted above. Further, having a community focus which integrates educators, parents, and neighborhood leaders could encourage personal responsibility and would also contribute to attainment of positive outcomes and improve postsecondary outcomes for EB students with disabilities.

The implication for us is that without comprehensive and inclusive involvement of all vested in the education of EBs with disabilities; the goals of transitional services may not be achieved. To better understand this implication, we focus next on scholarly investigations of comprehensive practices that integrate all school personnel and programs in general education.

School Wide Programmatic Practices

Scholarly discourse indicates that in addition to general principles and standards, school systems and specific schools must have in place programs that are built on relevant components, which offer: (a) student centered diverse support systems, (b) implementation for extended period of time, (c) broad coverage, and (d) promotion of student involvement and interests. In this section we discuss the findings of studies that have considered these components in promoting transitional services at the school wide level.

Student centered and focused transitional programs as well as instructional practices can have a sustainable effect on students with disabilities. Posthill and Roffman (1991) studied forty-five young adults' demands of independent living and competitive employment after intensive training in a 3-year program. The study revealed that 28 of the 45 participants were employed and 34 were living independently. They concluded that the majority of young adults with learning disabilities demonstrated their ability to retain their jobs and a key factor of their success was the support systems provided for them by the training program over an extended period of three years.

Consistent with prior research, it is important to offer comprehensive services through a school wide transitional program, rather than a program with a limited scope (i.e., only for one grade; only in one academic content area). In this regard, Daviso, Denney, Baer, & Fiexer (2011) found that transitional programs have a direct effect on the postsecondary lives of students involved in the program. Another study by Benz, Lindstrom, and Yovanoff (2000) examined relationships between education and transition outcomes for students with disabilities. They concluded that student involvement and interest contributes to effective secondary and transition practices by correlating student and program factors that predicted positive graduation and employment outcomes. They did this by exploring students' perceptions of the importance of the services that were implemented. Their findings indicate that for outcomes to be positive, the school needs to include: (a) direct support and that it not label students with special education; (b) participate in paid work experience that are related to the students' interests; (c) instruction in vocational training and transitional planning; and (d) students understanding and completing specific transitional goals.

Our search revealed a few sources that describe some specific instructional strategies, which educators could integrate into their instruction to enhance transitional skills of students in their classrooms. Implementing the following practices can serve to enhance successful transition.

Classroom Practices

The research discussed in this section considers the importance of self-determination of students with disabilities, as well as their engagement in classroom instruction for transitional learning. A study by Wehmeyer, Palmer, Soukup, Garner, and Lawrence (2007), examined the relationships among self-determination, transition planning knowledge, and transitional skills of 180 adolescent students with disabilities. The researchers found that self-determination was a significant predictor of overall "transition planning knowledge and skills, as well as of transition planning factors related to knowledge and skills about the individualized education program team process, goals, and decision making" (p. 31). Briefly, the results of this study indicated that promoting self-determination increased the students' ability and skills in working with others to create an educational plan for transition from school. Also noteworthy is that selecting instructional interventions involving and promoting self-determination could have serendipitous effects, which may improve a student's ability to work in teams, determine goals, and make decisions in post-secondary situations. These skills, in turn, could positively influence a student's employment opportunities and generate a better life after high school despite the presence of language and learning differences and difficulties.

Wehmeyer et al. (2009) also studied the importance of self-determination in transitional services. They developed a curricular model that enables youth and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities to engage in self-directed planning. Wehmeyer et al. posit that implementing this model would lead to preferred employment outcomes. In their study, these researchers used a computerized curriculum to assist high school girls completing an eight-step, goal-oriented problem solving process focusing on postsecondary education or employment. The steps in the

program included consideration of issues pertaining to self-determination, gender awareness, goal setting, quality of life, and employment outcomes. Initial data from the 18 young women with developmental disabilities who finished high school indicated that eight were employed and seven were attending courses in postsecondary education. Of the remaining three women, one was attending a day program, one was in a sheltered workshop, and one was pregnant with plans to attend community college. These results demonstrate the promise of incorporating self-development and awareness in a transitionally focused classroom for secondary students with disabilities.

