2015-12-09

Educational Experiences of Foster Care Youth with Disabilities

Vanessa A. Thorrington  
*University of Miami, vathorrington@gmail.com*

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_dissertations

**Recommended Citation**  
https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_dissertations/1561

This Open access is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact repository.library@miami.edu.
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF FOSTER CARE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

By

Vanessa A. Thorrington

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Coral Gables, Florida

December 2015
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF FOSTER CARE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

Vanessa A. Thorrington

Approved:

Elizabeth G. Harry, Ph.D.
Professor of Teaching and Learning

Batya Elbaum, Ph.D.
Professor of Teaching and Learning

Joshua Diem, Ph.D.
Clinical Professor of Teaching and Learning

Robert F. Moore, Ed.D.
Associate Professor of Teaching and Learning

Kele Stewart, Esq.
Associate Dean for Experiential Learning
Professor of Clinical Education

Dean of the Graduate School
THORRINGTON, VANESSA A. (Ph.D., Teaching and Learning)  

Educational Experiences of Foster Care Youth with Disabilities  

(December 2015)  

Abstract of a dissertation at the University of Miami.  

Dissertation supervised by Professor Elizabeth G. Harry.  
No. of pages in text. (169)  

Youth with disabilities who live in foster care face unique obstacles as compared with their peers who are non-disabled and not involved in the dependency system. Transition services delivered through their special education program during high school and at the culminating Individualized Education Plan meeting are designed to assist these youth in their transition. Few studies have focused on youth involved in both systems (special education and dependency) and on their transition from the education system. Even fewer studies have focused on the perspectives of the youth during this transition. This qualitative study, using case study design, focuses on two young men with Emotional / Behavioral Disability who are aging out of both the foster care and the education system. Findings indicated students’ perceptions of limited involvement in the process and included incomplete service delivery, school personnel bias, lack of instruction in transition and self-determination skills, and absence of collaboration between school and Community Based Care providers. The study points to the need for further research regarding ways to remedy the limitations noted in transition planning and implementation.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to Baby Girl Johnson. I was honored to be her Guardian ad Litem.

I helped her with a name and a family and she helped fill my heart.
Acknowledgments

I want to acknowledge my parents for always placing an emphasis on education and teaching us to value our intellect above all else. I also want to acknowledge my cohort. I started this journey with three amazing women, Andrea, Keya and Xuchilt, who have become my closest friends, confidants, and colleagues.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures........................................................................................................ vii
List of Tables ........................................................................................................ viii
Chapter 1: Introduction......................................................................................... 1
  Child Welfare Transition Services ................................................................. 3
  IDEA ...................................................................................................................... 4
  Youth Involvement in The IEP and the Transition Process .................... 6
  Purpose of the Study.......................................................................................... 7
  Research Questions............................................................................................ 9
  Definitions ........................................................................................................ 10

Chapter 2: Literature Review .......................................................................... 12
  Academic Achievement for Foster Care Youth ........................................... 13
  Foster Care Youth and Youth With Disabilities ......................................... 16
  Overrepresentation In Foster Care and Special Education .................... 18
  Transition Services ........................................................................................ 22
  Transition via IEP Goals ............................................................................... 25
  Agency Collaboration ................................................................................. 28
  Why Students Are Not Heard ................................................................. 32
  Youth Perceptions of Transition .......................................................... 35
  Conclusion ...................................................................................................... 38

Chapter 3: Methods ......................................................................................... 39
  Naturalistic Setting and Sampling .............................................................. 39
  Data Collection .............................................................................................. 42
  Raul, an Incomplete Transition ................................................................. 45
  Lew, "I Made my Own Plan" ....................................................................... 48
  Preparing Data for Analysis ..................................................................... 49
  Data Analysis ................................................................................................ 52
  Analysis Process for Raul .......................................................................... 55
  Analysis Process for Lew .......................................................................... 59
  Researcher Position ...................................................................................... 60
  Trustworthiness: Ensuring Rigor .............................................................. 63
  Conclusion ...................................................................................................... 65

Chapter 4: Findings ...................................................................................... 66
  Raul, An Incomplete Transition ................................................................. 67
  Educational and Personal History .............................................................. 67
  Overarching Theme from Raul's Transition ............................................ 73
  Research Questions ...................................................................................... 78
  Conclusion ...................................................................................................... 85
  Lew, "I Made my Own Plan" ....................................................................... 86
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The Progression from Open Codes to Themes ........................................56
Figure 2: Conceptual Map of Findings for Raul ..........................................................72
Figure 3: Conceptual Map of Findings for Lew............................................................89
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Number and Type of Data Source for Each Participant.................................45
Table 2: Code Families Developed from Conceptual Categories for Raul's Data...........58
Table 3: Code Families Developed from Conceptual Categories for Lew's Data..........61
Chapter One: Introduction

For most high school seniors, graduation day is filled with excitement and pride. For youth in foster care with disabilities, the day may be filled with an amazing sense of hard fought accomplishment. However, fear and trepidation can supersede any justly deserved joy for this population. Few of these youth have a solid plan for their future. They lack the foundation of family as a support. The routine and structure of school has been the most consistent part of their lives. Around the time of their high school graduation they are able and sometimes forced to leave foster care. These young adults are released from the care of their child welfare providers without complete planning and resources for what lies ahead (Gerber & Dicker, 2005).

Concerns about the future of children in foster care with disabilities after they leave their foster care program are legitimized by the outcomes evidenced for these young adults. Studies reported in the next chapter will show that these students lag behind their peers in educational attainment, annual income, and sustained employment. The obstacles faced by such youth are compounded by their earlier involvement in two complex systems: the child welfare system and the special education system. Although both of these systems attempt to prepare these youth for adulthood and their release from the safety of their protections, they are not a collaborated effort. When these efforts are not effectively partnered, the youth suffer (Hahnel & Van Zile, 2012). Additionally, the transition process out of foster care is often not a progression, but an abrupt end to services (Ferguson & Wolkow, 2012). Studies, such as the Midwest and Northwest large-scale and longitudinal evaluations of foster care youth, note that the poor outcomes for
these youth are ongoing. Nevertheless, education transition services for foster youth with disabilities continue to be overlooked (Geenen & Powers, 2007).

The majority of youth in foster care will not graduate high school on time. Hahnel and Van Zile (2012) refer to this as the foster youth achievement gap. Barrat and Berliner (2013) refer to the graduation gap between foster care youth and the general population as the invisible achievement gap. In California, the state graduation rate was 84%, while foster care students had a 58%, graduation rate, which was the lowest of all subgroups. Other subgroups fared slightly better, with 60% of English Language Learners (ELLs), 65% of special education students, and 79% of low Socioeconomic Status (SES) students graduating in 2010. (Barrat & Berliner, 2013). The low percentage graduating from high school for both subgroups, foster care and special education, indicates that foster care students with disabilities comprise a group of students with an inordinately high probability of dropping out. It is precisely these students who are most in need of the individualized services prescribed by the transition protocols of both the nation’s child welfare agencies and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), yet they are not receiving these needed services.

Thanks to a Florida law that took effect January 1, 2014, foster care youth now have the option of remaining in the care of the state and receiving foster care services until they are 21 years old. Before Florida Senate Bill 1036 was passed in June of 2013, youth in Florida’s foster care system were relinquished from protections of state care on their 18th birthday regardless of their housing, employment, or educational situation. Before this law, there was a mismatch in service provisions between schools and community-based care providers, since students with disabilities are afforded the right to
an education until they are 21 through IDEA. As a result, foster care students with disabilities who turned 18 were continuing in high school as students, but living independently as adults. There are issues related to being classified as a legal adult and continuing to attend a school culturally designated for minors. Although youth are notified in writing and sign an acknowledgement of the transfer of their educational rights at the age of 18, many schools still defer to their parents or a designated guardian. This has proven to be an issue for former foster care youth who have been declared independent and released from foster care, yet their school defaults to the need for maintaining contact information of a legal guardian for consent and notification purposes regardless of the student’s age.

**Child Welfare Transition Services**

In Florida, the Independent Living program facilitated by the Community Based Care provider (CBC) is the main vehicle used by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to deliver transition services. The goal of the program is to help foster youth become self-sufficient adults. Foster care youth are to begin involvement in this program at age 13. The services provided for youth engaged in Independent Living (IL) include the following: life skills training, employment support, educational assistance, financial assistance, conferences and field trips for educational purposes. A transition plan is developed and reviewed during a special staffing to make sure the youth are adequately prepared for the transition from foster care to adulthood. Educational providers or representatives from the youths’ school are not a part of the staffing (Department of Children and Families, 2014).
These services align with parts of the transition services outlined in IDEA. Both service programs call for the youth's strengths and needs to be determined, and for goals to be constructed to meet those needs. Additionally, both programs focus on employment support, development of employment experiences, and postsecondary education access (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2004). In my study I focused on the transition services and processes provided through youths’ special education programs.

**IDEA**

When a youth being served in special education is exiting secondary education to enter either the workforce or his or her postsecondary education, transition services are paramount to the success of this transition (Thoma, Bartholomew, & Scott, 2009). Planning for these services begins at the start of high school when a diploma type and course of study are chosen. During the eighth grade year, the individualized education plan (IEP) team chooses a diploma type for the youth to work toward. This decision is based on the student’s ability to master standards and pass standardized tests, desire for work experience, and plans for post graduation. A course of study is determined to help the youth graduate with the chosen diploma.

With the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004, taking effect on July 1, 2005, several aspects of the transition process were changed. The first change was a modification of the definition of transition services. The term “transition services” now refers to activities that are coordinated to be results oriented, focusing on aligning the youths’ academic achievement with post school goals, with the main priority being the youth's movement from school to postsecondary education or employment (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2004).
Another aspect that changed in IDEA’s 2004 reauthorization was the addition of the law’s purpose to include “further education.” Under one of the main foundations and rights of IDEA, a free and appropriate education (FAPE), students with disabilities are entitled to an education “that emphasizes special education and related services to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living.” These services are to meet the individual needs of each student and are to be based on each youth’s strengths, needs, and interests. The IEP is required to address instruction, community experience, employment attainment, daily living skills, and a functional evaluation of vocational skills. Another new aspect of the law specifies youth are to receive age appropriate transition assessments related to education, employment, and living skills (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2004). The information gathered from these assessments is to be integrated with information from the student’s family (guardians), teachers, and the students themselves to create goals.

As a result of a report by the President’s Commission on Special Education in 2002, the 2004 IDEA reauthorization includes mandates for interagency collaboration focusing on better coordination to reach students earlier. This mandate was accompanied with funding spread across multiple agencies (Kochhar-Bryant, 2007). Thus, according to IDEA 2004, a youth’s IEP should specify interagency responsibilities. Representatives from any outside agencies who provide services, beyond what the school is able to provide, need to be present at the transition IEP meeting and preferably at meetings leading up to the transition meeting.

Another revision to the transition section of the IDEA reauthorization mandates that the local education agency (LEA) invite the child to the IEP meeting when the
purpose of the meeting has been specified to include “consideration of post-secondary goals” (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2004). Transition skills are to be integrated with the youth’s curriculum for attainment of transition goals (Thoma et al., 2009). Transition skills can include life skills, community-based skills, employment skills, career development, vocational instruction, work experience, self-determination skills, or and social skills (Wehmeyer & Webb, 2012).

**Youth Involvement in the IEP and Transition Process**

The law mandates that youth be invited to the transition meeting, and research confirms benefits from youths' participation in such meetings involving the planning of their futures (Furney & Salember, 2000). Mason, McGahee-Kovac, Johnson, and Stillerman (2002) observed and interviewed 43 students and found that when students led their own IEP meeting, better communication between teachers, students, and parents could be seen regarding the transition process. General education teachers in this same study noted that students involved in leading their own IEP meetings were also more likely to meet the goals that had been created in those meetings. Other benefits attributed to student involvement in the IEP meeting were that the students were better informed of their rights, more organized, better communicators, generally more responsible, and better self-advocators. Cimera and Rusch (1999) noted that students who were involved in the creation of their IEP goals were more motivated to accomplish these goals. Additionally, greater self-worth and confidence can be accomplished through a student’s active involvement in their own plan. Students are more invested when they have been included in planning for their future, and they feel responsible for achieving goals they helped create (Thoma et al., 2009).
Unfortunately, school practice does not realize the positive benefits of youth participation in the IEP and transition planning process confirmed in the literature (Furney & Salember, 2000). An example of positive effects of youth involvement was seen in the Mason et al. (2002) study where 81% of youth leading their IEP meetings were able to describe the benefits and purpose of their IEPs, their disabilities, and their rights. However, Martin, Marshall, and Sale (2004) saw different effects when youth attended meetings but were not given as much of an opportunity to participate. Participants from 393 IEP meetings in middle, junior high, and high school were surveyed about their knowledge of the meeting’s purpose, their purpose being at the meeting, their level of comfort talking during the meeting, decisions they made in the meeting, amount they spoke about the student’s interests and strengths, next steps, and whether they felt good about the meeting. The answer options for each question were Not at all, A little, Some, or A lot. The results varied depending on who attended the meeting. More often than any other team meeting members (i.e., general education teacher, special education teacher, parent, or “other” member), students responded significantly lower on knowing the reason for the meeting, knowing what they needed to do, and understanding what was said at the meeting. However, youth did report talking about their interests significantly more than the general education teacher and participants in the “other” category of the team. While these findings do not show earnest involvement, the youth were afforded the opportunity to express their interests.

**Purpose of the study**

Data referred to in the literature review convincingly demonstrate a need for change when it comes to transition services and protocols for foster care students with
disabilities. From Ferguson and Wolkow's (2012) review of previous studies, we know these studies have led inquiry into the views of current and former foster care youth and the adults involved in their educational processes. These studies have focused on barriers to meeting youths’ educational needs. Ferguson and Wolkow (2012) reviewed these studies and found that they primarily interviewed foster care youth to identify educational barriers, and did not address the transition process. The findings of these studies showed differences in the ways that youth with disabilities and their non-disabled peers were given opportunities to express their desires about post high school living and goals. For instance, students without disabilities reported being provided more opportunity to discuss their desires in comparison with students with disabilities.

For students with disabilities, their transition IEP meetings are integral to the rest of their lives. They should be involved in every IEP meeting discussion beginning from when a diploma type is chosen (Thoma et al., 2009). The youth should always be present and heard unless the LEA representative can present a substantial reason to the contrary (Godsoe, 2000).

The present study used qualitative case-study methods (Stake, 1995) to uncover how foster care youth with disabilities experienced their educational transition in their own words and from their own perspective. Additionally, in order to gain a fuller understanding of the youth’s views, the study also sought the perspectives of school personnel engaged in the process and, where possible, of care-givers who knew the youth in a more personal way. Through qualitative processes, like open-ended questioning and grounded theory analysis, original themes were inductively created from the youths’
words. Qualitative inquiry was helpful in revealing which processes need to be targets of change.

Traditionally, youth with disabilities have been seen as “passive and grateful recipient[s] of services and, with no voice or only token participation in the ‘expert’ decisions regarding those services” (Cavalier, 1987, p.135). The present study seeks to hear and present the voices of youth for whom life decisions are being made. The study seeks to find ways to institute the youths’ voices in the transition meeting. The services culled for a transition plan are to be individualized for each youth after years of planning and ongoing assessment. During transition planning, the voice of the youth should be clear. Currently, policymakers are lacking an accurate picture of what these youth need to make a successful transition (National Council on Disabilities, 2008). The purpose of this study is to serve as a first step to enlighten policymakers and service providers alike as to youth perceptions of needed improvements in transition services.

**Research Questions**

This study examined the experiences of foster care youth with disabilities in their transition process from high school to post secondary living. Within this context, the following questions were explored:

1. How do foster care youth with disabilities perceive their involvement in their own transition process?
2. How do adults in the meeting view youths' participation in the process and in the educational transition meeting?
3. In the education transition process, how is interagency collaboration experienced by both youth and adults?
Definitions

Throughout this study and the studies I cite, terms are used that are specific to the child welfare field. For clarification, I have included definitions that have been compiled from written definitions from experts in the field and published sources. Additionally, I have included a definition of educational transition to clarify the difference between the transition foster care youth experience with school, versus the transition they experience when separating from the foster care system.

Dependency or involvement with the Dependency Court System:

A child becomes involved with the dependency court system after an allegation of abuse, abandonment, or neglect has been made against a parent or guardian. The police or a social worker may remove a child if they believe the child has been abused or is at imminent risk of harm, and reasonable efforts cannot be made to keep the child safe at home. The child remains under the supervision of dependency court until the child returns to the care of their parent or guardian or a permanent placement can be found for the child.

Educational Transition:

Halpern (1994) defines educational transition as:

“a change from behaving primarily as a student to assuming emergent adult roles in the community. These roles include employment, participating in post-secondary education, maintaining a home, becoming appropriately involved in the community and experiencing satisfactory personal and social relationships” (p. 117).
Legal Guardian:

Definition from Florida Courts Website:

Adult guardianship is the process by which the court finds an individual's ability to make decisions so impaired that the court gives the right to make decisions to another person. Guardianship is only warranted when no less restrictive alternative—such as durable power of attorney, trust, health care surrogate or proxy, or other form of pre-need directive—is found by the court to be appropriate and available.
(Florida Courts, 2015)

Out-of-Home Care:

An array of services, including licensed foster care, kinship/relative care, and residential group care, for children who have been placed in the custody of the state and who must reside temporarily away from their families (US Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).

Permanency or Permanent Placement:

Permanency or a permanent placement is achieved when one of the following three occur: (a) the child is discharged from foster care to reunite with his or her family (i.e., a parent or other relative), (b) the child is discharged from foster care to a legally finalized adoption, or (c) the child is discharged from foster care to the care of a legal guardian (Administration for Children and Families, n.d.).
Chapter Two: Literature Review

To understand the background related to my questions, I searched specific fields of literature to find information regarding the many aspects of my study. I needed to delve into the transition literature within the scope of foster care and special education. I would search the terms together, but would ultimately need to also search “foster care” and “special education” separately. With my familiarity in researching this population, I was aware of research organizations focused on foster care youth outcomes. Publications from organizations, such as Casey Family Foundation and Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, were a start in creating an educational profile of the youth in my study. Additionally, a database search was used followed by a hand search.

To ensure a thorough review of the literature related to the research questions, the main terms *transition and *collaboration were searched. The databases searched were ERIC and H.W. Wilson. Within the main search term of *transition, the keywords foster care, special education, IEP, educational transition, adult transition, student participation, student led IEP, youth participation, and outcomes were used alone and in combination. With the main search term *collaboration, the keywords foster care, special education, agency, theory, interagency, cross system, and interdisciplinary were used alone and in combination. Other keywords used in lieu of collaboration in these searches were collaborative and cooperation. Studies from outside the United States were excluded from this review, as the scope of this analysis does not allow for international comparisons between education and child welfare systems. Additionally, I used the year 2000 as the cut-off point for the literature search due to the changes made in child welfare legislation, especially the passage of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, which
required independent living services to be provided for youth aging out of the foster care system. Prior to that year, any studies on transition services for youth in foster care would have followed state or local guidelines. I felt it best to look at studies conducted during a period when both educational transitional services and transitional services offered through DCF were federally regulated. Additional sources were acquired from reference sections of journal articles and books found from the database searches.

My literature search yielded information demonstrating the adult outcomes for foster care youth, youth with disabilities, and foster care youth with disabilities. These outcomes are affected by issues of disproportionate representation of foster care youth in special education, as well as the disproportionate representation of minorities in both the foster care and special education populations. Findings from the literature search returned studies regarding transition services, including three studies that used the IEP as evidence of youth transition. As factors in transition, literature will be presented on agency collaboration, self-determination, and the additional marginalization of foster care youth with disabilities who are often not heard during the transition process. A related component to be discussed is the lack responsible adults to advocate for these youth, and a need for educational surrogates.

**Academic Achievement and Outcomes for Foster Care Youth**

The bleak outcomes and academic difficulties of foster care students and alumni are observable in the large scale studies conducted by research foundations. Educational attainment, sustainable employment, and livable wages are areas of constant struggle for these young adults. Time in foster care is the specific factor mentioned in these studies.
Other important factors to consider are the number of living and school placements of a youth, age of entry into the dependency system, and mental health diagnosis.

The Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Foster Youth conducted by Naccarato, Brophy, and Courtney (2010) is an expansive study of 758 youth from Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin who entered foster care prior to their 16th birthday due to abuse or neglect. This study was sponsored by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. The participants were interviewed three times between 2002 and 2007 when their ages ranged from approximately 17 to 21 years. The researchers used data from the study to specifically examine employment and income outcomes. The researchers found that, at the time of the last interview, almost half of the former foster youth were not employed. The mean income for those working was $8,603.54 annually and three-fourths reported an annual income of less than $15,600. Increases in educational attainment were found to improve earning potential, for example, with a high school diploma foster care alumni earned $7,000 a year more than their peers with some high school education but no diploma. Those with an associate’s degree or other 2-year degree reported a $25,100 increase in yearly income over those who had no high school diploma. A college education allowed these young people to make a livable wage. Unfortunately, this only accounted for 30% of the youth in this study. This low number may be partially explained by the fact that 68% reported receiving no help with employment related services or what could be classified as transition skills, including career counseling, vocational support, interviewing skills, or employment placement services.

The Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study (Pecora et al., 2005), sponsored by the Casey Foundation, followed 659 foster care alumni from Washington and Oregon
between the ages of 20 and 33 for a 10 year period dating between 1988 and 1998. While high school completion rates were encouraging at 85%, 28% had done so via general education development (GED). Similar numbers are seen in another study of 1,609 foster care alumni served by Casey Family programs from 1966 to 1998 (Pecora et al., 2006). These youth were served by Casey Family field offices in 13 different states. By the time their cases closed, 73% of the youth were high school completers. However, 19% were completers through a GED diploma. While it is better to obtain a GED than no diploma at all, it has been determined that people who obtain high school diplomas are more successful as adults.

In the Northwest study by Pecora et al. (2005), 16% of alumni had completed a vocational degree; the likelihood of this attainment was increased to 22% for alumni over 25 years of age. Less than 2% attained a bachelor’s degree or higher. While many were employed (80%), unfortunately not all were making a living wage. A common definition for living wage is a “the wage needed to cover basic family expenses (basic needs budget) plus all relevant taxes.” (Glasmeier, 2015). Thirty–three percent of foster care alumni had household incomes below or at the poverty level, which was three times higher than the national average (Pecora et al., 2005).

Piescher, Colburn, LaLiberte, and Hong (2014) found evidence of an achievement gap on standardized tests for foster care youth. Using data from multiple agencies, including the Minnesota Departments of Human Services and Education, three groups of students were compared: general population group (GP), child protection group (CP), and out-of-home placement group (OHP). Youth in each group attended Minnesota public schools during the 2009-2010 school year in grades K-12. Youth in the CP group were
involved in a child protection investigation case during or prior to that school year dating back as far as 2000. Youth in the OHP group were those living in an out-of home placement or who had lived in one previous to that school year dating back to 2000. Having lived in an out-of-home placement superseded CP involvement and those youth were placed in the OHP group. Using Minnesota's annual math and reading tests the study found that as involvement in the child protection system increased, math and reading proficiency decreased. Youth in the CP group scored 10 points behind their non-CP involved peers, and the youth in the OHP group scored another 1-3 points lower than the CP group. In the CP group, only 41% were proficient in math and 48% were proficient in reading. In the OHP group, 34% were proficient in math and 46% in reading. These numbers were in comparison with 67% proficiency in math and 73% proficiency in reading for their non-involved peers.

**Foster Care Youth and Youth With Disabilities**

Few studies were found that focused on the intersecting population of youth with disabilities who were also involved in the dependency system. Those studies that were located showed earlier signs of peril for these youth.

According to the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (Sanford et al., 2011), special education students enrolled in post-secondary education at significantly lower rates than their peers without disabilities. Of those enrolling, the majority were high school completers. In the area of employment, young adults with disabilities reported earnings at least $3.00 less per hour than their peers without disabilities (Sanford et al, 2011).
Barrat and Berliner’s (2013) study in California of approximately 43,000 youth in foster care and 5.9 million youth in California’s public school system used state databases from the California Department of Education and California Department of Social Services. The researchers also pulled individual educational data for all public California students enrolled in the 2009-2010 school year. Testing data was culled from the Standardized Testing and Reporting Program and California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). The study found that California’s foster care youth scored lower on both state tests than students in all other subgroups, including English Language Learners (ELLs), low SES, and special education. On the reading section of the CAHSEE, foster care youth scored 10 percentage points lower than students in the low SES group. Only 29% of foster care youth scored in the proficient range, while 24% of youth in the special education subgroup scored in the proficient range. The researchers refer to these discrepancies as an achievement gap. On the math portion of the test, foster care youth had the lowest scores of all subgroups, including: ELLs, low SES, and special education.

A group of researchers with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago used information pulled from their Integrated Database on Children and Family Services that was created using the Chicago Public School Information System and Children and Youth Center Information System (Smithgall, Gladden, Howard, Goerge, & Courtney, 2004). Using both databases, the study had a total sample of 19,317 youth. For testing measures, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills was used. In June 2003, for youth in out-of-home care in grades 3 through 8, almost half scored in the bottom quartile in reading. The number of out-of-home care youth scoring in the bottom quartile was higher than other Chicago Public School students.
Researchers Geenen and Powers (2006b) conducted a smaller study to compare four groupings of youth ages 13 to 21 years. The groups were as follows: (a) 70 foster care youth with disabilities, (b) 88 foster care youth without disabilities, (c) 81 non-foster care youth with disabilities, and (d) 88 non-foster care youth without disabilities. With group performance as the dependent variable and employing an analysis of regression, the study found that students in foster care with disabilities had the lowest GPA, as well as earned significantly fewer credits toward graduation. Of particular significance was the fact that these youth were twice as likely to be in a more restrictive placement than non-foster care youth with disabilities. An inverse relationship was noted between number of foster care placements and GPA.

**Overrepresentation in Foster Care and Special Education**

This topic was important for me to include in my literature review for several reasons. Although I did not know my participants when I wrote this chapter, my previous work and research in the areas of child welfare and special education indicated that a review of the literature pertaining to over-representation would be relevant. Issues related to race continue to be an underlying concern throughout the education system as students of color are overrepresented not only in special education and foster care, but also in the most restrictive programs for students with disabilities. Therefore, I see over-representation as a complicating factor that crosses both areas of special education and foster care, and is confounded when they interface.

Over-representation can be seen in three areas concerning special education and foster care. First, overrepresentation of minorities in special education placements has long been a concern in education (Donovan & Cross, 2002). Harry, Klinger, Sturges, and
Moore (2002) explained how the decision to administer a psychological assessment in order to place a child in a special education program is not as clear as one would think. What for years has simply been described as “refer-test-place,” Harry et al. (2002) revealed was actually a process without a definable procedure and could be dominated by particular school personnel. The lack of a unified protocol for this process lends concern to the issue of over representation.

Second, minorities are also over-represented in the dependency system. In 2012, approximately 250,000 children entered foster care in the United States. Close to a quarter, 22%, of these children were African American. Hispanic children accounted for 21% of the children who entered foster care in 2012 (Administration on Children, Youth and Families, 2012).

