

District Implementation of Research-Based Practices for Transition Planning With Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Youth With Disabilities and Their Families

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Abstract

Post-school outcomes are poor for youth with disabilities, in general, but even more discouraging for certain subpopulations of individuals with disabilities, particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds. The authors discuss structural inequalities in public schools which potentially contribute to the poorer transition outcomes of CLD youth with disabilities compared with their White peers with disabilities and identify 11 research-based practices (RBPs) for supporting CLD youth with disabilities and their families during the transition planning process. A study is subsequently described involving the development and implementation of a survey measuring the degree to which these 11 RBPs are being implemented in public school districts. The survey was administered during 2011 to 2016 to interdisciplinary transition teams representing more than 90 school districts in the United States who were attending state capacity-building transition services training institutes. Group consensus was sought on the 11 items appearing on the survey. Results from the study found that most school districts were not implementing any of the RBPs to any significant degree, school staff were in need of cultural competence professional development training, CLD families of transition-aged youth with disabilities lacked access to quality resources and supports, and CLD youth with disabilities lacked opportunities to strengthen their self-determination skills. Implications for practice and future research on this topic is presented and discussed.

Keywords

culture, linguistic, disability, special education, transition, youth

The area of secondary transition education and services for youth with disabilities has received much attention in the past three decades. Researchers have determined that effective transition planning for youth with disabilities is directly linked to positive post-school outcomes for these individuals in the areas of postsecondary education/training, employment, and independent living (Test et al., 2009). In addition, findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study–1 (NLTS-1; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine, 2005) and subsequent findings from the National Longitudinal Study–2 have shown that youth with disabilities continue to lag behind their peers without disabilities in important post-school outcomes (NLTS-2; Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009; Wagner et al., 2005; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Levine, & Garza, 2006; Wagner, Newman, & Javitz, 2014). The data are even more discouraging for particular subpopulations of individuals with disabilities, especially those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds (Newman et al., 2009).

What does the term *cultural and linguistic diversity* refer to in published educational research literature? Barrera and

Corso (2003) offered their thoughts on the terminology by stating that *cultural diversity* and *cultural and linguistic diversity* are synonymous terms, not based on ethnicity or an individual characteristic, or defined by a given cultural group or community. Rather, these authors contend that cultural and linguistic diversity is defined and characterized by the interactions and comparisons between people within a given environment as opposed to a trait or characteristic that resides within a given individual. Barrera and Corso argued that the challenges involved when interacting with people of a different culture and/or who speak a different language is the potential of producing emotional stress and discomfort within these individuals when interacting with

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them in a strange and/or uncomfortable environment (e.g., American public schools).

With these thoughts in mind, results from both the NLTS-1 and NLTS-2 studies found that CLD youth with disabilities compared with their White peers with disabilities had poorer post-school outcomes in the areas of post-secondary education/training, employment, and overall rates of engagement. These trends have continued according to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Statistics (2016). White persons with a disability were employed at a higher rate (17.8%) as compared with Asian (15.2%) and Black (14.3%) persons with a disability. Unemployment rates were lower for Asian (7.4%) and White (9.6%) persons with a disability as compared with Hispanic (13.3%) and Black (17.4%) persons with a disability.

The poorer transition outcomes of CLD youth with disabilities are cause for concern in lieu of the fact that public school student populations have become more CLD for more than a decade. Changes in public school enrollment between 2003 and 2013 showed a decline in White and Black students from 59% to 50% and 17% to 16%, respectively, whereas Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander students increased from 19% to 25% and 4% to 5%, respectively, and all other groups remained stable (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Linguistic diversity continues to grow and expand with 4.5 million students reported being English language learners. A recent report from Salt Lake City noted the challenges public schools face in educating increased numbers of children from minority and immigrant families:

Many families lack the language and skills needed to navigate the school and social systems . . . Local K-16 schools are underprepared and struggling to meet the language and cultural differences of students and families . . . Of the 26,000 students and families in the Salt Lake City District, there are more than 100 languages (including dialects) spoken . . . 36.7% are ELL . . . and 62.1% of the population are below the poverty level. (Becker, 2012, p. 2)

School Structural Inequalities Affecting the Transition of CLD Youth With Disabilities