Williams-Diehm, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Soukup, and Garner (2008) also proposed incorporating particular strategic practices for successful transitioning from high school. In their work they encouraged teachers and families to increase self-involvement in Individualized Education plans (IEPs) and to engage in transitional planning for all students with disabilities. The purpose of the Williams-Diehm et al. study was to examine differences in self-determination between groups of students who differed in terms of the level of involvement of students and their parents in their IEP meeting. Through interviews with the students, the researchers sought to investigate the following questions: (1) Did you attend your last IEP meeting? (2) If yes, did you prepare for your meeting the day before the meeting? (3) Did you talk about things that were important to you at the meeting? (4) Did people listen when you talked during your meeting? (5) Do you know what your IEP goals and objectives are? (6) If yes, have you talked with anyone about these goals? (7) Can you describe one of your IEP goals? Their findings advanced the knowledge base pertaining to self-determination and student involvement by revealing that students who were more actively involved in transition planning were also more self-determined. The results support previous findings, which suggest that student involvement and self-determination are linked. Accordingly, it is important for educators to promote student involvement in IEP meetings and to be aware that student involvement and engagement in transitional activities could have positive effects on personal development.

As illustrated in the discussion above, scholarly explorations of transitional practices offered to students with disabilities are rich in their findings but very few in number, and almost none existent in schools that serve EBs with disabilities. Informed by the research results and personal teaching experience, educators may create productive programs that offer transitional services to EBs with disabilities. To promote fulfillment of that goal, the second section of this article describes successful and time-tested transitional practices that we have observed in school settings. These practices may help educators begin envisioning ways in which to design and implement transitional services in their multilingual school contexts.

Scaffolding Instructional Activities and Strategies within Transitional Programs for EBs with Disabilities

In this section, we apply the findings of the scholarly investigations reviewed in the first section of the article to teaching EBs with disabilities. We consider the recommended practices in light of our collective expertise in the fields of bilingual special education, teaching in secondary school settings, and working with EBs with

disabilities in transitional educational settings. We have observed the recommended practices in secondary schools and, in some cases, have developed and implemented them in secondary schools. We hope that by describing these practices here we can promote their application in linguistically diverse educational settings as well as accelerate scholarly exploration in the future to expand academic discussions of transitional services for EBs with disabilities.

Pedagogy of Diversity

The first feature educators should consider while improving educational programs and practices for EBs is establishing a *culturally responsive instructional foundation* that embraces diversity. Establishing such a foundation for instruction may help educators remember that language is only one aspect of the identification of EBs; EBs have multiple varied personal and cultural characteristics and experiences that should be taken into consideration. We believe that culturally responsive pedagogy encourages educators and peers to focus on the whole student. In our experience, establishing a culturally responsive foundation involves a two-step process; first, embracing pedagogy of diversity and then translating this pedagogy to practice.

When educators incorporate a pedagogy of diversity, they provide a culturally responsive foundation for their instruction, which recognizes and leverages students' culture and language in instruction. Further, culturally responsive educators demonstrate respect for the students' personal and community identities (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2006) throughout the teaching-learning cycle. In essence, educators create a cultural connection between themselves and what they are teaching to the EB students.

We hold that a cultural connection is formed when individuals and groups in a shared environment develop a meaningful and relevant collaboration, which occurs when people sustain a shared interest in achieving a particular goal. In our view, establishing a cultural connection supports the principles of collaboration, cooperation, and community discussed in the scholarly literature above because formation of cultural connections involves scouting through the community in search of partnerships with prospective employers for EBs with disabilities.

Taking the step to involve community partners in the realization of student goals requires many educators in special, bilingual, and general education to step out of their comfort zones. From an effective transition-teaching standpoint, educators should perceive of their classroom as more than a group of students in a room of a school; educators should also perceive of their classrooms as important to the total development of their students and their community.