Third, youth in foster care are over represented in the special education population (Barrat & Berliner, 2013; Goerge, Voorhis, Grant, Casey, & Robinson, 1992; Smithgall et al., 2004). Scherr (2007) did a meta-analysis of 31 studies conducted in the 1990s and 2000s, with the purpose of comparing special education placements and experiences of students in foster care living in out-of-home care versus dependency involved youth who were lived with a parent. Using a mixed effects model, between 27% and 35% percent of foster care children were found to qualify for special education programs. Employing a random effects model yielded an odds-ratio showing that children in foster care were five times more likely than peers living in their original housing placement, to be identified as needing special education services.

With over-representation, comes the question of legitimate placement. Berliner (2010) attributes the placement of foster care youth in special education to several
factors. The first factor the researcher notes is making the determination with incomplete or missing information from parents and teachers. The second factor Berliner notes is the myth that special education means the child will get more services and that more services are always better for the child. Berliner also faults group home operators, who may get higher fees for special education youth, thereby pushing a youth to be given a special education label. Foster parents, teachers, and case workers may also believe that special education services will serve as a way for the youth to catch up on schooling they have missed because of their multiple placements.

In a 2004 Chapin Hall study, Smithgall et al. (2004) found that 19% of first graders involved with the dependency system were also receiving special education services compared to just 7% of other Chicago Public School first graders. In the same study, 45% of sixth through eighth graders residing in out-of-home care were also receiving special education services. Controlling for age, youth in foster care were 3.5 times more likely than other Chicago Public School students to be placed in special education. Barrat and Berliner’s (2013) California study found 20% of foster care students were given a special education designation. This was twice the rate of the state wide population. In many areas, these children were significantly more likely to be classified as Emotionally Disturbed (ED) than the general population of school aged children (Goerge et al., 1992; Smithgall et al., 2004). Smithgall, Gladden, Yang, and Goerge, (2005) found the ED classification was even more likely if the youth were living in out-of-home care. Children with the ED classification were less likely to be placed in permanent living placements than their foster care peers in other special education categories or foster care peers not in special education.
Other areas of over-representation in foster care include gender and race, which overlap with what is seen in special education. Males are over represented in the national foster care population, as they are in the special education population (Administration on Children, Youth and Families, 2012; Losen & Orfield, 2002). As mentioned previously, children of color are also over represented in the foster care system, (Administration on Children, Youth and Families, 2012; Godsoe, 2000) this is also true of African-American males in special education and in the category of ED (Donovan & Cross, 2002).

In reference to the over-representation of youth with ED, Goerge and colleagues (1992) pose the chicken or the egg question; “Are children who enter the foster care system more likely to be emotionally disturbed from what they have experienced previous to foster care placement or are they more likely to become emotionally disturbed as they spend time in the foster care system?” But it was Godsoe (2000) who took the inquiry one step further, asking whether children who have disabilities are harder to care for and therefore are more likely to be abused and neglected? Regardless of which occurs first, the disability or the placement in the dependency system, children faced with both issues experience unique burdens and challenges. Co-occurring placements in these systems act as multipliers against the probability that a youth will receive better care from either entity. Godsoe (2000) concluded, “Children in out-of-home care are more likely than other children to be mistakenly identified for special education purposes—both over-identified and under-identified for services—because of the problematic disjunction between the overlapping special education and child welfare systems” (p. 100).

Over-identification and under-identification of foster care children for special education programs were both evidenced in Zetlin, Weinberg, and Shea’s (2006) study
conducted with youth in foster care, caregivers, education and child welfare representatives, researchers, and policymakers. Regarding under-identification, during focus groups held in southern, central, and northern California, the investigators found that school districts failed to identify students’ special education eligibilities because of the youth’s frequent school transfers. As a result, these students would suffer frequent suspensions when they may have been better served in a different placement. On the other hand, it was also found that in other districts lacking behavior supports in general education classrooms, students in foster care were over-identified for special education services to help them receive more intensive services.

The issue of restrictive placements for these youth is also noted in the literature. Zetlin (2006) noted concerns with the highly restrictive placements of special education students in foster care. This had previously been substantiated by Goerge and colleagues’ (1992) findings that these students were almost five times as likely to be placed in more restrictive placements. These placements included schooling in group homes or residential treatment centers rather than foster children being placed in mainstream classrooms. Zetlin (1996) also discovered a practice in which youth are put in a special education program to make them eligible for placement in a certain group home that requires enrollment in a special education school. When light is shed on these practices that lead to over representation in disability categories, we are returned to the quandary of illegitimacy in diagnosis and placement.

**Transition Services**

Truly interactive and successful transition services and planning should begin in elementary school and continue through middle school (Halpern, 1994; Thoma et al.,
2009). Through extensive planning for the transition from school to adult life, a foundation is set for youth in secondary education to be successful after graduation (Avoke & Simon-Burroughs, 2007). With frequent school movement and lack of school stability, it is crucial that foster youth experience transition services in their high school years to compensate for the absence of services that the youth may have been missed in previous years. As noted in the Midwest study, Naccarato et al. (2010) found that the majority of foster care youth had not received any transition services.

Unfortunately, there is a scarcity of research in the area of transition for foster care youth with disabilities. Information on the transition outcomes of youth with disabilities in foster care must be viewed in conjunction with findings of transition studies of youth in foster care and transition studies of youth with disabilities that have been conducted with each group separately. Powers et al. (2012) suggest that studies conducted on youth in foster care and youth in special education can be used in conjunction with the few studies found on youth with disabilities in foster care to create a blueprint of the issues for this population.

**Self-Determination.** Previous studies have discussed self-determination interventions and skills for students with disabilities. Self-determination is part of a set of skills defined by IDEA as transition skills (Thoma et al., 2009). IDEA 2004 calls for transition skills to be integrated into the youth's transition goals. Self-determination is included in the *Transition Statement* Section of a student's IEP. In this section, before measurable secondary goals are stated, *consideration of instruction or the provision of information in the area of self-determination*, must be noted. The options for consideration and provision of self-determination are the following: *self-determination*
was discussed, information on self-determination was provided, student needs instruction in self-determination, beginning at age 16 (or younger if appropriate): instruction in self-determination will be provided in the following areas.

For the purposes of education, Wehmeyer (1996) defines self-determination in relationship to a person's behavior; views it as an educational outcome; and believes it is achieved through a lifetime of learning, opportunities, and experiences. The major components important for self-determination behavior are the following: choice making; decision making; problem solving; goal setting and attainment; self observation, evaluation, and enforcement; internal locus of control; positive attributions of efficacy and outcome expectancy; self-awareness; and self-knowledge (Wehmeyer, 1996).

Few opportunities exist for students with disabilities to learn and practice these skills. Experiences and opportunities to practice these skills are hampered by the perceptions and expectations of the professionals working with these youth. Students with disabilities need learning opportunities to apply the self-determination skills they have learned in order to solidify these skills (Wehmeyer, 1996). Thoma et al. (2009) describes how allowing youth to lead their own IEP meeting can give students the opening to practice many self-determination skills. Some studies, previously described, included a self-determination intervention to increase student involvement in the transition process. Self-determination skills are needed throughout an individual's lifetime.

Garrison-Wade (2012) used focus groups to interview 59 students with disabilities attending community colleges and 4-year universities in Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, South Dakota, and Wyoming to determine which factors inhibited and enhanced students’
success at the postsecondary level. All participating students had received services from their campus disabilities center. One-on-one interviews were conducted with the coordinators from the campus disabilities center at each institution. The author found that "capitalizing on student self-determination skills" was an indicator of post secondary success for students with disabilities. Students' lack of understanding of their disability and general lack of self-awareness impacted their ability to capitalize on their other self-determination skills. Other students with stronger self-determination skills were able to use those skills to navigate challenges. The study revealed that for students with disabilities to properly advocate for themselves and achieve success, self-determination skills are a necessity.

**Transition Via IEP Goals**

Evidence of transition services can be seen on the IEP. As mentioned previously, IDEA sets parameters regarding transition services to be provided to each youth. A quality IEP is an indicator of the services provided to youth as they transition.

Using IEPs as evidence of transition services provided, Powers and colleagues (2005) examined 399 IEPs of high school students in a large urban school district in the western United States. To evaluate the IEPs, the researchers used the Statement of Transition Services Review Protocol (STSRP). It should be noted that these youth were enrolled in the 2001-2002 school year before transition language was added to IDEA specifying goals to include measurable statements corresponding with transition services. The study found that 33% of the sample received independent living goals, but they did not address housing, transportation, health, or medical needs. Forty-four percent, less than half, of the youth had a postsecondary education goal, and 6% had no transition
goals at all. These goals also lacked quality. Using the STSRP, 63% of the goals were found to have minimal or no details. Meeting participation was good with 87% of meetings attended by an administrator, 82% by a parent, 78% by a special education teacher, and 76% by the youth. However, only 39% of the meetings were attended by a general education teacher. More importantly, only 21% of the meetings were attended by a transition specialist. Noting best practices, transition should be discussed at every IEP meeting after the first transition statement at the age of 16, if not sooner (Thoma et al., 2009). There was no mention of outside service providers attending meetings.

The findings above are similar to another study that focused on goal writing in IEPs. Geenen and Powers (2006a) looked for differences in the IEPs of foster care youth, youth receiving special education services, and foster care youth receiving special education services. A strength of this study was their use of stratified sampling in selecting the special education only comparison group to make sure each special education category was represented in the same quantities as in they are represented in the foster care and special education group.

While quality of IEP goals was still an issue in these results, Geenen and Powers (2006a) found unsettling differences between the groups. Using the STSRP, the researchers found that students in foster care received fewer and less detailed transition goals. In the IEPs of foster care students, the student was more likely to be named as the responsible person, with fewer outside responsible adults. Foster care youth were almost half as likely to have a written postsecondary education goal and even less likely to have a written independent living goal than youth not involved in the dependency system. Most concerning, is that these youth would be living independently soon after their
transition staffing, if they were not already. The majority of the special education only group was on a standard diploma, while only 28% of the foster care group receiving special education services was on a standard diploma, regardless of disability. Both the Powers and colleagues (2005) and Geenen and Powers (2006a) studies noted that transportation goals appeared most frequently, close to 60% in both studies. I would speculate that this is attributed to the simplicity of writing this goal.

The lack of detail in IEP goals is concerning since IEP goals and objectives guide service providers as they provide transition services to youth. Dole, Arvidson, Byre, Robbins, and Schasberger (2003) conducted a study of service providers asking them to define the important characteristics of an IEP that make it educationally relevant, measurable, and appropriate. Many of the findings aligned with what was commonly considered to be “best practices.” However, the study, which included occupational therapists and physical therapists, found that service providers thought objectives should relate to functional skills. Additionally, these objectives should connect with long-term goals. Other details included specifying what action or behavior was being measured and what material was being used. In general, the clinicians noted the goals should be meaningful and involved.

Young adults with disabilities living in foster care placements face daunting prospects regarding employment and education in their future. Researchers and practitioners have long looked for mitigating factors for these outcomes. As mentioned previously, there is a lack of career counseling being provided to many of these students. Both the education system and the child welfare system have processes in place meant to guide these students to productive placements in postsecondary education and/or
employment. Best practices also indicate making these processes youth-centered and agency collaborative. In reviewing the literature, I found that the processes being studied were not following the best practices recommendations. When the child welfare provider and education systems do not effectively collaborate with foster care, the youth are the ones who suffer (Hahnel & Van Zile, 2012).

**Agency Collaboration**

A strong collaboration between service providers is at the foundation of a successful transition. It has been established that foster care youth with disabilities have needs in the transition process that exceed those of youth solely in foster care or youth only receiving services in a special education program. The literature identifies many barriers to the interagency collaboration needed to successfully transition foster care youth with disabilities.

Beginning with the relationship between foster parent and teacher, Palladino (2006) purposely selected seven high school teachers in one urban area at schools with a high foster care population. In reference to his rationale for the study, “In sum, an historical lack of special education literature and policy about the role of foster parents in special education collaboration exists despite the co-morbid relationship reported among youth in foster care and special education” (Palladino, 2006, p. 23). Through semi structured interviews, only four of the seven teachers reported having made contact with the foster parents of their students. The other three teachers said they had not engaged with foster parents and admitted to not reaching out.

The voices of administrators have also been explored. More recently, Palladino and Haar (2011) solicited the input of administrators in schools with high foster care
populations. Specifically, they analyzed six special education administrators and their attitudes toward collaboration with internal and external constituents. The researchers found that the administrators focused on the negative behaviors of the youth in foster care at the expense of noting any accomplishments. The researchers concluded that the administrators were working from a deficit perspective of the students and foster parents and that they were not working from a place of full collaboration, although they proclaimed a stance of care and compassion. The administrators were unable to explain any strategies that had been implemented to build sustainable bonds with stakeholders. This was not surprising considering the administrators expressed criticism of the foster parents and implied that they were foster parents solely for the financial compensation.

Child welfare providers and special education programs face challenges when attempting to align services for the children they both serve. In many areas, these systems operate independently with little communication, causing replication or gaps in service delivery. In some cases, communication between youth service delivery is not connected with delivery of adult services, causing transition issues (Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010).

In several studies, communication is seen as a major concern and is noted as one of the major barriers between case workers and school personnel. In a multiple case study involving seven California counties, Weinberg, Zetlin, and Shea (2009) found low levels of communication and adversarial relationships between school personnel and case workers from child welfare providers. With no procedures in place for data sharing, the issues between these professionals were permitted to exist and communication to remain low. Similarly, Altschuler (2003) conducted a study in Illinois including a school social
worker, administrator, teachers, and eight case workers and discovered a mutual lack of trust between educators and case workers. The findings included a lack of understanding regarding confidentiality, lack of communication, and a perceived lack of caring and commitment for the youth. Educators believed the case workers withheld vital information while the case workers perceived the educators wanted them to divulge nonessential, confidential information. Neither set of professionals trusted each other to fulfill their professional duties.

Geenen and Powers (2007) conducted focus groups with 88 participants, including foster youth (special education and regular education students), foster parents, child welfare professionals, educational professionals, and independent living staff. All of the participants were concerned about the lack of collaboration and communication between providers. They noted much confusion over roles and gaps in services. “A number of foster parents commented that while foster youth often have numerous professionals involved in their lives, the lack of communication and partnership between the providers renders their services ineffective” (Geenen & Powers, 2007).

In the Weinberg et al. (2009) study, school districts were not being notified by the case workers regarding which students were in foster care and which students needed special education services. Additionally, students were not being enrolled immediately nor receiving evaluations at the needed time. This lack of communication and collaboration was echoed again in a 2010 survey of 94 educational foster care liaisons employed by the school district. California Assembly bill 490, similar to Florida’s § 39.0016, requires specifically appointed liaisons to ensure proper placement of youth and movement of their records. The liaisons reported that the most challenging part of their
job occurred when the case workers failed to notify them when a foster youth entered or left their district. Additionally, the child welfare case workers routinely did not notify the school if a youth in foster care was to receive special education services (Shea, Zetlin, & Weinberg, 2010).

Failure to communicate a youth’s special education status is negligence. Even worse is the number of foster care youth whose special education status is unknown to their case workers. In Goerge et al.’s (1992) investigation of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, their records indicated one sixth of the youth who were supposed to receive special education services were actually receiving such services. If left solely to the department, a large amount of youth would have been without services.

The most obvious opportunity for collaboration between school and child welfare for a child with disabilities is at the IEP meetings. Smithgall et al. (2004) asked eight case workers what they saw their role to be in the IEP process. Less than half of them saw themselves as being part of the IEP process. They described their role as being more like an administrator, collecting records and possibly attending some meetings.

Child welfare case workers and special educators work with the same children but have different priorities. The number one priority of a case worker is to find the youth a safe place to live. Educators hope that the youth’s schooling is at least the second priority, but little regard is shown for their school history and needs (Gerber & Dicker, 2005, Goerge et al., 1992). The lack of attention to proper school placement can be attributed to the immediate need for safety; in addition, most case workers are inexperienced with school system bureaucracy (Hope, 2009; Weinberg et al., 2009).
Why Students Are Not Heard

In the dependency system, parents are provided with attorneys while youth are provided with a volunteer to represent them, usually a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) or a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). Sometimes there are not enough volunteers for all youth to receive a GAL or CASA. Additionally, youth in the dependency system who are identified with disabilities should be appointed a surrogate parent to assist with educational decision-making. These are also volunteer positions that are often hard to fill and appropriately train. These factors also contribute to making education a second priority.

These youth are caught in a milieu of circumstances and labels that lead to their silencing. They are not only a part of the dependency system and special education systems, but they have membership in many marginalized groups that are routinely not afforded a space to speak. As mentioned previously, minorities are over represented in these groups. Barrat and Berliner (2013), in their study of California youth, found African American youth were represented in foster care at a rate three times higher than either the low SES group or the general population of students. To exacerbate the issue, these African American youth stayed in the foster care system longer than other subgroups (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2008). One of the main factors cited for this extended time spent in foster care is a commonality seen in most families involved in the dependency system—poverty. The voices of the poor in society carry notably less volume. Barrat and Berliner concluded that poverty contributed to their finding that over two thirds of foster care youth attended the lowest performing schools, as ranked by California’s academic performance levels. This is compared to approximately one half of
the general population of students. Lastly, the Northwest study found that over half, 54%, of the alumni they followed had current mental health problems. This was more than twice what was seen in the general population. The study used the National Co-morbidity Study Replication Survey to compare the mental health of foster care alumni with the general population. The rate of major depression was also twice as high for foster care alumni at 20%, than for the general population for whom it was 10%. The prevalence of post traumatic stress disorder was higher for the foster care alumni (25%) than for American war veterans: Vietnam 15%, Afghanistan 6%, and Iraq 12%. Historically, our country has silenced and discredited the voices of those with mental health issues (Pecora et al., 2005).

No responsible adult. Foster care youth generally lack parental figures in their lives, limiting opportunities for parental advocacy and impairing their education (Hahnel & Van Zile, 2012). Children in foster care are challenged by the law intended to protect them. As Godsoe (2000) argued, “Because the special education system does not encompass children without a stable home and parental advocates, the law’s constitution of family and denial of children’s rights contributes to the educational inequalities of children in the child welfare system” (p. 122). When youth are removed from the care of their parents, the parents retain educational rights, unless otherwise specified by a judge. When the permanency plan goal is for the youth to return to their parents, their case worker should be making every effort to keep the parents aware of issues and consult with parents regarding a youth’s education (Gerber & Dicker, 2005). However, communication between a youth’s caseworker and parents can be an issue. As previously mentioned, caseworkers do not always prioritize education nor do they prioritize
communication with parents regarding education (Weinberg et al., 2009). Schools often are not informed of who has rights to the youth’s educational decision-making. When a youth is moved frequently, there is no one at the school who knows the youth’s strengths, making the role of the youth’s educational designee even more important (Zetlin et al., 2006). Hope (2009) noted the inordinate number of adults involved in a foster care youth’s life. Yet, none of them are responsible for keeping track of school records, navigating the school system, checking up on missing records, counseling the youth on what courses to take, or monitoring the special education services that are supposed to be provided for the youth. When no one is taking responsibility for the education of the youth, the need for this role widens each school move the youth is forced to make.

As education placements change, it is imperative that children with special education service needs be placed appropriately and services not be interrupted. Often no one is paying attention to whether a youth is being placed correctly or if the progress of the youth is being impeded. Many students in foster care and special education are being placed in alternative settings because the school to which a youth has been moved cannot provide the intensity of services that the youth needs (Zetlin, 2006). Given the over representation of children with behavioral disorders, such as ED, in the foster care system and the lack of attention given to foster care student placement, more care should be taken in the movement of these students to alternative settings.

**The need for an educational surrogate.** If the parents have had their rights removed by the court, the youth is in even greater need of an advocate. The reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 states that the school system is responsible for appointing an educational surrogate for foster care youth with disabilities. The
appointment can also occur at the request of a dependency judge. Every effort must be made to fill this request within 30 days. Moreover, children desire someone stable in their lives who will support them in their education. Two public forums were held in the summer of 2010 at major universities in Michigan allowing high school and college students (either currently in foster care or who had previously been in foster care) the opportunity to speak to policymakers regarding barriers to completing high school and accessing college for children in foster care. The reports from the forums were transcribed and analyzed for themes using a constant comparison method (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The most common theme seen in the transcripts was the children’s desire for someone to care about their educational success. Students who felt as if there was no adult who cared about their academic progress were less motivated academically (Day, Riebschleger, Dworsky, Damaskek & Fogarty, 2012).

The educational surrogate should be a non-partial third party with no conflicts and should not be an employee of the child welfare agency (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2004). Hope (2009) contends that the appointment and training of the educational surrogates is a conflict of interest. If people in these position are to be impartial, their training should not be by the systems they will be advocating against.

**Youth Perceptions of Transition**

A search of the literature revealed two studies similar to the current one. The main similarity is that youth in foster care were asked about their perceptions of transition. However, there were several differences in methodology. In both these qualitative studies, the youth were asked for their perceptions after the transition had taken place, and no observation of the post school placement process occurred. In the study by
Geenen and Powers (2007), data was collected via focus groups, whereas I collected data through both observations and interviews with individuals and team members. Del Quest et al. (2012) interviewed their participants individually; they were also involved in a self-determination intervention. My participants received no additional intervention. Also, I interviewed my participants before the transition IEP meeting, and I observed both participants' transition IEP meeting.

Geenen and Powers (2007) asked what transition was like for youth in foster care, including foster youth with disabilities. Nineteen current youth in foster care and eight youth who had recently aged out of foster care participated in the focus groups. Of the total 27 former and current foster care youth, 13 reported receiving special education services. The study also included foster parents, child welfare professionals, education professionals, independent living professionals, a member of the Citizen’s Foster Care Review Board, and a CASA. In many states, CASAs are also known as GALs. Transcripts of the focus groups were coded and then analyzed using a constant-comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Major themes revealed missed opportunities for instruction in transition skills and practice for youth, as well as a lack of effort in planning by agencies. Specifically, the youth in the Geenen and Powers study noted they were given no experiences to practice self-determination skills while in foster care. However, there were expectations for them to exercise control and direct their lives once they were emancipated from the foster care system. This was also expressed by the youth’s lack of voice in choice making. They felt decisions were made for them and they never had a chance to learn from their mistakes. Parents, professionals, and youth all agreed on the lack of collaboration between services.
Youth noted a similar lack of support in determining a plan for their future in a study conducted by Del Quest, Fullerton, Geenen and Powers (2012). In this more recent study, named *Project Success*, the participants were seven youth (ages 15-18 years) in foster care who were receiving services as special education students and were enrolled in a randomized trial of a self-determination intervention for educational success. These youth were interviewed monthly, and transcripts were coded using constant comparative methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). In this study, a female youth noted that she had no support in making a plan for her future and felt she was at a dead end. A male youth in foster care expressed frustration with the lack of support coordination, particularly around his emancipation. He said there was no point in getting upset; he would not get any help from “the system.” An overarching theme found in both studies was that of the youth feeling they had not been taught the practical skills needed to make good decisions.

While these students noted gaps in transition during their final years of school, the importance of transition planning throughout a student’s schooling is also worth noting. Continuing transition planning increases attendance and prevents school drop out (Kocchar-Bryant, 2007). Pecora et al. (2006) found that participation in independent living training at any intensity from one time to extensive involvement can increase a foster care youth’s chances of high school completion by up to 4.3 times.

Compared to my study, the studies by Geenen and Powers (2007) and Del Quest et al. (2012) allowed for a wider range of views, including 27 and 7 youth respectively. However, the limitations of these studies are seen in the data collection processes. Geenen and Powers collected data through focus groups. A peril of focus group data can be its susceptibility to group dynamics, and with young adult participants this is a sound
consideration. Neither the Geenen and Powers study nor the Del Quest et al. study observed any part of the natural transition processes encountered by the youth in their studies. Further in using a case study approach, I was further engaged with each participant, gathering a substantial series of interviews with both the participants and people in their lives, as well as collecting documents. The limitations of the literature regarding youth perceptions of transition leave an opening for further investigation.

**Conclusion**

In response to the outcomes seen for foster care youth and youth with disabilities as well as youth in both systems, transition services for these youth must be delivered through a collaborative model. There has yet to be a study asking these youth through individual interviews, how they experience the transition process, specifically the concluding transition IEP meeting. Geenen and Powers (2007), asked youth using focus group interviews only after the transition process including the transition IEP meeting was completed. Del Quest et al. (2012) applied a self-determination intervention and interviewed foster care youth monthly as they progressed through the intervention and transition process. The literature has shown that the transition process is lacking in many aspects causing service delivery to be amiss for these students. With input from youth with disabilities in foster care during the educational transition process, as well as observing the transition IEP meeting, my study uncovers the needs of my participants and gives appropriate recommendations for effective change.
Chapter 3: Methods

I chose to utilize qualitative research procedures to best hear my participants, whose inclusion in both the foster care system and special education system makes them part of two marginalized groups. Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klinger, Pugach, and Richardson (2005) confirm, “By focusing on participants’ personal meanings, qualitative research ‘gives voice’ to people who have been historically marginalized” (p. 199). To pursue this end, I observed established features of qualitative research as described by leading scholars (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Glaser & Strauss, 1967): naturalistic setting with purposive sampling, participant observation and open-ended interviews, analysis of extant documents, and inductive approach to data analysis—specifically, grounded theory analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). In addition, it was important for me to approach the entire process in a reflective manner, being aware of my own positionality regarding the data I collected.

Naturalistic Setting and Sampling

Qualitative research seeks to answer a human or social question using the meanings that individuals attach to the problem (Creswell, 2013). To get to these meanings, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) tell us qualitative “researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). I chose my participants through purposeful sampling, which is the careful choosing of participants who will have the experiences to attribute meaning to the question being asked. I went to my participants in their schools, which is where they experience their education transition process. I observed transition IEP meetings at the participants' schools, each taking place in a closed office within a
larger designated special education area. Descriptive and thorough notes were taken during these meetings. For the first participant, individual interviews with the team members who attended the meeting also took place at the school in the team member's office. Additionally, this participant's initial interview was conducted at the school in a private office, while his later interview was held at his home. My second participant was interviewed at his home and at a restaurant near his home. The second participant's team members were on strict schedules completing senior transition meetings and were interviewed by phone over the 2 days following the transition meeting. All interviews were first recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Creswell (2013) notes that researchers using grounded theory choose “participants who can contribute to the development of a theory” (p. 155). The researcher's thick description of the naturalistic setting and participants is a cornerstone of qualitative research. Corbin and Strauss (2008) emphasize that description is the foundation for more abstract study of data and theory development. The details of each participant, their histories, and the contexts of their experiences provide the essential data of the study.

My study was designed for participants fitting the following criteria: current or former youth in foster care, graduating in the 2015 school year, and special education eligibility other than intellectual disability. I intended to exclude students with intellectual disabilities due to the high participation expectations of my study. Recruitment of participants for the study proved to be very challenging. The process was marked by several complicating features that included: gaining or maintaining access to key school personnel, identifying students who met the study criterion of not being in the intellectual disability category, getting accurate information regarding students’ graduation status,
and finding students who had signed up subsequently deciding to drop out of high school. Initial effort using the Community Based Care Provider's (CBC) check day proved fruitless but led me to my first participant's school which connected me with Raul. My second effort entailed delivering letters to five high schools with high foster care populations. While some of the schools’ initial return communications seemed promising, ultimately Margaret Sanger High School was the only school able to find a participant who fit my criteria. Fortunately when delivering the letter to Sanger High, I was greeted by the principal who directed me to the special education chairperson who in turn worked with her staff to find an additional participant.