Research literature has identified a number of structural inequalities in public schools that can potentially adversely affect the transition outcomes of CLD youth with disabilities. These include (a) teachers who have higher expectations for White and Asian students, and lower expectations of Latino, Black, and Native American students (Cherng, 2015; Downey & Ainsworth-Darnell, 2002; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007); (b) educators who lack or have a limited understanding of the culture of various CLD families of the students they are teaching (Pewewardy & Fitzpatrick, 2009; Robinson, 2016;

Rueda, Monzo, Shapiro, Gomez, & Blacher, 2005); (c) racial, cultural stereotypes, and biases in school personnel toward CLD families as well as school personnel consciously or unconsciously viewing culture as a liability (Brandon & Brown, 2007; Geenen, Powers, Lopez Vasquez, & Bersani, 2003; Gil-Kashiwabara, Hogansen, Geenen, Powers, & Powers, 2007; Harry, 2008; Landmark, Zhang, & Montoya, 2007). Additional school structural inequalities toward CLD families of youth with disabilities were identified by Greene (2011). These included special educators' lack of acknowledgment of CLD families' hopes and dreams for their children's futures (Brandon & Brown, 2007; Lai & Ishiyama, 2004; Landmark et al., 2007; Pewewardy & Fitzpatrick, 2009; Rueda et al., 2005), special educators' lack of sensitivity to CLD family immigration issues and limited language proficiency, and parents of CLD youth with disabilities reporting feeling intimidated when interacting with school personnel and feeling that their participation in the transition planning process was cursory (Landmark, Roberts, & Zhang, 2013; Leake & Boone, 2007).

Research-Based Practices for Promoting Active Involvement

Greene (2011) identified 11 research-based practices (RBPs) for transition planning with CLD youth disabilities and their families (see definition criteria from the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition, NTA, 2015). Adoption by schools of these RBPs increases the likelihood of more active involvement of CLD youth with disabilities and their families during transition planning process and may have a positive effect on the post-school transition outcomes achieved by CLD youth with disabilities. The 11 RBPs are shown in Table 1 and can generally be grouped into five main recommendations: (a) use skilled dialogue and culturally responsive communication with CLD families, (b) demonstrate cultural reciprocity with CLD families when planning transition services and supports for their child, (c) utilize person-family centered approaches to transition planning with CLD youth with disabilities and their families, (d) provide cultural competence training to school personnel, (e) provide transition training to CLD parents on the topics of special education law, parent rights and responsibilities, and special education services available to their child.

Description of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore public school district implementation of the 11 RBPs identified in Table 1 for promoting more active involvement of CLD youth with disabilities and their families during the transition planning process. The research team developed a district self-assessment instrument designed to help schools gather baseline

Table 1. Research-Based Transition Planning Practices for CLD Families of Youth With Disabilities.

1. School special education personnel encourage parents of CLD students to participate in the entire assessment process from data gathering to verification of information, valuing the parent's cultural background and intimate knowledge of and experience with their child.
2. Parents of CLD students are essential transition team members and are present and active partners at transition planning meetings giving information about their child either orally or in writing.
3. Parents of CLD students are actively encouraged to engage in elections, selecting people who represent their needs and concerns on local school building committees or boards.
4. Parents of CLD students are provided opportunities within the school to connect with other CLD families through support groups, mentors, or community liaisons.
5. Parents of CLD students are recruited to engage in peer advocacy for other CLD parents (e.g., provide IEP support or serve as interpreters at IEP meetings).
6. Nonfamily member CLD interpreters are used at IEP meetings who are trained in the basics of special education, transition law, and familiar with the individual student's family culture.
7. School special education personnel know the background of an individual student's family culture including the following: languages spoken at home, styles of communication, norms for personal and social development, postsecondary goals held by the family, views on disability, family structure, and decision-making practices.
8. Special education school personnel are provided cultural competence training to increase their cultural sensitivity and reduce professional behaviors known to be deterrents to CLD parent participation in the transition planning process.
9. To promote active participation in special education and transition planning meetings, training is offered to CLD parents based on their self-identified needs and to increase their knowledge of school policy, practices, and procedures in special education and transition planning.
10. School special education personnel use person-centered planning tools for transition planning with students, including CLD students (e.g., Circles, MAPS, and PATHS).
11. Self-determination coursework is provided to all students at school, including CLD students, with an emphasis on postsecondary options, legal rights, effective self-advocacy, and working with transition service providers to achieve desired postsecondary goals.