For example, in a neighborhood there could be several different businesses that educators may seek to associate with. Educators could partner with auto parts businesses as sites for transitional services to learn about the specific job skills necessary for this kind of employment. Another prospective cultural connection could be at service offices in the community (e.g., clinics, beauty salons, day cares) EBs with disabilities, in our experience, once they learn a skill and are trusted by employers, become excellent employees.

Another instructional activity that supports a pedagogy of diversity is biography driven instruction. In this activity educators understand the cognitive, linguistic, and academic abilities of EBs with disabilities. When educators understand the individualized linguistic ability in comprehension, communication, and expression in the native language and second language, they are better informed to help individualize a transitional service. In addition, understanding the cognitive and academic knowledge of EBs with disabilities provides insights into ways to provide placements for transitional services.

To accomplish this, educators should create biography cards for each student and use them to inform selection of specific integration activities for them. Toward that end, include aptitude measures and information on students' interest inventories on the biography card. Educators, students, and transitional coordinators can search for specific transitional activities that match each student's interests, experiences, and aptitudes. This targeted effort, in conjunction with opportunities for the student to participate in transitional planning, will heighten the sense of self-determination and belonging of all students.

Other information to include in the biography cards are assessments of first and second language proficiency in speaking, writing, and reading; standardized testing results; academic and social strengths and challenges; family composition; transitional goals; and activities that may help the student attain educational social skills despite disabilities (Rodríguez, 2010). Further, digital or paper biography cards could include notes generated when EB adolescents with disabilities share their own ideas and experiences in classes and job placements. The information contained on the biography cards can be used to enhance instructional planning and implementation of effective lessons as the educator consciously considers the multidimensional characteristics of the EBs. Biography cards provide opportunities to know the students at cultural, linguistic, academic, socio-emotional, and cognitive levels.

Pedagogy of Adjustment

A way for educators to improve transitional education for EBs with disabilities is to assist the EBs with adjustment to a new language, school culture, educational system, and country. Having a career day serves this purpose. Connecting the jobs from their original country to the newly adopted country is a cultural connection that bridges the previous reality of EBs to the current one. Educators could ask for the steps to become a police officer or a health care provider in a student's home country and then do a comparison and contrast with the new country. Building on this information, the educator could provide prerequisites and requisites for applying for work or to colleges in order to obtain a higher education degree in the new country.

Another important ingredient to effective adjustment is to build the linguistic repertoire and expand the skills of EBs with disabilities in order to help them apply knowledge in accordance with the situation and context. To increase the likelihood of success in transitions, educators should integrate as many activities and experiences as possible that involve practicing oral and written English language, while also valuing the students' home language. Differentiating between social and academic language

will assist EBs with disabilities in applying different types of language and linguistic skills to different contexts and situations.

Pedagogy that Places EBs with Disabilities at the Center

The educator must take advantage of the language strengths and other knowledge EB adolescents with disabilities bring to the classroom. Planning lessons in light of adolescents' strengths and challenges, especially taking into consideration the students' disability, will make the instruction more appealing and effective, as well as validate individual adolescent experiences and promote a close working relationship between educator and students. Conceiving of EB adolescents' personal and cultural experiences as resources for building lessons is a proactive and productive step toward establishing an environment supportive of students' self-determination. As noted in the Wehmeyer et al. (2007, 2009) research discussed earlier, integrating components of transitional programs that promote self-determination can strengthen the effectiveness of such programs and promote the personal development of students, contributing to more promising post-secondary prospects for the students.

Once educators know their EBs with disabilities, they can generate authentic instruction and learning and assessment activities that are meaningful to their students. For instance, the educator can design effective service learning projects and seek volunteer opportunities for students in places that their students have indicated interest. Once placed, the educator may include involvement in those activities a part of performance-based evaluation. Placements that match each student's interest will increase the likelihood of successful transitions for EBs with disabilities.