My first participant, Raul, attended Bennett Community Learning Center for exceptional learners. While the school was located in a suburb of a large metropolitan area, the school population was pulled from the entire eastern part of the district. Raul was placed at Bennett, instead of his home school because of behavior issues. At 22, Raul aged out of the public school education system. Raul has lived in the same group home since he was 8 years old. Raul was referred to my study by school staff who saw his IEP showing his only eligibility as Emotional/Behavioral Disability (EBD). As will be detailed later in this report, I subsequently discovered that Raul was previously designated as EMH (currently known as ID).

My second participant, Lew, was a June graduate of Margaret Sanger High School. Sanger High is considered an "inner city" school approximately six miles from the city center. His primary exceptionality was EBD. In high school, Lew was in all general education classes and active in several sports at his school. In the fall semester, Lew was living in a group home; however, after turning 18 in January, he moved into
Ferguson Villas, an apartment house for male foster care alumni. Lew was recommended to my study by special education staff after I had solicited for participants at Sanger High School.

Data Collection

I utilized three types of data collection: observations, interviews, and extant documents. I was able to be a nonparticipant in the meetings, taking notes but not being involved (Creswell, 2013). To be clear, I was only a participant in terms of the space that I assumed in the room. Creswell (2013) specifically outlines the nonparticipant role as the researcher being "outside of the group under study, watching and taking field notes from a distance" (p. 167). The interviews were semi-structured in nature, following an interview guide created using Patton's (2002) guide for qualitative interviewing. The interview guide was used flexibly as suggested by Patton—questions were added and amended as information emerged, and modifications were made in response to participants’ needs for understanding. The purpose of each type of data is explicitly explained in the following sections.

Observations. Observations were an integral part of the data collection because they provided information to craft interview questions and explore relevant topics. Further, as Corbin and Strauss (2008) point out, is it not out of the norm for people to say they are doing one thing when in reality they are doing another. Thus, observation provides an additional avenue for corroborating interview information.

For my first participant, Raul, I observed his transition meeting. The meeting was held in the transition specialist's office at his school, Bennett Community Learning Center. I took detailed and descriptive field notes at the meeting (Charmaz, 2006). I kept
track of who was in attendance at the meeting and when they entered and left the
meeting. Those in attendance at Raul's meeting were the following: Raul, Talisia (his
foster mother), Martin (his legal guardian), Mrs. Toggs (special education teacher and
school transition coordinator), Dr. Styles (school transition specialist), Linda LaClare
(district transition coordinator), Dr. Kant (school clinician), and Mrs. Moreno (vocational
rehabilitation representative). It should be noted that at one point in the meeting, Raul
exited the meeting abruptly without speaking to anyone. Talisia and Martin followed him
out of the room, and all three of them returned within minutes. I made notes in the margin
of my paper of my personal questions and impressions, so as to keep them separate from
what I was observing in the meeting. Particular phrases people used in the meeting were
recorded verbatim.

For my second participant, Lew, the transition meeting at Sanger High School
was informal. The meeting was held in what usually serves as the EBD clinician’s office.
In attendance at the meeting was the student, Lew, Mrs. Alexander, who identified
herself as the lead special education teacher, and the school clinician, Dr. Theo. I was in
attendance as an observer, which I explained to the small group. I was concerned that
because the group was so small and informal, I could easily get pulled into the
conversation. As in the previous meeting with Raul, I made copious notes. I followed my
technique of putting my thoughts in the margins to keep them separate from what I was
observing in the meeting. Given the smaller group in this meeting, I was able to capture
more verbatim quotes from the conversations and notice more body language.

In contrast to the meeting at Bennett, this meeting was held in two parts. After the
IEP document was complete, Lew went to a separate area to meet with the district
transition coordinator, Linda LaClare, and a Vocational Rehabilitation representative. In this meeting, I continued my role as an observer.

**Document collection and review.** With permission from the participants, I obtained a copy of the transition IEP written and signed by all parties during each meeting I observed and all IEPs dating back to when the student was 14 years of age. The purpose for obtaining the transition IEP was to confirm that the services and goals discussed during the meeting were documented on the IEP. Since the transition process begins when a student is 14, the purpose for requesting past IEPs was to identify a process of transition planning and also provide a record of who was in attendance for those meetings. Charmaz (2006) notes that extant texts, when compared with field notes, can assist in finding congruencies. Conversely, field notes can serve to challenge the belief that the document accurately reflects what occurred in the meeting. Charmaz (2006) warns that extant texts do not show the entire story. However, extant texts serve to assist with trustworthiness since the researcher has no part in their construction. In this study, the record of IEPs complemented the interview methods I employed, as they helped confirm and question services and incidents mentioned.

At Bennett Community Learning Center, I was permitted to make copies from the student’s file of the IEPs that I needed. Because Raul was 22 years of age when he left Bennett, his first transition IEP was when he was 13 years old in 2006. I made copies of his IEPs for each year between 2006 and 2014, totaling 9 IEPs, covering the ages of 13 to 21. His transition IEP brought the total to 10. Additionally, I made copies of 10 Matrix of Services that accompanied these IEPs.
At Sanger High School, the special education department did not have a copier. I was able to get copies of Lew's IEPs by having them printed from the main data system. For an unexplained reason, his 10th grade IEP was not in the system. They were able to print for me his eighth, ninth, 11th, and 12th grade IEPs as well as the transition IEP that was created in the meeting I observed. These IEPs had no signatures on them. However, names and titles were typed into designated spaces.

**Interviews.** As Fontana and Frey (2005) suggested, I used interviewing as the means of storytelling. Knowing that Raul’s and Lew’s stories began long before their final transition meeting, it was essential to know their previous educational experiences. Through this process, I found that I did become an advocate and partner for my participants as Fontana and Frey had warned. These are roles with which I am familiar.

Table 1 shows the types of data obtained for each participant as well as the differences in sources of data between Raul and Lew. Raul had quantitatively more of all but one type of source, but this did not create issues in analyzing the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Number and Type of Data Sources for Each Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview data</strong></td>
<td><strong>Observational data</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>location conducted:</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raul</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lew</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Raul, an Incomplete Transition**

To understand Raul's story, I interviewed six people in his life in addition to interviewing him twice. My first interview with Raul took place before his transition meeting on February 24, 2015 at his school in a private room with Talisia, his foster mother, present. The interview guide was closely adhered to because of Raul's short
answers. The interview guide (see Appendix A) for the first interview asked about the student’s educational history including previous schools, their previous involvement in IEP meetings, and any preparations they have been involved in for post graduation and the transition IEP meeting. The first interview with Raul was brief, less than three minutes, but I was able to determine that he was not aware of the subject or purpose of the meeting. The participants interviewed in Raul's case were his foster mother, his legal guardian, his Medicaid coordinator, and his team members from Bennett Community Leaning Center (Dr. Styles, Dr. Kant, and Mrs. Toggs).

The second interview with Raul took place at his home the evening after his transition meeting. I used the interview guide, which begins with a grand tour question (Spradley, 1979) about the youth's perspectives, recollections, and point of view regarding the transition meeting. For Raul, I modified or replaced questions with those I believed he could answer more effectively. As I expected, the first question was not helpful for two reasons. First, I had confirmed in his first interview that Raul did not know the purpose of his final transition meeting. Second, on the day of the meeting, the presence of an intellectual disability was confirmed both by my extended observations and information his foster mother provided. Consequently, using my knowledge of what I had observed of Raul and my experience with individuals with disabilities, particularly intellectual disabilities, I modified the questions to get optimum responses. The second interview guide (see Appendix B) asked more questions about the student’s transition meeting and their transition plan, as well as their needs for services as they transition.

**Talisia.** While at Raul's home, I also interviewed Talisia, his foster mother. The interview with Talisia was conducted in an office at the home. As I began the interview, I
adhered to the interview guide (see Appendix C), which asked about the team member's role in the youth's life, her impressions of the transition meeting, and her thoughts on the youth's participation in the meeting. I deviated from the interview guide as background information on Raul became available through the conversation with Talisia. From this interview, I developed a few questions which were added to the interview guide and used when I interviewed the other members of Raul’s team. Specifically, I questioned the team regarding Raul's behavior in the workplace, since this was mentioned several times in the transition meeting. I particularly asked if they believed his behavior would be an issue if he was doing something he enjoyed.

**Interviews with Raul's team members.** Interviews with the Raul's team members were completed the week after his final transition meeting. I interviewed Raul's legal guardian, Martin, by telephone. Martin's approach was very professional and set the tone for the interview. Both Martin and Talisia followed Raul out of the transition meeting when he became overwhelmed. Talisia has explained that Raul will rub the sides of his head when he overwhelmed. I asked Martin about this incident in his interview.

I interviewed Gloria, Raul’s Medicaid support coordinator, in Raul's home in the same office in which I had interviewed Talisia. Gloria, having known Raul for many years in several capacities, was able to provide her opinion as to which skills should be prioritized for Raul and which services Raul should receive.

The school team members were interviewed at Bennett Community Learning Center in their respective offices or classrooms. I had the advantage of having worked previously with several of the professionals from the school and felt an insider status during the interviews. Dr. Styles’s interview was formal, especially in comparison to the
informal working relationship which had emerged between us. Dr. Kant, the school's clinician, was very candid and forthcoming about her experiences with Raul in her interview, as well as the faculty and school culture at Bennett. My last interview at Bennett was with Mrs. Toggs, a special education teacher and transition facilitator. She declined to be recorded. I took notes as she spoke, repeating them back to her for corrections. Mrs. Toggs did not want any direct quotes written. We spoke for approximately 20 minutes.

Lew, "I Made My Own Plan"

The first interview with Lew took place on the day prior to Lew's transition IEP meeting. I recorded an interview with him for approximately 15 minutes. I picked Lew up at his apartment and we went to eat in his neighborhood. In the car and while we were eating, there was conversation that was not recorded. Lew and I had already built a rapport the two previous times that we had met, when I recruited him for the study and when he consented to the study. Many of the questions I asked built on those previous conversations in addition to asking the questions from the interview guide. After I dropped Lew off, I drafted field notes (see Appendix D) about the conversation that Lew and I had during the time that we were together which was not recorded.

The next day, as the transition meeting was winding down, Lew got my attention to let me know he wanted to complete his second interview that evening. We met that evening of the transition meeting to complete his post-interview, which lasted 15 minutes. I met him at his apartment, and we sat at a table in the backyard of the building. Again, the interview was much like a conversation, and I found that I was giving him information about myself and my schooling, as well as asking questions. While I was
asking questions about the transition meeting, I also asked follow-up comprehension questions. I noticed that my role had shifted from researcher to teacher, concerned that he understood what was said in the meeting.

**Interviews with Lew's team members.** I conducted phone interviews with Dr. Theo (EBD clinician) and Mrs. Alexander (lead special educator). Dr. Theo's interview was professional, and she gave complete answers with details about Lew. While speaking with Mrs. Alexander, I was given the impression that she was short on time, so I kept close to the interview guide. However, once the subject was raised I inquired for details regarding Lew's lying, a continuing subject in the interviews. Also, I interviewed Linda LeClare, district transition coordinator at Sanger High School, who had been a participant in both Raul’s and Lew’s transition meetings. I used some of the questions from the team member interview guide. Additionally, I asked questions that surfaced during the course of analyzing Raul's transition meeting. The interview was insightful regarding systemic issues in postsecondary options for youth with ID. Lastly, I interviewed Damien, the program director at Ferguson Villas where Lew resided. During the interview, it became clear that Lew and Damien had not talked much and that Damien's answers were based mostly on his experience with youth in similar situations.

**Preparing Data for Analysis**

After the collection of my raw data, preparations were needed before I could begin analysis. These measures were taken to ensure triangulation and efficacy of my data collection. Described below are the processes taken to review data collected for discrepancies and organization of the data for analysis.
**Observations.** Observational data included visits to gain consent from participants, observations of transition meetings, researcher reflections after participant interviews, and other nonaudio recorded communications and interactions with participants. Field notes from these interactions were synthesized into full descriptions of the events, which were formatted and entered for coding into a qualitative analysis software, Atlas.ti version 6.2.28 (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2015).

**Interviews.** All but one of the interviews were audio recorded. All of the interviews, excluding interviews with Raul and Talisia, were sent to a transcription company. I transcribed both of Raul's interviews because there were many times that he did not verbally answer but answered with body language, specifically a facial affirmation. I was able to complete his interview transcriptions with the details from my field notes. I transcribed Talisia's interview because she had a heavy accent. Additionally, she used her hands to convey examples of Raul's behavior, which I captured in my field notes. As interview transcriptions were completed, I listened to the audio of each interview while reading the transcription to check for errors and changed names to pseudonyms. The transcriptions were then formatted and placed in Atlas.ti for coding. Coding of interview data and observational data occurred simultaneously as transcripts were returned.

**IEPs.** The IEPs needed to be examined in several contexts. The IEPs from each year were first examined individually as complete documents. Next, data from the IEPs were put into tables by section of the document. To discern the progress of the participant and changes in services provided, sections of the IEPs needed to be examined in the context of what had been written in other years for the same section. Tables were created
for each section with the date of the IEP and the school as constant columns (see
Appendix E). The following are sections of the IEP for which tables were made:
Signatures, Program Eligibility, Assessment Data, Present Levels, Affects [sic] of
Disability, Priority Education Needs, Transition Goals (other than Instructional Goals,
including Community Experience, Post School Adult Living, Employment, Daily Living
Skills, and Functional Vocational Evaluation), Transition Statement, Measureable
Transition Goals, Conference Notes, Specialized Instruction, Supplementary Aids and
Services, and Related Services. Lew’s IEPs had Parental Input which was added to the
bottom of his tables. Any word for word repetitions from year to year were written in
blue font. This was done to signal that there had been no change in services, a lack of
progress for the student, or a possibility that the author had cut and pasted from the
previous year's IEP. As I completed the tables, I added my comments or questions under
the table in green font. After reviewing the data, both in sections and as a whole, I had
more comments and questions. Those comments were written in a memo and combined
with the comments on the tables in green and entered into Atlas.ti for coding. Next, for
purposes of coding, I selected tables with narrative information regarding the
participants. Those sections were Transition Statement, Transition Goals (other than
Instructional Goals, including Community Experience, Post School Adult Living,
Employment, Daily Living Skills, and Functional Vocational Evaluation), and
Measureable Transition Goals. For Raul, I also selected the tables that were titled Affects
[sic] of Disability and Conference Notes as these tables held a large amount of relevant
information about Raul. For Lew, neither of these tables had information relevant to the
study. However, I did add the information that had been included in his IEPs under the section, Parent Input.

Data Analysis

I used grounded theory methods to assist in data collection and analysis. Charmaz (2006) described grounded theory as the following: "Simply stated, grounded theory consists of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves" (p. 2). Inductive thinking is an important aspect of grounded theory analysis. Through inductive thinking the researcher studies the data to extrapolate patterns (Charmaz, 2006), instead of deductively fitting the data into preformed ideas or prescribed themes. To avoid any preconceived hypothesis or theories being imposed by the researcher, inductive thinking in grounded theory begins from the "bottom up," with the first level of coding sticking closely to the data, applying the least possible interpretation. The process of interpreting the data by grouping codes together and then seeking cross-cutting themes comes after this initial stage of concrete coding. This is not to say that the inductive process is linear in nature, as researchers continually work back and forth between data and themes (Cresswell, 2013). However, staying grounded in the data and allowing the data to drive the story is the best way I have found to diminish the influence of preconceived ideas.

Following the inductive approach, my coding process worked through four main stages. The first stage, open coding, involved coding all data for the most concrete level of meaning. The second phase of coding, conceptual categories, involved reviewing my open codes for commonalities and creating broad categories. The third step occurred through hand reviewing the codes in a conceptual category and noting key words,
incidents, roles, and adjectives that emerged in a pattern to make a statement about the data; I refer to these as code families. Finally, I reviewed code families to create themes to interpret a participant's experience.

**Open coding.** The first phase of coding was open coding, which involved "sticking closely to the data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 47). For interviews, every piece of data was coded to capture the main meaning of the participant's words. Although there is always some level of interpretation in the coding process, at this phase the intent was to develop a set of codes that were as close to the data as possible, with a minimum of decision-making regarding whether data may or may not prove useful (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The concreteness and thoroughness of my process produced a large amount of open codes. Because this level of coding was more descriptive than analytic, many codes reflected data that were not useful in the final application to research question. For example, codes such as, "went to hall to find cell service" and "VR rep mid 40s" were just a couple of the many that were not used in the next stage of analysis. Sections of data captured verbatim are done so to keep all aspects and nuances of the original data. These codes are known as in vivo codes (Charmaz, 2006).

**Conceptual categories.** As explained by Harry, Sturges, & Klingner, (2005), this phase of coding has been described by different theorists using different names. The best fit for my process is what Glaser and Strauss (1967) termed conceptual categories. In this phase of analysis, I looked for general common elements among my open codes to develop conceptual categories that served to focus the large amount of open codes by clustering them according to commonalities. These categories were also driven by topics asked in my research questions. For example, I specifically looked to see if there were
groups of codes dealing with transition. I also looked for reoccurring issues, people or conclusions. For example, both Raul and Lew had issues with the faculty at their school, which I grouped into the conceptual categories Teacher Issues for Raul and School Personnel for Lew. The following were examples of codes from Raul's category Teacher Issues, "The school has bent for R- put him w/ Mrs. B" and "Mrs. -- trying to get him out of school." Examples of codes in Lew's conceptual category, School Personnel, were "Dr. T: he seems to always limit his options" and "Mrs. A: concerned he might sit at home and be lazy." Within my conceptual categories, some open codes were repeated, meaning an open code may have been applicable to more than one conceptual category.

**Code families.** As I coded more data, I was able to create code families (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process was done by hand, beginning with printing the list of conceptual codes from Atlas.ti. In each conceptual category, I identified codes that were about the same event, person, emotion, expectation, etc. These code families were collections of codes making explicit statements from the data. For example, at this phase, the previously mentioned code, "Mrs. -- trying to get him out of school" spoke specifically about Raul's relationship with his teacher. This code, as well as other codes relating to Raul's relationships with his teachers, were selected from the conceptual code, Teacher Issues, to create the code family Raul's teachers and his relationships with them. In Lew's case, both previously mentioned codes, "Mrs. A: concerned he might sit at home and be lazy" and "Dr. T: he seems to always limit his options" were used with other codes to create the code family Team members predicted Lew's stumbling blocks and transition issues. These codes were distinguished from the other codes in the conceptual category of School Personnel to form this category specifically referring to team
members’ predictions of his transition issues. At this phase, I met with one of my advisors to consult on the names of my code families. I would later refine the names of my code families to make their titles more active and representative of what the data had expressed. For example, the family *School personnel express negative feelings about Raul*, was originally titled *Negative Assertions*.

**Thematic coding.** The fourth level of coding was thematic, wherein code families were analyzed for interconnections in order to identify themes to summarize a participant's experience. As explained by Charmaz (2006), the use of grounded theory may be concluded at the thematic level, without the development of a theory. This is the level at which I concluded my analysis. Each participant’s data resulted in themes that offered answers to the original research questions. Further, both cases provided additional findings, as will be detailed in Chapter 4.

To reflect more clearly on what the data was saying, I labeled index cards with the name of each code family; on the back of the card I listed many of the codes contained in that family, especially any in vivo codes. I also wrote each research question on an index card. I spread the three question cards across the top of a cleared table and then laid out each family. For each research question, families were combined to create a theme answering the research question.

**Analysis Process for Raul**

For Raul's data, the open coding and conceptual category process was followed as previously described.
Open coding and conceptual categories. Open coding was a smooth process for Raul's data. In a review of the codes from his team members' interviews, I was able to collapse a series of codes; particularly codes regarding his behavior as they repeated much of the same information. When all data was coded and codes collapsed to the extent possible, the data yielded 577 open codes. My first set of conceptual categories included workplace concerns, transition meeting, teacher issues, and behaviors. At the suggestion
of my advisor, I operationalized the code named *behaviors* to mean those behaviors that were defined as antisocial and which Raul's team feared would make him unemployable. Through continued work with the codes, one last conceptual category was added, *Raul interviews and observations*. This category was comprised exclusively of codes from observations of, and interviews with, Raul. This category ultimately led to the families that answered research question 1. Table 2 shows the conceptual categories and the code families which developed from them, as well as the number of open codes in each code family. There was a discrepancy between the total number of open codes and the number of open codes that appeared in code families. This discrepancy is a result of coding all the data, including details that were not relevant once the analysis began. Examples of codes that became extraneous include descriptions of people and places, body movements, and information that was outside of the study's purpose.

**Code families.** Code families evolved from conceptual categories. For example, the conceptual category, *transition meeting*, evolved into several families such as *researcher's observations of transition meeting process and gaps, school personnel plan individually for transition meeting, school personnel's solicitation and perspectives of Raul's participation in the transition meeting, and observations of personnel's solicitation and perspectives of Raul's participation in the transition process* (see Table 2).

**Thematic coding.** Code families were joined together to create themes and ultimately to identify one overarching theme to exemplify Raul's transition experience. Additional themes provided answers to the three research questions as well as supported the overarching theme, as displayed and explained in Figure 2, Chapter 4.
Table 2

*Code Families Developed from Conceptual Categories for Raul's Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual categories</th>
<th>Code family</th>
<th>Open codes per family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workplace concerns</td>
<td>Behaviors feared in the workplace</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition meeting</td>
<td>Team members' interactions with Raul did not facilitate his participation</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School personnel planned individually for transition meeting</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team members' made efforts to solicit Raul's participation in the transition meeting</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transition meeting processes revealed gaps in collaboration</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher issues</td>
<td>Participants' differing portrayals of Raul</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raul's teachers and his relationships with them</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School personnel express negative feelings about Raul</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors</td>
<td>Reasons for Raul's behaviors</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raul interview and observation</td>
<td>Transition process went on around Raul</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raul's perception of his involvement in his transition process was reflected in his limited awareness of the process</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis Process for Lew

The same open coding process was completed on Lew's data as described previously. However, compared to Raul’s analysis, Lew’s richer data set resulted in a more complex, less linear analysis, as will be described below.

**Open coding.** The same process of open coding was completed on Lew's data. Using the constant comparison method described by Corbin and Strauss (2008) and returning often to my data for confirmation, I was still not able to collapse or condense codes. As noted in Table 1, Lew had fewer interviews, observations, and documents to code, but the data produced more open codes, a total of 803.

**Conceptual categories.** Three conceptual categories were created when the codes were first reviewed: *Lew and special education, school personnel and transition services,* and *agency collaboration.* As I combed through these categories for families, I saw a need for more categories. From *transition services* I separated out a more specific category, *transition meeting.* Next, from *school personnel* I extracted the categories *lying* and *conflicts.* The dominant nature of these two topics warranted their own categories. The last conceptual category I created was *Lew's academics.*

**Code families.** The data I gathered was rich in details of Lew's story. But I struggled to pull details of his transition experience. I stepped away from my data and consulted Stake (1995) who warned of devoting too much time to formal aggregation, which may lead to being distracted from the phenomenon naturally occurring in the case. I realized that I had been trying to make the data answer my questions.

Looking at my codes anew, I noted code families as mentioned before with explicit purpose and meaning. The following families were created: *team members*
predict Lew's stumbling blocks and transition issues, Lew has conflicting views on his abilities and how he will fair in the future, Lew never felt like he belonged in special education, team members would have liked Lew to be more engaged in his transition meeting but are glad that he did not shut down, team members identify services that will help Lew in transition, agencies had contact with Lew individually, school personnel are concerned about Lew's self-advocacy and self-determination but admit to not teaching it, team members are fixated on the concept of believing that Lew lies, conflicts arise when Lew is expected to "open up" and an in vivo from Lew was used to title the last code family, "I feel like I made my own plan and they just went along with it, and I don't feel like it's good or bad, but it's a foundation." Table 3 depicts Lew's conceptual categories, the code families they formed, and the number of open codes in each code family. As with Raul, not all of Lew's 803 open codes are accounted for in the table. Again, all data was coded, and many open codes were found to be details that did not correlate into findings.

**Thematic coding.** Themes were derived from two code families influencing a third for research questions one and two. For research question three, one code family supported a theme. Additional findings led to a fourth question answered with three code families supporting a central theme, as displayed and explained in Figure 3, Chapter 4.

**Researcher Position**

The intention of this study was to hear the voices of foster care youth with disabilities during their transition processes. Many studies have noted the outcomes of these youth and the lack of transition services provided; some have recorded the thoughts of professionals working with them, but few have asked the youth specifically for their
Table 3

*Code Families Developed from Conceptual Categories for Lew's Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual categories</th>
<th>Code family</th>
<th>Open codes per family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lew and special education</td>
<td>Lew never felt like he belonged in special education</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School personnel</td>
<td>Team members would have liked for Lew to be more engaged but were glad he did not shut down</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team members predicted Lew's stumbling blocks and transition issues</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School personnel were concerned about Lew's lack of self advocacy and self determination but are not sure it was taught</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition services</td>
<td>Team members identify services that will help Lew in transition</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency collaboration</td>
<td>Agencies had contact with Lew individually</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition meeting</td>
<td>&quot;I feel like I made my own plan and they just went along with it and I don't feel like it's good or bad, but it's a foundation.&quot;</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicts</td>
<td>Conflicts arose when Lew was expected to &quot;open up&quot;</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying</td>
<td>Team members are fixated on the concept that Lew lies</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lew's academics</td>
<td>Lew had conflicting views on his abilities and how he would fare in the future</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

perspectives. I asked for perceptions of the professionals working with the youth, in order to inquire how they felt they enabled the youth to have a voice and how they may have
contributed to their transition. Throughout the coding process, I especially looked to code participants’ word for word quotes that were significant, also known as in vivo codes.

As the data collection tool, it was important for me to be aware of my own positionality in the study in order to explain how my interests developed the study and how my background may have affected my interpretations.

Identifying my partiality made me conscious of my noted biases when identifying emergent patterns. As I was in a naturalistic setting and collecting data using qualitative research methods, characteristics in the data emerged that I needed to acknowledge and consider independent of biases and expectations.

**Role of advocate.** In my journey of becoming a researcher, I have had to acknowledge my origins of being an advocate. Harry (1996) encouraged us to think about the microcultures to which we belong and how they create personas that may influence us in our decision-making as researchers. At my core, I am a fighter for children. I currently work as an educational consultant with the Children and Youth Law Clinic at the University of Miami. At the clinic, I consult with law school interns on educational issues and advocate for clients, many of whom are foster care youth. My goal with these clients is to help them obtain educational services to access the curriculum and prepare for their future transition from the secondary school system. Previously, I volunteered as a Guardian ad Litem, advocating for youth in the dependency system. Through these positions, I have found a community, a microculture, of people invested in child welfare. Innately I stand with the child and this affects the lens through which I view student and school interactions. I have been aware of this instinct and consulted colleagues and advisors regarding any interpretations of the data.
**Teacher to researcher.** I have been immersed in the foster care system as an advocate for approximately 6 years and in the area of special education as a teacher and transition specialist for over a decade. I can navigate these two fields adeptly. Working with youth, particularly adolescents, for my entire career has allowed me to build bonds with this unique group. Some of my most salient moments as an educator were while working at a juvenile correctional facility with youth who had been marginalized by most of society. I was able to form connections with these youth through literature and learning, trying to provide them with the best educational experience possible.