Note. CLD = culturally and linguistically diverse; IEP = Individualized Education Program.

data on the implementation of the 11 RBPs for transition planning with CLD youth with disabilities and their families. In addition, the study attempted to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: To what extent do transition teams perceive that their districts are implementing the 11 RBPs?

Research Question 2: What data do teams use to determine if the RBPs are being implemented?

Research Question 3: What barriers and facilitators do transition teams identify to successfully implementing the RBPs?

Method

Instrumentation

The research team developed an instrument designed to measure the degree to which school districts are implementing the 11 recommended RBPs shown to effectively engage CLD youth with disabilities and their families in the transition planning process. The *Survey of Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Transition Planning Practices* (Gothberg, Greene, & Loving, 2011) is a self-assessment instrument that employs a 5-point Likert-type scale to accomplish this purpose. Practices included on the survey were based on studies

that used rigorous research designs and demonstrated a sufficient record of success for improving transition education, planning, and services for CLD youth with disabilities and their families. Due to the paucity of rigorously designed practice-level research in this area, the survey was limited to 11 items designed to provide data related to the three guided research questions of this study. For each of the 11 RBPs, participants were asked to rate themselves using the following scale/descriptor: (0) *unsure* (if the practice is occurring), (1) *this practice is not occurring with CLD students*, (2) *we are developing this practice with CLD students, but it is not yet occurring*, (3) *this practice occurs some of the time with some CLD students*, or (4) *this practice occurs regularly, widely, and consistently with CLD students*. Thus, the higher the average score across responses on the survey, the higher the rate of RBP implementation occurred according to the survey respondents. In addition, each of the 11 survey items included two areas for open-ended responses: (a) an area to describe the data to show if this practice is occurring or not occurring, (b) an area to provide comments for the state team.

The survey underwent a two-phase validation process. Once items were selected, for phase one validation, the researchers engaged experts in the field of transition ($n = 8$) to confirm construct validity, sampling validity, and face validity. From the expert review, several items on the survey were reworded per suggestions (note that expert review

panel suggestions were strictly related to wording on the survey, with no suggested content changes to items on the survey). For example the items in the draft survey included I statements: "I recruit parents" which were updated to "We recruit parents." Due to the anticipated interdisciplinary team focus and potential of teams including vocational rehabilitation staff, experts recommended changing the term student with disabilities to youth with disabilities and child in statements referring to a youth within the family context.

For phase two, to determine the reliability of the 11-item self-assessment, the instrument was piloted in five districts. One administrator and one school staff member from each district independently rated their district one each item to measure the level of within district reliability. This was done to ensure both agreement between administrators and school staff and that the data collected correctly measured the specific variables (McHugh, 2012). Agreement was measured using simple percent agreement and the more robust Cohen's Kappa. Cohen's kappa coefficient is a change corrected measure of agreement with kappa values ranging from +1, indicating complete agreement to -1 indicating complete disagreement with a 0 indicating overlap due to chance (Landis & Koch, 1977). Using ReCal 0.1 for paired coders, an acceptable average level of percent agreement was met with 88.9% agreement and Cohen's kappa values confirmed high agreement as well ($\kappa = 79.7$). With this confirmation, the instrument was determined to meet the reliability needed to implement in the study.

Participants

This study was conducted with a convenience sample of participants who were members of interdisciplinary transition teams that were attending state capacity-building transition institutes being conducted by one of the lead authors. The teams that participated represent 98 local public school districts in five states and one territory (Illinois, Georgia, Michigan, Northern Marianas Island, Oregon, and Utah). Participant interdisciplinary transition teams varied by size and specific personnel represented, but typically included an administrator, a special education teacher, other school staff, parents, and community transition service agency personnel (e.g., vocational rehabilitation, community mental health). Team sizes ranged from two to 12 members with an average of four members per district team. Although teams participating in the institutes included representation from large diverse urban districts such as Salt Lake Public Schools and Detroit Public Schools, information on the total overall percentage of CLD students enrolled in the school districts from the participant convenience sample was not available.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected from the previously described interdisciplinary transition teams (vs. single persons) who attended the state capacity-building transition institutes. The multi-day institutes culminated in the creation of a school improvement plan turned into the state. Plans focused on the evidence-based practices found in the *Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0* aimed at guiding teams to improve transition education and services for secondary students with disabilities (Kohler, Gothberg, Fowler, & Coyle, 2016).