Pedagogy Supported by Reflective Planning

As stated previously, special educators teaching EB adolescents with disabilities should make sure that decisions pertaining to the creation of an effective and enjoyable classroom and community environment are thoughtful, deliberate, and appropriate. Effective transition programs for EB students with disabilities require educators to engage in active reflection. This type of active reflection may be most evident during program planning to address the individualized education and transition program needs of EB students with disabilities, as well as the more global needs of all adolescent students during this time in life, which is marked by transition to adulthood.

Reflective planning requires careful consideration of the following: learner characteristics, including strengths and areas needing development; instructional context, including specific curricular goals, grade level, and IEP goals, standards, and objectives; instructional methods, including organization of the learning experiences into cogent, reinforcing sequence, as well as consideration of the materials and resources you are going to use to foster attainment of learning goals; and evaluation issues, which involves use of valid and reliable assessments of learning. These reflective and planning activities are conducted within the context of promoting the advancement of all students while delivering culturally responsive targeted transition activities. Clearly, an effective transition-based educational program for all students, including EB students with disabilities, doesn't just happen by chance. Planning, preparation, and implementation take considerable time.

Throughout one's teaching career, educators can integrate practices such as reflective journaling, researching, and reading professional books and materials related to broadening personal and professional perspectives. They could also host "get to know you" faculty and staff lunches and dinners with guest speakers from different cultural, socioeconomic, and experiential backgrounds in order to promote an environment which values cultural responsiveness and that encourages personal and professional growth and reflective practices. In addition to activities such as these that promote conscious thought about issues in transition education and educating EB students with disabilities, educators can create practical tools for program implementation at the class and school level. As an example, the lesson plan template used by teachers in the school could have an additional section entitled "cultural connection" and "promoting transitions." Those headings, in addition to other expected components, such as planning the review, introduction, guided practice, independent practice, closure, and assessment, will continually draw attention to the needs of EBs with disabilities. Additionally, individual classrooms and schools could create a database of helpful contacts within the community that could be used as needed when transition lessons and projects are being planned. The database of cultural contacts and supportive organizations for transitioning could be supplemented with summaries of successful ideas and instructional experiences for transitioning.

Engaging in reflective planning is supported by research in the field of multicultural education and it is seen as good practice (Eby, Herrell, & Hicks, 2001). However, extending reflective planning from an educator centered responsibility to a group action planning endeavor could hold more promise for promoting transitional education for EB students with disabilities.

Group Action Planning is a process of creating a reliable alliance among an individual with a disability, family members, professionals, and friends. The purpose of the process is to support the individual with a disability to create a vision of how he or she wants to live life and then to make a long-term commitment to the individual to transform that vision into reality. (Turnbull et al. 1996, p. 238)

Group action planning is centered on the student with disability and the student is central to the group's action. The special educator may act as a guide, but the invitations, agenda, and moderating of the discussion are conducted solely by the student. The skills promoted and reinforced by this planning strategy help develop those skills needed for self-determination. Self-determination seems to be necessary to any effective transitional program. Additionally, group action planning is family systems oriented because it involves family members as key members of the planning group (Turnbull et al., 1996). This family systems orientation may be the key to this type of planning for creating the best transition program for EB students with disabilities because involving the family has been found to be very important to creating effective programs for EB students (Williams-Diehm, et al., 2008). It should be noted that even though group planning is a collaborative effort, the student's engagement in reflective planning is critical. The student has to think consciously about what aspects of her or his education are the most important to her or his future goals. Once the student sees the relevance of high school to her or his life, there is an

increased likelihood that the student will be motivated to complete school; increased motivation on the student's part will have a positive influence on the overall effectiveness of a transition program.

School Wide Effective Transition Practices

Rather than plan and implement activities intended exclusively for successful transition of EBs with disabilities in isolated classrooms, planning and implementation could occur school wide in all classrooms. It is true that individual special educators could work on developing an effective transition program only for the students with disabilities and EBs with disabilities on their case load in order to make a positive contribution to those specific students' future careers and lives. However, we assert that what special educators know about transitions, their experience with legally mandated transitional planning, and their familiarity with programmatic paperwork, and other systemic processes, could contribute to establishing a school wide secondary transition program that, with little modification, could serve *all* students in the school. Not to diminish the importance of individual educator efforts regarding transitional initiatives and activities, a school wide transition program and transitional service involving all educators within a school, could enhance the effectiveness of any such transition activities by creating a truly inclusive environment. That is, individual needs could be addressed within a climate where all students' needs are met and every student is prepared to meet the demands of adulthood. The remaining discussion focuses on effective school-wide practices that can be adapted and modified to meet the needs of individual students.