It is through these experiences with foster care youth in their IEP meetings that I was given the impetus for this study. I was aware of the uphill road these youth face and had been part of programs to assist them for college readiness. But it was the lack of participation by the youth that I wanted to explore further. As Charmaz (2006) noted, it is these "sensitizing concepts" that give us the beginning ideas to pursue and ask further questions about our topics. As a grounded theorist, I used this as “a place to start, not to end” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 17). It was from this point of departure that I choose to think again about those professionals at the table, the ones so many other studies had used as participants. Now I question if professionals and researchers inadvertently missed hearing from the youth, or if they ever felt it was their responsibility to involve the youth.

**Trustworthiness: Ensuring Rigor**

Trustworthiness is a key concept in qualitative research. Asserting that studies employing qualitative designs produce empirically based knowledge and contribute to their field requires rigor be established in each study.
**Triangulation.** One way I secured trustworthiness was through triangulation. As Lincoln and Guba (1986) suggested, I used multiple and different sources (interviews, observations, and extant texts). The interviews I conducted engaged participants who were able to address my research question and were purposefully sampled from the population I was interested in studying. I used technology to record and transcribe the interviews. Lastly, I kept all information regarding participants confidential and secured where only I had access (Brantlinger et al., 2005).

Observations were appropriate to answer my research questions. I was comfortable and generally accepted in the school setting. I was familiar with the specific school settings and easily built rapport with professionals in these settings given my background in education and previous experiences with many of the professionals at these locations. My field notes were collected systematically. I followed my practice of keeping observer comments in the left margins while using the right side of the paper for factual operations and observations (Brantlinger et al., 2005). All field notes were retained in their original form to check for possible discrepancies. As mentioned previously, systematic collection and filing of field notes was helpful when looking for details from an interaction which was in the field notes but had not been included in the summation of the interaction.

The extant text analysis was also kept confidential and only accessible to me. The documents were cited correctly in this report. In Chapter 4, the findings section, I establish context and relevance of the IEPs that I analyzed (Brantlinger et al., 2005).

**Collaboration.** I participated in collaborative work by involving a colleague in reviewing my coding for interrater reliability. This colleague again counseled with me on
emerging themes from the data. Both of my advisors met with me individually to review coding and the creation of themes from code families. Each participant received the transcript of their interview via e-mail for member checks. Only a few participants responded to confirm that the transcriptions were complete and captured what they wanted to say (Brantlinger et al., 2005).

**Conclusion**

This chapter described the reasons why I chose to utilize qualitative research procedures and a grounded theory approach to analysis of the data. As part of these procedures, the naturalistic setting and sampling, data collection, data preparation, and inductive analysis of the data were explained in detail in this chapter for each participant. Also, I presented my positionality in the study, as well as any roles I assumed other than researcher. By discussing my work in child advocacy, I made a concerted effort to disclose my assumptions and biases as well as any sensitizing concepts. While diligence to trustworthiness is explicitly addressed at the end of the chapter, instances of triangulation are mentioned throughout the method section.
Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter I present findings from all data collected for both participants in the study. The intent of the study was to hear the perspectives of foster care youth with disabilities as well as the perspectives of the team members participating in the youths' transition meeting, regarding the students’ transitions from high school. I present and explain those perspectives as well as additional themes that emerged from their transition processes. Further, I present findings specific to the participants and their contexts.

Following Stake (1995), I view these cases as intrinsic case studies, which are of interest specifically because of their match between my interests and the critical issues of the cases themselves, rather than for their reflection of larger systems at work. Thus, for each case, I begin with a description of the participant’s home and family contexts. I note that difficulties in interpreting some of the quotations may be accounted for by the fact that some participants are English Language Learners.

The cases and their data will be presented in three sections. The first section presents Raul's case. In order to set the context for this case, I begin with his educational and personal history. Second, to set the stage for his transition, I describe his school and what Raul was like as a student. Third, I present the overarching theme identified in his data. This theme is explained in detail and supported with five families of codes. Finally, I present each research question with its defining theme and supporting families of codes.

The second section of the chapter presents Lew's case, beginning with his educational and personal history. Second, I describe Lew's cognizance of how his education progression and special education placements affected him beyond the schoolhouse and continued to affect his stance for his transition. In Lew's case all
research questions were answered independently (see Figure 3). Questions 1 and 2 were each answered by relationships between code families, which converged to produce a theme. The third research question was handily answered with one code family that supported a theme. Additional findings came together to answer what could have been a fourth research question with three code families tied together with a theme.

The third section examines similarities between Raul’s and Lew’s cases. Certain themes were found in each case: lying, conflicts, and support systems. Each of these will be discussed as they have been issues that have emerged and grown (Stake, 1995). As the data collection tool, I found these themes from synthesizing data throughout the process. Many contexts were the same for these young men. Static descriptors created a context for them such as disability, state care, minority, gender, and location; however, in each process the agents of the educational system ensured these young men were bound by their perceived context of their abilities and personality traits.

**Raul, an Incomplete Transition**

The title of this case reflects the overarching theme revealed in the data. This section details the context of Raul’s case as well as the process and outcomes of the analysis.

**Educational and Personal History**

As the study began, Raul was a 22-year-old student at Bennett Community Learning Center, receiving services for EBD. Raul was Hispanic with black hair that was kept short. On the day of Raul's transition meeting when I first met him, his foster mother, Talisia, explained that I could not discuss the study or obtain Raul’s consent for the study until his legal guardian arrived. "Raul is not a competent adult," Talisia stated.
As I talked more with Raul and his legal guardian, Martin, there were indications that Raul was ID. After interviewing Raul and watching him during the meeting, I noted that he did not track conversations with his eyes or head movements, and his delayed responses and speech were suggestive of ID. When I interviewed his foster mother the next evening she confirmed that this was his diagnosis. Talisia mentioned that Raul received services from The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) through a Medicare waiver under the diagnosis that he was ID. Although his current IEP showed his only eligibility as EBD, his 2007 IEP also listed a secondary eligibility as Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH). His 2006 and 2007 IEPs also listed the EMH eligibility with a line crossed neatly through the words. EMH was a category that has since legally been replaced by ID under IDEA. Public law 111-256 was signed on October 5, 2010, recognizing the use of ID in all federal health and education codes. However, on Raul’s IEPs, the deleted term “EMH” was never replaced by “ID.” The reason for the removal of this eligibility is not clear nor does it negate Raul's needs.

**Home life.** Raul resided in Talisia's group home from the age of 8 years. Four other people lived in the group home with Raul. Raul called Talisia "Mommy," as did the others in the home. In the home were other adults who were unable to live independently, some of whom originally came to live there as children over a decade ago. Talisia said that she raised them like a family:

Because one of mine, one of the thing that I tell them, as long as I'm the foster mother I don't care, White, Black, blue-you are brothers and sisters, and I am your foster mother. That's the how they call me mommy. I didn't force nobody they do that.
With regard to biological family, Raul had a biological brother who was a year older. Talisia reported that when Raul was a teenager, the brother visited once with his girlfriend but had made no contact since. According to Talisia, Raul's parents' rights were terminated before he came to live in the group home.

**Raul as a student at Bennett Community Learning Center.** Raul had attended Bennett Community Learning Center from 15 years of age. Before Bennett, Raul attended South Lake Behavioral Center, a specialized developmental center for students with disabilities. In the 2007-2008 school year, when he entered Bennett, Raul was a 10th grader on a special diploma track. He continued on the special diploma track for the duration of his time at Bennett. Bennett was also a specialized center for exceptional students which accommodated varying levels of least restrictive environments. Bennett served approximately 120 students in grades 6-12. Generally, half of the students were in high school, grades 9-12. The demographic features of the school included 67% Black, 24% Hispanic, and 8% White. The school was predominately male with only 19% female. Ninety percent of the student body was on free or reduced price lunch.

Much of what was talked about regarding Raul as a student was his behavior. Dr. Styles, the transition specialist, mentioned that Raul had spent a lot of time in Behavior Center (BC). Here she described BC:

Well, in-school, when they're indoor. It's a behavior center geared more for students with disabilities instead of outdoor suspension. They are put into the Behavior Center where they would sit with the dean of discipline and go over different strategies, ways of-when you're frustrated, you're upset, how you should, um, handle those situations. They're also given their classwork in BC.

Raul's behavior issues were the target of a large part of his day at Bennett. His IEPs revealed that because of his behavior, little progress was made academically. It was
also noted in his IEP that Raul had high instructional needs including "need for instruction in word learning strategies," "need [sic] self motivation in academics," and "need [sic] intensive instruction in most activities."

It is worth noting the severity of Raul's behaviors. Some of his general behaviors were described by Dr. Kant, the school's clinician:

Walking in the street, literally jumping on cars... throwing himself on the hood. I'm really surprised there hasn't been something really tragic at this point. Um, cursing at people driving up and down the street, uh, cutting himself, um, not to the degree where he's hitting, you know, a vein or anything, but superficial, but more than superficial. I mean drawing a fair amount of blood. I mean, you know, extreme attention seeking. Um, cursing, saying the most outrageous, vile sexual things to teachers, so I-I've kind of seen the gamut with him.

Raul had some notable behavior issues involving weapons. After an incident with another student and a knife, Raul was staffed out of Bennett and into the self-contained unit of Sandra Day O'Connor High School. Dr. Kant explained the incident:

Okay, Raul was here (Bennett)-was staffed out of here and was sent back, which wasn't the best idea. There was a student here, Luther, and Raul had an ongoing battle with him, and Raul once brought a long knife to the bus stop, and I think it was all on the bus. And Luther was about to get on the bus. Somehow, Luther's father was-got wind of this and somehow wrestled the-the knife away from Raul.

Another major behavior of Raul's was leaving the designated space where he was supposed to be. This behavior occurred in school, on community based instruction field trips, and in the community with Talisia. On his IEPs for ages 19 to 21, it was written as an "Affect[sic] of his Disability" in the area of "Community Experience," "he will wander off and make inappropriate remarks to women in the community" and "he will wander off, walk out of class." Talisia noted, "He like to get out of his classroom and go to another place" and "he runs away from school." Dr. Styles explained the consequences of
that behavior, "Raul is one too that he-if other students get upset and he would get so mad
that he'd walk away and then he found out that one of the consequences if you walk out,
you have to spend 45 minutes over in B-at the behavior center." There is no teacher or
classroom that Raul is more likely to leave, "I mean in all honesty, he leaves everywhere
a lot," Dr. Kant explained.

**Behavioral differences between home and school.** Information about Raul's
behavior at home presented some contrasts to his behavior at school. For example, at
home Raul did not have issues with others tenants in the home, regardless of their level of
disability. Additionally, Raul did not have conflicts with the female caretakers working in
the home. However, absconding was the only behavior that carried over into Raul's home
life. Outside of school this behavior became a safety concern. Talisia described times
when Raul left school, and she did not know where he was.

Because you know he had left school and go to Broward. Broward police had
called me. I have to go with my son to pick him up at one o'clock, two o'clock
(in the morning). Yes. One time he left from school. At five o'clock or six o'clock
a man call me, "Who are you? Do you (have a) son named Raul?" "Yes." "Oh,
come over." He was around the school, and I come over and pick him up.

Because his physical and verbal aggressions were not a problem in the home Raul
did not receive services in the home for behavior modification. Raul got along well with
his mother and the others living in his home. In the home, he shared a room with another
young man, and his foster mother reported there were no problems.

As preparations were made for Raul's transition, new settings for volunteering and
work were considered and questions arose regarding Raul's potential behavior in these
settings.
Figure 2. Conceptual map of findings from Raul's data.
**Overarching Theme From Raul's Transition**

School personnel’s issues with Raul's behavior served as a barrier to his receiving the appropriate services throughout the transition process. Factors contributing to this theme included an inability by team members to understand motivations and patterns to Raul's behavior. There was no evidence of a comprehensive behavior plan or reference to use of a behavior implementation plan in Raul's IEPs, which is a standard practice with a student with EBD. Five families of data collectively supported this theme.

**Code family one: Behaviors feared in the workplace.** This code family explains team members' primary concern with Raul's transition to adulthood. As mentioned previously, knowing Raul meant knowing his behaviors. During his transition, there were fears that these behaviors would carry over into the workplace. Both Martin, Raul's legal guardian, and Dr. Kant, the school clinician, were concerned that Raul's antisocial behaviors would surface in the workplace and that these behaviors wouldn't be tolerated. Specifically, Dr. Kant was concerned that "if somebody told him to do something and he assumed that they had an attitude" he would start, “you know, cursing, saying, you know, sexually inappropriate things." These were behaviors that had been seen at school. Dr. Kant noted concern about Raul navigating interpersonal relationships in the workplace.

And people would not be as accepting, or understanding, or try to figure out where it came from, which would lead to, you know, a series of events that, you know, really might be very bad for him and-and those around him.

Along similar lines, Talisia believed that Raul's behavior at work would depend on who else was at the work site.
I hope they don't have people that are in wheelchair or are to him weak people, that Raul can walk over them. And I hope that won't happen. And I hope that they have people that you know, can be firm with him. "No, Raul this is what it is."

Dr. Kant wanted to see Raul in an employment situation that would allow him to practice employment and social skills, "I think he needs to learn how to work in a structured situation and take directives without becoming rageful [sic] and losing it and personalizing it."

While fears of Raul's behaviors in the workplace were the impetus for team members falling short on his transition, others noted that Raul's behavior might not be of concern. They presented the negative case. Providing the idea that Raul might have no issues in the workplace ran contrary to all other accounts. While Martin did express concerns, he also said in the transition meeting that if Raul's interests were there his conduct would fall into place. Dr. Styles agreed, "if it's something of his choice, his interest, his preference, I feel that he would be successful."

**Code family two: Participants' differing portrayals of Raul.** This code family reinforced the theme that Raul received an incomplete transition because of school personnel’s issues with him. Both Talisia and Dr. Kant discussed Raul's penchant for lying. When asked if Raul lies, Dr. Kant replied, "That's kind of an understatement." She continued to state that, "Um, he may be low functioning, but he can plan things out and he knows the difference between right and wrong because he will hide his behaviors and lie about them." Talisia was more specific in her interview regarding Raul’s lying, "I will tell you one thing, Raul, we have in there (pointing to the cabinet) that one of his diagnosis is that he lies. He's a liar." Earlier, Raul had been portrayed as a bully. Talisia
said at school he picks on kids weaker than him. Martin explained what he believes goes on in the classroom with peers.

But in a classroom setting he’s, his demeanor changes, uh, he’ll actually become a little bit more-too confident if you ask me. Um, ‘cause he has had a history of, um, bullying the other students, so I’m not sure if that takes part in the, the actual change in his demeanor when he goes into the classroom.

However, Gloria, his Agency for Persons with Disabilities APD coordinator, who had also known Raul for an extended period, talked of the vulnerable side of Raul. She explained that at every school Raul attended, he showed the ability to behave appropriately, as well as, showing physical aggression and self-injurious behaviors. Later she explained in more detail,

he come to be physical aggression and he also easy to follow, um, negative recommendation, like, uh, um, if a friend tell him, "Cut your arm," he would do it. If, uh, the friend tell him, "Go away," he will go away, you know? It's-it's something that I really-I really, uh, am very concerned about it, you know.

Regardless of Raul's aggressive or submissive state, he was in need of intensive services in the school environment. The following was written in the "Affects [sic] of the Disability" description of his Community Experience section for IEPs ages 19, 20, and 21, "Because he needs continuous supervision to ensure physical safety, this kind of inappropriate behavior create [sic] need for continuous supervision."

In spite of all of these emotions and behavioral needs, Mrs. Toggs, the special education teacher, said that Raul needs an opportunity to work. She noted that he was helpful with the computers in her class. She believed that he could do supported employment and on the job training.

**Code family three: Raul's teachers' perceptions of Raul and his relationships with them.** This code family discussed the perceptions Raul's teachers had of him as well
as the relationships Raul had with various teachers at Bennett. To begin, Dr. Kant stated that there was a problem with his homeroom teacher, "but there is a particular level of contention there above and beyond anything else." Dr. Kant went on to describe her, "you know, his homeroom teacher uh, is not very accepting, is not very tolerant, is not warm, and can sometimes take a provocative situation and make it worse." In the interview after Raul's transition when I asked if he did not like school anymore, his response was, "Um, I don't like the teacher, Mrs. ----." Martin also expressed concern that this same teacher was not willing to work with Raul.

Okay. My personal opinion, I think she’s just trying to get him out of the school. She seems to be more of an advocate of putting him out of the school instead of trying to work with him. All the students there have challenges and that should be expected, but I, in my personal opinion, I don’t know if I can state that.

Talisia's interactions with this teacher were notably different. Talisia remembered incidents in which Raul's behavior was beyond the school's typical obligations and Raul could have been removed from school.

Um, they could have called the police a lot of time. Even that teacher that was there, um, Mrs. ----, I don't know how to say her name. She could have called it, and I almost have to beg her, "Please don't do it." So he doesn't have . . . his behavior at school is terrible!

Not only had this teacher, and the school in general, been lenient about Raul's behaviors, but Talisia also acknowledged the school's willingness to accommodate Raul's preference for Mrs. Bee, another teacher at Bennett. Dr. Kant described Mrs. Bee as, "a very loving, warm, accepting person. She knew him when he was very young, a little boy, so she's almost like a second mother to him." Talisia agreed that Mrs. Bee was his mom at school, "He even got a mommy just the same, and like I say she have him since he was small. I guess he sad now because he leaving the school that he can't see her no more, and he ran
and the once he start doing that to his hair." Talisia was talking about Raul rubbing the sides of his head. She explained that when he does that it is a precursor to him having an episode of some sort. This was evident in Raul's transition meeting when Raul began rubbing his head before leaving the meeting to find Mrs. Bee. Talisia explained that Mrs. Bee was, "the teacher that he don't go over the line with." When Raul left the room, Talisia and Martin followed him and discovered that he went to Mrs. Bee's room, but she was not there. Talisia promised Raul that they could come back another day to say goodbye to Mrs. Bee. Talisia revealed in her interview that Bennett had yielded to Raul in allowing him more time with Mrs. Bee.

But like we tell her, "Raul the school cannot bend for you and they have, they have, they have! They have put him in her classroom to make . . . make him quiet. They have done, not that I am praising the school, but they have gone over their back to make-please Raul.

**Code family four: Reasons for Raul's behavior.** This code family listed the reasons given by team members for Raul's behavior. School personnel openly admitted to not being able to determine an antecedent for Raul's behavior. Bennett Community Learning Center was a school designated for students with behavior issues. When asked about an antecedent for Raul's behavior Dr. Kant responded,

> I-I can't find an antecedent. I . . . mean he will be like, in class. Everything will be perfectly calm. Nobody will be provoking him. There's nothing anxiety provoking going on. You know, a lot of it is his own internal dialogue.

Martin suggested a more basic reason for Raul's behavior, "I guess he’s just trying to establish some sort of dominance, which we try to reiterate to him that it’s not necessary ‘cause everybody’s there to learn." While the professionals who worked with Raul searched for a starting point to begin behavior modification, Talisia ascribed the situation to stubbornness, "But Raul is going to do what Raul wants."
**Code family five: School personnel express negative feelings about Raul.** This code family relates to the negative attitudes displayed toward Raul and his future aspirations by the school personnel at Bennett. Given that Raul attended Bennett for approximately 8 years and his behaviors were well documented, next was to assess if the staff's negative feelings predated his escalating behaviors. Using Raul's IEPs as evidence for the negative disposition toward Raul, I noted that the negative feelings seemed to eventuate from Raul's behaviors. The following is an excerpt from his IEP describing his behavior:

> He often times engages peers and adults in verbal altercations causing frequent disruptions. His provoking arguments with others, refusing to do work and walking away from classes inhibits his growth and causes concern for his safety and the safety of others.

Dr. Kant, who had previously provided much detail about Raul's behavior, did not neglect to provide her judgment, "I-I have to say Raul has been frankly one of more-my more outrageous students."

> She also believed that Raul's goals were unattainable for him. When speaking of his participation in the transition meeting she said, "It'll take on that kind of grandiose proportion, you know? ‘I wanna be a veterinarian.’"

**Research Questions**

Research questions will be answered in the following section. Each question will be explained by its theme and followed by supporting code families. Data analyzed to create code families and themes also support the overall theme of Raul's findings and transition experience.

**Research question one: How do foster care youth perceive their involvement in their own transition process?** The theme supported by two code families to answer
this question was "Raul's perception of his transition was affected by his lack of involvement in preparation and understanding of the transition process." Raul's answer to this research question was evident in everything he said about the meeting and everything he said about leaving school. Because the transition process begins for students at age 14, every IEP for Raul at Bennett should have discussed transition. Despite evidence that it was discussed, it was clear that Raul was not prepared.

**Code family one for research question one: Raul's perception of his involvement in the transition process was reflected in his limited awareness of the process.** When I interviewed Raul before the transition meeting, he did not know what meeting he was about to attend. When I met with him the next evening, I first asked how he felt about the meeting yesterday, and he responded, "For the fact that I won't be going there (Bennett)?" Continuing with this subject, I asked how he felt about not going to school anymore and he responded, "messed up." For Raul, the major focus of the meeting was that he would no longer be attending school. When I asked about other things discussed in the meeting, he was able to say he remembered there was talk about jobs.

Raul answered positively to questions regarding his input at the meeting, but his take away from the meeting is clear in the following exchange:

*Interviewer*: Yeah, um do you feel like you got a chance to say what you wanted to say in the meeting?
*Raul*: Yes.
*Interviewer*: Yeah. People asked for your opinion?
*Raul*: Sometimes.
*Interviewer*: Sometimes, was there anything that you wanted to say that you didn't get a chance to say in the meeting?
*Raul*: I'm really going to miss my teachers.

Raul's disconnect from the proceedings of the meeting could be attributed to his not being part of the planning for the meeting. Involving the student in planning the
meeting is a best practice in transition (Thoma et al., 2009). Dr. Styles, staffing specialist, confirmed Raul was not involved or consulted.

_Dr. S:_ Definitely. Prior to that particular meeting, because Raul was out of school a lot.
_Interviewer:_ Yes.
_Dr. S:_ I think that was a loophole in itself too, because he really wasn't here, so we could talk with him and on a daily basis be prepared in the program that Ms. Toggs has there.

**Code family two for research question one: The transition process went on around Raul.** Despite Raul's lack of involvement in the planning of the meeting and knowledge of the purpose for the meeting, he knew what he wanted to do after graduation. He knew that he wanted to work with animals. His affinity for animals and desire to work with animals had been noted in his transition statements for the last 4 years. These same transition statements stated, "He would like to learn what he has to so that he can live on his own." This statement was continued on two successive IEPs. Unfortunately, no goals were ever written addressing Raul's desire for independence and no progress was made toward placing Raul where he could work with animals.

For Raul, the only palpable business at his transition meeting was that he would no longer be going to school. Transition information was exchanged mostly between the vocational rehabilitation representative and Martin. When Martin spoke to Raul he did not look at him. They were sitting next to each other and for the most part Raul looked straight ahead. Martin used metaphorical phrases, such as "each step at a time," and "this is a window of opportunity," which increased Raul's disconnection from the situation. Raul, not actively involved in the proceedings, got up and left the meeting to find Mrs.
Bee. As he noted in his interview, he is really going to miss his teachers. His concern at that time was with saying goodbye to Mrs. Bee.

**Research question two: How do adult team members view youth's participation in the transition process and transition meeting?** This question was answered with the theme "Participants' differing portrayals of Raul affected the lens through which team members viewed Raul's participation in the transition process" and was supported by two code families. These repeated notions and views were seen in the personnel’s interactions with Raul during the transition meeting, as well as in their comments made during interviews.

**Code family one for research question two: Team members’ interactions with Raul did not facilitate his participation in the transition meeting.** Despite team members’ attempts to invite Raul’s participation, there were several indicators that these efforts were not successful, as evident in the following examples. Linda LaClare, the district transition coordinator, asked Raul what he wanted to do after high school. He responded that he wanted to go to college to be a veterinarian. Then, her body shifted to one side and, looking over her glasses, she said, "Ok, well." Her response was cold and short and did not welcome more input. Despite the information relating to Raul and his needs, the vocational rehabilitation representative, Mrs. Moreno, spoke and interacted directly with Martin, rather than Raul. The only time Mrs. Moreno interacted with Raul was to have him sign a form indicating that he had received the information that was given to Martin. When Martin spoke to Raul, he did not make eye contact, even though they were sitting next to each other.
Code family two for research question two: Team members made efforts to solicit Raul's participation in the transition meeting. Several members of the team made efforts to solicit Raul's involvement. For example, Mrs. Toggs solicited Raul's input frequently during the meeting. She made direct eye contact and comments, such as "Talk to us, this is your meeting," "Do you have any questions for us? This is your moment, do you like the plan?" and "Are you ready?" Raul intermittently acknowledged Mrs. Toggs and responded nonverbally. The consensus from the team members was that Raul had the opportunity to speak and express his needs in the meeting. The caveat they explained was that he was not very verbal in meetings. Martin explained, "Uh, that’s pretty much the most interaction you’re gonna get out of him when you’re having a meeting, uh, of that caliber with Raul." When asked if Raul was asked about his own wishes and desires, Martin responded, "He was asked, but he was a little timid, as usual, in response. Um, that’s just his demeanor when he’s around quite a few, you know, people that he doesn’t see that often." Additionally, Martin stated, "And at times I volunteered, uh, to speak on his behalf." Martin had explained when we first met that speaking and signing for Raul were some of his duties as his legal guardian.

Mrs. Toggs believed that Raul "absolutely" was given the opportunity to speak at his transition meeting. She also noted that he responded appropriately in the meeting. When he left the meeting, she noted to the others that the meeting had taken too long. At that point the meeting had lasted longer than forty minutes.

In agreement with Martin and Mrs. Toggs, Dr. Kant believed Raul had the opportunity to participate.

Uh, yeah I do. Yeah, he was given a chance to-I mean do-I mean, I know I directed questions towards him, and I think he was given the chance to express
himself. My experience with Raul, and I've known him for many years now, is that he does not express himself in public forums.

Dr. Styles explained that from her perspective, Raul was as involved as he could be:

And Raul listened very carefully. I don't know how much of it he really understood, but he got to the point, when it was overwhelming, and he walked out, but they were able to bring him back, and he sat through the meeting, which was a plus.

Talisia knew Raul to be headstrong as she mentioned before. "Because you know, ehh, he was free to talk. 'I want this,' and I think they address him when they was talking, but Raul is Raul and he's going to do what he wants to do."

**Research question three: In the educational transition process, how is interagency collaboration experienced by both youth and the team?**

This question was answered with the theme, "Both youth and the team experienced a low level of interagency collaboration during the transition process" and supported with two code families. In examining the data and reviewing the transition meeting for examples of interagency collaboration, little evidence pointed to collaboration. The lack of collaboration also contributed to the incomplete nature of Raul’s transition, Since, without collaboration, connections could not be made to place Raul. As the meeting concluded, Martin planned to begin the process of applying for vocational rehabilitation services for Raul. Beginning the agency contacts at previous meetings or interagency connections during the preplanning stages of the meeting could have thwarted the lag time Raul faced during the application and processing time.