Each interdisciplinary transition team completed the previously described instrument entitled *Survey of Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Transition Planning Practices*. Teams were given up to 60 min to discuss and build a consensus of agreement in choosing their responses to the survey. Some teams moved through the process quickly and were able to complete the entire assessment in the allotted time, whereas other teams were unable to finish in the time allotted due to difficulty finding data needed to complete the survey or difficulty coming to a consensus. For this reason, there was a range of completion rates by items on the survey, with only Items 2, 5, and 6 receiving more than 90 responses. Items 1, 3, 4, and 7 to 11 received 57 to 59 responses.

Data Analysis

The unit of analysis in this study was interdisciplinary transition team responses to the survey. Each team was given the choice to complete paper surveys or electronic versions. All data were entered into QuestionPro, an online survey software tool. Survey data were then downloaded, cleaned, and aggregated in Microsoft Excel.

Quantitative. Data were imported into SAS 9.4. Descriptive statistics were computed for each of the individual survey items to determine the overall means, standard deviations, and percent of participant-reported practice implementation for Research Questions 1 to 3.

Qualitative. Participant-written open-ended responses on the survey were analyzed to better understand ideas, relationships, and common themes related to the data used to determine ratings and implementation of culturally responsive RBPs. Two researchers followed the process of content analysis to analyze (a) the responses to quality of data the teams used to answer each of the 11 items, and (b) the additional written information teams provided to explain the scores for each item. Content analysis is a "distinctive approach to analysis" that seeks to quantify the content of text in "a systematic and replicable manner" (Bryman, 2004, p. 181). In

Table 2. Survey Responses for the Implementation of CLD Research-Based Practices.

CLD practice ^a	<i>f</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	% at a 4
1. Parents participate in the entire assessment process	58	1.90	1.58	22.41
2. Parents are active partners at transition planning meetings	93	2.67	1.35	33.33
3. We encourage parents to engage in school elections	59	0.86	0.98	1.69
4. We provide parents opportunities within school to connect with other families	59	1.51	1.43	15.25
5. We recruit parents of CLD students to engage in peer advocacy	93	1.78	1.46	17.20
6. We use nonfamily member interpreters	92	2.29	1.42	22.83
7. School personnel know the background of individual student's family culture	58	2.09	1.60	20.69
8. We provide our school personnel with cultural competence training	59	1.18	1.23	6.78
9. We offer training to parents based on their self-identified needs	58	1.25	1.26	5.17
10. School personnel use person-centered planning tools for transition planning with students	57	1.41	1.56	10.53
11. Our school provides self-determination coursework to students	58	2.00	1.56	24.14

Note. CLD = culturally and linguistically diverse.

^aShortened version of the actual assessment questions.

addition, the researchers took on a qualitative exploratory approach to draw out and verify the conclusions (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). The analysis included initial thematic coding to examine, compare, and sort similarities and differences throughout the data. The coding scheme included the frequency of common codes and identification of overarching themes. The researchers independently coded the open-ended responses and met to compare identified codes, categories, and themes. A process of data reduction was used to distribute the initial codes into 10 overarching themes.

Results

Quantitative data obtained for the 11 RBPs investigated in this study are shown in Table 2 and are analyzed below. Qualitative analysis of school interdisciplinary team-written comments to the open-ended question on the survey are analyzed and discussed below as well.

Perceptions of RBP Implementation

Overall, results indicated school district interdisciplinary teams perceived their districts were not implementing any of the 11 RBPs to a high degree. Mean ratings on the 11 RBPs on the survey instrument ranged from a low of 0.86 to a high of 2.67, with an overall Mean of all RBPs = 1.72. These results indicated that school districts in the study were doing very little with regard to implementing recommended RBPs for transition planning with CLD youth with disabilities and their families.

