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Connecticut Special Education Transition Services:

Results of a Statewide Survey

Research Team

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I. Background: Connect-Ability

Funded by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Connecticut's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, known as "Connect-Ability," is designed to support the competitive employment of people with disabilities. The grant was awarded to the Connect to Work Center at the Connecticut Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), Department of Social Services, and is intended to facilitate enhancements to the state Medicaid program and services, to promote linkages between Medicaid and other employment-related service agencies and to develop a comprehensive system of employment supports for people with disabilities.

Beginning in January 2006, BRS contracted with the University of Connecticut Health Center (UCHC) to conduct a statewide needs assessment to guide the year-long strategic planning process. The resulting strategic plan focused on five broad areas: youth in transition; stakeholder education; recruitment, employment, and retention; transportation; and technical assistance.

CMS approved Connecticut's strategic plan, and in February 2007, the state received permission to implement state-wide infrastructure changes to promote the hiring of people with disabilities. In an effort to capture the voice of the consumer, and also provide evidence that services and programs are effective, CMS has encouraged states to gather information that will influence future funding, programs and policies.

II. State Department of Education Transition Services Survey

One major focus of Connect-Ability is the “Youth in Transition” initiative, which seeks to smooth the way for students with disabilities from secondary education to employment or further education. It emphasizes practical solutions such as promoting the development of more internships and summer employment, encouraging mentoring opportunities, and making tools available for identifying areas of interest and strength. Priority areas for this initiative include school transition programs, the integration of assistive technology that can follow people from school to work, work-based opportunities, mentoring, increased understanding of benefits, and increasing independence.

In order to collect baseline data on the types of transition, work experience, and community participation services currently available to students age 16 to 21 who receive special education services, a survey was sent to all school districts in Connecticut in March of 2008. The survey effort was co-sponsored by the Connecticut State Department of Education (SDE) and Connect-Ability.

School districts were given background information about Connect-Ability and advised that this information would be used to inform the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) about the range of services available in Connecticut districts to support transition-age students in reaching their post-school outcome goals. In addition, since this information will be used to disseminate resources as they become available, every school district serving transition-age students was asked to complete and return the survey.

A response rate of 100 percent of public school districts that operate secondary programs (n=126) was ultimately achieved. Although there are 169 towns in Connecticut, many do not have their own high school, and are part of a regional district. In Connecticut, the Department of Corrections and the Department of Children and Families operate school districts under the auspices of the SDE, and both are included in the 126 public school districts surveyed. Connecticut also has approved private special education programs and Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) that provide special education services to transition age students. Survey participation for these secondary programs was encouraged but optional. Two such private programs, the American School for the Deaf (ASD) and Cooperative Educational Services (CES), submitted surveys and were included in the data analysis. The total number of surveys analyzed was therefore 128: all 126 public school districts and the two private programs noted. See Appendix A for a complete list of school districts surveyed. Most surveys were completed by some combination of the district’s Director of Pupil Personnel Services, Special Education Coordinator, transition specialist and/or special education teachers, frequently with input from general education staff and administrators.

The survey asked school district personnel to indicate whether they provide any of a list of services in the continuum of secondary transition services in the following general areas:

- Career/employment services
- Other transition services
- Academic services
- Transportation
- Collaboration with other state agencies serving people with disabilities
- Transition personnel/staff

The survey also asked a number of open-ended questions related to transition services.

III. Survey Results

A. Note on Data Interpretation and Limitations

Although surveys were received from all 126 public school districts and two private programs surveyed, some of the data is incomplete. Many returned surveys contained questions that were left blank or not completed, and it is unknown whether those questions did not apply to the district or whether the person(s) answering the survey did not have the information. Districts often have multiple people or departments serving students with disabilities, and it is possible that the person(s) filling out the survey did not have all of the relevant information and did not consult with others in the district who could have supplied more complete answers. The data is only as good as the knowledge level of the person(s) filling out the survey, which varied by district.

The survey contained a section with definitions of most of the specialized terminology used in the questions. However, some terms were not specifically defined, as noted in the discussion below, and may have been misunderstood, leading to incomplete or erroneous responses.

For each career and employment service, other transition service, and academic service enumerated in the survey, school districts were asked to indicate: (1) whether the service is provided to special education students and/or regular education students, (2) whether it is paid and/or unpaid; (3) whether it is for credit and/or not for credit, and (4) whether it is provided by the district and/or provided by a contractor. Since a district may offer an enumerated service to regular education or special education students, or to both or neither, may offer them on both a paid and unpaid basis and both for credit and not for credit, and may offer them through both the district and contractors, response totals may add up to more than 128. In many cases, however, there was missing data. For example, a district's response may have indicated that a certain service is offered, but failed to check whether it is for credit or not for credit, paid or unpaid, or provided through the district or contractors. In those cases, responses add up to less than the total number of districts offering the service, and no conclusions may be drawn about the districts for which the data are missing.

Appendix B summarizes in detail the survey responses by question.

B. Career/Employment Services

The first section of the survey covers 21 career/employment services that school districts may offer to students. This section defines these services, and notes how many of the 128 districts indicate that they provide each service:

- To special education students and/or to regular education students;
- On a paid and/or unpaid basis;
- For credit and/or not for credit; and
- Through the district itself and/or through contractors

Career/employment services defined

- **Apprenticeships** are training opportunities offered by sponsors who provide work experience, education and training for people entering certain occupations.
- **Career exploration** refers to district assistance to students in exploring career possibilities via their career centers.

- **Community service** programs include service/volunteer work that a student performs for the benefit of his or her local community and for which students may earn academic credit. Typically community service is organized or supervised by a school district as a graduation requirement or to obtain elective credits.
- The **Cooperative Work Experience (CWE)** program involves classroom instruction that includes, but is not limited to employability skills, career exploration and planning, life skills, entrepreneurship and goal setting, combined with paid credit-bearing, work-based experience.
- **Informational interviews** are interviews of a person in a career field that the student has researched in order to give that student an opportunity to explore a profession. The student uses the information gathered to determine if a particular career field is a good match.
- **Internships** involve the student working in a specific career field for a specified period of time to develop skills needed and to gain a better understanding of the demands of the career. They are supervised by the school and credit is granted if the student masters the goals and objectives of the experience.
- **Job Corps** is a national job training program for youth ages 16 to 24. Students can get a high school diploma or GED, and train in a vocation (not defined in survey).
- **Job shadowing** involves the observing of or shadowing an individual working in a career field that a student has researched. This program usually lasts for a day or part of a day. The student gathers information to assist in making a career decision.
- **Pre-employment skills** include job searching, resume writing and interview skills.
- **On-the-job training (OJT)** involves the experience that is given in a normal work environment, using the actual tools, equipment, documents or materials that a student will use when he or she is fully trained. OJT is usually most effective for vocational work, and is usually paid and supervised by the employer.
- **Start on Success (SOS)** is an introductory job training and paid internship program for at-risk high school students with physical, mental or sensory disabilities. Sponsored initially by the National Organization on Disability (NOD), this program helps high school students with disabilities transition into the workforce.
- **Tech Prep** is a sequenced program of study that combines at least two years of secondary and two years of post-secondary education. Tech Prep is designed to help students gain academic knowledge and technical skills and is intended to lead to an Associate's degree or a certificate in a specific career field.
- **Transition services in the community** for the 18-21 age group may include functional academics, independent living skills, age-appropriate social experiences, and paid or un-paid work experiences in a community setting.
- **Transition services at college/university** for the 18-21 age group may include functional academics, auditing or enrolling in college-level courses, independent living skills, age-appropriate social experiences, and paid or un-paid work experiences in a college or university setting.
- **Vocational evaluation** involves a situational assessment for each student in determining a suitable vocation.
- **Vocational training programs** prepare learners for careers that are based in manual or practical activities. These activities are traditionally non-academic and totally related to a specific trade, occupation or vocation. Sometimes vocational training programs are referred to as "*technical education*" as the learner directly develops expertise in a particular group of techniques or technology. This normally involves more than one or two courses in a particular area.
- **Volunteer work** involves the student performing service work of his/her own free will without pay and usually without academic credit to benefit the local community. Volunteer work is

often used as a way to explore careers and gain work experience, often prior to the legal employment age.

- **Work experience** involves placement at a work site that may occur in any of three settings:
 - at the high school;
 - in a district school; or
 - off-campus at a business.