**Code family one for research question three: School personnel plan individually for transition meeting.** Planning for the transition meeting gives the team members a chance to discuss services and plan for the student's future. All team members
were asked about their participation in the planning of the transition meeting. Their answers varied. The transition meeting is also an IEP meeting reviewing a transition IEP with important transition goals. It is required that input be solicited from teachers, counselors, and teachers prior to producing this document. Dr. Kant and Martin stated that they were not a part of the preplanning for the meeting and were not asked for input prior to the meeting, only that they were invited. Mrs. Toggs was responsible for sending out the invitations but did not mention any involvement in construction of the transition plan. Talisia was also not included in any preplanning or asked for her input, but she was told that there would be a place for Raul. She stated,

they told me that this was because Raul, that this was about the IEP and Raul would be and this would be the last year and you know that he would have to be in school, and you know we was trying to plan with a program for Raul.

Dr. Styles reported being part of the planning for the transition meeting. She was part of his staffing the previous year in preparation for this transition.

*Code family two for research question three: Transition meeting processes*

revealed gaps in collaboration. In reviewing the transition meeting processes, several gaps were discovered. The evidence that Raul's transition was incomplete, the most salient of which was his lack of post school placement, was seen in the proceedings of the transition meeting. The meeting began with Mrs. Toggs stating that there was no placement for Raul. Dr. Styles admitted to seeing the gaps in the meeting in the area of collaboration, particularly that important people were missing.

*Interviewer:* Okay, so you're saying all of this was together. Who do you think was missing from the meeting? Who-or who do you think would be ideally-who else can we get at the meeting?

*Dr. Styles:* We-we didn't really have anybody for the program of leaving, when he would leave, transition-leave here. What program is he going to go into?
There was some undecisive [sic] . . . I-I don't think they had really decided what would happen.

*Interviewer*: Like, every day, what's he gonna do?

*Dr. Styles*: Yeah, what-every day, as opposed to-because that day I had three meetings and the first two, they already knew.

Later, Dr. Styles explained why she believed more effort wasn't made to collaborate and find Raul a suitable placement.

He wanted to work with animals, and I think if that could have been explored and given him more of a realistic, um, you know, if you want to work within a vet's office, maybe help with the grooming of animals of what-I think that would have been needed, but because of his aggressive behavior here, that didn't take place.

When I asked Dr. Styles, whose job responsibility it was to make contact with outside service providers to collaborate about placements for Raul to either volunteer or work in a supported environment, about this process she answered, "Basically what happens with that is there's a transition specialist that is assigned to our area and I coordinate with her and also we have a person here (Bennett) who has been given the step[sic]." Both of the people in the positions she was talking about were at the transition meeting. The person assigned to their area from the district was Linda LeClare, district transition coordinator, and the person at Bennett who was responsible in assisting with transition was Mrs. Toggs, whose secondary title to teacher was transition coordinator, a job she said was given to her recently by the principal to help prepare the students’ transition to adulthood. Collaboration between these positions did not take place.

**Conclusion**

Raul aged out of the public education system in the spring of 2015. He had an established living situation in a group home and was receiving benefits from APD. His educational transition process was not complete, in that he was not found a placement for
postsecondary employment or postsecondary education. Raul very much desired to work
with animals, but the evidence suggests that issues with school personnel’s negative
views of Raul and concerns regarding his behavior kept them from working toward
securing a placement. Additionally, a lack of collaboration limited any connections that
could have been made for a postsecondary placement for Raul. Showing very little
understanding of the process, Raul had not been taught about his transition and therefore
could not be an active participant in his transition. Evidence from his IEPs shows that he
had a desire to learn more regarding his independence and decision-making, but these
desires were never addressed.

Lew, "I Made my Own Plan."

Lew's case title was chosen from his own words. As will be reported, throughout
his experiences in education, Lew felt he had been let down by those whose job it was to
provide for him and his education. In his final transition, Lew chose to make himself a
part of the education transition process. As noted in the overview to this chapter, although
all the research questions were well addressed by the data, my analysis did not reveal an
overarching theme for this case.

Home Life and Personal History

In the middle of his senior year of high school, after his 18th birthday in January,
Lew moved from a group home to Ferguson Villas, which was an apartment house for
males aging out of the foster care system. The program worked in conjunction with one
of the local CBCs to provide programming to assist young men in being successful in
their transition into adulthood. Our meeting in November took place in the office of his
school EBD counselor, Dr. Theo.
Prior to moving to Ferguson Villas, Lew lived in a group home with five other teenaged youth for approximately 2 years. Previous to that placement, Lew lived with his grandmother for 2 years after a period of several placements in foster homes, after having been removed from his mother's care in fifth grade. Lew maintains that he was not abused by his mother and that the allegations against her were false. However, Lew and his sister were taken from his mother, and he reported that she did serve time in jail. When she was released, she had no resources to regain custody of her children. In our first meeting, I asked if he was in touch with his parents, and he replied yes. I asked if that was a good or bad thing and he replied, "it is what it is." In our second meeting, Lew told me that his father had passed sometime ago.

**Special Education.** Lew first spoke about his special education placement in our second meeting. Lew did not believe that he was in special education, only that he had an IEP. Lew had been in self-contained classes for students with EBD throughout middle school but for high school, all of his classes had been general education. He believed he had been released from special education.

Lew's referral to special education coincided with his removal from his mother's custody. At school during this time, Lew's behavior changed and he began getting behavioral referrals. Lew explained what main behaviors he was referred for,

*Lew:* Um, I would say just being a kid ‘cos [sic] like me and my friends would be running around the hallways or like making a joke in class; you know.
*Interviewer:* What would they say you were being suspended for?
*Lew:* Acting out, misbehaving, disrupting class, you know.
Once Lew was placed in self-contained classes, he was never comfortable. In our second meeting, Lew described his EBD classes as "a jungle," that he was in there "with a bunch of retarded kids," and that he "ain't learn squat."

**High School and Transition.** Lew said that his placement in special education classes did not prepare him for classes in high school. When asked, Lew elaborated on his initial statement, "I ain't learned squat."

So when it really comes down to it, you think back like wow, what was I doing back in middle school? Then when I think about it, my teacher wasn’t teaching me nothing. So it’s kind of screwing me in the long run.

For high school, Lew attended Margaret Sanger High School, located less than six miles from the city center of one of the largest metropolitan areas in the country. The school served students in grades 9 through 12. Sanger High was an urban high school in an historically black neighborhood. The demographics of the school were 91% Black, 7% Hispanic, and 2% White. The median annual household income for the neighborhood was $18,000. The school's enrollment for the 2013-2014 school year was 1,619. Sanger High School offered Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment classes.

Socially, Lew did well in high school. He participated in three varsity sports: football, wrestling, and track. He showed me pictures of four, strong, stern faced young men in football jerseys posed in various positions, whom he referred to as his “dawgs.” He casually mentioned that he should have invited them to his IEP meeting.

Lew explained that he felt every IEP meeting in the past had been mostly the same. His expectations for his transition meeting were no different.

*Interviewer:* Okay. All right. Is there anything else you want to say about this meeting tomorrow? Do you have any um, do you anticipate anything happening or are you looking forward to anything?
*Lew:* It’s going to be the same as the last four.
**Figure 3.** Conceptual map of findings from Lew’s data.
Research Questions

Lew's data answered his research questions with an additional research question, presented as "A Fourth Question."

**Research question one: How do foster care youth perceive their involvement in their own transition process?** To answer this question the theme, "Lew's perception of high involvement was influenced by his belief that previous decisions were not made in his best interests and by lack of confidence in his academic abilities for the future," was developed by information contained in two code families acting to influence a third code family that represents Lew's perception of his involvement in his transition process. When a code family influences another it provides detailed information reinforcing the code into the creation of the theme to ultimately answer the research question. In research questions one and two, I had two more narrow code families providing influence with details and examples to a more broad code family contributing to the theme that answered each of the two research questions.

**Code family one for research question one: "I feel like I made my own plan and they just went along with it, and I don't feel like it's good or bad, but it's a foundation."** This family is titled from a quote by Lew in his post transition meeting interview. Lew had been asked if he felt like he had been given a good transition plan. Lew said that he had control in the meeting and ownership of the plan. Lew continued to take ownership of the plan when he explained that he did not see it as a plan.

It’s just kind of like a statement. All it’s stating is that I’m going to college and when I get there, I’m gonna try to do this and that. It’s not really, it’s not really good or bad. It’s kinda neutral.
Lew admitted that the transition meeting was different, specifically less complicated than his previous meetings,

I feel like today was kind of different from all the meetings. I feel like this meeting was just like less complicated than all the others 'cos [sic] we pretty much knew what, where we was that at this point, and I think it’s basically 'cos [sic] it’s the ending.

Lew continued to explain how this meeting was different, "I feel like this was the easiest one ‘cos [sic] none of my goals changed. Uh, basically get ready for me to go off to college. Ain’t nothin' really change ‘cos [sic] you know, the school year about to end."

Lew felt as though he was listened to in the meeting. When asked if he had a chance to say everything he wanted, Lew replied, "Yeah, for the most part, yeah. It wasn’t really nothing to talk about at this point. School year over with."

However, Lew would have liked for connections to have been made to the community college. When asked what was the most helpful thing that could have been done for him, Lew replied, "Um, I think they should have brought somebody in from college, to be honest." Lew expounded on what he needed from a college representative,

And just explained to me the college experience. Tell me the ins and out about it because I really don’t know what to expect walking into this. I’m just going in, it’s kind of like my first day at middle school. You know? So I’m just going in, don’t know what to expect.

"**Code family two for research question one: Lew never felt like he belonged in special education.** Lew never felt like special education was the right placement for him, and the decision for placement in special education was not Lew's choice. Therefore, in this final transition IEP meeting, Lew displayed independence and asserted himself to take what he viewed as more control of the meeting."
Lew attended his first IEP meeting in the middle of his fifth grade year. He recalled this it was in this meeting that the placement decision was made. "Yeah, because I remember them asking my mom do . . . they want to place me in this program? They asked her and like, she like she agreed with them I guess. And I remember that." It was during this same time period that Lew's mother lost custody of her children.

Lew was forthright about his behavior and reasons for being suspended, "I had a couple altercations with fighting. That was one of the reasons why." These fights coupled with the classroom disruptions mentioned earlier were the impetus for Lew's referral to special education. However, one aspect missing from this special education referral was that Lew's behavior was not adversely affecting his school performance. Lew explained,

When I look at them (grades) from right now to-I mean, from elementary till now, it really ain’t no difference ‘cos [sic] when I first got into high school, I made grades like a couple A’s, B’s and mostly C’s. And I got my transcript and I took a look at it in elementary still, even though I was getting suspended and all that, I still had B’s and C’s on my report card. But as a child, I really didn’t look at that because you know, grades didn’t mean nothing, and I had a long way to go.

While Lew was in the self-contained classes, he knew that he was not in the right place. He felt uncomfortable when his EBD class would enter the general population of the middle school.

I’d go to lunch and I could just feel the difference. I see the freedom that the other kids have. I see the way they look at us in the EBD program. And it just makes you feel like you, like you mental but you really ain’t.

When asked if he made friends during the 3 years he was in self-contained EBD classes he responded, "Yeah, we all got to know each other because it was small classes. We got to know each other, but I can’t say like we was friends. I can’t say that."
Lew said that he felt misplaced until he was finally placed back into general education classes in high school. Unfortunately, once Lew was in high school he realized his placement in a special education program had not prepared him for future success. Specifically, Lew believed that his placement in self-contained EBD classes in middle school did not prepare him for high school.

I think, I think if I wasn’t placed in those classes, it wouldn’t have prepared me for high school because when I was placed in those classes, it’s kind of like I was limited to like the real, real way that school actually works as far as like going to different periods, being independent and keeping up on your work and stuff. Because once I got into high school, they just stuck me out there in the real world. So it was like I was being hit with this assignment, that assignment. I wasn’t used to all that.

Third code family for research question one: Lew had conflicting views on his abilities and how he would fare in the future. The conflicting views Lew held for his future and his abilities were the main reasons Lew chose to take a position of high involvement in his transition meeting. Because of the uncertainty of Lew’s future, Lew became active in the transition meeting where he felt he had power.

At Lew’s transition meeting, Mrs. Alexander brought up an issue with his grades. Although Mrs. Alexander and Dr. Theo were concerned about how close Lew was to failing a class and not graduating, later in our interview, Lew expressed an attitude of nonchalance regarding the situation. "I still ain’t passed, it still ain’t over yet. Now, I ain’t passed or fail yet. So you say did I know I was that close, it’s-I could still fail. I could, I could." Later in the same interview, Lew chose to take control of his outlook on the situation, as he did in the transition meeting.

I feel like I’m doing great so. I’m looking at the positive side of I really don’t see nothing wrong, but if you check my grades, you see I got good grades; got a nice grade point average. I could just say I just, I just, I just made the best of it.
Lew had assured Damien, the program coordinator at Ferguson Villas, that his grades were not a reflection of his abilities. Damien relayed from his conversations with Lew that, "he claims that, that his poor grades are from him not doing the work. Not because he’s not able to do it. It’s if he decides to choose not to do it."

Lew's independence was unwavering as he thought about college, "Yeah, but me personally, I feel like I’m independent enough that I could handle college on my own." He even said that he would most likely not seek out disability services on campus because he would not need them.

Despite these assertions of strength and self-confidence, Lew expressed self-doubt. He admitted to not being prepared for high school, and this fear reappeared as he approached college, "Uh, I’m scared of getting to college and just, just failing. I’m just scared of going to college and it being too tough for me and then I just completely flunk out."

Research question two: How do adult team members view youth's participation in the transition process and transition meeting? The theme, "Due to preexisting beliefs that Lew was not truthful, team members perceived his involvement was adequate," ascribes the team members' views to the question without omitting an important detail of their perspectives. This theme pulls together issues team members consistently discussed, which had an impact on the way they viewed Lew's participation. The research question was answered by a main code family and influenced by the findings in two additional code families regarding team members’ beliefs.

Code family one for research question two: Team members would have liked Lew to be more engaged but were glad that he did not shut down. This code family best
answer the research question. Both members of the team, Mrs. Alexander, lead special educator, and Dr. Theo, EBD clinician, agreed that the meeting went well. However, both members had caveats regarding Lew's performance.

Dr. Theo expressed higher expectations for Lew's involvement, "I would have liked for Lew to be more um, active. Um, given his and even given that he’s getting ready to go out in the world and do everything by himself." Dr. Theo talked about the difficulties she had with getting Lew to participate, "You know, knowing Lew for the last 2 years, it’s always uh, pulling teeth to get information from him. Um, so I don’t think he expressed himself as eloquently as he could have yesterday."

Mrs. Alexander was glad that Lew communicated in the meeting. But then she reported that Lew had "shut down" in the past. "He responded and he participated. He didn’t shut down because he does get into that mood where he doesn’t want to communicate, and he will shut down. And he didn’t do that so I think it went well." As seen in each statement and in this last one, when either Mrs. Alexander or Dr. Theo commented on Lew's communication in the transition meeting there was a negative caveat attached to the statement. They would say how the meeting went well and that Lew participated, but always mentioned that he had a propensity to shut down.

The next two families discuss Lew's lying. These instances took two forms: lying when asked questions and not being open when he was expected to share.

*Code family two for research question two: Conflicts arose when Lew was expected to "open up."* When Lew was put in situations with adults where he was expected to "open up" or divulge his experiences or emotions, conflicts followed. Dr.
Theo believed that not only was Lew not to be believed but that he was also not interested in working on goals.

Instead of okay, we’re working on this goal to get something for you, uh, he doesn’t take an active part in that and you know, I constantly have to push him, and then he’ll give me the half truth and stuff like that.

Lew had a very different take on the idea of working on goals with Dr. Theo.

They write them down and then they call them goals. They write what I want to do now and call it a goal and say we going to work towards the goal. And I really haven’t been helped towards any of my goals if you ask me. If you ask me.

During the transition meeting, Lew and Dr. Theo did not show a relationship of genuine trust. She continually asked him about the prom: if he went, whom he went with, where he was, could she see the pictures? Lew avoided her questions or answered no each time she brought up prom. This continued on and off throughout the meeting.

Another example showing the lack of respect Lew had for Dr. Theo occurred when she asked Lew about what he wears to work, and he responded, "work clothes." In speaking with Lew about his relationship with Dr. Theo, I asked if he had always been so guarded regarding answering her questions. He replied that she had never helped him with anything. Dr. Theo again mentioned how hard it was to get information from Lew, "It’s like I’m saying, if I don’t ask the right questions, I don’t get anything out of him."

Conversely, Lew mentioned how he believed Dr. Theo always wanted to talk about "irrelevant stuff." Unfortunately, it seemed that Dr. Theo took what she perceived as Lew’s shortcomings personally. Here she gives an example.

last year Lew expressed that he wanted to take the ACT, and I spent a lot of time with him filling out that application and pushing for the waiver whatever and stuff like that, and then he doesn’t show up for the test, you know?
By happenstance, during a discussion on test taking, Lew mentioned that he couldn't take the ACT the first time he was signed up because he did not have a ride. Because their relationship has been marked with conflict, Lew had never shared details like this with Dr. Theo. He most likely never found it an important detail. While the adult, Dr. Theo, perceived Lew not showing up for the test as not caring.

Damien, the program director at Ferguson Villas, told me when we talked before I met with Lew in March that Lew had declined to speak with Damien several times. When I asked Lew about this, he said that he did not feel the need to bond with Damien. Lew believed that Damien should do his job and "I'll (Lew) be me." It should be noted that Damien has a master’s in social work, and his attempts to talk with Lew were also attempts to get to know him. Damien noted that Lew had been at Ferguson for 3 months, and they had no relationship. Conflicts arose due to this lack of bonding, and Damien made a point to tell me that Lew's apartment was always messy. When I brought this up to Lew, he responded that "clothes be all over the place, so what?"

**Code family two for research question two: Team members were fixated on the concept that Lew lies.** A reoccurring theme from interviews with team members, Mrs. Alexander and Dr. Theo, was the articulation of their belief that Lew lied. Recalling the comments team members made about Lew's involvement in his transition meeting, Mrs. Alexander was not only concerned that Lew would shut down, but questioned the validity of his input, "I know he sometimes fabricates the truth, but I’m just glad that he did communicate and even if it wasn’t the truth." She also stated, "I’m not sure if everything that he expressed was believable." When asked about the times when Lew lied, Mrs. Alexander replied,
He’ll just at that moment, I guess how he’s feeling. If it’s something that’s his business or that’s related to his personal life or school life, if that particular time he doesn’t want you to know his business, he’ll tell you anything.

Dr. Theo provided an example of a lie Lew told her, "I know last year, Lew had me believing he was on the football team all year and come to find out that he was not."

She went on to explain her experiences with Lew's lying,

Well, Lew tends to be um, very secretive, and when you’re talking to him about um, things that he should have done, uh, he doesn’t readily give you the information or um, he’ll give you part of the information and leave something out or sometimes I have found that um, he engages in half-truths with me.

Dr. Theo also believed Lew was not willing to participate in the group therapy she led because other students would catch him in lies, "You know what I’m saying? Because the kids seem to know what’s going on with each other."

**Research question three: In the educational transition process, how is interagency collaboration experienced by both youth and the team?** This research question was addressed by the theme, "agencies providing services to Lew did not attend the transition meeting but contacted Lew directly." This theme is supported by the findings in one family.

**Code family for research question three: Agencies had contact with Lew individually.** Agencies offering services to Lew made contact with him outside of the educational transition meeting. The only possible agency collaboration at the transition meeting was the vocational rehabilitation (VR) representative. The representative from the organization was present and explained the services the organization could provide to Lew. Because this representative had not been a part of the transition team proceedings, she could not give information specific to Lew's needs. Seeing Lew's disinterest, the representative quickly covered all of the services VR was able to provide.
The major agency providing services to Lew for his transition, his CBC, had been in contact with him prior to the transition meeting. Someone from the CBC had discussed what he was eligible to receive and what his transition would be like. Here he described what was discussed, making a comparison to his school transition:

They actually—it was more strict on they part. They set up the goals for me. They told me I gotta stay in school, maintain a certain GPA. Bottom line. They told me once I complete my high school, I gotta to enroll in college within a month later. Bottom line. And then once I’m in college, I gotta maintain a certain grade point average to even get benefits from them. Bottom line. So they ain’t even, it’s kind of like they ain’t even play with me like, do you know what I’m saying?

**A fourth research question:** What services do team members perceive Lew needs for transition? After completion of the analysis, remaining data pointed to a fourth research question. Although this question had not been asked, the three remaining code families came together to answer the question. These code families created the theme "Lew's team members were aware of the services he needed for transition but unfortunately, they did not provide them." Three code families supported this theme and are explained below.

**Code family one for question four: Team members predicted Lew's stumbling blocks and transition issues.** Team members expressed concerns for Lew regarding his transition. Many of their concerns came in the projection of stumbling blocks and issues they believed he would encounter. Dr. Theo expressed some general concerns regarding Lew's attending school and being successful.

I’m just hoping that he follows through with all of it. Like, I’m concerned about that part of it. So that’s where I would be concerned, whether he’s actually going to be going. I do have some concerns. I do. Functioning in the community I don’t have as much concerns, but just may be functioning in a higher ed setting, I would have some concerns.
Her concerns speculated on Lew's future, "So I would definitely be concerned that he’s going to be able to complete it even to get an associate’s degree or to go on to get um, a 4-year degree."

Mrs. Alexander's concerns were basic but echoed those of Dr. Theo. Mrs. Alexander stated, "Um, I just want to make sure that he does something. . . . My concern is he won’t do anything. Like once he leaves here, you know, he won’t go to school."

The culprit for these concerns were Lew's poor decision-making skills. Mrs. Alexander explained how the team addressed that.

Mainly because he’s an EBD student, the behavior goals that we address on his IEP; we make sure we update his behavior goals especially in the area of decision-making because he tends to make poor decisions so we put that goal on there to make sure that whatever postschool plans he has, I guess college level, they can continue to address it.

*Code family two for question four: School personnel were concerned about* 

Lew's lack of self-advocacy and self-determination but were not sure it was taught.

This code family explored the evidence that team members were concerned about Lew's inability to self-advocate, yet upon questioning it was admitted that Lew did not receive instruction on self-advocacy or self-determination as was indicated on his IEPs.

Mrs. Alexander noted in her concerns that, "He won’t try to just go and get what it is he needs to get to make sure he’s successful because sometimes he can be lazy and he could just, he might just sit home. That’s my biggest concern." Later in the interview, Mrs. Alexander was asked directly about her concern for Lew's self-advocacy skills, she responded:

A little but not too much because it’s like it just depends. He can advocate for himself depending on the situation. Like some things he will advocate for himself for, some things he won’t say a word. He will just sit there and not speak up and
get the help that he needs. So it really just depends on Lew. Lew is one of those people like you don’t know, it just depends on his mood that day.

On Lew’s IEPs dated 12/17/13, 10/20/14, and 5/19/15, in the Affect [sic] of Disability area of the Post School/Adult Living section, it was stated that "Lew requires assistance in self-advocacy skills. He needs to understand his disability and how to seek accommodations when needed." The statement of Lew's need for self-advocacy skills, repeated in three successive IEPs, indicated that his need for instruction on these skills was not being addressed or was being addressed without success. Also, on the transition statement page of Lew's IEPs for the previous dates mentioned, boxes were checked for "self determination was discussed," "Lew needs instruction in self determination," and "Beginning at age 16 (or younger, if appropriate): Instruction in self determination will be provided in the following areas: instruction."

When asked if Sanger High had a designated self-determination curriculum, Mrs. Alexander replied, "No, there isn’t a set curriculum because here at Sanger, the majority of our sped [sic] kids are in the general population." I then inquired as to how Lew received self-determination instruction. Mrs. Alexander responded, "So as far as the self-determination, it would come from the consultation meetings with him with whichever sped [sic] personnel that consults with him that year. They might address self-determination with him. But there’s no type of curriculum."

*Code family three for question four: Team members identify services that will help Lew in transition.* During their interviews, several adults in Lew's life identified services they believed would be beneficial to him as he transitioned. These services were not yet being delivered to Lew from any of the people or institutions that recommended
them. Mrs. Alexander and Damien both believed Lew was in need of a mentor.

"Someone just to guide him, so to speak" was how Mrs. Alexander described the person he needed. She was not sure if he already had someone in his life helping him. Damien answered that mentoring was the number one service Lew needed as he transitioned. Damien said that he would make the referral to get Lew a mentor but was skeptical saying, "He needs to-he needs to be on-board." Damien understood that Lew would need to be willing to have a mentor for the relationship to work.

Mrs. Alexander mentioned services Lew would need academically, "And of course, he would still need accommodations in postsecondary school because he needs extended time for certain academic subjects." In the same vein, Dr. Theo said, "And then in the higher education setting, I definitely think he’s going to need some support academically." However, no effort was made to take Lew to disability services at the community college he will be attending or to even give him a contact name or number.

This is exactly what Lew defined as missing from his transition meeting.

Like they said I would have to go to some-whoever the counselor is at the college. I might not know how to do all that stuff on my own. So they could’ve set something up that would help me get that, achieve that.

Mrs. Alexander stated that she believed Lew needed to continue the counseling he received with Dr. Theo, "I think he could just benefit, he would benefit from continuing to receive counseling." When asked what specific counseling he needed she replied,  

Like the counseling that he receives from Dr. Theo because like I said, he is a student with a behavior disorder and behavior disability, and he makes poor decisions, and if he can get counseling to continue to work on his decision-making and sometimes strategies of how his poor decisions can affect him in his life, that would be good.
Counseling services could have been addressed through a collaboration with Lew's caseworker or CBC. Dr. Theo mentioned that she had interfaced last year regarding transition planning with Lew's caseworker, "I know last year I participated with his case manager came out to talk about his transition planning, and they were offering a whole lot of services to him." This conversation could have taken place again if the caseworker or CBC representative had been invited to the meeting.

**Conclusion**

Lew graduated with a standard diploma in June of 2015. He was living independently in an apartment of his own, receiving financial assistance from his CBC for living and school expenses. Lew entered community college in the summer after he completed high school. Lew said that he had a high level of involvement in his educational transition meeting. Although his team felt that he could have done more to participate, they were pleased with his efforts in the meeting. There was little interagency collaboration in Lew's transition meeting, except for the participation of a VR representative. Collaboration between Lew and other service providers, such as his CBC, took place prior to his educational transition meeting. Team members predicted some of the obstacles that Lew would likely encounter as he transitioned and expressed concern about his ability to self-advocate. Team members additionally noted services that would have benefited Lew as he transitioned. Neither self-advocacy skills nor the services noted by team members were part of Lew's transition plan.

**Case Comparisons**

The cases of Raul and Lew present arrant contrasts when looking only at their outcomes. But within the layers of their contexts, these young men were alike both in
internal and external features. They bore the same labels in education status, state care, minority status, and gender.

**Both Lew and Raul Lie and Cause Conflicts**

Both Raul and Lew had received the moniker of liar. They both lied to avoid punishment. Dr. Kant told a story about Raul stealing a phone and then spinning the story later:

There was an incident where he stole a teacher's phone, and later on, he was seen using the phone, you know? No attempt to hide it, and this was on a Friday. He came back on Monday and was confronted by a security guard. He quickly ran to me and told me he's being accused of all this stuff and why are people accusing him? I also went to the principal, and I later found out it was true.