Data Used to Determine if RBPs Are Being Implemented

The responses from school district interdisciplinary teams in the study indicated that school districts had very limited

sources of information to determine the degree to which they were implementing the 11 RBPs. In 37 instances, school district interdisciplinary teams indicated they were using only “anecdotal evidence” to show that a specific practice was occurring. In many instances, school district interdisciplinary teams used Individualized Education Program (IEP) documents as their only source of data to determine if the RBPs were occurring ($n = 25$). Although the IEP is a valid document, participants indicated there was little to no information in the IEP to answer the specific items appearing on the survey. One team stated, for example, “The only way we can show parents participated in transition planning is . . . parent signature on IEPs with transition plans.”

Barriers and Facilitators to RBP Implementation

Ten overarching themes appeared in the data in response to this question. These themes fell under the categories of the following: Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) compliance, use of translators, CLD family participation, opportunities for CLD families, personnel knowledge, cultural competence training, family training, person-family centered transition planning, student self-determination, and pockets of excellence. Specific findings within each of these categories are described below.

IDEA Compliance

Overall, districts reported they were meeting IDEA compliance requirements for parent involvement in transition planning with little or no differences in practices being used with CLD families compared with non-CLD families. One district team reported, “We treat all students with the same opportunity regardless of CLD.” Another district team stated, “There is no special outreach to CLD families.”

Use of Translators With CLD Families

Use of translators was a common practice but varied in terms of whether this person was a trained special education professional, had knowledge of special education law, was intimately familiar with the culture of individual CLD families, or just spoke the primary language of the family. Results from the survey item “We use nonfamily member interpreters” were as follows: ($f = 92$, $M = 2.20$, $SD = .42$, with 22.83 % of the school interdisciplinary teams rating themselves at Level 4). One team commented, “Usually our translators are teachers who speak the language, but they are often not trained in Special Education.” Another team stated that translators “don’t train [in special education], just serve as interpreters.” In addition, the teams often reported not knowing if a translator was knowledgeable about special education practices. This was indicated by one school interdisciplinary team response that said, “We have an interpreter in the schools but we don’t think she or he is trained in the basics of special education.”

CLD Family Active Participation in Transition Planning

The survey item “Parents are active partners at transition planning meetings” yielded the highest values on the survey ($f = 93$, $M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.35$, with 33.33% of the school interdisciplinary teams rating themselves at Level 4). Nevertheless, respondents acknowledged the importance and need to provide more support for CLD families involved in the transition planning process. The majority of written responses acknowledged the need to increase focus on the specific needs of CLD families involved in transition planning rather than using the basic and common practices that comply with IDEA. One district reported that CLD parents needed “more . . . by that we mean understand the law, their rights and those of their child, as well as looking ahead.” Many teams reported low involvement of CLD families in IEP meetings with one team stating that “parents of CLD students have yet to attend the meetings or trainings we have scheduled.” Another team was concerned that IEP meeting times were not flexible, “We host all our IEPs at school with only 10% being held at nontraditional hours (after 3:00 p.m.)”

Networking Opportunities for CLD Families

CLD families were not being provided special opportunities to connect with one another beyond the usual programs offered by school districts to reach out to all parents. This was evidenced in the following results from the survey: “We provide parents opportunities within the school to

connect with other families” ($f = 59$, $M = 1.51$, $SD = 1.43$, with 15.25% of school interdisciplinary teams rating themselves at a 4), “We recruit parents of CLD students to engage in peer advocacy” ($f = 93$, $M = 1.78$, $SD = 1.46$, with 17.20% of school interdisciplinary teams rating themselves at a 4). One team commented that there are already opportunities for all parents to participate in “school parent advisory committees, websites, blogs, e-mails.” School personnel appeared to be focused on only what was mandated rather than CLD transition planning RBPs. One team stated, “we did not know this was our responsibility.” Another followed the same line of thinking with a comment of “as far as we know this has never been mandated or focused on by the district policy administration.” In some instances, teams wrote defensive comments such as “the other school councils and the school board do not have any culturally diverse parents.”