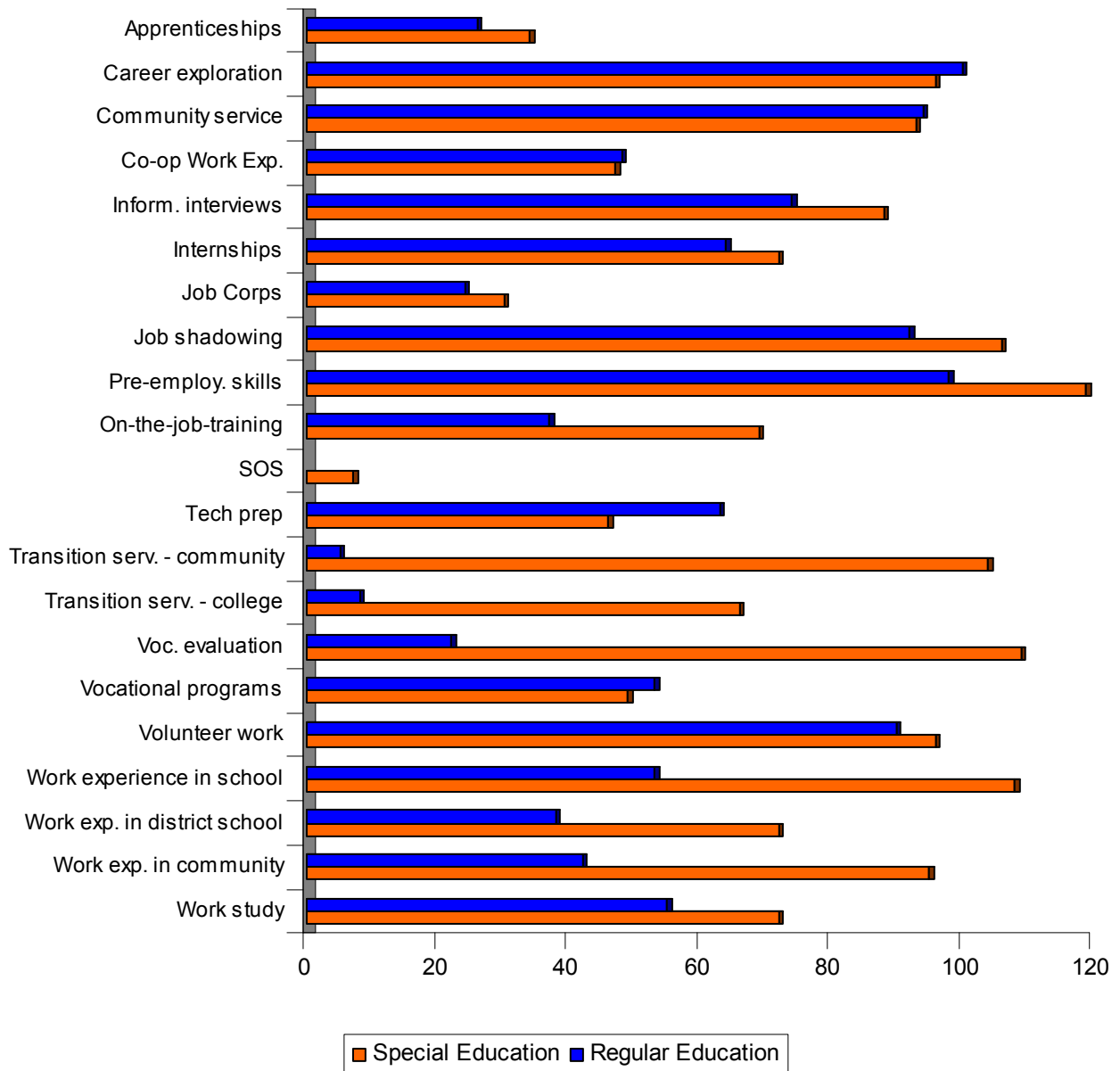
As defined in the survey, for work experience in all three settings the school is the employer, the positions are non-competitive, and no wages are paid. However, some school districts indicated that these are paid positions, as school districts may opt to pay a stipend to students participating in a work experience placement. The jobs are provided based on individual student interests. A variety of work experiences is offered, typically office work, working in the cafeteria or school café, custodial work, shredding, landscaping, library assistant, mail room, copying, and maintenance. In some cases, the school might have its own school store run by students, or an in-school business such as a printing business or computer repair business.

- **Work study** is a school-supervised training experience, competitive or non-competitive, for a wage or for credit. The emphasis is on developing transferable skills and appropriate work behaviors for future employment.

Services offered to special education and/or regular education students

Services most likely to be offered to both regular education and special education students include career exploration, community service, job-shadowing, pre-employment skills, and volunteer work. Services that are offered substantially more frequently to special education students than to regular education students include transition services (in both the community and at a college/university), vocational training programs, and work experiences (both in schools and in the local community.) Figure 1 summarizes the number of school districts offering each career/employment service by student designation.

Figure 1 – Career/employment services
Number of school districts offering programs by student designation



Services offered on a paid or unpaid basis

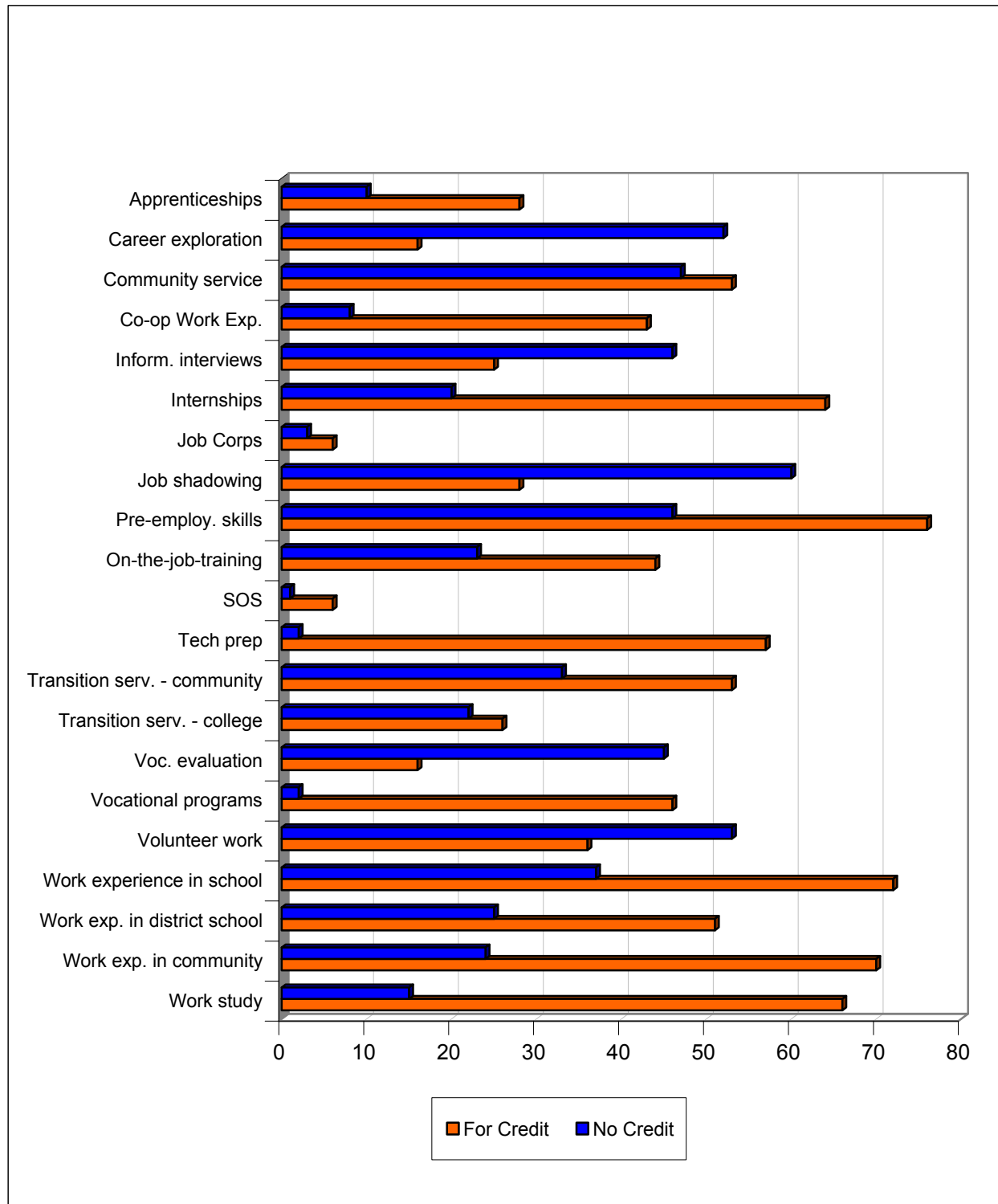
For career or employment services, districts were asked to indicate whether a service offered is paid or unpaid. The terms “paid” and “unpaid” were not defined, but the districts were instructed to check the appropriate characteristics “for students receiving special education services.” Nevertheless, in certain cases it appears that some districts may have misinterpreted the instructions and indicated whether the *provider* of the service is paid rather than the student. For example, some districts checked “paid” for volunteer work which by definition is unpaid. In these cases, the survey results in Appendix B make a notation of “N/A.”

