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What are the top two challenges special educators encounter when implementing transition plans for transition aged youth with severe disabilities?

Rationale

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 guarantee transition services for youth with disabilities. Secondary transition services offer youth with disabilities the opportunity to plan for their future after high school. The most effective transition plans are compliant but not implemented. Despite these requirements, students with disabilities continue to face postschool outcomes in which they are less prepared for adulthood than their peers without disabilities. What are the causes of this discrepancy? Is evident-based instruction being used? What barriers do teachers face when implementing transition goals? The purpose of this research is to examine the top two challenges special educators encounter when implementing transition plans for transitioned aged youth with severe disabilities?

Literature review

Since 1975, special education has evolved over the years to become more inclusive for all students receiving specialized instruction. However, youth with severe disabilities are more likely than any other disability group to encounter unemployment, underemployment, and segregated jobs after exiting high school (Carter et al., 2010)

youth with the opportunity to participate in community life by creating independent living and employment goals.

Despite explicit mandates, postschool success has not been achieved for youth with disabilities as compared with youth without disabilities (Morningstar et al., 2016). Given these challenges, youth with severe disabilities lack the necessary components needed to engage fully in community life.

Methodology

The data was collected to determine the top two challenges gathered from a targeted subset of special educators who instruct youth with severe and profound disabilities. All respondents are employee of DCPS. The anonymous online survey was comprised of nine questions: six multiple choices, two short answer and one Likert scale. Of the 18 respondents, 12 completed the short answer and Likert scale questions.

Data Analysis

Majority of the respondents, 83 percent, acknowledged scheduling/time as one barrier for implementing transition plans. Furthermore, 44 percent of respondents reported the master schedule lacks instructional time dedicated for implementing transitions plans. When asked what changes should be made to DCPS's transition program, respondents recommended "specific and allotted time for them to work on those goals and plans throughout the week."

Time is a critical resource in education, increasing instructional time has the potential to improve student achievement.

Of the study population, 50 percent of the respondents recognized that the lack of a curriculum was another stumbling block. A curriculum serves as a detailed plan with identified lessons in an appropriate form and sequence that directs teaching. A well-written curriculum

embeds specific instructional methods, activities, assignments, and assessments to determine the mastery of the goals. Respondents mention that DCPS should consider “create/implement a curriculum that emphasize community-based instruction.”

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Recommendations:

Based on my finding in this small research, the author recommends the following:

- Target transitional planning and services through pre-service teacher education programs.
- Create a community-based curriculum that allows all students that have cognitive deficits or other impairments the opportunity to participate in community life.
- Designate time in the master schedule for transition planning and services.
- Increase the amount of volunteer partnerships throughout the community for monthly field trips.
- Create an on-the-job training program using DCPS as the employer.

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