Personnel Knowledge About CLD Families

School district personnel possessed general, basic knowledge about CLD families obtained from standard school forms and records. In-depth knowledge about a family’s culture was not actively sought. This was evidenced in results from the survey item “School personnel know the background of individual student’s family culture” ($f = 58$, $M = 2.09$, $SD = 1.60$, with 20.69% of school interdisciplinary teams rating themselves at a 4).

Cultural Competence Training for School Personnel

Cultural competence training was generally not emphasized or offered to school staff beyond what was provided by English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Language Learners (ELL) Coordinators. Results from the survey item “We provide our school personnel with cultural competence training” were as follows: ($f = 59$, $M = 0.86$, $SD = 0.98$, with 6.78% of the school interdisciplinary teams rating themselves at Level 4). One school interdisciplinary team commented, “Cultural diversity is discussed at faculty meetings but we do not see training being provided.” Another team wrote they needed expanded training opportunities, as reflected in the comment, “We need professional development for teachers of all cultures.” Even in urban school districts, written responses from school interdisciplinary teams indicated that they needed to go beyond ESL, stating the need for “offerings for cultural diversity classes/conferences, outside of an ESL endorsement program.” Many survey respondents reported feeling overwhelmed, with one team in particular sharing, “It is difficult for a teacher and a school as a whole to be cognizant of and comfortable with many aspects of ‘other’ cultures.”

Specialized CLD Family Training

Specialized training for CLD families was not formally provided, as evidenced in findings from the item “We offer training to parents based on their self-identified needs ($f = 58$, $M = 1.25$, $SD = 1.26$, with 5.17% of the school interdisciplinary teams rating themselves at a 4). Written comments from the survey indicated that there was an overreliance in school districts on the use of standard parent-school contacts and written forms of communication (e.g., parent-teacher organization (PTO) meetings, Open House, Back to School Night, IEP conferences, letters home to parents, letters of invitation to parents to attend IEP team meetings, and e-mails to parents) versus specialized contacts and communication with CLD families. One written comment to the survey stated parents “should know they are welcome,” going so far as to emphasize that even though there were no formal methods to engage CLD families in trainings or learning opportunities, “parents know they are always invited to be a part of their student’s situation and progress.”

Person-Family Centered Transition Planning

Person-family centered transition planning was an emerging but not common practice in school districts, as indicated in the following results for this item on the survey: $f = 57$. $M = 1.41$, $SD = 1.56$, with 10.53% of school interdisciplinary teams rating themselves at a 4. Comments by school interdisciplinary teams did not expand why this was not a common practice. However, several teams reported person-family centered transition planning was an area of need ($n = 12$).

Student Self-Determination

Student self-determination in transition planning varied from not happening at all to being an emerging practice in school districts. Results on this item of the survey were as follows: $f = 58$, $M = 2.00$, $SD = 1.56$, with 24.14% of school interdisciplinary teams rating themselves at a 4. Several school interdisciplinary teams commented that this was a needed practice ($n = 15$), but did not expand on reasons why it was not being implemented in their district. One school interdisciplinary team wrote, “Transition services for all students including students with CLD backgrounds are a problem in our schools.”

Pockets of Excellence

Finally, a large number of school districts representing urban, suburban, and rural contexts reported occurrences of pockets of excellence ($n = 29$). Several highlighted their work with community partner organizations ($n = 8$). Others shared that they were collaborating with the “Multicultural

Center.” Still other school districts reported that they were working closely to gain access for their CLD youth with disabilities to participate in “unified sports and mentor programs.” One school district reported partnering with community organizations to prepare their students for the workplace explaining that “we conduct mock interviews with the community, VR, DWS, and the military.” Other effective practices reported by school interdisciplinary teams were support for staff to conduct home visits in the evenings, using gatekeepers to engage cultural communities in the school, using facilitators and liaisons to reach out to Native American families, and providing translators in as many different dialects as needed by families. One school district had even hired a “bilingual examiner” to maintain logs of communication. A common theme across all the school districts reporting pockets of excellence was a willingness on their part to share innovative and effective practices with others.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to explore public school district implementation of 11 recommended RBPs for promoting more active involvement of CLD youth with disabilities and their families in the transition planning process. A survey was developed to measure the degree to which these practices were happening in school districts, using a 0- to 4-point scale, with 0 = *We don't know if this is happening* to 4 = *This is happening widely, regularly, most of the time*. Findings indicated that implementation of the 11 RBPs were very limited within the surveyed school districts. The overall Mean across all 11 RBPs was 1.72, with all Mean ratings ranging from a low of 0.86 to a high of 2.67. The overall percentage of districts that rated themselves at a 4 on any item of the survey was at or below 35%. The survey instrument item that received the highest Mean rating was “Parents are active partners at transition planning meetings” ($M = 2.67$). The survey item that received the lowest Mean rating was “We encourage parents to engage in school elections” ($M = 0.86$).