For the districts that answered this question, a large majority of career/employment services are unpaid. For only five services did more districts indicate that the service is paid than that it is unpaid: apprenticeships (20 paid, 18 unpaid), Cooperative Work Experience (28 paid, 22 unpaid), on-the-job training (43 paid, 29 unpaid), Start on Success (6 paid, 1 unpaid), and work study (44 paid, 31 unpaid). For three additional services at least 20 districts indicated that the service is paid: internships (36 paid, 60 unpaid), transition services in the community (50 paid, 55 unpaid), and vocational evaluation (21 paid, 43 unpaid). For all other career/employment services, only a small number of districts indicated that they are paid.

Services offered for credit or not for credit

Most career/employment services provided by school districts are offered for credit more often than they are not offered for credit. The five services that are least likely to be offered for credit are career exploration, informational interviews, job shadowing, vocational evaluation and volunteer work. Figure 2 summarizes the number of school districts offering career/employment services for credit and not for credit.

Figure 2 – Career/employment services
Number of school districts offering programs for credit and not for credit



Services provided by the district and/or provided by contractors

All career/employment services except Job Corps are provided by school districts more often than by providers. The services most likely to be offered by contractors include transition services in the community (50 districts), vocational evaluation (49 districts), on-the-job training (25 districts), and work experience in the community (20 districts).

C. Other Transition Services

A separate section of the survey concerns 12 “other transition services” that districts may offer to their students. This section defines these other transition services, and notes how many of the 128 school districts indicated that they provide each service:

- To special education students and/or to regular education students;
- For credit and/or not for credit; and
- Through the district itself and/or through contractors

Other transition services defined

- **Assistive technology (AT) evaluations** are detailed evaluations of the ways in which assistive technology can aid a student in both school and work settings.
- **Assistive technology with training** is the actual provision of assistive technology to the student with appropriate training on its use.
- **Benefits counseling** is provided by various professionals who present information on work incentives and examples of how wages impact state and federal benefits (e.g., SSI, Medicaid). This is done in order to assist individuals to become more independent by understanding how work may allow them to earn more money and to be active in their community.
- **Independent living skills** may include self-care, leisure skills, personal safety, mobility, transportation, banking, and budgeting (not defined in survey).
- **Mentoring** can be provided by a trusted friend, a counselor, or a teacher. Mentors provide expertise to less experienced individuals in order to help them advance their careers, enhance their education and build networks. Mentors may be peers, adults, or employees and may support individuals in the worksite, during recreational/social situations, or in academic environments. The survey asked districts about their programs for mentoring:
 - by peers,
 - by adults in school, and
 - by adults in the workplace or community.
- **Person centered/futures planning** is a process designed to assist an individual in making plans for his/her future with a group of caring professionals, friends and family. Person centered/futures planning is used most often as a life-planning model to help individuals with disabilities to actualize their dreams in education, employment, independent living, self-advocacy and self-determination. Common person-centered planning tools include MAPS, PATH, and Circles of Support.
- **Social skills training** may include etiquette in applying for a job and basic skills for interacting with other people in a variety of different situations.
- **Student work stipends** are payments to students for working in the district or the community. These stipends may be below minimum wage during an evaluation or exploratory situation, and may be paid by the school district or employer in one of three ways:

- by the district with funds from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA);
- by the district without IDEA funding; or
- by an employer.

Other transition services offered to special education and/or regular education students

All services classified as “other transition services” are offered more frequently to special education students than to regular education students. Services most commonly offered to special education students are the evaluation for, and provision of, assistive technology (108 and 94 districts, respectively), independent living skills (85 districts), and person centered/futures planning (82 districts). Mentoring programs for both special education and regular education students are offered most often by peers, and less frequently by adults in either the school or workplace/community. Table 1 shows the number of districts offering each type of mentoring program to special education and regular education students.

Table 1. Number of districts offering mentoring programs to special and regular education students

	Special Education	Regular Education
By peers	79	57
By adults in school	54	43
By adults in workplace/community	55	26

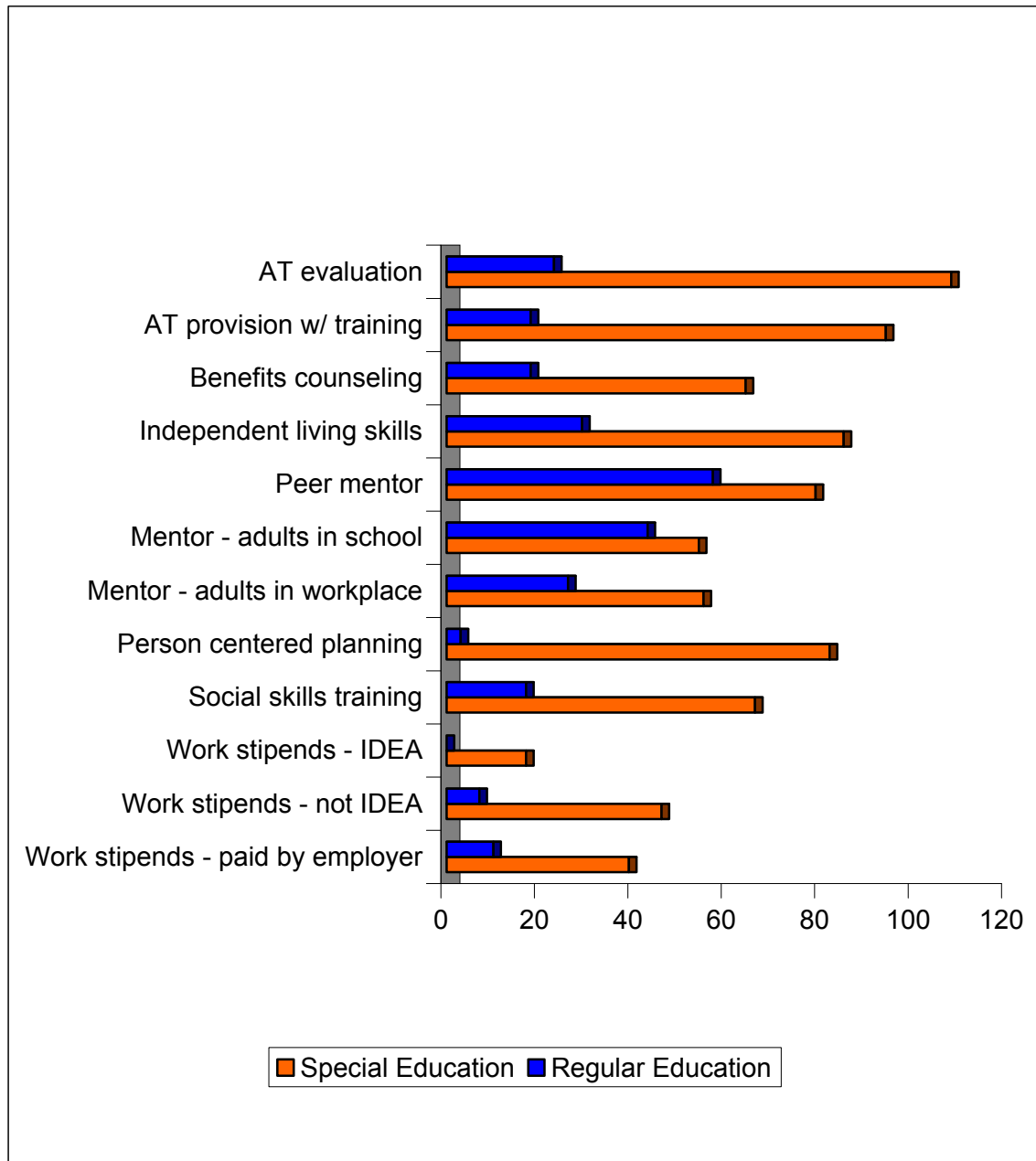
Student work stipends are less common than mentoring programs, and are rarely offered to regular education students. Table 2 indicates the number of districts offering student work stipends for special and regular education students.

Table 2. Number of districts offering student work stipends to special and regular education students

	Special Education	Regular Education
Funded by district – IDEA funds	17	N/A
Funded by district – no IDEA funds	46	7
Funded by employer	39	10

Figure 3 summarizes the number of school districts offering any of the 12 “other transition services” to special education and regular education students.

Figure 3 – Other transition services
Number of school districts offering programs by student designation



Services offered for credit or not for credit

For the most part, other transition services are not eligible for credit. The two exceptions are independent living skills (51 districts offer for credit; 21 not for credit) and social skills training (19 districts offer for credit; 30 not for credit).

Services provided by the district or by a contractor

As with career/employment services, other transition services are provided primarily by the districts themselves. Services most often provided by a contractor include both the evaluation for, and provision of, assistive technology (46 districts and 32 districts, respectively), and person centered/futures planning (30 districts).