Similarly, Dr. Theo told of an incident where Lew was caught stealing and lying:

On one occasion, um, he came into my office when I wasn’t here, and he took one of my notepads and wrote a pass for himself, and then I ran into him like right after he did that and I’m like why are you in the hallway? And then he showed me the pass and I’m like, “Lew, I did not write that for you.” Um, so I know that sometimes he can be dishonest about things.

While both young men first stole and then lied to get out of trouble, their motivations were grossly different. Raul wanted the phone, Lew wanted the power to be somewhere else. Raul's lying was generally meant to avoid further punishment, to shift the blame onto someone else or the focus onto something else. Lew's motivation to was to be left alone.

This carried over to the conflicts both young men had with adults. Raul's conflicts were generally to seek attention, whereas Lew's conflicts arose because he was trying to avoid attention by not giving any information he felt was not necessary. Raul's conflicts could easily escalate to physical confrontations, as Lew's remained emotional battles.
Paradox of EBD

Both participants had the same primary eligibility on their IEPs. They both received services in a special education program for emotional/behavioral disabilities. However, this information alone provided no information about these young men, their academic readiness, perceptions of ability, or behavior concerns as they entered the transition process. Academic readiness was a concern for both young men, surprisingly more so for Lew. A placement for Raul teetered more on behavior concerns than his academic readiness. However, Lew's team expressed concerns for his academic skills. While this is not the expected dilemma for a student graduating from a traditional high school versus a student graduating with a special diploma from a specialized school, both students' secondary eligibilities must be taken into account. Raul had a secondary eligibility in EMH that would now be called ID that stopped appearing on his IEPs in 2007. Lew also had a secondary eligibility in specific learning disabled (SLD). The only services on Lew's IEP tied to his SLD eligibility were accommodations for instruction and consultation in two academic classes. Assessment information for Raul was outdated. Attempts to assess Raul had not been completed in several years. The personnel at the school had varying ideas of what his capabilities were. Lew was both self-aggrandizing in reference to his academic abilities and self-deprecating. Fitting their eligibility, behavior was a concern in both cases. For Raul, the concern was that he would bring his antisocial behaviors into the community and workplace. For Lew, the concern was that his tendency to “shut down” would lead him nowhere.
**Seen the Same**

In many ways, Raul and Lew had been boxed together by institutions for a long time. In addition to special education and EBD, they occupied the categorization of foster care children, specifically foster care children in group homes. In all these spaces, they have been minority males. Distinctively, however, they had been permitted their own stereotypes. As a Hispanic male, Raul presented with misogynistic tendencies, specifically calling women vulgar names. Lew walked into his stereotype of the athletic Black male who excelled in sports, especially football.

**School and Support System Roles in Transition**

School personnel played an important role in the transition of both Raul and Lew. They were ultimately responsible for Raul's incomplete transition. In contrast, Lew’s school personnel supported his needs in the process of attending college. Counselors at Lew's school made sure that he applied for waivers and took the standardized tests needed to apply to college.

The support systems experienced during the transition differed for each young man. Raul had a strong support system in his foster mother, legal guardian, and APD coordinator. Although the school had not found a placement for Raul to work or volunteer, there were no concerns regarding Raul's basic needs or doubts about his care. Lew had been provided shelter and opportunities for schooling, otherwise supports provided by the key people in Raul's life were not provided for Lew. While Raul had been given security, Lew had been given opportunity.
Perceptions of Involvement

There are always different points of view about how an event took place. Both participants views of their involvement in their transition meetings differed from those of their team members. These perspectives were different still from my perspective as an observer. Raul answered in his post meeting interview in the affirmative that he did get say what he wanted in the meeting, although he said very little and even left the meeting at one point. The team members present at his meeting concurred that he was given plenty of opportunities to participate. Two team members, Dr. Kant and Martin were sure to mention that he doesn't not generally participate in meetings with large amounts of people. As an observer I noted if was if he was almost invisible, and at times talked about in the third person.

Lew perceived that he was fully involved in his transition meeting, so much so that he believed he was in charge of the meeting, and created his own plan. His team members viewed his participation as adequate and were thankful that he did not shut down. As an observer I noted Lew's body language as signs he was either withdrawing from the process, or controlling the tempo of the process. For example, he would roll the chair so that his back was to the team, focus on his cell phone for periods of time, and give one word answers after being asked a question more than once.

Both Denied Complete Transition

IDEA does not define a successful transition. However, it does clearly define the objective of transition services to be the youth's movement from school to post secondary education or employment, emphasizing services to help meet their individual and unique
needs. According to the stated intention of the law, neither Raul or Lew had a successful transition.

**Summary of Findings**

In this chapter, data from all sources for both participants revealed themes answering the study's research questions posed in the first chapter, as well as additional findings to further explain the participants' transition experiences.

For Raul, the overarching theme revealed that he experienced an incomplete transition. Due to school personnel's fears that his aggressive and antisocial behaviors would carry over into the workplace, their inability to isolate a cause for Raul's behaviors, their negative feelings about Raul, Raul's inconsistent relationships with teachers, and how different staff portrayed Raul, a complete transition could not be achieved. Raul had limited awareness of his transition process because he had not been a part of the ongoing process and had not been part of the planning for the transition meeting. The transition process had been going on around Raul, and on the day of the transition meeting the process continued to go on around him with some attempts to involve him. A teacher attempted to solicit his involvement, as well as his legal guardian. Unfortunately, some of these attempts were made with clichés or metaphors that Raul may have not understood. While all adult attendees of the meeting agreed that Raul had the opportunity to participate verbally in his meeting, they all noted that he generally did not talk in meetings. Raul and the attendees experienced a low level of collaboration during the transition process. The only agency represented at the transition meeting was VR.
Lew's transition process was marked with his own perceptions of his involvement. In his transition meeting, he felt as if the plans that were made were done so under his direction. He expressed feelings of both doubt and success for the future, which acted to influence his increased involvement in his transition. Lew also believed that his placement in special education had been detrimental to his educational preparedness and through involvement in his transition planning he aimed to control the effects of that placement. His team members in the transition process believed that he was involved in his transition meeting. However, both members included exceptions to his participation. One of these exceptions was when Lew "shut down." Another exception that influenced their perceptions of Lew's involvement was what team members continuously referenced as Lew's lying. His lying also took the form of omission when he did not "open up" in situations where adults probed for more information. Situations in which he did not disclose information caused conflicts with team members and other adults. Team members identified services that Lew may need during his transition, yet they had not been addressed in his transition or by any agency the team members represented. Lew had met with his primary service provider before the meeting.
Chapter 5: Discussion

This study presents a portrait of a microcosm of the implementation of transition services provided for foster-care students with disabilities. Case study methodology was chosen because I "deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions-believing that they might be highly pertinent to the phenomenon of study" (Yin, 2003, p. 13). The data confirmed that the participants’ contextual conditions within their schools were pertinent to their transitional experiences. Case-study methodology expects that phenomena are related through many actions that must be looked at in an expansive collection of contexts, such as, spatial, historical, political, economic, cultural, social and personal (Stake, 1995). The current study viewed a collection of contexts most immediately related to the smaller context of my participants' transition. While looking at these contexts, qualitative research practices emphasize a focus on the meaning the participants, rather than the researcher, hold about the issues (Cresswell, 2013). Thus, while the study does not claim to present generalizable findings, the cases provide close-up views of youths’ and school personnel’s perceptions, as well as the researcher’s observations, regarding the implementation of transition services. The study found shortfalls in several aspects of the implementation of the laws that are designed to protect and support the transition of these youth to their adult lives.

In this chapter I begin by reviewing the findings of the study and their importance in understanding not just issues of compliance with the law, but also social and interpersonal processes in its implementation. Second, I consider the contribution of this study to the extant literature on transition for foster-care students with disabilities. Third, I examine IDEA using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems as a frame to find the service
gaps seen in the current study. Finally, I describe the limitations of the study and make suggestions for further inquiry.

**Review of the Findings**

Raul's data pointed to the overarching theme of an incomplete transition. Both participants were affected by team members' personal biases, as well as the team members’ lack of collaboration. An additional finding for Lew's, was that his team members had ideas about the services he needed and did not follow through with them.

**Raul's incomplete transition.** Personal biases are hard to confirm. However, throughout this study team members consistently displayed attitudes and opinions towards Raul that led me to conclude they held biases against him and that these biases had an effect on their relationships with Raul. My analysis of these data indicated that, due to the personal biases of and lack of planning by the personnel at Raul's school, he did not receive a complete transition. Raul believed that he got to be a part of his transition meeting, although he did not know the purpose of the meeting. The team members noted that they asked him for his input, but they had not prepared him for the meeting. Raul's legal guardian was introduced to the services offered by vocational rehabilitation (VR) during the meeting, and he intended to apply for those services for Raul. However, had the connection to VR been made sooner, Raul could have been ensured a placement in a training program immediately after leaving Bennett.

**Transition varies by personnel bias.** School personnel’s biases toward both students appeared to have affected their efforts to collaborate and to create effective transitions for the students. In Raul’s case, a post-school placement did not occur because of the professionals’ feelings toward him. The personnel who needed to coordinate in
finding a placement for Raul were the same team members who feared his behavior in the workplace, and one in particular had discussed calling the police regarding his behavior. There are structured behavior plans utilizing self-advocacy that could have been implemented to allow Raul to have more involvement in the process, to learn self-determination, and, in turn, help his behavior. In Lew’s case, it appeared that the professionals shared a distrust of any information Lew gave them. Personnel at his transition meeting never contacted his caseworker or knew that he had one until they asked in the meeting. Mrs. Alexander suggested that Lew needed a mentor, yet she did not ask Lew if he had someone in his life in that capacity.

**Collaboration makes a difference.** Collaboration is what made the difference between a complete and incomplete transition for Raul. Had the people within the school worked together or someone from the school chosen to make connections to outside agencies, Raul could have been found a placement.

For Lew, collaboration would have been as simple as keeping the caseworker information current. Every school should be in touch with the caseworker of each foster care youth. If this had been the case, during Lew's transition meeting, counseling, academic, and mentor services could have been discussed and set up as needed. Also, if his team members were in contact with his caseworker throughout the year, they could have collaborated to assist when Lew's grades began to slip.

**Importance of Findings**

In each case, the findings point to processes that could have made a difference not just in the participants' transitions, but in their lives. The lack of collaboration in Raul's transition resulted in his having no placement. Subsequent to this meeting, Raul was no
longer a student in the school district, and the team whose charge it was to find him a placement no longer had a legal obligation to work with him. For Raul, the absence of a placement had an impact on his daily life. Raul had a legal guardian who said he would apply for VR services, but that there was a wait period. In the meantime, Raul's life consisted of video games and outings with his foster care mother and companion supplied by APD services. He was not learning the social skills that he needed to be successful in society. His mental stimulation was limited to repetitive video game interaction. Also relevant from these findings is the continued need for practice and training of collaboration for school professionals.

Following the requirements of IDEA regarding transition, preplanning should have taken place for Lew's transition meeting. This preplanning would have included talking with Lew to find out what the transition team could do for him and inviting his case manager to the meeting. His transition team was already skeptical that he would seek help through disabilities services when he started college. If they had asked what he felt would make a difference and what he felt he needed, they could have arranged for someone from the college to talk with him. This contact would have increased the chances that he would access those services. Students are supposed to be part of the planning for their meeting. Thoma et al. (2009) outlined how to get students involved in their IEPs from the preplanning stage where the student chooses the day and time, chooses and invites participants, chooses modes and examples to show their progress, and practices leading the meeting from introductions to signatures. Although Lew was a passive participant in his educational transition meeting, he felt as though he was an integral part. However, Lew's transition could have been more successful if he were as
much a part of it as he perceived he was. On a positive note, Lew’s case recalls the work of Sanford et al, (2011), who found only a small amount of foster care alumni with disabilities enrolling in post-secondary education. Lew has graduated and is college bound (Sanford, et al., 2011).

Neither participants was exposed to a self-determination curriculum or given opportunities to exercise these skills. In fact, they were limited in their abilities to collaborate and assert their needs. For Lew, the transition team was concerned that he would not seek help when needed. They feared he could not or would not advocate for himself. As mentioned in Chapter 2, these skills are part of self-determination and are required to be part of a curriculum taught by the school to students with disabilities. In Chapter 4 it was noted that according to Lew’s IEP, the school instructed him in self-determination. However, Mrs. Alexander confirmed that there was no curriculum and could not ensure the skills were taught. Wehmeyer (1996) explains that quality of life is determined through environments, settings, and opportunities. An individual's ability to navigate these areas directly contributes to their quality of life. "The measurement of both quality of life and self-determination share considerable overlap. Both examine issues of choice and access to various activities and emphasize individual perceptions about and self-reports of experience and expectations" (Wehmeyer, 1996, p. 29). As outlined in IDEA, transition services are to be planned and executed for the youth's most beneficial outcome. With this in mind, the study finding of no placement for Raul is significant and reflects the lack of power behind the implementation of the legislation.

In Raul’s case, he should also have been instructed in self-determination (Thoma et al., 2009; West, 1996). His IEPs indicated that self-determination was discussed; that
he needed instruction in self-determination; and that starting at age 16 he would receive instruction in self-determination in the areas of instruction, community experience, employment, post school adult living, and daily living. Through self-agency and the skills of self-determination, Raul could have been taught strategies to better control his behavior. Instead his behaviors were often, if not always, met with a punitive recourse. With each incident, he earned more restrictions. West (1996) discussed "learned helplessness" and "programmed dependence" in individuals with disabilities. These conditions were the result of the absence of choice and control. "Choice making and self-directed behavior have been recognized as an expression of dignity and autonomy for people with disabilities" (p. 312). West noted that when individuals have choices in learning and social interactions they participate more and perform better. He applied these findings to employment services for individuals with disabilities. These findings also reinforce the position that Raul's behavior would likely not have been an issue if he were placed doing something he enjoyed, possibly working with animals.

**Relationship of Findings to Previous Studies**

Findings from the current study align with findings from four studies in Chapter 2. Results from those studies will be discussed with specific supporting findings from the current study.

**Similarities of participants’ situations to other studies.** Several of the studies highlighted in the literature review presented situations that are very similar to those of the current study. First, Gennen and Powers (2006b) compared four groups of students and found that students in foster care with disabilities were in the highest risk group for a low GPA, earning the fewest credits toward graduation. Additionally, the students in this
group were twice as likely to be placed in a restrictive placement than non-foster care youth with disabilities. Both participants in this study experienced restrictive placements. Raul's placement in Bennett was restrictive, he was in a behavior school that served only students with EBD, while Lew was placed in a self-contained classroom throughout middle-school, despite the lack of evidence that EBD was not affecting his classroom performance.

Scherr (2007) found that dependency involved youth in out-of-home care were five times more likely than their peers who remained in their original housing to be identified for special education programs. Similar studies also found youth in foster care qualifying for special education at twice the rate, or higher, than their non-dependency involved peers (Barrat & Berliner, 2013; Smithgall et al., 2004). Lew's placement in special education occurred at the same time as his family's involvement with dependency court. Previously mentioned were Lew's belief that he was not appropriately placed and the evidence that his behavior did not affect his grades. A possible explanation for Lew's placement is offered by ills of over-representation. Berliner (2010) notes the egregious placement of foster care youth in special education can be attributed to a lack of information available from parents and teachers or the myth that special education will provide more services and more services is always better. This could have been the thought process of the school personnel as they saw a change in Lew's behavior.

Meeting participation. This study furthers our understanding of problematic compliance with IDEA regarding requirements for school personnel’s participation at transitional IEP meetings. To quantify IEP participation, Powers and colleagues (2005) examined 399 IEPs. They found strong attendance for administrators, special educators,
and the youth. However, less than half of the meetings, 39%, were attended by a general educator and only 21% by a transition specialist. Additionally, they made no mention of outside service providers attending meetings. While Raul's transition meeting was attended by the above mentioned personnel, Lew's meeting was sparsely attended. Similar to Powers et al. (2005) findings, the special educator and youth attended Lew's meeting. The special educator did not sign the IEP on the special educator line, but as the general educator, indicating they would not be obtaining the signature of a general educator. Lew was a bit more fortunate than those in the Powers et al. study since his EBD clinician was in attendance at his meeting. But neither young men had an administrator in attendance.

As were the meetings in Powers et al. (2005), Lew's transition meeting was out of compliance with special education statutes. The meeting was conducted by two people, one of whom identified herself as a lead special educator but signed the IEP on the general educator line and was not a teacher of record for the student. Three other signatures on the IEP were of persons who were not at the meeting. This is not a compliance issue as long as the person in the special educator position is in fact one of Lew's teachers or at least consults with his teachers. The other two signatures were an administrator and the LEA. The people in these positions were ultimately responsible for the contents of the IEP and its implementation. They have a responsibility to read the IEP and understand its parameters.

**IEP Quality and Team Understanding of Goals.** The transition IEPs of both Raul and Lew were complete in the areas of Measureable Post Secondary Transition Goals and Transition Statements. This is in contrast to the participants in the previously
mentioned Powers et al. (2005) study, where only 44% of participants had post secondary transition goals and 6% had no transitions goals of any kind. The teams of both Raul and Lew’s seemed to have a clear sense of the students’ goals and desires and how to accomplish these goals and yet a complete transition was not achieved in either case.

**Transition skills and self-determination.** The ability to make decisions that fit with one’s own goals and preferences is an essential skill in transitioning to adult life. Geenen and Powers (2007) examined this issue in their study of foster care youth and foster care alumni, and found that the youth believed they had missed opportunities for instruction in transition skills. While we cannot be sure how the students in the current study would have responded to this question, based on the data, it is clear that Raul and Lew also missed opportunities for instruction in transition skills. For Lew, ironically, those who were responsible for teaching him those skills were the same people concerned about his lack of skill in those areas.

**School personnel bias.** It is true that individual biases can be difficult to prove, since an observer’s perception of another’s actions may itself be influenced by the observer’s own biases. In this study, however, I believe that some school personnel’s actions regarding the students’ transition plans were often consistent with the negative comments expressed by the school personnel. Such biases were investigated by Palladino and Haar (2011), who asked for the input of administrators working in schools with high foster care populations. Although the administrators claimed to be working for collaboration and with care and compassion, the researchers concluded that they were working from a deficit perspective. Palladino and Haar also concluded through observations and interviews, that the administrators focused on the negative behaviors of
the foster care youth at the expense of noting any accomplishments. In the present study, neither Mrs. Alexander nor Dr. Theo related information that Lew had football prospects at larger state universities; I gained this information from Damien, the program coordinator at Ferguson Villas. Additionally, any positive comments school personnel made were most often followed with negative ones. There were very few positive statements about Raul in his transition meeting, and many aspects of his IEPs reflected a deficit perspective of him. There was very little information provided about his abilities. In fact, present level of performance statements in his IEPs often repeated, showing either that he had no growth or that the statement was cut and pasted from the previous year. Appearing for 2 years, "Raul can read well at his ability level" is an example of the type of information provided in his IEP.

**Teacher Preparation and Trauma Informed Training**

Lastly, there has been momentum between schools and CBCs to train school personnel on issues uniquely affecting foster care youth (D. Clayton, personal communication, June 25, 2014; K. Graydon, personal communication, July 23, 2014; C. Harris & L. Shoemaker, personal communication, July 15, 2014). Teachers and school administrators are starting to be trained on trauma informed care. These trainings could have assisted personnel working with Raul and Lew to see some of their behaviors as a manifestation of the foster care experience. For example, what was perceived as Lew's unwarranted lying, may have been motivated by a history of having personal information used against himself and his family. Zetlin, MacLeod, and Kimm (2015) surveyed beginning teachers in schools with high foster care populations and found the unique
challenges presented by foster care youth went unaddressed. The teachers in the study expressed a strong desire for in-service training on supporting their foster care students.

**The Ecology of Services for Foster-Care Youth with Disabilities**

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) model of ecological systems is helpful in placing these findings within the larger context of the nation’s good intentions for supporting students’ transitions to adulthood. These students’ education was provided under IDEA and their transition was supported by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). However, the implementation of these laws is filtered through several systems of service provision.

Rights to services for foster care alumni with disabilities are covered under the ADA. While there are what appears to be a myriad of services legislated for these youth, accessing them can prove problematic. Depending on location and funding for the year, youth like Raul can be limited in their options. In the interview with Linda LeClare, district transition coordinator, she described pitfalls of the system that affect all youth with behavior issues placed in the ID disability category. Mrs. LeClare explained that the main placement for students like Raul was adult day training.

And most of the time for, statistically for the students that you met at Bennett, it's mostly for, agencies, facili-, group homes, transition to adult day training facilities. And, there are not that many for that population, to be honest.

Adult day training programs are primarily paid by APD. For those youth who do not have APD or have not applied, their outcome seems hopeless, "Because once you get out there, especially the students who are intellectually disabled, they're, they don't have the money. They sit at home. They don't have APD, they sit at home." Gloria, Raul's support coordinator explained that he had money from APD, but not enough for an adult day training program.
Gloria: Okay. I'm exploring about, um, adult day training.
Interviewer: Adult day training?
Gloria: Yeah.
Interviewer: Okay.
Gloria: I'm exploring to see, because he doesn’t have too much money in the budget.
Interviewer: Right.
Gloria: Because in the waiver, they assign a budget for consumers, and we cannot go over the limit.
Interviewer: Okay.
Gloria: You know? And I'm looking for one that they-somebody told me that it's for free, as a general resource, but otherwise, yes. Can be reducing [time with his paid] companion.

Raul also did not have a placement in an immediate adult day training program because his APD money was being used for a companion who took him places and instructed him in the community. Raul had a good relationship with his companion and was learning how to navigate places and situations in the community, such as the movie theater and shopping centers. Therefore, in this case service providers had to decide which service would be more useful for Raul and it seemed that the companion was valued over day training.

**IDEA as an Ecological System**

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) Ecological Systems theory works as a frame to examine IDEA service delivery for Raul and Lew. The model helps us to understand the larger structural contexts behind these students’ transitions to adult life. Specifically, the law, IDEA, embodies a provision of the macrosystem that ideally represents the values of our society. IDEA specifically outlines provisions for individual education rights. The statutes and tenets of the law are formulated through structures of the exosystem, and are enacted by individuals who deliver services that directly penetrate students' lives. The close-up view provided by the case studies allows us to see how this implementation can
have advantages and disadvantages. Lew felt these disadvantages and advantages first hand. First, Lew saw his apparently inappropriate placement into self-contained classes in middle school as a disadvantage. Later, Lew graduated with the advantage of test waivers granted to students in special education programs. With implementation also comes the lack of implementation, as seen in the fact that statutes and guidelines were ignored and youth received no services or incomplete services.

In the micro and mesosystems appropriate transition services should be directly delivered to the students. Yet, the study revealed that certain required services, as outlined by IDEA, were not made available to Raul and Lew. Despite the existence of regulations for implementation, we see a gap of services between the exosystem and the mesosystem. It is in this space that Raul and Lew were disconnected from the intent of IDEA. This gap could be attributed to a lack of enforcement of the regulations specific to transition or a lack of training for individual service providers regarding the guidelines and services needed for a successful transition. This gap may also be providing the space for school personnel's feelings to thwart service delivery.

**Youth in Care Need More Individualized Services than IDEA**

IDEA was written in anticipation of the individualized needs for students with disabilities. However, the transition processes outlined in the law do not provide for students with needs as unique as those for youth in foster care. One such issue is the parental role, which is very specific and detailed under IDEA. The IEP team must include the parent and the procedural safeguards guaranteed to the parents are detailed and precise. For youth in foster care the emphasis on parental involvement puts them at a disadvantage. IDEA does allow for others to step in and fill the parental role. The 2004
reauthorization of the law defines a parent as: a biological or adoptive parent, guardian authorized to act as the parent, an individual acting as the parent with whom the child lives, or a surrogate parent who has been appointed by the court. These individuals have been given the responsibility of making important decisions,, which, in some cases, have long lasting repercussions (Hope, 2009). However, in many circumstances their relationship with the child is new or transitory, if there is a relationship at all. Further, the individuals who are filling the crucial role of making educational decisions for these youth are not required to have any knowledge of special education or the student's educational rights.

School stability is also an issue for many youth in foster care (Berliner, 2010; Hope, 2009). As youth change schools they lose academic continuity and the transition process is interrupted. The transition process is designed to take place over a youth's k-12 school career, aligned with the youth's course of study and involving service providers individually chosen to meet the youth's needs as they progress through the transition process (Thoma et al, 2009). The fragmented education that most youth in foster care receive is not conducive to this model. A more individualized, flexible and integrated approach to transition is needed for youth in foster care also being served in special education.

Study Limitations

Using case study design limited the generalizability of the study's findings. As I reflected on my methods, I attempted to distinguish if my methodological dilemmas served as limitations. As I chose case study design, I knew that I would need to go more in depth than if I had been able to recruit four or more participants, as I had originally
planned. While individualizing my findings, I was able to give each case rich details. However, as a qualitative researcher, I was stifled by the constraints of the dissertation format, as Stake (1995) declares, "But the traditional research report of statement of the problem, review of literature, design, data gathering, analysis, and conclusions, is particularly ill-fitting for a case study report" (p. 128). Often during the writing process, I found that I wanted to write the report much like a narrative including description of places and people. Through the editing process, I was urged to remove as much narration as possible from my writing.

Another issue of concern was the criteria I used for including participants. When I set up my criteria to find youth who were not ID, I limited my participant possibilities and the findings of the study. I was put in touch with several possible participants who were excluded because they had an ID eligibility. I grappled with inquiring as to the exclusion of ID on Raul's IEPs. Ultimately, it did not change the findings, and I would have had to make contact at the county level to find the personnel who handled Raul's IEPs when the designation was dropped.

Conducting the interviews by telephone presented some limitations as well. Because of the schedule at Sanger High, Mrs. Alexander and Dr. Theo could not be interviewed directly after Lew's transition meeting. I had to schedule phone interviews with them for 2 days later. The limitations of phone interviews include the inability to read facial expressions and know if another question could or should be asked or if a topic could be pushed further. Interviewing in person also allowed the interviewer to see body language and gestures.
Lastly, I believe that I could have tried harder to speak with David Stills, the foster parent listed on Lew's IEPs. During my interview with Lew, Mr. Stills phoned and the caller ID showed "papa stills." I asked Lew twice for permission to speak with Mr. Stills, and he ignored the request both in conversation and via text. I could have gotten Mr. Stills’ information from Sanger High, but I did not feel it was worth betraying Lew.

**Continuing Research**

Future studies on foster care youth’s educational transition should include youth from varied school settings and include all types of disabilities. Youth’s voices and perspectives should continue to be the focus of study. In the current study, youth and team members' perceptions concurred in the opinion that youth had been given opportunities to participate; yet this was not the entire reality. The next generation of research should investigate not just youth participation, but the quality of youth participation. Another next step in research would be to look at the effects that negative views of the student may have on the transition process. While Palladino and Haar (2011) confirmed that bias occurred for foster care youth in their study, no study thus far has examined this bias in the transition process. As trauma-informed trainings become more commonplace, research confirming their efficacy will be helpful to make the training more streamlined and reliable.