Qualitative analysis gathered in this study indicated that districts generally were doing very little to nothing different with CLD families as compared with non-CLD families during the transition planning process. Transition planning practices in most school districts focused on IDEA compliance, with little to no regard about the unique transition needs of CLD youth with disabilities and their families. In addition, no special training was offered to school district personnel or CLD families of youth with disabilities regarding transition planning for CLD populations. Likewise, school district personnel were not provided any special training on strategies to facilitate better communication, understanding, and participation of CLD families in the transition planning process. Finally, qualitative data indicated

that RBPs designed to promote greater student involvement and self-determination in transition planning was an emerging but uncommon practice in surveyed school districts.

School Structural Inequalities Affecting Transition of CLD Youth With Disabilities

Obtained results from particular portions of the survey yielded evidence of many of the school structural inequalities noted in the literature review which potentially are contributing to the poorer transition outcomes of CLD youth with disabilities compared with their White peers with disabilities. These include (a) special educator's lack or limited understanding of the culture of various CLD families in the transition process, as evidenced in obtained results for Item 7 in Table 2; (b) immigration issues, limited language proficiency, and differences between Western views and a family's cultural attitudes and norms toward transition and adult roles, as evidenced in obtained results from Items 5 and 8 in Table 2; (c) CLD families' limited understanding of the legal requirements for transition planning as specified in IDEA, as evidenced in obtained results from Item 9 in Table 2; (d) CLD youth with disabilities and their families feeling intimidated when interacting with school personnel in public school settings, as evidenced by results from Items 1, 2, 4, and 8 in Table 2; and (e) CLD youth with disabilities and their families feeling their contributions to the transition planning process is undervalued by school professionals, as evidenced by obtained results in Items 1, 2, 9, and 11 in Table 2.

Findings from this study also indicated (a) a lack of special educators' use of skilled dialogue, culturally responsive communication, and person-family centered approaches to transition planning with CLD youth with disabilities and their families, as evidenced in obtained results for Items 8 and 10 in Table 2; (b) a lack of cultural competence training being provided to school personnel engaged in transition planning with CLD youth with disabilities and their families, as evidenced by obtained results for Item 8 in Table 2; and (c) a lack of training provided to CLD youth with disabilities and their families involved in the transition planning process, as evidenced by obtained results from Items 4, 5, 9, and 11 in Table 2.

Potential Explanations for Limited School Implementation Recommended RBPs

The question arises as to why the 11 recommended RBPs for promoting more active involvement of CLD youth with disabilities and their families in the transition planning process were not being implemented to any significant degree in the school districts that participated in this study. One potential explanation is that school district special education teachers spend more time attending to the assessment,

annual goals and objectives, and related services portions of a student's IEP than the student's Individual Transition Plan (ITP). Special education teachers may feel that the former sections of the IEP are more important because these are more directly related to the teachers' day-to-day school roles and responsibilities in preparing students with disabilities for high school graduation with a diploma or a certificate of completion. Transition from school to adulthood, in contrast, represents a distant outcome for a youth with a disability, which special education teachers may perceive themselves as having comparably less control and influence over achieving with their students.

A second potential explanation for the obtained results of this study is a lack of adequate resources for special education teachers to use when engaged in transition planning with CLD youth with disabilities. For example, there are few, if any, transition assessment instruments designed for specific use with CLD populations. In addition, when it comes to the actual drafting of ITP goals, many special educators rely on school district provided and/or computer-based transition goals. Few, if any, school district or computer-based ITP goals contain verbiage aimed at the unique transition needs of CLD youth with disabilities.