D. Academic Services/Courses

A separate section of the survey asked districts for information on eight types of academic services, which are courses or skills training that may be offered to special education students, regular education students, or both. This section defines these academic services, and notes how many of the 128 school districts indicated that they provide each service:

- To special education students and/or to regular education students;
- For credit and/or not for credit; and
- Through the district itself and/or through contractors.

The survey also asked districts to indicate the type of teacher(s) responsible for teaching each course.

Academic services defined

The eight course types enumerated in the survey include:

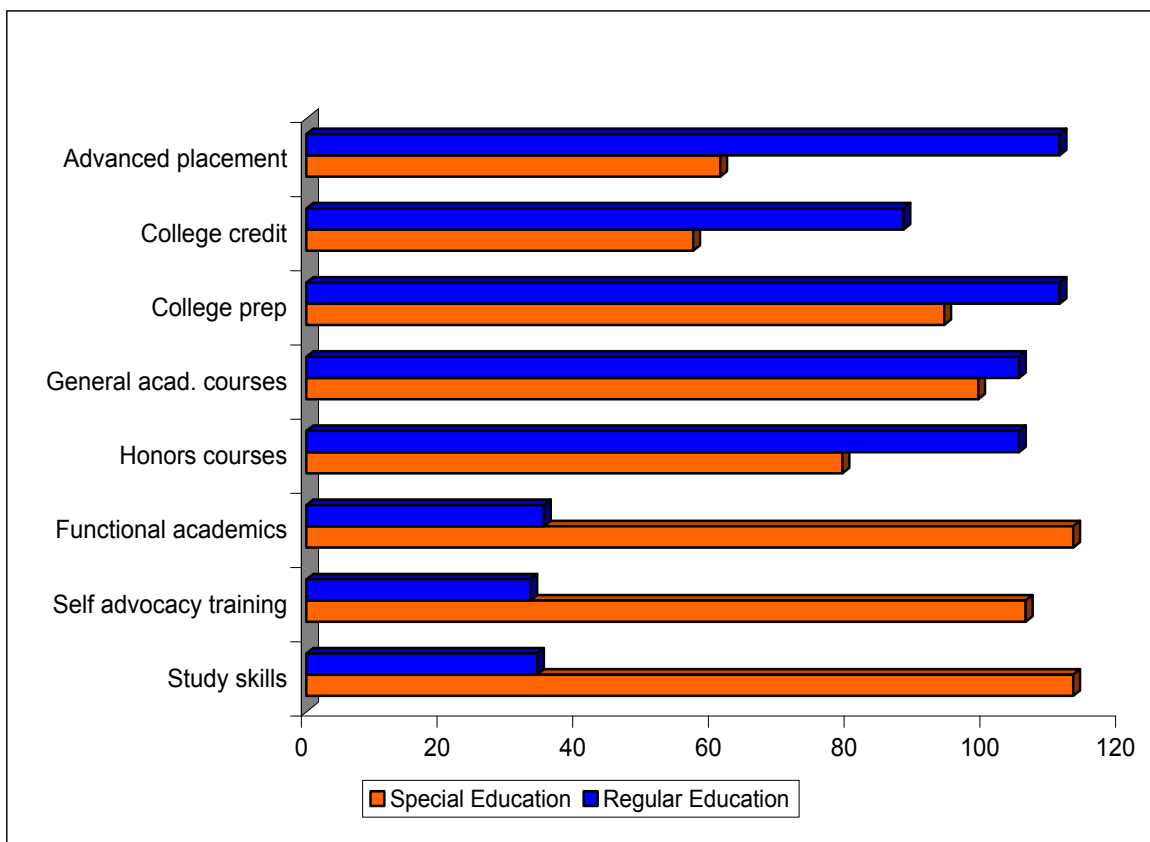
- **Advanced Placement (AP) courses** are administered by the College Board. High school students may take one or more college-level course in a variety of subjects. Though intended to be representative of introductory college study, AP courses do not use actual college curricula. Students may earn college credit for AP courses by scoring well on an end-of-course exam.
- **College credit courses** involve dual enrollment and provide the student with both college and high school credit.
- **College prep courses** are courses that are more academic in nature as a basis for continuing education on the college level.
- **General academic level courses** offer academics for students who are not planning to go on to further education. They provide the basic academics to prepare the student for a career or job.
- **Honors courses** are designed to help meet the needs of accelerated students. They offer the same curriculum as non-honors courses but may be more challenging. Honors courses are often faster paced and may cover topics more in-depth. However, these classes are not usually considered to be equivalent to college-level work (not defined in survey).
- **Functional academics** consist of courses that emphasize the practical applications of academics.
- **Self-advocacy training** is designed to develop in the student knowledge of personal strengths, needs and rights as a citizen. Self-advocacy emphasizes the student's ability to act in an assertive, yet appropriate, manner and to make his or her needs known to others.
- **Study skills courses** are designed exclusively to enable a student to derive more from any particular lesson. The study skills course emphasizes a learning strategy training that allows the student to organize and retain more information about any particular course.

Academic services offered to special education and/or regular education students

There appear to be some anomalies in the number of districts reporting that they offer certain courses. For example, it would seem likely that ALL school districts offer “general academic level courses” as defined in the survey, yet only 111 out of 128 districts report that they do so. It may be that certain districts skipped over some questions. It may also be that special education personnel who filled out the survey may not have consulted with their general education counterparts to identify such information.

Reported results indicate that both advanced placement and college credit courses are offered more often to regular education students than to special education students. The opposite is true for functional academics, self-advocacy training and study skills, which are far more commonly offered to special education students. Figure 4 summarizes these results.

Figure 4 – Academic course/skills training
Number of school districts offering programs by student designation



Academic services offered for credit or not for credit

As would be expected, nearly all academic courses are offered primarily for credit. Some districts do offer functional academics (11 districts), self-advocacy training (23 districts), or study skills (18 districts) on a not-for-credit basis.

Academic services provided by the district or by a contractor

Likewise, academic services are provided almost exclusively by the districts. Only five districts or fewer provide any academic service through a contractor.

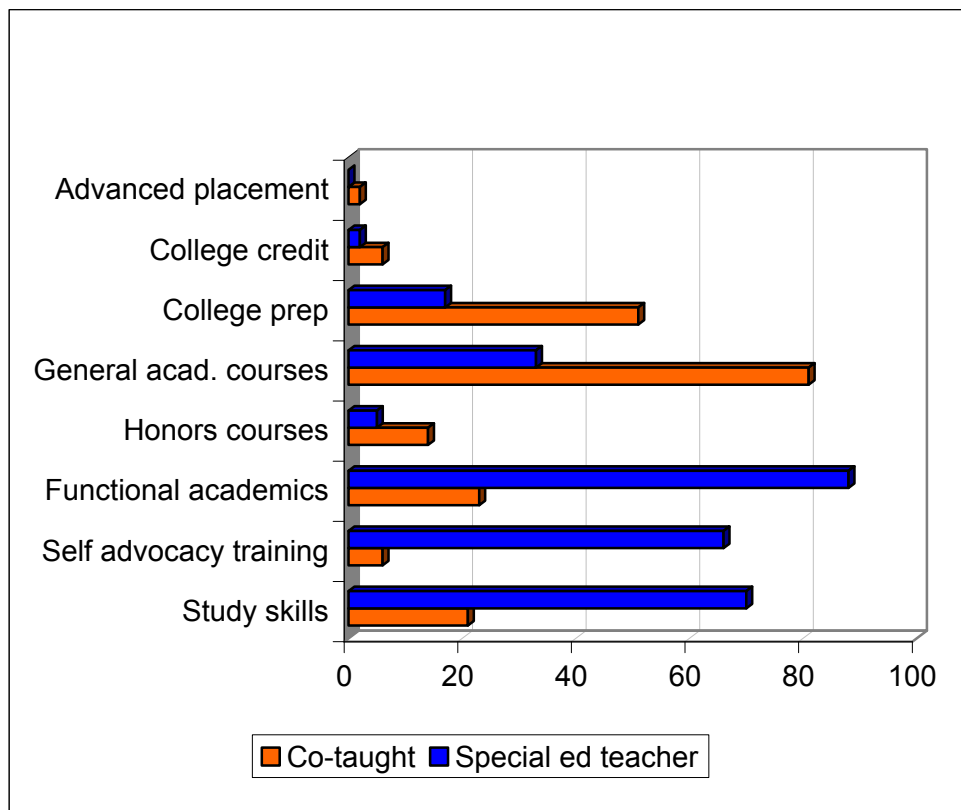
Academic courses by type of teacher(s)

Districts were asked to indicate whether academic courses were co-taught or taught by special education teachers alone. Co-taught classes were defined as an approach to program delivery in which two teachers (regular and special education) share teaching responsibilities within a regular education classroom. Both teachers interact with all students at various times and are jointly responsible for the curriculum and for monitoring and recording student performance.