**Conclusion**

While this study included only two participants, their transition experiences provided details illustrating practical issues in the transition process. Raul and Lew were transitioned from two different school settings, and two major themes cast weight for both young men: both met with bias from school personnel, and both young men
encountered a lack of collaboration to deliver services. In the case of Raul, the express purpose of the transition process was not met. Finally, the students’ perspectives revealed issues that provoke serious concerns about the efficacy of this legally mandated process in both these cases.
References


Atlas, ti (Version 6.2 ed.). Berlin, Germany: GmbH.


Berliner, B. (2010). Grappling with the gaps: Towards a research agenda to meet the educational needs of children and youth in foster care. Santa Cruz, CA: The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning.


Individuals with disabilities act improvement act, 34 CFR § 300, 300.1, 300.320, 300.43, 300.7 (2004).


Appendix A

Interview Guide, First Interview with youth

1. Let’s talk about where you have attended school before your current school. Where else have you gone to school?

2. Can you tell me about the best school you attended?

3. What were the reasons you moved schools?

4. Can you talk about your involvement in your past IEP meetings?

5. What preparations and discussions have been had at school for post graduation (or exiting school)? Who has worked with you on this?

6. What is going to be discussed in your transition IEP meeting?
Appendix B

Interview Guide, Second Interview with Youth

1. Describe what happened from your perspective, your point of view what happened in your transition IEP meeting.

2. How do you feel about the plan set forth for your transition?

3. If you could have a chance to say anything else in the meeting what would it be?

4. Do you feel like everything you said was heard and understood in the meeting?

5. What are your hopes for after graduation? What are your biggest fears as you graduate?

6. Have you had your Independent Living Staffing? How did the education goals and plan match with the transition plan discussed at school?

7. Who do you think has been the most helpful to you as you plan for your future, what have they helped you with?

8. What do you think could have made this process easier?

9. What has been the most helpful?
Appendix C

Interview Guide, Team Member

1. What is your role on the team and how long have you known the student?

2. How were you part of the planning for the meeting and transition plan?

3. What were your general impressions of the transition meeting?

4. How do you feel the student expressed themselves?
Memo: First Interview with Lew, day before transition meeting
May 18, 2015
I went to the apt house where Lew lives at 3:30 pm. I texted and asked if he wanted to eat. He replied yes and I picked him up in front of the building. As we pulled away I asked if they still fed the cats on his street, he said yes and that he counted 32 the other day. I asked if he liked cats and he said no, they were like aliens. But he likes dogs. As we drove around downtown looking for a spot to eat and park he questioned me about if I was still taking classes, if I had a job and how I got money. I explained that I did research and was paid by the law clinic and would be living on student loans soon. He saw my auxiliary cord for the radio and I offered for him to hook his phone up for music. He declined saying that I would not like his music. I said that he should not make that judgment. He apparently listens to hard core gansta rap that very few people like. I found a parking spot that was a tow away zone earlier in the day but at this time of day we could park. He said he didn't know nothing about that. Being the teacher that I am I pointed out and read the signs to him and showed him the parking by phone app on my phone. I asked if he was getting a car and he said the 17th. Then I showed him the app on my phone called "Around Me" that would show us all the places to eat near us. He was mildly interested in what I was showing him. He asked when I graduated high school and I told him. He said something about how long it was taking me to get this degree. He thought I was just a few years older than him. I explained that I already had a few degrees and that I taught high school for 15 years.

We walked around the corner and went into a cafe that was closed. I said that they must only be open for breakfast and lunch and he said the he had never heard of that. We walked by Lime and I asked if he liked Mexican and food and he said he didn't think so, but then liked what he saw people were eating outside. When we went in he was rather confused by the menu. He wasn't quite sure what a burrito and fajitas were. I walked him around the side to show him the different kind of salsas. He made his order, we got our sodas and we waited outside for our orders. He continued asking questions like ones he had in our previous meeting about how much I was going to make when I finished this degree. I said most of my friends were getting jobs that paid 60k. Thinking that sounded like a lot to him I told him my student loan debt was 2x that much and if I had stayed teaching I could be up to 50k. He said I could pay off my debt in 2 years- I said not exactly. I reiterated what I said the last time we talked about this- that I had not made the decision to get this degree for money. I want to make a change- for foster kids, teach teachers, etc. Again I am not sure it really sunk in.

I reminded him what he said in our last conversation about Planet of the Apes and told him I watched it. I turned on the recorder and he followed my lead on holding it close to his mouth. There was a lot of background noise. We talked a bit and then I decided to turn it off while we ate.

After the interview we talked about his grades, he had told me that he was having trouble in English- he said he brought that up to a C.

I asked how things were with Damien the social worker at the house. Lew said that he should do his job and he'll be him. In regards to his apt being messy Lew says there's
clothes all over the place. I said I thought that was normal guy stuff. It's obvious he
doesn't feel the need to bond with Damien.
When I gave him his gift card he said "I gotta blow this." I mentioned that in a few days
he will get another one if he wanted to wait and he said "before I think about it. I gotta
blow this."
I asked if I could ask how his mother lost him and his sister. He said someone called in
and alleged she was tying them to trees. He says there were no trees in the yard. She went
to jail for it. He says "She took it like a man" But when she got out she had no way of
getting them back- no job, etc. We discussed that who made the call was jealous of his
mom and had more power than she did. He said he has no regrets, what happened is in
the past. He said something about God putting you in situations and taking you out of
them.
There was a homeless man sitting next to us that wanted to take our trays back in to Lime
for a few bucks. He said that he had had the same pair of jeans for 30 days and wanted a
new pair. I told him he should be ashamed asking a foster care youth for money. Lew told
me not to call him that, I apologized. The man asked who I was, I said a researcher, who
by the way was wearing a 6 year old skirt. Later I realized I had no ones to pay him to
take our trays in, I whispered this to Lew. He shook it off. When we stood to leave I
asked an employee if we should take the trays back in and he said no.
As we were walking Lew said "you gotta not be so vulnerable miss" He said that man
told us he had spent 24 years in prison, you know he's not right, that does something to
your brain.
He had asked if I would take him to a Game Stop to use his gift card and I had said that I
could but that I could not take him home. He said there was one close enough and that he
would walk. While we were in the car I asked about football opportunities at other
schools. He told me about meeting a beautiful girl from UF, a cheerleader, and she
showed him a picture of the cheerleading team, she asked him what he noticed- she was
the only black girl on the team. I told him that I went there and that surprised me. He said
that he had a recruiting trip planned for UF and they could not get the paperwork through
court regarding that he to have a guardian assigned to go with him in time for the trip. He
did say he was scared to go so far away and when I mentioned playing at FIU he said he
was afraid of messing up.
[OC: I have to admit that his lack of knowledge about the world made me sad. He
wouldn't try my guacamole because it was green. In so many ways Lew seems savvy. He
seemed to nothing for the man asking us for money. But kids in care are not given the
exposure or guidance- they simply are not ready for the world. I am not sure what to say
as far as his judgment regarding my age. I think it is wonderful that he does not think I
look my age, nor do I apparently come off as a 40 year old woman. But the context that
he met me as a student looking to graduate could have set that all in play. He was very
forthcoming and what felt like honest in the interview. I say felt honest because I have
talked to adults now that make me question the validity and motivations of Lew's
comments. However, he seems to have no reason or motivation to hold back with me. My
familiarity with the dependency court system makes his story of his missed recruiting trip
sound legitimate, regardless of his penchant for storytelling. It broke my heart to think
that he missed an opportunity to get out of Miami and see a University campus that could
be his home. I know that I am biased. But he could make it at UF, as an athlete they
would make sure of it, and he would have none of his hometown distractions. I also think that Lew knows he did not get an education that prepared him for a university and he is scared he would not be able to handle it, especially if he were playing football. He has had a lot of successes in high school and is now living alone, which for FC youths is the sweetest success. ]
### Appendix E

**IEP Tables for Both Participants**

#### Raul

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Signatures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/16/06</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td>&quot;Parent not in attendance&quot;, illegible- LEA, Ms. H- ESE Teacher &amp; Evaluation Specialist, Raul- Student, L.B.- ESE Teacher, Mr. P.- ESE Teacher,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/07</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td>&quot;Proceed without (not in attendance)&quot;, illegible- LEA, , Ms. H.- ESE Teacher &amp; Evaluation Specialist, Raul- Student, , RM Illegible- clinician, Mr. M.- ESE Teacher, Mr. P- ESE Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1/08</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>T. F.-LEA, illegible- ESE Teacher, illegible- Evaluation Specialist, D. H.- General Ed Teacher, Raul- Student, B.- Counselor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/28/09</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>T. F.-LEA, illegible- ESE Teacher, Dr. Kant, PsyD.- Evaluation Specialist, D. H.-General Ed Teacher, Raul- Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1/09</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>M. F.- LEA, Simpson- ESE Teacher &amp; Evaluation Specialist, D. H.- General Ed Teacher, Raul- Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/16/10</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>M. F.- LEA, Mrs. S.- ESE Teacher &amp; Evaluation Specialist, D. H.- General Ed Teacher, Raul- Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/21/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>S.V.-LEA, Maria Escobar- ESE Teacher, A. A.- Evaluation Specialist, A. H.- SPED-ID, G. R.- Sr. Assistant Principal, Raul- Student, Talisia- Parent, M. F.- ESE placement specialist, Gloria- Agency Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/12/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>M. F.- LEA, Ms. T- ESE Teacher, Dr. Kant, Psy D. Evaluation Specialist, J.C.- General Ed Teacher, Raul- Student, Talisia- Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/14/13</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>M. F.- LEA, Ms. Toggs- ESE Teacher, J. Kaufman, Psy D. Evaluation Specialist, J. C.- General Ed Teacher, Raul- Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/13/14</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Dr. Styles- LEA, Ms. Toggs- ESE Teacher, Dr. Kant- Eval Specialist, J. C.- General Ed Teacher, ,Raul- Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Program Eligibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/16/06</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td>Severely Emotionally Disturbed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/07</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td>Severely Emotionally Disturbed, Educable Mentally Handicapped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Assessment Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1/08</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Emotional Behavioral Disabilities,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/28/09</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Emotional Behavioral Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1/09</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Emotional Behavioral Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/16/10</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Emotional Behavioral Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/21/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Emotional Behavioral Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/12/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Emotional Behavioral Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/14/13</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Emotional Behavioral Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/13/14</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Emotional Behavioral Disabilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Assessment Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/16/06</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td>8/16/06- word recognition 5th, reading comp, vocabulary 3rd, Math Comp 1st, Problem Solving 1st, Sentence Writing 1st, passage reading 2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/07</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td>Brigance 4/18/07: Word Recognition 6.0 Reading Comp. 4.0, Vocabulary 5.0, Math Comp 4.0, Problem Solving 4.0, Sentence Writing 4.0, Passage Reading 6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1/08</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>SRI: 05/04 Lexile: 0105, FCAT: 03/02 Reading Comp Level :1 Math Ap. Level: 1 Reading Comprehension: 2.0; Vocabulary: 8.0; Writing: 1.0; Math computations: 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/28/09</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>SRI: 05/04 Lexile: 0105, FCAT: 03/02 Reading Comp Level :1 Math Ap. Level: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1/09</td>
<td>(Complete after Section XVI)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/16/10</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>SRI: 05/04 Lexile: 0105, FCAT: 03/02 Reading Comp Level :1 Math Ap. Level: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/21/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>FAA- Science -3/30/09, Score 6 Performance Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/12/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Same as previous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/14/13</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>FAA- Science -3/30/09, Score 6 Performance Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/13/14</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>FAA- Science -3/30/09, Score 6 Performance Level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Present Levels/ Strength of the student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/16/06</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td>Raul is able to identify all letters of the alphabet and their corresponding sounds. Raul can read 74 basic sight words and used phonetic skills to decode unfamiliar words. He can read a short story and orally answer questions about the story. Raul can solve 2 digit addition problems without regrouping, solve subtraction problems borrowing from tens . follow one step directions. Raul enjoys working on the computer, responds positively to praise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/07</td>
<td>So. Lake</td>
<td>Raul can read 100 basic sight words. He is able to identify all letters of the alphabet and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1/08</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Raul can read 100 basic sigh words. He is able to identify all 26 letters of the alphabet and knows their corresponding sounds. He uses phonetic skills to decode unfamiliar words. He can read, write and spell multi-syllable words. He reads and understands safety/ warning signs. Raul can add and subtract multi-digit numbers. He can manipulate money in amounts of up to $100. Raul can also use a ruler to accurately measure length to the nearest quarter of an inch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/28/09</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Raul can multiply 1 digit by 1 digit (1-10) Can solve simple addition and subtraction problems. Add and subtract two digit numbers with regrouping. Answer simple comprehension questions. Can write 5-6 word sentences. Can write 2-3 paragraphs given a prompt. Enjoys music likes to write and sing (rap).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1/09</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/16/10</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Raul can read randomly selected numerals, write word names for whole numbers and identify odd and even numbers. He can read orally a passage of up to 1000 words, according to his readability level. He enjoys music as well as rapping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/21/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>(Instruction) Raul can read well at his ability level. He often seeks books that are non-fiction. He reads using phonics. He is always anxious to answer questions when the class is having a discussion. He can add and subtract with regrouping with minimal assistance. He understands the concepts of money and time. He is good on the computer and competing in games</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3/14/13 Bennett (INSTRUCTION) Raul can read well at his ability level. He likes working on the computer and helping others using the school tools for student support site. When he is actively participating in class, he is eager to answer questions and add to the discussion on many different topics. He can add and subtract without regrouping with minimal assistance. He enjoys writing lyrics to rap music as well as playing an assortment of video games.

3/13/14 Bennett (INSTRUCTION) R is currently enrolled in the Successful Education Pathways for Student Success Program (STEPS). STEPS is designed for over aged students who have completed all high school requirements and will be transitioning from high school to the world of work and/or independent living. The courses taught are Career Education, Career Experiences, Community/Social skills as well as Home and Functional Living skills. He is also enrolled in two elective classes: Music and Horticulture. In addition Raul practices his Math and Reading by using a computer program called I-ready. (This is not his present level, this is his course of study. I-ready would also supply information on skill levels and assessment data.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Affects of Disability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/16/06</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td>Raul’s involvement and progress in behavior curriculum is affected by his academic deficits resulting in remaining on task for 15 minutes, writing newly learned vocabulary appropriately in a sentence, answering who and what questions both orally and written, defining newly learned vocabulary words. Raul has difficulty reading with expression, displays oppositional behaviors resulting in physical aggression and verbal aggression towards authority figures. Raul is easily influenced by others peers. He has difficulty multiplying 2 digit numbers without regrouping. Further affecting his disability is his lack of impulse control, Control low frustration tolerance, poor self determination skills, difficulties completing class assignments, and difficulty maintaining previously learned skills beyond the 180 day school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/07</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td>Raul’s involvement and progress in behavior curriculum is affected by his academic deficits resulting in remaining on task for 20 minutes with prompts, writing newly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


learned vocabulary appropriately in a sentence, answering who and what questions both orally and written, defining newly learned vocabulary words. Raul has difficulty reading with expression, displays oppositional behaviors resulting in physical aggression and verbal aggression towards authority figures. Further affecting his disability is lack of impulse control, low frustration tolerance, poor self-determination skills difficulties completing class assignments and difficulty maintaining previously learned skills beyond the 180 day school year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Bennett</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/1/08</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Raul’s involvement and progress in the general curriculum is affected by his academic deficits resulting in task/completing assignments. He has difficulties answering higher order questions and using newly learned vocabulary in a paragraph. He has difficulties adding and subtracting fractions of the same denominators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/28/09</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Raul’s involvement and progress in the general curriculum is affected by his low cognitive ability resulting in difficulty staying in assigned areas, following directions, applying word meanings to unfamiliar words. Counting change from a dollar. He is unable to answer higher level comprehension questions unable to complete tasks without one on one assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1/09</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Raul’s progress in general curriculum is affected by his low cognitive ability that hinders staying focused on the completion of classroom activities without constant redirecting. He struggles with some math concepts, and has difficulties with high level comprehension questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/16/10</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>(INSTRUCTION) Raul’s depressed cognitive ability requires intensive curriculum or instructional approaches for most learning activities. He requires constant prompting to stay on task. He needs to learn how to spend up to $20 and get correct change. He also needs to improve his comprehension skills by answering “wh” questions orally and in sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/21/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Same as previous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/12/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>(INSTRUCTION) Raul’s depressed cognitive ability requires intensive curriculum or instruction approaches for most learning activities. He requires constant prompting and reminders to stay on</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results on the i-ready assessments indicate that Raul is decoding accurately. However, his vocabulary score suggests that substantial gaps in word knowledge are making it very hard to read for meaning. Instructions in word meanings and word-learning strategies will support Raul's continued growth in overall comprehension.

3/13/14 Bennett

Raul's depressed cognitive ability requires ability requires intensive curriculum or instruction approaches for most learning activities. He requires constant prompting and reminders to stay on task. His behavior impacts his learning and performance development. He often times engages peers and adults in verbal altercations causing frequent disruptions. His provoking arguments with others, refusing to do work and walking away from classes inhibits his growth and causes concern for his safety and the safety of others. His refusal to do academic and vocational assignments as well as current I-ready assessment hinders both his academic and personal growth. Results on past I-ready assessments indicate that Raul is decoding accurately. However, his vocabulary score suggests substantial gaps in word knowledge are making it very hard to read for meaning. His regular refusals to complete current assessments has not yield any recent developmental results. His behavior and altercations with peers cause him to be placed in alternative class settings for his safety and the safety of others.

9/06 & 5/17: Self determination is checked, but there is no mention of where it is presented and in what type of curriculum. There are several behaviors mentioned here that are a problem, which ones are addressed on his BIP. He is in ESY, does that not help with maintaining skills beyond the 180 day school year? That is the point of ESY.

4/09: finally mention low cognitive ability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Priority Education Needs (PENS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/16/06</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td>Functional reading, Functional math, Functional Writing, Self-Determination, Impulse Control, Respect Authority Figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1/08</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Reading Comprehension, Written Comprehension, Math Computation Self-Advocacy, Impulse Control, Self-Control Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/28/09</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Reading Comprehension, Math Computation, Self-Advocacy, Impulse Control, Self-Control Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Transition Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/16/06</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td>Raul said he would like to graduate from high school. He would like to go to a specialized technical school to become a video game designer. Raul's course of study focus on academic and functional skills to deal with compliance. (Person responsible: staff and students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/07</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td>Raul said that after graduation from high school he would like to live independently. He said that he would like to work at a video game store. He stated that he would like to live in Atlanta and get married and have babies later. Raul's course of study focus on academic and functional skills to deal with compliance. (Person responsible: staff and students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1/08</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Raul said after high school he would like to stay in Florida and live with his brother. He said that he would like to work at the YMCA as a life guard. He also stated that he would like to get married and have children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/28/09</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Raul would like to live at home with his family after he graduates from school. He would like to be able to write music (rap). He would like to be able to make his own money so that he could help his mother and buy things for himself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1/09</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3/16/10    | Bennett         | Raul indicates that he would like to graduate from High School and pursue a career in the music industry writing music and rapping. He would like to be independent, making his own money to support himself and contribute to
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/21/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Raul has enjoyed participating in CBI. He feels that he is now 19, he should be able to decide what is best for him. He wants to make the decision about where to live. He would like to find a job working with animals. He would like to learn what he has to do so that he can live on his own. <strong>Coursework description:</strong> Raul will continue to work on the vocational track. He wants to move on to agriculture. He needs to improve his behavior in order to participate in this program. He will focus on learning about community services. He needs to motivate himself in areas of academics. As of now he needs intensive curriculum or instructional approach for most learning activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/12/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td><em>Same as previous</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/14/13</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Raul has enjoys participating in Curriculum Based Instruction. He feels as he is now 20 years old, he should be able to decide what is best for him. He wants to make the decision about where to live. He would like to find a job working with animals. He would like to learn what he has to do so he can live on his own. <strong>Coursework description:</strong> Raul will work on obtaining knowledge about vocational programs and places of employment for his interest in working with animals. He needs to improve his behavior in order to participate in this program. He will focus on learning about community service and appropriate employment related behaviors. He needs to become more self motivated in areas of academics and employment skills. To this point, he continues to need intensive curriculum and/or instructional approaches for most learning activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/13/14</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Raul likes listening to music. He also likes composing music and rap songs. Additionally, he enjoys singing and participating in school programs where he can showcase his talents. At times, with in the classroom, he assists others to navigate the computer - as he operates the computer proficiently. Because he enjoys working with animals he has expressed an interest in being a veterinarian. <strong>Coursework description:</strong> Raul is currently an over aged student assigned to the Successful Education Pathways for Student Success Program (STEPS).He has met all requirements for high school and his course of study is presently focusing on vocational, independent and daily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
living skills. Raul continues to need close guidance and supervision during his instructional time. Because of his interest in animals, Raul will work on increasing his knowledge about vocational programs and places of employment with in his area of interest. Raul participates in CBI where he learns about various job opportunities and job occupations. His behavior continues to be a concern and she still needs to be more self motivated in areas of academics and employment skills. To this point, he continues to need intensive curriculum and/or instructional approaches for most learning activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Measureable Post Secondary Transition Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/16/06</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/07</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1/08</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/28/09</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1/09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/16/10</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/21/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td><strong>Education or training:</strong> Within six months of graduation from HS, Raul will apply and seek out places and programs that will better prepare him in working with animals. He will do this with family support. He will apply for two jobs while in search of appropriate placement with animals. He will continue to work on skills needed to maintain a job. <strong>Employment:</strong> Within six months of graduation from high school, Raul will seek a program or vocational school that will assist in training him in his area of interest. He will also apply for 2 jobs while searching for a vocational school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/12/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Same as previous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/14/13</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td><strong>Education or training:</strong> Within six months of graduation from HS, with family assistance and support, Raul will apply and seek out employment locations and vocational programs that will better prepare him in working with animals. He will apply for two jobs while in search of appropriate placement with animals. He will continue to work on skills needed to maintain a job. <strong>Employment:</strong> Within six months of graduation from HS, with assistance from family, Raul will seek out 2 employment locations and/or places that employs or trains individuals within his area of interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/13/14</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td><strong>Education or training:</strong> Within six months of graduation from HS, with assistance from family, Raul will apply and seek out 2 employment locations and/or places that employs or trains individuals within his area of interest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
graduation from HS, with assistance and support from others, Raul will apply and seek out employment locations and vocational programs that will better prepare him in working with animals. He will apply for one to two jobs while in search of appropriate placement with animals. He will continue to work on job keeping and job-seeking skills. **Employment:** Within six months of graduation from HS, with assistance and support from others, Raul will seek out 2 employment locations and/or places that employs or trains individuals within his area of interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Conference Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/16/06</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td>General education teacher was not present at the meeting. Raul is assigned to a special school and change in program or placement is not recommended at this time and the team agrees that Raul's need can be met at this time and the team agrees that Raul's needs can be met at this school to provide him a free and appropriate setting in the least restrictive environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/07</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1/08</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>On 4/28/08 Raul's mother confirmed via that she would be attending Raul's IEP meeting, to take place on 05/01/08. On the day of the meeting (05/01/08), Raul's mother came to the school to sign the necessary paperwork for the school's upcoming prom. It was at that time that she informed Raul's counselor that she would not be attending the IEP meeting later because her husband was not feeling well. She instructed the counselor to proceed without her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/28/09</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>10/1/09 safety vest removed as of 10/1/09 (was part of transportation services)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1/09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/16/10</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Safety vest removal as of 10/01/09. Community Based Instruction. Raul will participate in community based instruction once a week. He will access and utilize MDCPS and public transportation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/21/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>The IEP meeting was terminated due to pending concerns that needed to be addressed regarding Raul's placement. 3/21/12: The IEP team met to discuss Raul's current placement at Sandra Day O'Connor. It was discussed that Raul required a more restrictive environment due to the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
nature of behavior/disability. Raul is in need of a more intensive behavioral program. The IEP team decided that it was in Raul's best interest to return to his previous school. IEP team met to conduct a manifestation determination and found that Raul's behavior was a manifestation of his behavior.

Talisia waived her rights to being rendered the Procedural Safeguards, as well as, the explanation. She feels as though that she is familiar with the information mentioned in the document.

On the notification of meeting form it was selected that a (RT) will be selected, however, the IEP team feels that it is not needed at this time.

Raul's transportation routes will require changes due to the fact that other routing provisions needs to be made in order to ensure proper safety of Raul and specific peers. The IEP teams agrees that RR will pursue the possible need for paraprofessional assistance for Raul to ensure his safety and that of his peers.

The IEP team met today to adjust transportation services for Raul. He has been creating an unsafe transport for himself by jumping off the school bus. He will have safety vest added to his transportation services.

Notes from 2 previous IEPs in conference notes copied

Ms. Toggs spoke with foster mom and was informed that she had unforeseen responsibilities and had to address them. However, she advised the teacher to proceed without and provide a copy of the IEP to be delivered the student.

3/16/10 if there was an intent for R to use public transportation it should have been a goal with benchmarks and someone responsible for teaching him. Not a mention in a note.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Post Adult- employment- vocational goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/16/06</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/07</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1/08</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td><strong>Employment:</strong> Raul will use appropriate behaviors for employment success. <strong>Community Experience:</strong> Raul will use appropriate behaviors for employment success. <strong>Post School Adult Living:</strong> Raul will show respect towards others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/28/09</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td><strong>Community Experience:</strong> Raul will display the behaviors needed to successfully participate in the community (benchmarks: 1. speak appropriately to others when</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
expressing his needs, 2. handle delays in reinforcement, 3. interact with peers without assistance) **Post School Adult Living:** Raul will exhibit appropriate listening skills (benchmarks: 1. follow directions with prompting, 2. comply with teacher limits without prompting, 3. demonstrate respect for those in authority by not arguing without arguing, 4. demonstrate respect for those in authority by not arguing.) **Employment:** Raul will realistically identify vocational skills and abilities. (benchmarks: 1. list favorite activities and interest in order of preference, 2. Complete an interest and aptitude survey with assistance, 3. develop realistic job and career goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/1/09</td>
<td><strong>Community Experience:</strong> Given real world opportunities the student will identify and practice appropriate social skills when attending a community event. <strong>Community Experience:</strong> Given an activity within the community setting the student will increase cooperative participation in small group activities. <strong>Community Experience:</strong> Given a trip to a merchandise/food store, student will identify and demonstrate independence e skills as related to purchasing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/16/10</td>
<td><strong>Post School Adult Living:</strong> Raul will demonstrate an understanding of personal and social skills which are necessary for success on the job and for independent living. <strong>Community Experience:</strong> Raul will locate and use community resources and facilities. <strong>Employment:</strong> Raul will demonstrate an awareness of job opportunities and resources in the community. <strong>Functional Vocational Evaluation (FVE):</strong> Raul will respect and recognize authority and participate in group activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3/21/12| **Community Experience:** Strengths of the student: Raul likes going out into the community with the class. He does well on CBI. He can be very independent at times and will assist his peers. He is beginning to learn about some of the community leisure activities. His mother has been taking him on excursions and they also spend time at the park. He goes to social events in the community with his family. **Affects of the disability:** Raul's disability affects his ability to comply with behavioral skills. Although Raul can be independent at times, he will wander off and make inappropriate remarks to women in the community. Because he needs continuous supervision to ensure physical safety, this kind of inappropriate behavior create need for continuous supervision. **Goal:** 1. When in a social situation, Raul will use appropriate language with minimal prompting in a 9 out of 10 opportunities. 2. When in a social setting, Raul will remain with the class with minimal prompting in a 9
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Bennett</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/12/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Same as previous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/14/13</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Community Experience: Strengths of the student: Raul like going out into the community on CBI field trips with the class and family. He likes shopping for video tapes and music from various artists. He can be very independent at times and will assist peers. He enjoys going to the park and attending social events in the community with his family. Affects of the disability: Raul's...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
disability affects his ability to comply with behavioral skills. Although Raul can be independent at times, he will wander off, walk out of class and make inappropriate remarks to women in school and the community. Because he needs continuous supervision to ensure physical safety, this kind of inappropriate behavior create need for continuous supervision. Post Adult Living: Strengths of the student: Raul wants to finish high school and eventually live on his own. He knows that he may have to attend a post secondary program to get the job he wants working with animals. Once Raul graduates he plans to live at home then obtain an apartment once he obtains employment. Affects of the disability: Raul still needs a supported living environment due to the nature of his disability. He requires guided supervision in order to meet his daily needs. Goal: Given an opportunity to meet with his assigned caseworker, Raul will discuss realistic, supported living options that are available to him in his community in 5 out of 5 opportunities. Employment: Strengths of the student: Raul wants to be employed in a job where he can be around animals. He will look in the neighborhood and possibly search on the computer with the support of his family. Raul can do very well when he puts forth effort. He prefers to do only the tasks that he wants to do. He has gone on CBI experiences where there were animals in which he was excited and participated. Affects of the disability: Raul's progress in general curriculum is affected by his need for job skills training. Goal: In a structured classroom setting, Raul will demonstrate knowledge of positive work-related behaviors by providing correct responses to job-related questions 3 out of 4 opportunities from March 13, 2013 to June 6, 2013. Functional Vocational Evaluation (FVE): Strengths of the student: Raul is capable of participating in a vocational/technical program with supervision and assistance. Programs of interest should be related to a
career that allows him to be around animals, or a training program that allows him to move more and independently and obtain employment. **Affects of the disability:** Raul requires supervision to meet his goals in the area of functional/vocational training. **Goal:** In the classroom setting, Raul will discuss with his teachers and assigned counselor, vocational/technical programs that are available to him in the community that have a program of interest with 75% accuracy.