A third potential explanation for the obtained results of this study is inadequate professional preparation of special education teachers. Numerous published articles have discussed a lack of quality teacher training at the university, state, and local levels for preparing special educators for their roles and responsibilities in transitioning youth with disabilities from school to adult life (see Benetiz, Morningstar, & Frey, 2009; Flannery, Lombardi, & McGrath Kato, 2015; Kohler & Greene, 2004). Greene (2011) argued that even less time is dedicated in special education teacher training programs to the topic of transition of CLD youth with disabilities.

In summary, results and findings from this study support the hypothesis that structural inequalities exist in public schools that contribute to ineffective transition planning practices used with CLD youth with disabilities and their families, and these inequalities may be related to the poorer transition outcomes achieved CLD youth with disabilities compared with their White peers with disabilities. Special education personnel and CLD families appear to need targeted professional development and training in the area of CLD transition planning. Finally, CLD youth with disabilities need more effective educational programming and experiences designed to strengthen their involvement and self-determination in the transition planning process.

Implications

A number of implications for future research and practice emerge from this study. First, federally funded transition technical assistance centers (e.g., NTACTION) in conjunction

with state Departments of Education need to offer professional development programs and training to school personnel and CLD families addressing transition planning for CLD youth with disabilities. Content of such training should focus on (a) post-school transition outcome data of CLD youth with disabilities compared with their White peers with disabilities, (b) barriers and challenges faced by CLD youth with disabilities and their families during the transition planning process, (c) ways to promote better involvement of CLD youth with disabilities and their families in the transition planning process, and (d) development of action plans at the state Department of Education and local school district level focused on program improvement in the area of transition planning for CLD youth with disabilities and their families.

A second implication emerging from this study is the need to engage in empirically based research investigating causal versus correlational relationships between the RBPs discussed in this article and actual post-school outcomes achieved by CLD youth with disabilities. A comparison of postsecondary education/training, employment, and independent living outcomes of CLD youth with disabilities whose school districts are implementing the RBPs versus school districts that are not implementing them would be enlightening. Finally, a study investigating the satisfaction and active involvement of CLD youth with disabilities and their families in the transition planning process in school districts implementing the RBPs in comparison with school districts not implementing them would be beneficial and useful.

Limitations

A number of limitations to this study must be acknowledged. The total number of school districts participating in the survey was relatively small and, therefore, findings cannot be generalized to state Departments of Education and school districts nationwide. School district interdisciplinary teams that participated in the study were a convenience-based sample rather than a random-based sample of school districts nationwide. Data on the total percentage of students in these districts who were CLD were not gathered as part of the study. Hence, limitations exist with respect to the generalizability of the obtained results of the study to school districts nationwide with existing CLD student populations. A third limitation of this study is that data was obtained primarily via a written survey as opposed to using more valid and reliable methods and techniques such as group- or individual-focused interviews with school district personnel, CLD youth with disabilities, and their families involved in the transition planning process. Interviews would potentially permit more in-depth probing of specific aspects of transition planning that promote CLD family and youth with disabilities involvement and satisfaction with the

process beyond what we currently know about this subject. Finally, this study was limited in scope by its use of a rating instrument to gather data on implementation of CLD transition planning RBPs versus direct observation and validation of actual use of these practices in school districts. A future study of this type would be helpful in validating what actually is occurring in school districts implementing the RBPs versus second person reporting of what is occurring through implementation of the RBPs.

Conclusion

The transition of CLD youth with disabilities to adult life remains an important issue and challenge in the implementation of IDEA. As minorities become the majority in this country, the post-school outcomes of CLD youth with disabilities compared with their White peers with disabilities warrants further attention, research, and study. The findings from this study provide supportive evidence of critical school structural inequalities which potentially contribute to the poorer transition outcomes of CLD youth with disabilities, along with research to practice gaps with respect to school district special education personnel knowing and implementing 11 RBPs for transition planning CLD youth with disabilities and their families. It is hoped that the content of this article will promote more culturally responsive transition planning practices in school district special education personnel in the future.

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