Establishing a Transitional Team

A team of educators and partners focused on transitional planning and services provides a solid foundation for transitioning students to adulthood. This team, comprised of school personnel and community members, would establish a support system for transition from school to community, whether as a worker, post-secondary student, or in some other role. Importantly, the team would also include student members who would be involved in decision making whenever possible. As discussed earlier, Wehmeyer et al. (2007, 2009) and Williams-Diehm et al. (2008) found that it is critical for students to play a major role in the decision making of their transitional planning. The transitional team would be a functioning and standing team in the school and its members appointed or elected to serve in an official capacity.

This team would be responsible for providing direct services to identified students with and without disabilities who are EB or native speakers. This team would build and maintain relationships and partnerships with the community and community organizations to help make appropriate student placements. It would plan and implement transition activities, such as career days, guest speakers, volunteer fairs, and work release programs for all interested students with and without special learning needs. Team members could also guide and supervise students. In addition, the transition team could implement new methods dynamically modeled after how businesses respond to employee suggestions. This would be a model and an example on how the real business world operates.

The school's transition team could work on an individual basis for those students with special needs, or those students needing more individualized attention. In other words, the transitional team must include the input from EB students with disabilities in the decision making of transitional skills. Therefore, any individualized planning would involve the student. A subset of this team would include personnel that could serve in an official capacity as part of the special education program's multidisciplinary team (school psychologist, special educator, general education teacher, LEA representative), but the people in this subgroup would not be limited to serving only students with special needs. They would always be considered part of the school's transitional team and be involved in all team's activity.

Monitoring Progress

As is the case with any program implementation, assessing and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the transition program would be an important feature and would consist of formative and summative evaluation measures and procedures. Progress monitoring would be an important feature and activity for the transitional team, which would involve every student and almost every faculty member in the school. Much of the progress monitoring should be student centered and involve self-monitoring and self-recording practices. For example, all students would actively participate in their individualized transition planning. As soon as the students entered high school they would be educated as to the transitional planning process. They would be taught that eligibility criteria for admission to college require attainment of a particular grade point average and SAT scores. Students would learn about transitional services available in school and they would become familiar with what was meant by a program of study.

All students would become active members in their individualized transition planning. They would begin creating a transitional plan in their freshmen exploration and goal setting and continue throughout their academic career in high school. Strategies to help students self-monitor their transitional progress could be implemented. As part of those strategies, students would have to self-evaluate their progress toward the workplace or post-secondary education. This can be done by creating transition-program evaluations (similar to job satisfaction measures), which students would complete at specified times. Through such evaluations, EBs with disabilities and other students would determine how their transition process is going. Even given a structured procedure for self-monitoring and evaluating progress, adolescents are just that, adolescents, and there would need to be set procedures and periodic checks to keep every student on track. For this purpose, a school might establish some sort of advising similar to that of a college advising program. A key to effective progress monitoring and program effectiveness would be to make sure that every student was assigned a major transition mentor from the faculty and an assigned upper classman as a peer mentor. If this strategy were not feasible or agreeable to a school, they could experiment with a student cohort model, where groups of students would have the same mentors. No matter the design model adopted by a school, it is very important that a student have a caring connection to a person or persons in the school. Goals and responsibilities in transition education should always be clearly articulated in order for the parties to have an honest, collaborative partnership.