Many districts did not answer this question with respect to advanced placement courses, college credit courses, or honors courses, most likely because those courses are taught solely by regular education teachers, which was not an available survey choice. The courses most likely to be co-taught are college prep and general academic level courses. The courses most likely to be taught by special education teachers alone are functional academics, self-advocacy training, and study skills.

Figure 5 indicates the number of districts that report each course as co-taught or taught by a special education teacher.

Figure 5 - Number of districts offering academic course/skills by type of teacher(s)

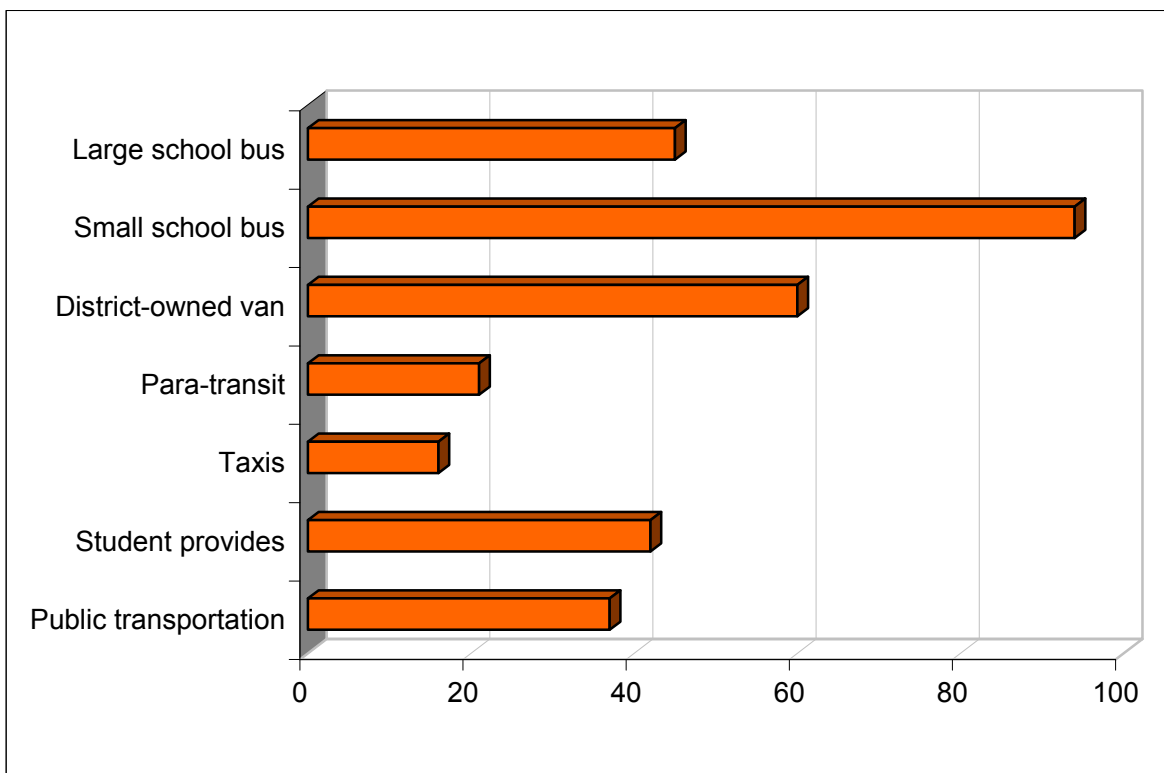


E. Transportation

One section of the survey asked districts to indicate which type(s) of transportation are used to meet the transition/vocational needs of their special education students. School districts employ a variety of different transportation modes to transport students to work, education, or community sites, including large and small school buses, district-owned vans, para-transit, and taxis. Para-transit is an alternative mode of flexible passenger transportation that does not follow fixed routes or schedules and is usually operated by public transit agencies, community groups or private operators. Typically vans or mini-buses provide services along a more or less defined route and pick up or discharge passengers upon request or may offer on-demand, call-up, door-to-door services.

Small school buses (94 districts) and district-owned vans (60 districts) are the most common transportation options for special education students, while para-transit and taxis (21 and 16 districts, respectively) are the least common. These results are summarized in Figure 6.

Figure 6 – Transportation
Number of school districts using various transportation types*



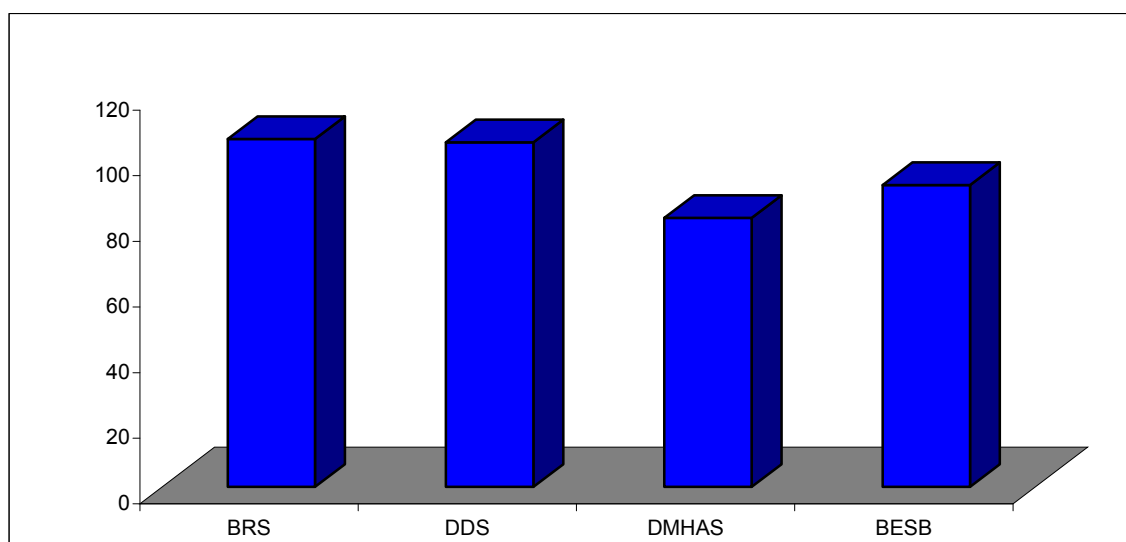
*categories are not mutually exclusive

F. Collaboration with adult service agencies

The survey asked districts to indicate whether they collaborate with any of four adult service agencies that work with people with disabilities. These agencies include the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), and the Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB). The

term “collaboration,” however, was not defined, and it is possible that even a minimal amount of contact was counted as “collaboration” by the districts. Most districts report that they collaborate with each of these agencies, ranging from 82 (DMHAS) to 106 (BRS). The survey did not probe the extent or quality of collaboration with adult service agencies, an issue that may merit further exploration. These results are summarized in Figure 7.

Figure 7 – Agency Collaboration
Number of school districts reporting collaboration with various adult service agencies*



*categories are not mutually exclusive

G. Personnel/Staff

The survey asked districts to provide information about six job categories that are typically associated with services for special education students, including whether people in these positions are employed full-time (a dedicated position), part-time (as part of larger job responsibilities), or as a dedicated part-time position, whether they are contract or per diem employees, and whether or not they receive benefits.

- A **job coach** is a paraprofessional who accompanies a student to a work site and assists the student to varying degrees to develop and maintain competitive work skills and behaviors and to adapt to the work site environment.
- A **job developer** is a professional who is responsible for finding employment opportunities or restructuring the workplace experiences or jobs for students with disabilities. Such customized employment is based on an individualized determination of a student’s strengths, requirements, preferences and interests.
- A **life coach** is a trained professional who assists a student to identify and achieve personal goals related to transition goals and objectives (e.g., making friends, finding a job, navigating a college campus).
- **Transition coordinator** (not defined in survey)
- **Transition specialist** (not defined in survey)
- **School counselor (guidance)** (not defined in survey)

Although the first three job categories were defined in the survey, the last three were not. It is likely that there may have been some confusion on the part of districts answering the survey as to the distinction between “transition coordinator” and “transition specialist,” and the differences in responses concerning these job categories should be viewed with caution.

School counselors are most likely to be full-time dedicated positions with benefits, while job coaches and job developers are most likely to serve in that role part-time as part of their job responsibilities. Life coaches are rare. Very few jobs in any category are part time positions, per diem positions, or positions with no benefits. Table 3 summarizes survey data concerning these staff positions.

