

# Choices in Transition Newsletter

Advocacy and Empowerment for Minorities with Disabilities

Summer 2005, Institute on Disability and Human Development, UIC



Since 1994 the Chicago Public Schools, in partnership with the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), has used the “Choices in Transition” model with high school students with disabilities in transition to adulthood. Students experience many obstacles in making a successful transition to adulthood activities. Part of the problem is the limited information that our teachers possess regarding the planning and service components necessary in transition planning.

The purpose of this study is to research the effectiveness of various outreach and dissemination strategies for an already proven model of transition preparation. By identifying four different treatment conditions and collecting consistent and systematic data from all groups, we plan to demonstrate that staff development, student and parent education and on-site technical assistance and support will be the most effective way for making an impact on student transition-related outcomes. Transition experts identify core best practices in transition which include the development and attainment of goals, skill development in the area of disability awareness, self-advocacy and self determination, and interagency collaboration (Kohler, 1996; Fine, 2001). In this study, we incorporate these

components that have been included in the Choices-in-Transition Model (Balcazar, Keys & Garate-Serafini, 2000) and attempt to evaluate various strategies for disseminating this model systemically in a large school system. The study is being implemented in the third largest school district in the nation with over 90 high schools and 15,000 high school students with disabilities. The magnitude of this study speaks to its importance. Currently, transition services for students with disabilities are inconsistent and limited. In this study we want to examine, in a systematic way, the best strategy to support classroom implementation of training curriculum for transition preparation. With this study, we expect to conduct effective outreach and dissemination that will result in district-wide standards and methods for transition services that support the attainment of post-school outcomes. The method will include the random assignment of schools to one of four conditions, the implementation of



*Choices in transition team on a meeting.*

various treatment conditions, and the assessment of individual student outcomes as well as knowledge levels of professionals and parents.

A sample of schools was selected for randomization. A total of 8 schools were selected for participation and schools had the opportunity to make the final decision regarding their participation. Forty eight potential schools were identified for recruitment. Project staff worked with the school district partners to present the project details and obtain school consent as well as participant consents. Once schools were enrolled, the participating teachers gave consent and facilitated the contact with the students and families. Recruitment was conducted in partnership with the CPS personnel but UIC project staff was responsible for obtaining informed consents. Printed copies of the student manual were a contribution of CPS to the project.

## Mission Statement

This program attempts to disseminate an empirically tested transition curriculum to help youth with disability prepare for careers after graduating from high school. This curriculum includes classroom activities for participating students and a teacher's guide with lesson plans. The project also attempts to empirically examine the various degrees of support that teachers require in order to implement the curriculum in their classrooms effectively. The curriculum was developed and evaluated through a 5 year research and demonstration project with the Chicago Public Schools. We also provide training for parents for their children's transition from high school to work or higher education.

Participants in the research include teachers, parents and students with disabilities. The data collected included pre and post knowledge surveys, goal attainment scaling, role-play skills assessment, observations, and records review. Individual students and parents were invited to participate in this study based on the school's assignment to each of the treatment conditions.

A needs assessment was conducted with interested LEAs through the use of a survey. A staff development in-training services was then conducted. The team then met with schools in condition two to plan for implementation. Data collection with comparison school sites has been completed. A dissemination plan is currently in the process.

The benefits from the intervention strategies include the attainment of increased knowledge for all participants, progress towards improved transition experiences for the students and parents, and improved transition plans and services for participating schools.

## Gage Park High School report by Carlos Drazen, M.A.

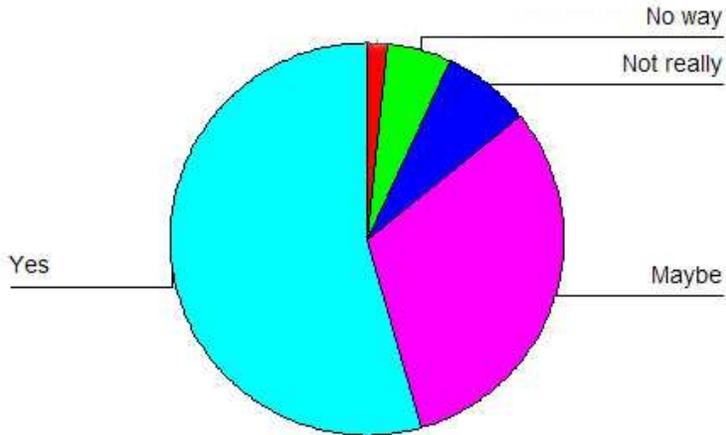
Ms. Lang, the teacher at Gage Park, indicated that the manual had a great many good points but she wanted more information on job searching and getting and keeping a job.

She and the students were very pleased with the program and felt that they were learning techniques that would serve them all through their life. They were anxious to go job hunting so that they could use their new interview techniques.

Finally, most of these students were waiting to graduate so that they could apply to the Office of Rehabilitation Services for job help and college help. They were told that they were not eligible until after graduation.

## Question from Generalized Self-Efficacy survey

If I try really hard, I can always solve any tough problems.



*Most of respondents answered with "Yes" (54.4%). 31.6% of students responded on this question with "Maybe"; 7.0% "Not really" and 5.3% "No way".*

## Students Pre- Evaluation: Intake Interview Knowledge and Needs Related to Transition

### Demographics:

#### Gender

Males = 63.3%, Females = 36.70%

#### Race

White = 10.2 %, African American = 26.5%  
Hispanic = 57%, Other = 4.0%

#### Language spoken

42.8% Only English, 6.1% Only Spanish  
49.0% Spanish and English

### Self Perception of Disability:

Do you have a disability?

Yes = 32.7%, No = 53.1% , No answer = 14.3%

## Job Interests and Situation

### Not working population

47% (of the 52% who are not working) want a part-time job

5.2% are not interested in working

### Working Population

48% work part-time, 52% are not working

Do you want a job within the next year?

YES = 91.3 %, NO = 8.7%

To view the full assessment reported to our sponsor, please visit our website: [www.uic.edu/orgs/empower](http://www.uic.edu/orgs/empower)

## Resources:

Balcazar, F.E., Garate, J. T. & Cantu, C. (2004). Choices in Transition: Student's Guide Department of Disability and Human Development, Chicago IL

Balcazar, F.E., Cantu, C., Melo, X. & Garate, J.T. (2004) Choices in Transition: Teacher's Guide. Department of Disability and Human Development, Chicago IL

Download a copy at the web site:  
[www.uic.edu/orgs/empower](http://www.uic.edu/orgs/empower)

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**Project Funded by:  
The U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Special Education &  
Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)**

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