Data from collaborative assessments and evaluations, along with other transition information (noted previously, such as interest inventories and notes on student statements) would populate a database with records for each student that could be monitored and kept current by appropriate personnel and the student. This database would go beyond the traditional data mining conducted in schools. Information would be collected on transitional goals, learning styles, interests, and special talents, for instance. It should be noted that the term *database* rather refers to any organized collection of data, student information in this case. As noted, this type of record keeping would incorporate a myriad of academic, linguistic, social, and emotional information designed to support efforts for all students to make successful transitions to adulthood. Educators would have access to students' personal information and official school records. In addition, each student would have access to her or his records of individual learning characteristics, strengths, and identified needs in order to keep them informed so that they can be better prepared to make decisions about their future.

Developing Core Transitional Behaviors

There are many skills that students with and without disabilities must learn before entering into adulthood that no single educator can provide directly. By implementing a school wide approach to offering transitional services, all educators within a school could help create opportunities for EBs with disabilities and other students to increase self-determination skills to set goals, evaluate options, make choices, work to achieve goals, explore employment and housing options, explore recreational programs, and learn about post-secondary education options. It is recommended that the school-level transitional team create a list of core transitional behaviors, which include key professional dispositional characteristics such as attendance and punctuality, as well as appropriate attire and manner of speech. Educators can integrate core professional dispositions into all lessons and make integration conspicuous.

Classroom and course design should focus on transition to post-secondary environments. Along with the school wide team, create a core set of transitional objectives. Then lesson plans could include objectives with corresponding references to core transitional objectives. For example, transitional objectives that promote quality of life may include: (a) explore options for postsecondary education and identify admission criteria; (b) identify career interests and skills; (c) identify options for future living arrangements; (d) learn and practice informed decision making; (e) broaden the student experience with community activities and help students form friendships; (f) investigate money management skills; and (g) use transportation. The team should take advantage of the student's bilingualism and have students, parents, and community members help with translation of school displays into their native language and post them adjacent to the English Language version. All information should be available through multiple media. In light of the core set of transitional objectives, each student should create an individualized list of transitional objectives and monitor attainment of their personal objectives.

The school wide transitional services program should also include: (a) domestic skills (i.e. cooking, budgeting, cleaning); (b) vocational skills (getting to and from work, performing work satisfactorily, working cooperatively, using appropriate safety measures, accepting supervision, following direction); (c) recreation /leisure skills (use free time for fun, develop a hobby, use community resources); (d) community skills (make necessary appointments, use bank accounts, know how to seek help); and (e) social/personal skills (use good grooming/hygiene, be courteous and friendly, use contemporary style of attire, greet people appropriately). Importantly, school wide transitional services must provide the option of post-secondary education. There are many EBs with disabilities that are intelligent and capable of handling post-secondary education. Providing seminars or workshops about issues to consider when looking into higher education is necessary because EBs with disabilities need to understand, prepare for, and ultimately meet admission requirements.

Develop Skills for Adulthood

As highlighted above, the transitional team is an intricate part of any transition program, yet, it is the entire school organizational structure that adopts and supports the necessary program activities, materials, and guiding principles and practices that make an effective transition program for students with and without disabilities. Developing a transitional team and charging that team to design transitional activities addressing core transitional behaviors, to monitor and evaluate program effectiveness, and to supervise student directed monitoring and progress is one way of creating and promoting school wide transition practices.

Just as we asserted that special educators could be the catalysts for improved transitional practices school-wide, the focus of special education on skill building could help inform instructional practices for skill development of all students in any high school. In particular, the skills that adolescents need to learn for adulthood may often be overlooked, or perhaps not overtly stated as a learning skill set to help prepare students for adulthood. Often in special education, educators carefully and explicitly define, to the point of completing task analyses at times, important skill sets for students to learn. This focus on explicit and direct teaching could help better prepare all adolescents in high school for adulthood by paying particular attention to what students ought to learn in a transition program.

Invite guests from the bilingual community, employed in a variety of jobs, to have “business” lunches with students and guests. Invite individuals from different professional fields into the class. Have students invite different speakers and participants to class. Transitional teams may use flexible scheduling for students to enable them to complete classwork during the first half of the semester and then work in an applied setting in the second half of the semester. Consider generating cohorts of volunteers within classes so every student is assigned to a specific cohort for support and interaction in school and at service learning workplaces.