Table 3. Number of districts by characteristics of six job categories

	Full time Dedicated	Part time Part of job	Part time position	Contract	Per diem	Benefits	No benefits
Job coach	32	52	18	50	13	43	19
Job developer	22	34	6	34	5	30	6
Life coach	5	7	1	8	1	8	2
Transition coordinator	31	34	7	41	5	49	6
Transition specialist	15	12	1	17	1	20	0
School counselor	82	22	9	55	2	76	1

H. Transition related questions

In addition to asking about specific services and courses offered by school districts, the survey asked six additional qualitative or open-ended questions about transition services. Responses to the open-ended questions were entered in full into a Microsoft Access database. Content from these questions were analyzed using standard qualitative analysis techniques (McCracken, 1988). Data was analyzed line by line to identify and interpret each response. Major concepts or areas of interest supported by direct quotations were organized into common themes using the constant comparative technique (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Additional themes were included until no new topics were identified. Like statements were explored and compared to refine each theme and ensure a fuller understanding of each. Percentage of response was determined by dividing the number of times any particular theme was mentioned by the total number of responses.

Who is responsible for developing 504 Plans?

The term “504 Plan” was not defined in the survey, but is generally understood by educational professionals. It refers to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and spells out the modifications and accommodations that will be needed for certain students with documented disabilities to have an opportunity perform at the same level as their peers. The 504 Plan might include such things as wheelchair ramps, blood sugar monitoring, a peanut-free lunch environment, home instruction, or a tape recorder for taking notes. In Connecticut, 504 Plans are the responsibility of general education, not special education personnel.

One hundred thirteen districts responded to this question, with 36 of them reporting the use of a team approach for developing 504 Plans. School districts described their team approach in various ways:

Consist[s] of teachers, parents, guidance counselor, nurse, administrator and other appropriate school personnel to the suggested student plan.

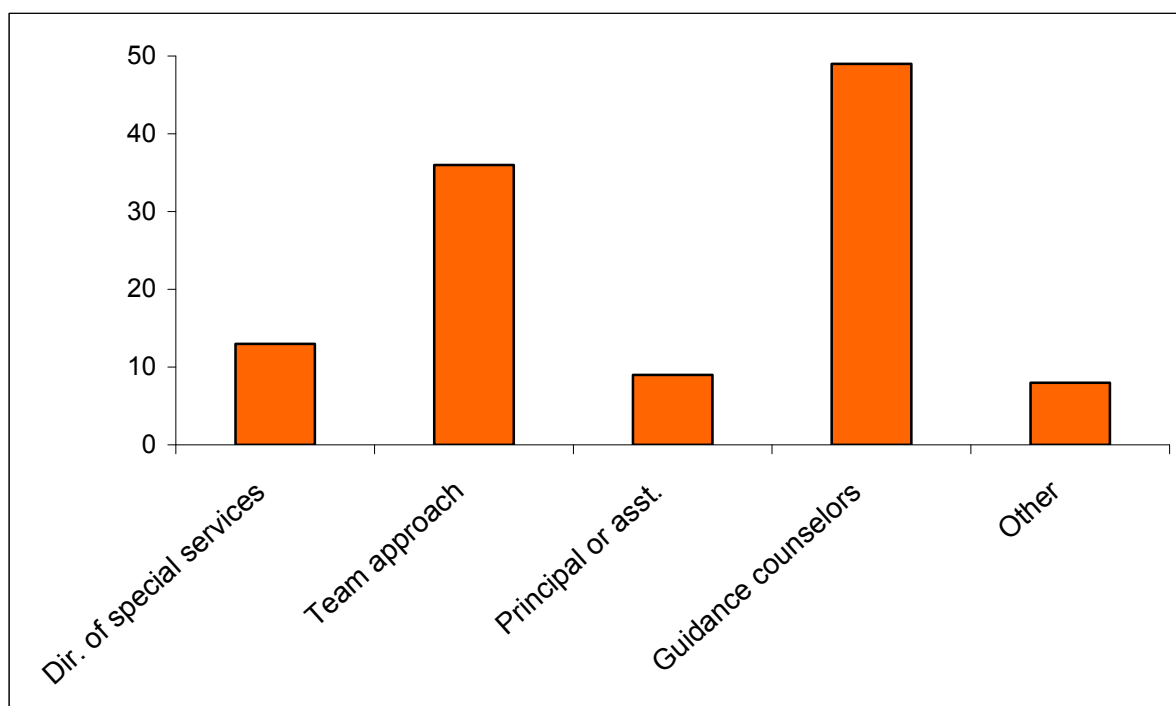
504 Team consists of Guidance counselors, school psychologist, teachers, students, parents, nurse.

PPTs have a team consisting of an administrator, teacher, and counselors who jointly develop 504 Plan.

Guidance counselor writes plans, coordinates meetings. Director of Pupil Services is overall District 504 Coordinator.

Forty-nine school districts rely on their guidance counselor staff to develop 504 Plans. In 13 districts it is the Director of Special Services who develops the plan; in nine districts the principal or assistant principal is responsible for plan development. The “other” category includes transition specialist, psychologist, social worker, and special education staff. Figure 8 summarizes these results.

Figure 8 – Who is responsible for developing 504 Plans?
Number of school districts utilizing various sources for development of 504 Plans

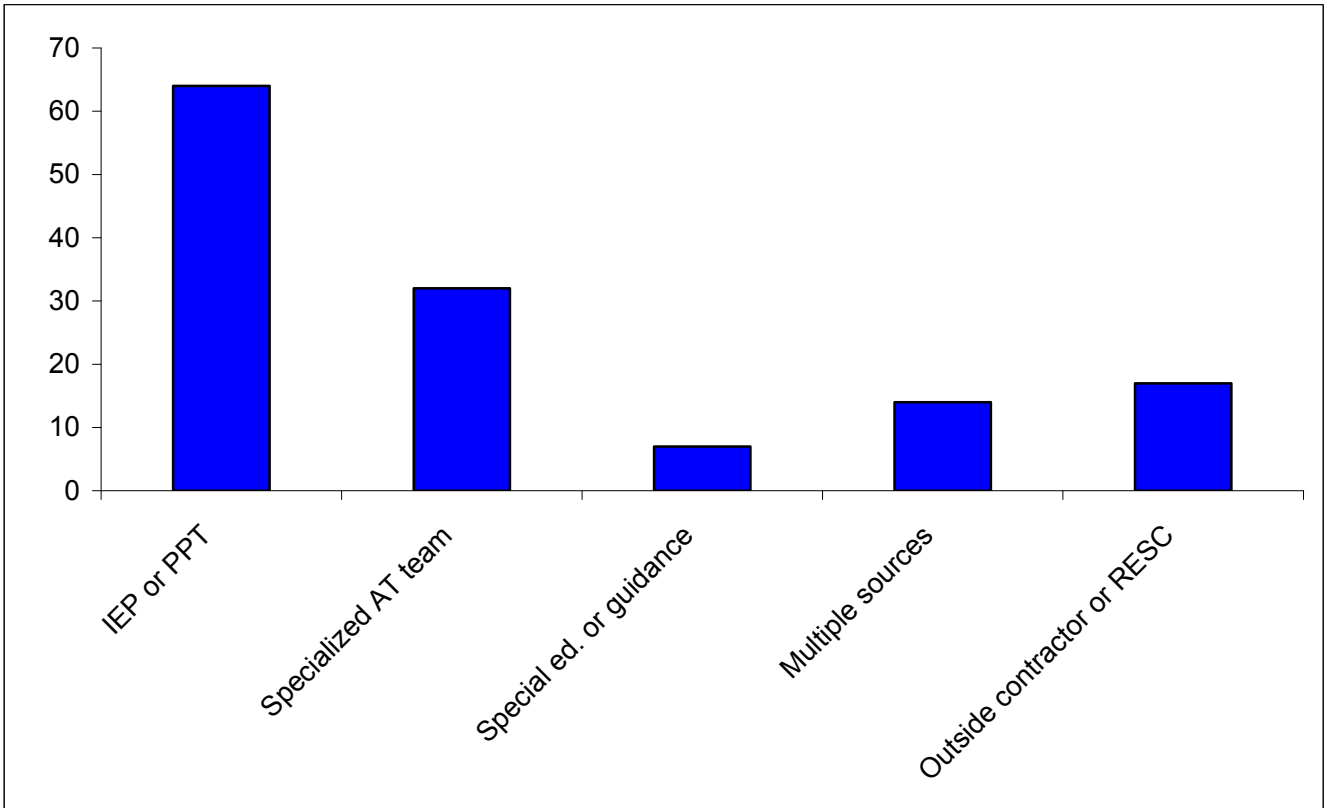


Is there a process by which to identify Assistive Technology (AT) resources and accommodations? Explain.

Most of the districts that answered this question (107 of 120) indicate that they do have a process by which to identify AT resources and accommodations. The most common method employed is as part

of the IEP or PPT process¹ (64 districts). Other common methods are use of a specialized AT team (32 districts) and outside contractors, including Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) (17 districts). Figure 9 illustrates these results.