**Community Experience:** **Strengths of the student:** Raul likes going out into the community on CBI field trips with the class. He is able to navigate through stores and find various sections that interest him. At times he is very independent and is willing to and able to assist his peers. He likes shopping for video tapes and music from various artists. He can be very independent at times and will assist his peers. Additionally, he enjoys going on gatherings with his family and to the park and on social events. **Affects of the disability:** Raul's disability affects his ability to comply with rules and his behavior impacts, affects and often times prohibits his participating academic and social settings. Although Raul can be independent at times, he will wander off, walk out of class and make inappropriate remarks to women in school and the community. Because he needs continuous supervision to ensure physical safety, this kind of inappropriate behavior create need for continuous supervision. **Goal:** 1. Whether in the classroom, community or social setting, Raul will demonstrate conforming behavior skills as evidenced by his ability to follow rules, regulations and expectations, without arguing or disagreeing with request in 7 out of 10 opportunities, June 2015. 2. When in a classroom or social setting, Raul will remain in the class and not walk out or away from the class with minimal prompting in 5 out of 7 opportunities by June 2015. **Post Adult Living:** **Strengths of the student:** Raul has expressed a desire to
complete HS and eventually live on his own, after obtaining a job. He knows that he has to work on developing his employment skills and obtain training through a post secondary school to work with animals as a career occupation. **Affects of the disability:** Raul still requires a supported living environment due to the nature of his disability. He requires close and guided supervision in order to meet his daily needs. **Goal:** In a structured classroom, when presented with a job or career out-look pamphlet, Raul will identify the job's duties, education and training in requirements of the given occupation in 7 out of 10 opportunities. **Employment: Strengths:** Raul has the ability to work on an assignment or vocation task that he finds appealing to him. He has indicated that he would like to be employed in a capacity where he can work around animals. He has been provided with instructional materials to increase his knowledge of the role and responsibilities of a vegetarian and finds it very interesting. Raul has also accompanied the school on a Community Based Instruction (CBI) where he has visited an animal site where he observed a veterinarian working. Raul will explore possible job openings within his neighborhood by newspaper and computer searches. (Should this be a goal? rather than mentioned in strengths) Raul can do very well when he puts forth effort. **Affects of the disability:** Raul's progress in general curriculum is affected by his need for job skills training. **Goal:** In a structured classroom, Raul will be able to identify 4 effective job related behaviors when given 4 out of 7 opportunities. **Functional Vocational Evaluation (FVE):** **Strengths of the student:** Raul is capable in participating in a vocational/technical training program with supervision and assistance. Programs of interest should be related to a career that allows him to be around animals, or a training program that allows him to be more independent and obtain employment. **Affects of the disability:** Raul requires supervision to meet his goals in the area of functional/vocational training.

3/21/12- PSAL- strengths of the student- this statement seems to contradict- does he want to live independently or not? It seems they may have actually discussed post secondary education- a hint of transition services and placement. FVE - strengths of the student- here they mention a training program that allows for independence, but the next section pushes back the need for supervision. In three years, no one ever found a program, did they look?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Supplementary Aids and Services /Related Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/16/06</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td>None needed at this time / Weekly counseling under &quot;related services&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/07</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td>None needed at this time / Weekly counseling under &quot;related services&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1/08</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>None needed at this time/Related Services: <strong>Counseling Services</strong>- weekly. Location: counselor's office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/28/09</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>None needed at this time/Related Services: <strong>Counseling Services</strong>- weekly. Location: counselor's office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1/09</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/16/10</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>None needed at this time/Related Services: <strong>Counseling Services</strong>- weekly. Location: counselor's office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/21/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Consultation in behavior (1x week), consultation in healthcare(1x month)/CBI (Community Based Instruction) (1x week-180 min.),Counseling (1x week-30 minutes in classroom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/12/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td><strong>Same as previous</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/14/13</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Consultation in behavior (1x week), consultation in healthcare(1x month)/ Counseling (1x week-30 minutes in classroom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/13/14</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Consultation in behavior (1x week), consultation in healthcare(1x month)/ Counseling (1x week-30 minutes in classroom)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5/08: People mentioned in implementation section are ESE Teacher and Counselor, who will be providing PT and OT. Are these services charged on the Matrix?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>ANY OTHER NOTES OF INTEREST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/16/06</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td>ESOL Data empty, Meds: welbutrin 150mgs, risperdal 2mg BID- all meds given at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/07</td>
<td>So. Lake Beh.</td>
<td>ESOL Data empty, Medications: Mirtazapine 15 mg, PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1/08</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>ESOL entry date: 7/6/98, no exit date, , BIP dated 5/1/2008, medications: N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/28/09</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>ESOL entry date: 7/6/98, no exit date, BIP dated 4/28/09,medications: N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1/09</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/16/10</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>ESOL entry date: 7/6/98, no exit date, BIP dated 5/1/2008,medications: N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/21/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>Exemption criteria for FCAT &quot;significant cognitive disability&quot;, FAB 2/24/10, BIP 3/11/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/12/12</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td><strong>Same as previous</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Welbutrin is an antidepressant, can also be used to treat ADHD
Risperdal- is an Atypical Antipsychotic, used to treat schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, dementia, Austism, Tourettes
Mirtazapine- is an antidepressant antiemetric (stops vomiting and nausea) , used to treat major depression , depression disorder
10/1/09- seems to be an interim IEP at a different school. The goals listed are on an insert. They have been typed in by a typewriter in language not similar to the previous writing of goals. This may have been the period when Raul was staffed out for the knife incident with the other student. It has only been 6 months since his previous IEP and his next one will be in 5 months.
4/28/09- if there was a BIP done this day, why would someone go back and use one from '08. Unless there was not one done that day....
10/12/12- this IEP is exactly like the one done 7 months prior. The team was brought together to add safety vest to the transportation area of services because of Raul's jumping from the back door of the bus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Signatures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/16/11</td>
<td>Jesse Owens Middle School</td>
<td>L B (Program Specialist), T L (ESE teacher &amp; Evaluation Specialist), R M (General Ed Teacher), T H (Secondary Counselor), student, D M (ESE Autistic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>Mrs. Hartwick (Program Specialist), C W (ESE teacher &amp; Evaluation Specialist), A W (General Ed Teacher), David Stills (parent), student, S P (Language Arts Reading SR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>Mrs. Hartwick (LEA Representative), H B (ESE teacher &amp; Evaluation Specialist), P G (General Ed Teacher), Dr. Theo (Psychologist), David Stills (parent), student, S P (Language Arts Reading SR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/20/14</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>Mrs. Hartwick (LEA Representative), L W (ESE teacher &amp; Evaluation Specialist), Mrs. Alexander (General Ed Teacher), David Stills (parent), student, Dr. Theo (Psychologist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/19/15</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>Mrs. Hartwick (LEA Repesentative), C A (ESE teacher &amp; Evaluation Specialist), Mrs. Alexander (General Ed Teacher), Dr, Theo (Psychologist), student, P M (Senior Assist Principal), Vanessa Thorrington (other)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10/20/14- Mrs. Alexander is not a General Ed Teacher, she is a Sped teacher . In the interview she identifies herself as the ESE Lead teacher. This makes me question other names and titles on
While all of these folks signed the IEP, besides myself and the student, only two ladies were at the meeting. It is not unusual to have folks sign the paperwork who did not attend as long as they know the student and had some input as the content of the document. However, I know that one of the people signed the IEP performing the wrong role. And the person signing as the LEA was not in attendance that is one that should have been by law.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Program Eligibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/6/11</td>
<td>Jesse Owens Middle School</td>
<td>EBD, SLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>EBD, SLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>EBD, SLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/20/14</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>EBD, SLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/19/14</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>EBD, SLD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Assessment Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/6/11</td>
<td>Jesse Owens Middle School</td>
<td>FCAT, 3/2010: Math 250, Reading 211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>FCAT, 3/2011: Math 277, Science 269, Writing 3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FCAT, 3/12: Reading, 220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/19/15</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>Same as 10/20/14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10/20/14- there is new FCAT data that could be entered here, he has had to take it at every administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Present Levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/6/11</td>
<td>Jesse Owens</td>
<td>I: Lew is able to decode basic sight words from a passage or text. He can read a paragraph and answer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Middle School comprehension question on his independent reading level. Lew can compute basic mathematical problems such as addition subtraction and multiplication using manipulative. He can write a short paragraphs using a graphic organizer.

**S/E:** Lew has shown improvement in his behavior. He seems to get along well with his peers and teachers. He likes to listen to music and play football with peers for fun.

**1/17/13**

Sanger HS

**I:** Lew is able to compute one step math equations utilizing basic operations, functions and word problems without assistance. His reading is below grade level, however, he is able to utilize context clues to answer basic comprehension questions. Lew is able to comprehend grade level text when read aloud. He can organize his thoughts orally and in written form.

**12/17/13**

Sanger HS

**I:** Lew is able to compute one and two step math problems utilizing basic operations, functions and word problems without assistance. He is able to utilize context clues to answer basic comprehension questions. Lew is able to comprehend grade level text when read aloud. He can organize his thoughts and ideas orally and in written form.

**10/20/14**

Sanger HS

**I:** Lew is able to phonetically sound unfamiliar words to read passages at his independent reading level. His vocabulary skills are strong, and he is capable of identifying the main idea in passages read. In math, he has good algebraic knowledge and can solve simple and complex equations without assistance. He has passed the Algebra EOC exam.

**5/19/15**

Sanger HS

**Same as 10/20/14**

**5/6/11**

Jesse Owens Middle School

**Affects of Disability**

10/20/14- "at his own independent reading level", "vocabulary skills are strong" these statements tell nothing about Lew's levels. This is lazy on the part of the staff. How are his vocabulary skills strong? He is good using context clues? He has a good foundation with prefixes, suffixes and roots? He is above grade level?
S/E: Lew requires assistance and supervision too stay on task with behavior and academic skills. He requires close supervision to stay on task and complete his assignments. He has poor impulse control. He can become aggressive and displays anger in inappropriate ways.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>I: Lew requires and structured environment and academic support due to his distractibility, additional support in reading, math application and comprehension and the manner in which he addresses his academic tasks. No S/E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>I: Lew requires and structured environment and academic support to stay on task. He needs additional support in reading comprehension and math application due to his inability to answer higher order questions and problem solve. No S/E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/20/14</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>I: Lew's progress in the general curriculum is affected by his inability to answer complex, higher order thinking questions related to grade level passages. He also needs assistance with building organization skills to help him keep track of all assignments/ tasks. No S/E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/19/15</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>Same as 10/20/14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Priority Education Needs (PENS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/6/11</td>
<td>Jesse Owens Middle School</td>
<td>Instructional: Reading skills, Written communication skills, Math skills, Written Communication Skills, Math Skills Social/Emotional: Impulse Control, Self Advocacy, Impulse Control, Self Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>I: Math skills, Reading skills, Organizational skills C/E: self-Advocacy No S/E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>I: Math skills, Reading Skills, Organizational skills C/E: decision making skills PSAL: Self- Advocacy Skills No S/E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/20/14</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>I: Reading Skills, Organizational Skills C/E: decision making skills PSAL: Self- Advocacy Skills EMP: Social Skills No S/E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/19/15</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>Same as 10/20/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Transition Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>****************************************************************---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/6/11</td>
<td>Jesse Owens Middle School</td>
<td>Lew likes to play sports. He has expressed an interest in attending college to study law. He will research information on this career in high school. He would also like to pursue a career in football and become an NFL player.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>Lew has talents and strengths including sports and specifically football. He has a lifelong goal to pursue a career in law as a lawyer. He has expressed interest in attending a four-year university in state to study law. He feels his best subject is Biology and enjoys his classes. Outside of school, Lew likes to socialize with his friends. He wants to research his career goals more through the internet and core classes. Additionally, Lew would like to take an elective class in law studies at his high school. COS: Lew is currently taking courses for a standard diploma. He is not currently in a specific academy, however he has elective courses in sports and auto mechanics. He is taking academic core classes that will prepare him for entry into a university where he plans to study law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>Lew states his strengths are math, science, football and basketball. His weakness is reading. After high school he would like to attend University of Miami or FIU, maybe on football scholarship where he can pursue a career as a lawyer. He would like to live in Miami and maybe at age 30 get married and have two children boy and girl, or two boys. Lew loves going to the movies and hanging out at malls and going to football games. COS: Lew is currently a 11th grade student currently taking courses for a standard diploma. He has elective classes in intensive math and digital media. His first nine weeks grades averaged out to a 3.0. He is taking academic core classes that will prepare him for entry into a university where he plans to study law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/20/14</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>Lew's academic strength is in Math. He loves to play football and basketball, and is currently on the school's varsity football team. He wants to attend FIU to play football and major in business. He hopes to someday become an entrepreneur or a police officer as a second option. Lew loves going to the movies and hanging out at malls and going to football games. COS: Lew is currently a 12th grade student at Sanger High who is enrolled in all general education classes towards earning a standard diploma. He receives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
collaboration support in Math, while receiving consultation in English. He is taking an automotive elective course as well. His current GPA is 2.2 and he has earned 20 credit hours thus far.

5/19/15  Sanger HS  
Lew's academic strength is in Math. He loves to play football and basketball, and is currently on the school's varsity football team. Lew has been accepted to Miami Dade College and plans to enroll in the fall semester. He will pursue a career in physical therapy. He is still awaiting a response from FIU. Lew loves going to the movies and hanging out at malls and going to foot ball games.

COS: Lew is currently a 12th grade student at Sanger High who is enrolled in all general education classes towards earning a standard diploma. He receives consultation in all academic areas. He is taking childcare as an elective course. His current GPA is 2.3 and he has earned 26 credit hours thus far.

10/20/14 - what is the difference between collaboration and consultation? I remember hearing that Lew did not like his automotive class and I believe he was moved out of it quickly and was in one previously.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Measureable Transition Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/6/11</td>
<td>Jesse Owens Middle School</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1/17/13    | Sanger HS            | **Education or training:** Within 4 to 6 months of graduating high school, Lew will apply and enroll into a post secondary program will he will pursue a licensure or degree in the area of law studies to become a lawyer. Lew will also pursue employment as a professional NFL football player.  
**Employment:** Lew has the ability to identify his interests and abilities as it relates to future career goals. Lew works within cooperative groups and contributes to the teams goals and tasks assigned. After completion of college Lew wishes to find a job in legal studies. 
**Independent Living:** Within three months of graduation from college Lew will move home with his parents for a year until he saves up enough money to move on his own. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th><strong>Education or training:</strong> Within 3 months of graduating high school, Lew will apply and enroll into a post secondary program where he will pursue a licensure or degree in the area of law studies to become a lawyer.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td><strong>Employment:</strong> Within 6 months of graduating from college, Lew will obtain employment in the legal field. <strong>Independent Living:</strong> Within a year after graduation from college, Lew will move into an apartment by himself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/20/14</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td><strong>Education or training:</strong> Within three months after graduating from high school, Lew will enroll in FIU to pursue a career in business. <strong>Employment:</strong> Within six months after graduation, Lew will obtain employment at local business to gain insight of the field and to provide financial support for himself. <strong>Independent Living:</strong> Within a year after graduation, Lew will open/ maintain a checking/savings account to save money for himself to live independently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/19/15</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td><strong>Education or training:</strong> Within three months after graduating from high school, Lew will enroll at Miami Dade College to pursue a career in physical therapy. <strong>Employment:</strong> Within six months of graduation, Lew will obtain employment to provide financial support for himself. <strong>Independent Living:</strong> Within a year after graduation, Lew will open/ maintain a checking/savings account to save money for himself to live independently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>1/17/13- The employment goal is neither a goal nor measureable. The IL goal should be for after HS, and who are these parents he is going to live with after college?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/20/14</td>
<td></td>
<td>10/20/14- He should have employment goals for during college. His employment goals should not be scheduled for 4 plus years from now. Independent living goals also should not be about a bank account for living independently six plus months from now. Self determination, self advocacy that is being discussed by the guardian and clinician, this includes transition services that should be delivered now and they include starting a bank account, especially in light of Lew moving into an apartment by himself being a possibility sooner rather than later.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5/19/15- Now I see that he is to get a job within 6 months of HS graduation. This was written at the meeting I attended, where it was discussed that he already had a job. And again he has the goal of getting a bank acct to save to live independently- when Lew currently lives in his own apartment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Conference Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/6/11</td>
<td>Jesse Owens Middle School</td>
<td>Spoke with case manager via telephone regarding Lew's educational program here at CCMS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>Notification of meeting was sent on December 2, 2013, phone call was make 12/10/13. Parent stated that he will attend meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/20/14</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>Parent attended meeting and received information in the John McKay Scholarship. Procedural Safeguards were also explained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/19/15</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>5/19/15 FCAT waiver and transition meeting. Adult student attended meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The School should know that this is not Lew's parent and should also have made contact with the case manager.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Transition Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/9/11</td>
<td>Jesse Owens Middle School</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td><strong>CE:</strong> Strengths: Lew has the ability to access community/adult education resources as needed. Lew is involved in a community organization in which he meets regularly in a group. Utilize public transportation and can navigate as a pedestrian in his own neighborhood. <strong>Affects of Disability:</strong> Lew's disability hinders him from making rational decisions independently and completing the community service project for graduation. <strong>Goal:</strong> Lew will become involved in one or more community or school based organizations and acquire a minimum of 10 community service hours within 4 out of 5 opportunities. <strong>PSAL:</strong> Strengths: Lew is able to utilize services from the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>CE: Strengths:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 12/17/13  | Sanger HS | Lew has the ability to access community/ adult educational resources as needed. Lew is involved in a community organization in which he meets regularly in a group. Utilize public transportation and can navigate as a pedestrian in his own neighborhood. **Affects of Disability:** Lew requires assistance with completing and logging his service project for graduation. **Goal:** When deciding on a local community organization, Lew will volunteer at one or more local organizations and keep a log of at least 25 volunteer hours by 12/14. **PSAL: Strengths:** Lew is able to utilize services from the community and school in the school (school trust counselor, PBS coordinator) independently without assistance. He knows that he wants to attend college and pursue a career in law. **Affects of Disability:** Lew requires assistance in self-advocacy skills. He needs to understand his disability and how to seek accommodations when needed. **Goal:** In a structured setting, Lew will identify the impact of his behavior on his academic progress and seek assistance when needed in 4 out of 5 opportunities by 12/14. **Employment: Strength:** Lew demonstrates employability skills that are feasible for home and school environments. He is able to work...
with peers and follow directions. No affects of disability, no PEN, No Goal.

**Daily Living Skills (DLS):** Strengths: Lew is able to maintain himself independent as it relates to personal hygiene, social activities, and making decisions that impact his well-being. He is able to launder his own clothing and attend regularly scheduled meetings. No affects of disability, no PEN, No Goal.

**Functional Vocational Evaluation (FVE):** Strengths: Lew can fill out a self determination checklist and express his interest and what he wants to do after high school. No affects of disability, no PEN, No Goal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10/20/14</th>
<th>Sanger HS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CE:</td>
<td>Strengths: Lew is able to participate in the community independently. He knows how to utilize public transportation and access community resources independently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affects of Disability: Lew requires assistance with completing and logging his service project for graduation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal:</td>
<td>When given a community service packet, Lew will utilize decision making skills to identify a local community organization. He will volunteer at least 25 hours and exhibit appropriate behaviors, keep a log, and complete 100% of the packet by the end of the school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSAL:</td>
<td>Strengths: Lew knows that he wants to attend FIU to pursue a career in business. He has begun to work on his post secondary plans by applying for the ACT/SAT. When he attends college, he wants to live in the college dormitories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affects of Disability: Lew requires assistance in self advocacy skills to pursue his post secondary plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goal: Given the opportunity, Lew will advocate for himself by pursuing his post secondary plans. He will identify his college of choice, identify his areas of strengths and prerequisites required, complete at least three college applications and financial aid application by the end of the school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment: Strength:</td>
<td>Lew demonstrates employability skills that are feasible for</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
home and school environments. He is usually a respectful young and complies to school rules. **Affects of Disability:** Lew needs to build his social skills and learn to communicate and participate in groups. **Goal:** When in a group session, Lew will initiate and maintain group conversation without shutting down. He will communicate his wants and needs and seek assistance in 3 out of 4 opportunities by the end of the IEP.

**Daily Living Skills (DLS):** **Strengths:** Lew is able to take care of his daily needs independently. He can care for all of his independent needs as it relates to personal hygiene and cleaning after himself. He is able to do his own laundry and prepare small meals. **No affects of disability, no PEN, No Goal.**

**Functional Vocational Evaluation (FVE):** **Strengths:** Lew can fill out a self determination checklist and express his interest and what he wants to do after high school. **No affects of disability, no PEN, No Goal.**

| 5/19/15 | Sanger HS | **PSAL:** **Strengths:** Lew has been accepted to Miami Dade College and will enroll in the fall semester. He participated in the ACT in April. When he attends college he will live in his own apartment. **Affects:** Lew requires assistance in self advocacy skills to pursue his post secondary plans. **Goal:** Given the opportunity, Lew will advocate for himself by pursuing his post secondary plans. He will identify his college of choice, identify his areas of strengths and prerequisites required, complete at least three college applications and financial aid application by the end of the school year.

10/20/2014- the self advocacy goal does not give Lew practice in Self Advocacy. It is simply a check off list for procrastinators. His employment affects of disability and goal are not related to employment. Is this from input by teachers? Or Dr. T? His goals should not be focused in making him share in counseling. In earlier IEPs it is confirmed that he is a member of a community group, is there evidence that he is not
communicating there. Should this be under communication rather than employability. If he were unable to work in groups he would most likely be unsuccessful in team sports. This is not sensitive to a student's personal issues, esp that of a foster care youth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Specialized Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5/6/11  | Jesse Owens Middle School | Reading Skills, Math, written communication and Impulse control skills, gen ed class 2.5x week/300 min  
Reading, math, written communication & impulse control skills, ESE class 3x week/380 min  
Self-advocacy skills |
| 1/17/13 | Sanger HS       | Reading Skills, Math, written communication, gen ed class 3x wk/270 min  
Self-advocacy skills, Organizational skills |
| 12/17/13| Sanger HS       | Reading Skills, Math, gen ed class 3x wk/270 min  
Self- advocacy, Decision Making Skills  
Organizational Skills, General Ed Campus, 1x mon./ 30 min |
| 10/20/14| Sanger HS       | Decision Making Skills, Self-advocacy skills  
Organizational Skills, Reading Skills gen ed class 3x wk/270 min  
Social Skills, gen ed class 1x mon/ 30 min |
| 5/19/15 | Sanger HS       | Same as 10/20/14                                                                        |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Supplementary Aids and Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/6/11</td>
<td>Jesse Owens Middle School</td>
<td>Collaboration in Language Arts, Reading and Science, gen ed class 2.5 x week/ 300 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>Collaboration in all Academic Areas, gen ed class, 1x mon./ 30 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 12/17/13| Sanger HS       | Collaboration in Language Arts, Social Studies, gen ed class 3x wk/270 min  
Collaboration in Math, Organizational Skills, Science, gen ed class 1x mon./ 30 min |
| 10/20/14| Sanger HS       | Collaboration in Math, gen ed class 1x mon./ 30 min  
Collaboration in Language Arts, gen ed class 3x wk/270 min |
<p>| 5/19/15 | Sanger HS       | Same as 10/20/14                                                                        |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Related Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/6/11</td>
<td>Jesse Owens Middle School</td>
<td>Counseling 2x week/ 30min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>Counseling, ESE class, 1x week/ 30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/17/13</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>Counseling, Gen Ed Campus, 1x week/ 30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/20/14</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>Counseling, Gen Ed Class, 1x week/ 30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/19/15</td>
<td>Sanger HS</td>
<td>Same as 10/20/14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Parental Input**

5/16/11: Parent Input: Lew's guardian would like to see him be a successful young man in school, and make positive choices in his behavior.

1/17/13: Parent Input: Lew's guardian states he is interested in Lew pursue a high school diploma via the traditional track. He would like Lew to have options as it pertains to Lew's education and would him to utilize resources in the school to succeed. He wants Lew to understand the outlets available to him in the school and to take initiative in his decisions.

Date of FAB: 1/10/2013  Date of BIP: 1/17/2013

12/17/2013: Lew's guardian Mr. Stills states that to enhance Lew's education he should continue to pursue his high school diploma, so that he may attain his goals after high school. He would like Lew to have options, like trade or vocational school. Lew should visit college to experience what college is about, and take some courses or internships in his desired field of study (Law).

Date of FAB: 12/10/2013  Date of BIP: 12/17/2013

10/20/2014: Lew's guardian Mr. Stills stated that he feels Lew is a big procrastinator and is not responsible. He does not follow through with assigned tasks when given. He is concerned because Lew sill soon be an adult and needs to become a little more mature and self-sufficient.

Satisfied on-line requirement by taking driver's ed

Date of FAB: 10/20/2014  Date of BIP: 12/17/2013

5/1/2015

Date of FAB: 10/20/2014  Date of BIP: 5/19/2015

They wrote a BIP that day? When he was to graduate in less than a month? New FAB- same BIP, no need to change plan

No Social and Emotional PLEP (strengths, Affects of Disability, PENS or goals). Renewed dates for FAB and BIP.

When a service happens on the General Education Campus- where exactly is that?