Another way of including partnerships with other agencies or community leaders is to develop competitive teams or group activities through which local community issues are addressed. Involve EBs with disabilities in creating or participating in activities that involve interaction with key community representatives

who seek solutions to various issues. This may include youth activities aligned with community organizations such as the Americans with Disabilities Act in Action; or activities related to community transportation assistance programs; or any leisure and recreational activities. The transitional team could identify businesses willing to hire students or provide internships to students. In addition, the transitional team could identify tasks that must be done in and around school, as after school projects, where students could earn points for participation and complete work that needs to get accomplished. Activities could range from data entry, categorizing supplies and books, and maintenance work, for instance. Conceivably, students could develop collaborative green houses, decorate classrooms, or pursue other grass roots “business” opportunities within the school.

Transitional planning, choices, learning style, and preferences have become important issues in vocational guidance and rehabilitation for several reasons. Transitional planning supports adolescents’ self-empowerment to pursue a high quality of life. Emergent bilingual students with disabilities and their parents have been unequivocal in their demands for enhanced quality of life and there is compelling evidence from the education and rehabilitation literature that enhanced transitional planning leads to more positive adult outcomes (Echevarría, 2009; Turnbull, et al. 2011; Wehmeyer, et al. 2009). There are also discussions which suggest that by encouraging participation in expanded transitional services to reduce problems, there is a reduction in problems linked to low academic achievement, including low expectations of educators, adolescent alienation from school, lack of enrichment activities, poor quality education, and lack of a structured and supervised environment during critical hours after school (Cummins & Swain, 1986; García, 2002). EBs with disabilities learn best when they encounter a variety of content in a meaningful and purposeful manner (Herrera & Murry, 2005). Accordingly, ensure that EBs with disabilities engage in learning and thinking about their transition into adulthood.

Concluding Remarks

A healthy society has a responsibility to secure the future of its youth, including EB adolescents with disabilities, who, like other groups of students, must develop an understanding of what constitutes a meaningful life and acquire the skills necessary to achieve their goals. For secondary schools to fulfill their obligation to help EBs with disabilities make a successful transition from school, whether to work or to postsecondary education, transitional services are imperatives. Improved second language instruction and interactions with community members, while still in high school, will help adolescent EBs with disabilities gain the skills necessary to be successful in a diverse society. Teaching within a transitional context, fostering ideas, and implementing school-wide transition plans enhance successful transitioning of EBs with disabilities to the workplace or post-secondary education. As such, in this article we highlighted transitional services, which can be developed and implemented in order to provide EBs with disabilities a more structured path to adulthood.

Educators can be a driving force behind improved educational practices that provide high quality expanded learning opportunities, both inside and outside the classroom. This article presented promising transition teaching practices/strategies for

EBs with disabilities, which individual educators can implement in order to make a positive difference in the transition of her/his students to adulthood. We, as authors, also challenged educators to create programs that involve collaboration with community members to increase the authenticity and meaningfulness of adolescent learning for EBs with disabilities in the transition process. In addition to increasing students' learning and retention of knowledge, innovative community/classroom collaborations can generate a sense of connectedness and personal value to adolescent learners. In turn, these types of collaborative projects can have a serendipitous effect on the community whereby individuals in the community begin to value EBs with disabilities and the positive impacts of the local school.

While it is essential to reform the educational system at district, state, and national levels, it is important to know that individual educators are responsible for the academic, social, and transition instruction of all students on a daily basis, even though systemic challenges are formidable. Adolescent EBs with disabilities cannot wait for massive national or state reform to be filtered down, eventually, to their class. EBs with disabilities need, and deserve, the best education possible today. The efforts of a single educator and school can prevent an EB with a disability from "slipping through the cracks" of the current educational system and make it possible for an adolescent's vision of a productive future to come true.

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Notes

¹The authors use ELLs and EBs interchangeably throughout the article.