Figure 9 – Is there a process to identify AT & accommodations?
Number of districts that utilize various methods of identifying AT resources and accommodations



*categories are not mutually exclusive

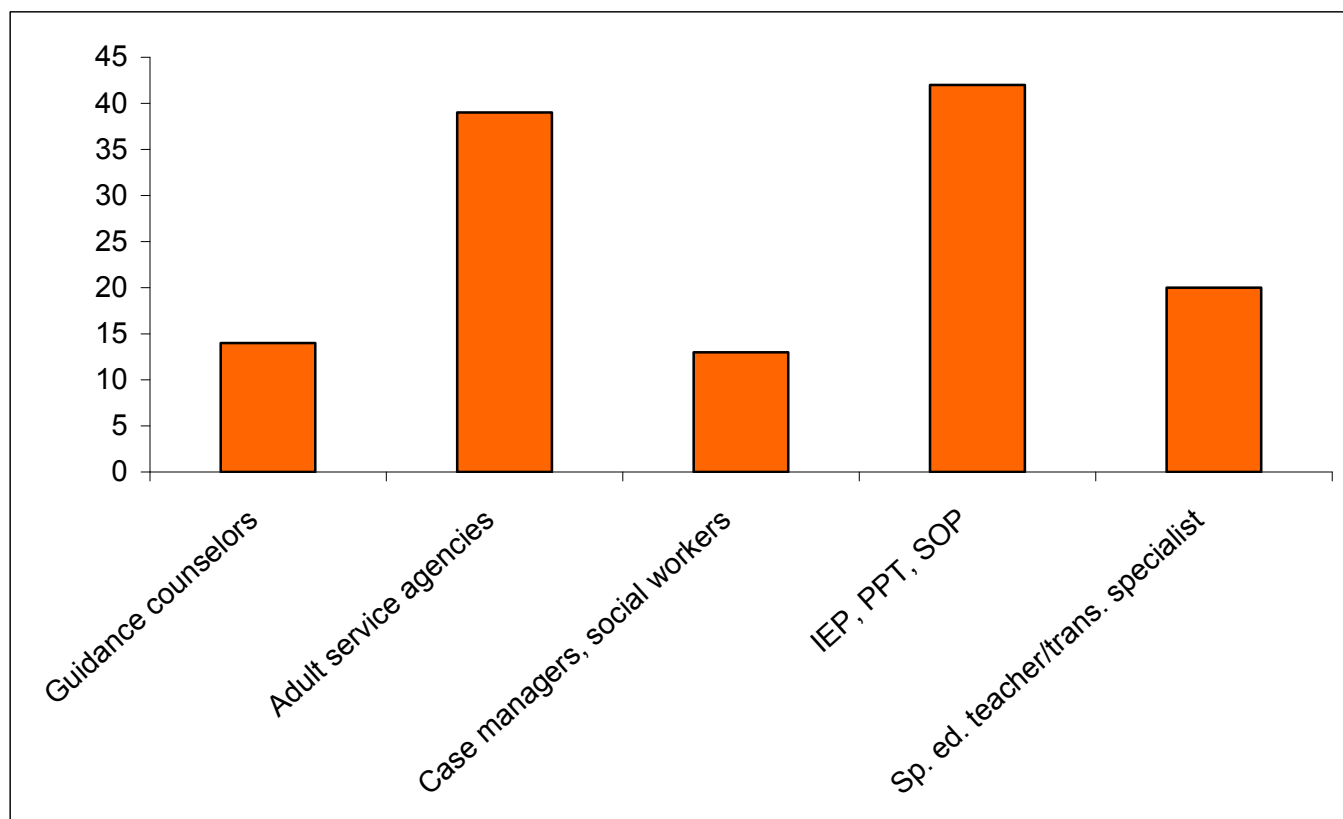
How are students advised about accessing AT after exiting high school (e.g., funding, training, resources)?

After exiting high school, students are advised about AT through multiple sources. Of the 100 school districts that answered this question, nearly half (47) listed more than one source. The most common methods, however, are through the IEP/PPT/SOP² processes (42), and through various adult service agencies such as BRS, BESB, DDS and DMHAS (39). The transition specialist or special education teacher provides this information for the students in 20 districts, and guidance counselors provide this information in 14 districts. These results are summarized in Figure 10.

¹ An IEP is an “individualized education plan,” a written plan that details a student’s special education and related services the district will provide to meet the student’s individual needs. A PPT is a “planning and placement team,” a group of professional personnel and family members responsible for planning the student’s IEP.

² An SOP is a “summary of performance,” a summary of a student’s academic achievement and functional performance, including recommendations to assist the student in meeting post-secondary goals.

Figure 10 – How are students advised about AT after exiting high school?
Number of school districts that utilize various sources for advising students about AT



*categories are not mutually exclusive

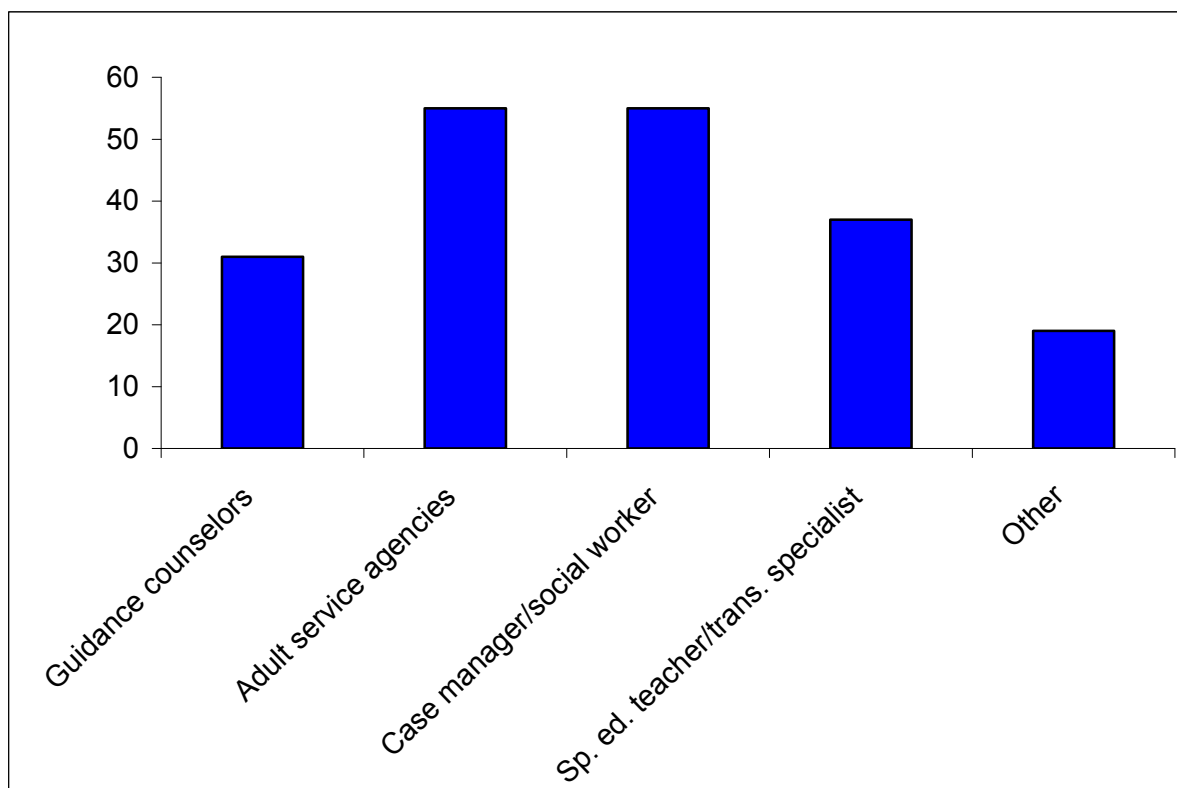
Is your transition coordinator/specialist a certified teacher? If yes, area of certification

Eighty-one of the 92 school districts that responded to the question indicated that their transition coordinator or specialist is a certified teacher, usually a special education teacher. Eleven districts responded that their transition coordinator/specialist is not a certified teacher.

How do students get information about benefits?

One hundred-eighteen school districts answered the question regarding how students get information about benefits such as SSI, Medicaid, food stamps and Section 8 Housing. The primary sources of information are adult service agencies and case managers/social workers, each of which is utilized by 55 school districts. Special education teachers and transition specialists are utilized by 37 districts for information about benefits, and 31 districts rely on guidance counselors for providing information about benefits.

Figure 11 – How do students get information about benefits?
Number of districts that utilize various sources to inform students about benefits



*categories are not mutually exclusive

Does your district have a transition service that is exemplary?

The full survey question about exemplary transition services was: “Does your district have a transition service or transition service component (e.g. job development, transportation, internships, portfolio development, career counseling) that is exemplary? If YES, please describe the service component(s) for possible inclusion in our Secondary Transition Best Practices.”

One hundred eight districts responded to this question: 61 districts checked “yes” and 47 checked “no.” However, some that checked “yes” did not give examples, while some that checked “no” did give examples. In all, 54 districts gave examples of transition components considered exemplary. Answers to this question were wide-ranging, with examples of services given in many different categories of transition services. The following examples are illustrative only. All responses are being analyzed by the State Department of Education for feasibility and future use in technical assistance and training to school districts.

There is an extensive supported employment program that provides experiences in a desired field for pay. The district will pay the student. The employer just agrees to train the student. Staff members monitor the work placements.

Our 18-21 year old program for students with special education needs provides individualized programs within the local community. We provide services designed to meet the specific needs of each student with regards to independent living skills, recreation and hobbies, work experiences, cooking, hygiene and whatever other skills are needed. Students rotate through a variety of work experiences based on their specific strengths and interests.

STEP Program - supported employment model of vocational training; continuum of career & employability skills instruction; Career Seminar - grades 9 & 10; Employability Skills - grade 11; Transition Services - grade 12 Variety of hands-on experiences; in-school job training, community based vocational training, internships, job shadowing; paid work experience Career Trips to area businesses.

In addition to career field trips, guest speaker forums, career counseling, job shadows, internships, annual college fair (in-district), the high school is currently utilizing "Naviance", a web-based career & college-planning program. This interactive forum also allows parents to have access to certain information.

Students discuss the current employment market, determine the educational and training requirements for their career interest area, develop job seeking skills, build employment portfolios and get hands-on experience with on campus jobs.

[Name of town] High School offers a transition program which includes functional life skills and functional academics, work in the community exposure. Employment skills is a course which focuses on job skills development for a diverse group of students which includes key boarding, banking and budgeting, interviewing, business behavior, ethics, vocabulary development, career exposure and in house jobs such as Earthly Delights, an in-house bistro simulation, Kopy Kats - a copying business, kitchen prep for student lunches and building maintenance and mail delivery.

IV. Conclusions

A statewide survey of 128 Connecticut school districts concerning transition, work experience and community participation services for students receiving special education services was conducted in 2008 and produced a 100 percent response rate. Despite the limitations of the survey, which include missing data for some questions, some general conclusions may be drawn.

A wide variety of transition services, including career and employment services, academic courses, and other related services, are made available by Connecticut school districts to special education students. However, there is also wide variation in the availability of such services, the relative propensity to provide similar services to regular and special education students, the array of services for which students may receive credit and/or payment, and services likely to be provided by a contractor.

Career/employment services most likely to be offered to both regular education and special education students include career exploration, community service, job-shadowing, pre-employment skills, and volunteer work. Services that are offered substantially more frequently to special education students than to regular education students include transition services (in both the community and at college/university), vocational training programs, and work experiences (both in schools and in the local community). A large majority of career/employment services are unpaid, are offered for credit, and are provided by the district rather than by contractors. Those most likely to be paid include apprenticeships, Cooperative Work Experience, on-the-job training, and work study. Services least likely to be offered for credit are career exploration, informational interviews, job shadowing, vocational evaluation and volunteer work.

Other services frequently viewed as transition services, such as evaluation for and provision of assistive technology, independent living skills, and social skills training, are also offered most frequently to special education students. Mentoring programs, particularly by peers, are common for both regular and special education students. These services are generally not for credit; some that are commonly provided by contractors include assistive technology and person centered/futures planning.

Academic services such as functional academics, self-advocacy training, and study skills are far more common for special education students, and those courses are most likely to be taught by special education teachers. By contrast, advance placement, college credit and honors courses are far less available to special education students. College prep and general academic courses are most likely to be co-taught by special education and regular education teachers. Nearly all courses of every type are for credit, and are provided almost exclusively by the districts themselves.

Small school buses and district-owned vans are the most common transportation options for the transition/vocational needs of special education students, while para-transit and taxis are the least common. Most districts reported that they cooperate with adult service agencies, though the quality and extent of cooperation is unknown and merits further study.

Transition services are provided by a wide variety of personnel in different job categories. School counselors are most likely to be full-time dedicated positions with benefits, while job coaches and job developers are most likely to serve in that role part time as part of their job. Life coaches are rare. Very few jobs in any category are part-time positions, per diem positions, or positions with no benefits.

The survey gained valuable additional information about the variety of approaches used by districts to develop 504 Plans, identify Assistive Technology (AT) resources and accommodations, and advise

students about their benefits and post-high school AT resources. A compendium of these answers, as well as best practices identified by the districts, will be useful to the State Department of Education for continuing technical assistance and training to school districts.

References

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

McCracken, G. D. (1988). *The long interview*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Appendix A

Connecticut School Districts Surveyed

Ansonia	Madison	Tolland
Avon	Manchester	Torrington
Berlin	Meriden	Trumbull
Bethel	Middletown	Vernon
Bloomfield	Milford	Wallingford
Bolton	Monroe	Waterbury
Branford	Montville	Waterford
Bridgeport	Naugatuck	Watertown
Bristol	New Britain	Westbrook
Brookfield	New Canaan	West Hartford
Canton	New Fairfield	West Haven
Cheshire	New Haven	Weston
Clinton	Newington	Westport
Colchester	New London	Wethersfield
Coventry	New Milford	Wilton
Cromwell	Newtown	Windham
Danbury	North Branford	Windsor
Darien	North Haven	Windsor Locks
Derby	North Stonington	Wolcott
East Granby	Norwalk	Woodstock Academy
East Haddam	Norwich (Norwich Free Academy)	Reg. Dist. 1
East Hampton	Old Saybrook	Reg. Dist. 4
East Hartford	Oxford	Reg. Dist. 5
East Haven	Plainfield	Reg. Dist. 6
East Lyme	Plainville	Reg. Dist. 7
East Windsor	Plymouth	Reg. Dist. 8
Ellington	Portland	Reg. Dist. 9
Enfield	Putnam	Reg. Dist. 10
Fairfield	Ridgefield	Reg. Dist. 11
Farmington	Rocky Hill	Reg. Dist. 12
Glastonbury	Seymour	Reg. Dist. 13
Granby	Shelton	Reg. Dist. 14
Greenwich	Simsbury	Reg. Dist. 15
Griswold	Somers	Reg. Dist. 16
Groton	Southington	Reg. Dist. 17
Guilford	South Windsor	Reg. Dist. 18
Hamden	Stafford	Reg. Dist. 19
Hartford	Stamford	CORRECTIONS/DOC – USD 1
Hartland HS (Gilbert School)	Stonington	DCF – USD 2
Killingly	Stratford	CT Tech HS
Lebanon	Suffield	American School for the Deaf
Ledyard	Thomaston	Cooperative Educational Services
Litchfield	Thompson	

Characteristics of Transition Services									
Check all that apply									
	Special Education n=	Regular Education n=		Co-taught n=	Sp Ed Tchr n=	For Credit n=	No Credit n=	Provided by District n=	Contractor Provided n=
Academic Services									
Advanced Placement Courses (AP)	61	111		2	0	105	2	95	1
College Credit Courses (dual enrollment - college & HS credit)	57	88		6	2	82	2	67	4
College Prep Courses	94	111		51	17	101	4	91	1
General Academic Level Courses	99	105		81	33	97	3	87	1
Honors Courses	79	105		14	5	93	2	82	1
Functional Academics (practical applications)	113	35		23	88	96	11	91	2
Self-Advocacy Training	106	33		6	66	57	23	77	5
Study Skills/Learning Strategy Training	113	54		21	70	80	18	82	3
OTHER									
Transition Related Questions									
1. Who is responsible for developing 504 Plans?									
Please list name and role/position of 504 Coordinator:									
113 answers									
2. Is there a process by which to identify Assistive Technology (AT) resources and accommodations? YES NO									
Explain: 107 yes 13 no out of 120 answers									
3. How are students advised about accessing AT after exiting high school? (e.g., funding, training, resources)									
Explain: 100 answers									
4. Is Transition Coordinator/Specialist a Certified Teacher?									
YES - Area of Certification: 81 yes 11 no out of 92 answers									
NO - Qualifications: _____									
5. How do students get information about benefits (SSI, Medicaid, Food Stamps, Section 8)?									
Explain: 118 answers									
6. Does your district have a transition service or transition service component (e.g., job development, transportation, internships, portfolio development, career counseling) that is exemplary? YES NO									
Please Elaborate: 61 yes 47 no out of 108 answers									
If YES, Please describe the service component(s) for possible inclusion in our Secondary Transition Best Practices: [Attach or send additional information as appropriate.]									